

## **Foreword**

One of the objectives of the Drill Hall Gallery is to support the wider academic interests of the Australian National University, so we are pleased to be presenting *Witnessing to Silence: Art and Human Rights* in conjunction with the Humanities Research Centre's focus on human rights in 2003.

Artists, writers and musicians have long addressed the issues of war, poverty, refugees, discrimination, ethnic intolerance and cultural clash. Artists have been a particularly active and effective group in forcing society to confront human rights issues. They have raised our consciousness about the victims of human rights violations through their artistic expression. They have articulated our horror and our anger at the perpetrators and those who acquiesce. They have used their creative powers to light the fires of decency and tolerance in the hearts of people. They have helped society with its catharsis.

The exhibition at the ANU Drill Hall Gallery is one of three different exhibitions under the common title *Witnessing to Silence: Art and Human Rights*. The other exhibitions are being shown at the ANU School of Art Gallery and the Canberra Contemporary Art Space. The three exhibitions and a performance at the National Museum of Australia are being held to coincide with the Art and Human Rights international conference convened by Dr Caroline Turner, Deputy Director of the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University. Dr Turner has been the creative and organisational force behind the conference and its associated activities and the inspiration for and co-curator of the three exhibitions that, collectively, feature the work of fifteen artists of high international reputation selected for the effectiveness with which they analytically and incisively address a range of global human rights issues, including social justice, colonialism, displacement, racism and genocide.

The exhibition at the School of Art has been co-curated by Christine Clark of the HRC and Professor David Williams and co-ordinated by Bronwen Sandland and Lisa Andreatta of the School of Art. It features the work of the New Zealand based artist Michel Tuffery, best known as a printmaker and performance/installation artist, and the Indonesian born artist Dadang Christanto, following residencies at the School of Art. The exhibition at the Canberra

Contemporary Art Space has been co-curated by its Director Lisa Byrne and Christine Clark and features the work of three regional artists: Nindityo Adipurnomo and Mella Jaarsma from Indonesia, and the late Santiago Bose from the Philippines, all of whom will be known to Australian audiences for their commitment to human rights.

The exhibition at the Drill Hall Gallery presents the work of nine artists. Juan Davila, exploring issues of colonialism in Latin America, has created a *Panorama of Santiago de Chile* for this exhibition. Fiona Foley addresses colonial issues in Australia in her paintings with words of a disappearing Aboriginal language. Pat Hoffie's work addresses issues of colonialism in the Philippines and the plight of the refugee. The installation by Alfredo Jaar, the New York based Chilean artist, forensically documents the plight of Vietnamese boat people in detention in Hong Kong. The Chinese born artist Guan Wei, who now lives and works in Sydney, has produced a wry, tightly devised masterpiece, also on the theme of boat people. William Kentridge gained his international reputation for his drawings and animated films on apartheid in his native South Africa. Nalini Malani is a leading multimedia artist and social activist who lives and works in Mumbai. The Belgian figurative painter Luc Tuymans and the French artist Christian Boltanski, both amongst the leading European artists of our time, have focused on genocide. Christian Boltanski's installation *Pourim Reserve*, in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia, will also be on exhibition there and will cross reference his more recent work *Contacts* on loan from the artist's gallery in Paris and included in the exhibition at the Drill Hall Gallery.

I would like to thank the artists, lenders and sponsors, in particular the ANU National Institute of the Arts and the National Europe Centre, the National Gallery of Australia and the National Museum of Australia. Special thanks to Dr Caroline Turner for co-curating with me the exhibition at the Drill Hall Gallery, and to my colleagues David Boon and Tony Oates.

Nancy Sever  
Director, Drill Hall Gallery