

Introduction

Frances Separovic

As we approach the end of the academic year, many of us are astonished—yet again!—by how quickly it has passed. We protest that time is our enemy; there is so much we wish to achieve, but only a relatively small opportunity in which to do the necessary work. Yet the passage of time also gives us wisdom and understanding. Often it is only in retrospect that we fully appreciate the significance of an event, a work of art, or a scientific discovery, and can place it in its proper context.

The leading article in this issue of *University of Melbourne Collections* is concerned with time on a relatively long scale: the evolution of early humans. Yet Rohan Long's discussion of the palaeontological hoax known as 'Piltdown Man' also demonstrates how quickly knowledge can develop; no scientist today would be fooled by this 1912 'discovery' of fossils 'proving' that our own species emerged in England, rather than Africa. This is one of the many reasons why museums and other collections are so important: they preserve irreplaceable evidence for a future era, potentially revealing the answers to questions that we cannot even imagine today.

The painter and printmaker Helen Ogilvie recorded an Australian way of life that was fast disappearing—her depictions of abandoned farm

buildings serve as traces of a rural settler existence that was being lost to rapid urbanisation in the 20th century. Amelia Saward contrasts these nostalgic later paintings with Ogilvie's earlier depictions of technological advances, infused with modernist spirit. Steve Martin and Zora Sanders recount an intriguing tale of the arrival of a replica of a 2,400-year-old Greek bronze at our campus in the 1950s, which suggests that some art is timeless. The passing of centuries and civilisations, rather than rendering such artworks irrelevant, makes us consider them afresh in the light of our own circumstances.

Two articles pay tribute to University of Melbourne scholars who are no longer with us. Karla Way and David Young tell us the stories behind zoological specimens donated by one of Australia's pioneering women scientists, Georgina Sweet (in whose honour the Australian Research Council named the Georgina Sweet Laureate Fellowship, awarded annually for outstanding achievement by a woman researcher in science and technology), while the tale of the Kipp apparatus originates in the work of a colleague of my own, the late Professor Tom O'Donnell, who led a distinguished career in inorganic chemistry at the University of Melbourne.

I hope that you enjoy these and the other articles in the magazine, and I wish all readers a fruitful 2019.



Frances Separovic is professor of chemistry, deputy director of the Bio21 Institute, and former head of the School of Chemistry and associate dean of science at the University of Melbourne. Her main topic of research at present is the use of nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy to determine the structure and dynamics of membrane polypeptides. This has implications for developing new antibiotics and understanding medical conditions such as Alzheimer's disease. Professor Separovic is a fellow of the Australian Academy of Science and in 2018 was admitted to the Victorian Honour Roll of Women.