

47.

GEMMA WESTON >

On taking up her position as curator of the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art, **Gemma Weston** brought with her a honed expertise in contemporary art practice, animating the historic collection in ways that make it relevant to the contemporary art world.

Before she took up the post at the CCWA, Weston ran one of Perth's most renowned contemporary art spaces, OK Gallery, an innovative hybrid of an artist run space and a commercial gallery. The unique model enabled a "huge learning curve," says Weston, setting her up for meeting the challenges of curating the only specialist women-specific art collection in Australia.

While these challenges would be daunting to most, Weston describes it as "exciting". As she points out, it's the only public collection in Australia dedicated to women's arts and its history. And as a "passion project" of a family of private collectors, the curator sees it as offering "a unique and very focussed perspective on women's art". In short, for Weston: "The opportunity to explore how the collection could speak to contemporary women's art and ... the future of women's art and feminism was very appealing. Especially as feminism was becoming increasingly more prominent in contemporary art and beyond."





While the collection is traditionally known for portraiture and early Australian Modernism, *Object Lessons*, a series of three exhibitions, specifically emphasises the contemporary work held in the collection. This project showcases Weston's skill in reconciling the wide diversity of historical work, which necessarily involves a celebration of the variety of women's interests and experiences, with a sophisticated level of conceptual coherence.

Weston is the perfect person to strike this balance. She is an arts professional who grasps the significance of being able to present the collection at such a crucial cultural moment in the history of women artists' struggles for gender equality, both in the arts and in broader culture.

In the spirit of bringing a contemporary relevance to the collection, she has also worked on a series of site-specific commissions and projects as a way of supporting emerging artists, which, as she points out, was part of the original mission of the Cruthers family in establishing their collection.

Carrie Miller

OBJECT LESSONS SHOWCASES WESTON'S SKILL IN RECONCILING THE WIDE DIVERSITY OF HISTORICAL WORK WITH A SOPHISTICATED LEVEL OF CONCEPTUAL COHERENCE.

1. // Installation view of *Object Lessons*, Lady Sheila Cruthers Gallery, UWA, Perth, 2015.

PHOTO: RACHAEL BARRETT

2. // Jacob Ogden Smith, *Hovea Pottery Ale: Quite a Few Bottle, Some Large Pots and a Video*, 2012. Installation view, OK Gallery, Perth.

PHOTO: ANDREW VARANO

3. // Gemma Weston, 2015.