SYDNEY BALL GIFT LAUNCH

Sydney Ball is one of Australia’s most successful and established artists, an alumnus and the donor of a $1 million gift of his paintings. The donation comprises key bodies of work from his career, including works from the ‘modular series’ of the late 1960s, the important ‘stain series’ of the 1970s through to the ‘structures series’ of more recent times.

Time: 2-3pm
Date: Wednesday 18 February, 2015
Place: Sir Eric Neal Library, Mawson Lakes Campus
• Good afternoon and welcome

• At the outset, I acknowledge that this ceremony is taking place on Kaurna land.

• The Kaurna people have performed ceremonies on this land for many centuries, and we pay respect to their living culture and the unique role they continue to play in the life of the Adelaide region.

• This afternoon we give a warm welcome to the artist Sydney Ball

• and to his gallerist, Joanna Strumpf, from Sullivan + Strumpf,

• as we launch the very generous gift that Sydney has given to the University of South Australia.

• As you all know, Sydney Ball is one of Australia’s most successful and established artists, a living treasure.
• Sydney Ball is one of ours and we are immensely proud of his achievements.

• He studied at the South Australian School of Art - now our School of Art, Architecture and Design - and eventually taught here.

• And in the late 1950s, when other artists headed for Europe to overcome the cultural uncertainty that the tyranny of distance helped create,

• Syd Ball chose New York instead,

• testing his talent in a world of abstract expressionism,

• meeting and working with, and learning from, the great proponents of abstract art in America such as Theodore Stamos, Mark Rothko, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Lee Krasner, and Helen Frankentaller.
• It was Sydney Ball who helped bring that focus on the abstract – that exploration of colour – back to Australia,

• and he was central to the great period of innovative art that Australia saw in the decade through the late 60s and early seventies.

• I tell you all this to explain that this wonderful gift he has given us,

• this million dollar plus gift of his major work,

• will add immeasurably to the university’s collection and to our cultural capital.

• It’s here in the Sir Eric Neal library because this building is a testament to the creative energies of the 1960s and 1970s.

• And I would like to thank, here and now, the Samstag Museum staff:
o Director, Erica Green,
o Senior Curator Susan Jenkins and
o Curatorial Assistant Ashleigh Whatling,
o all the people from the university’s library,
o particularly Jane Whiteside and Christine Cother

• who have really embraced the display of The Sydney Ball Gift in the Library,

• have owned it and are enjoying and valuing the benefits of great art in the Library environment,

• and our security and facilities management people who have worked so hard and so professionally to put this display of The Sydney Ball Gift together.

• We intend sharing this gift across the university and using it over the next few years for ongoing research and study.
• Key works from the gift will form the core of an exhibition of Australian abstract art that the SAMSTAG is mounting from July this year.

• the Birth of the Cool will celebrate a golden era of Australian art, abstract art from the decade between 1963 and 1973,

• and open its power and energy to a new audience.

• But this donation you will see here today is more than cool.

• Sydney has donated key bodies of work from his entire career,

• including works from his ‘modular’ series from the late 1960s and

• including Reach 1969 which is around the corner on the left.
- the important ‘stain series’ – probably the greatest one of which, *Pale Stream*, is right here in front of you,

- and you’ll see the other Stain work, the majestic *Magellan Blue 1978*, across the atrium behind me in the new part of the Library on this level.

- Syd’s more recent ‘Structures’ series have helped bring the old and the new part of the Library together.

- The Sydney Ball Gift has around 30 pieces that encompass one man’s life, and his times, and we are thrilled that they will be on permanent and public display at the University.

PAUSE (Use Syd’s story about upside down painting)

- I understand he was also a bit of a rabble rouser in the day,
• upsetting patrons of a Sydney eatery while painting.

• I like to imagine Syd hard at work in his studio on Broadway, furiously painting on the floor while the paint dripped off the edge of his canvas and onto the food of the people dining in an eatery below.

• The diners could have taken home doggy bags of original abstracts;

• they complained instead.

• Syd has played a great part in helping educate Australians to know great art.

• He will continue to do that through his paintings as students, staff and the public at large

• study, research and simply enjoy Syd’s wonderful gift.
• And through that gift I would like to think that we’re helping educate the next generation of people upstairs dripping paint through the floorboards,

• And not the people downstairs eating it.

• Thank you Syd. Thank you for your wonderful gift, thank you for your rabble rousing days and thank you for helping free Australian art from the constrictions of polite society.

• We are - all of us - forever in your debt.