

April 2024

The graphic art of protest: *If you don't fight ... you lose* exhibition to showcase iconic prints and posters from Adelaide's Progressive Art Movement (PAM)



Image: Mandy Martin, *Adelaide Railway Station 2 (detail)*, 1973, screenprint, ink on paper, 50.0 x 73.7 cm (image) 55.9 x 75.9 cm (sheet), Ann Newmarch Collection, © the Estate of the artist

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Be transported to an era of political volatility, student activism and industrial unrest with the unveiling of [*If you don't fight ... you lose: politics, posters and PAM*](#), a timely tribute to Adelaide's radical spirit of the 1970s, presented by Flinders University Museum of Art (FUMA).

Running from Monday 6 May to Friday 5 July, the exhibition promises to summon the energy, passion and revolutionary ambitions that forged a local counterculture. A launch event will also be held on Thursday May 16, featuring guest speaker Academy Award-nominated film director and screenwriter and Flinders alumnus, Scott Hicks.

Curated by art historians Catherine Speck and Jude Adams, *If you don't fight ... you lose* shines a light on the objectives and programmatic clarity of the Progressive Art Movement (PAM), 50 years after the group's inception. Born out of the Flinders University Politics and Art course and spearheaded by radical thinkers Brian Medlin and Ann Newmarch, PAM united artists, writers, poets, filmmakers, actors and musicians with the aim of cultivating a politically progressive culture rooted in local issues, while vehemently opposing US imperialism.

At the heart of PAM's mission was a reimagining of arts role in society. Outspoken visual artists like Ann Newmarch, Mandy Martin, Robert Boynes and others transformed their practices into powerful tools for political dissent, with their prints and posters designed to challenge the status quo, mobilise communities and disseminate messages of resistance and solidarity.

At the time, industrial unrest facing Adelaide's car manufacturing industry was a key concern, with artists standing alongside local workers to demand better working conditions. Iconic works brought together for the exhibition speak to this and other local campaigns, while other works address broader issues including the Vietnam War, nuclear energy, environmentalism and the role of women in society.

In developing the exhibition and its accompanying publication, co-curators Catherine Speck and Jude Adams said the exhibition stems from a chapter on the 1970s they wrote for the 2023 book, *The Adelaide Art Scene Becoming Contemporary 1939–2000*.

"Our initial investigations revealed that little had been written about the Progressive Art Movement in contrast to the well-documented accounts of other political poster groups in Australia," said Emerita Professor Speck.

Ms Adams added, "the more we researched, the more we realised that here was a unique and radical part of Adelaide's cultural landscape deserving of recognition and a place in Australian art history."

PAM's activism intersected with a tumultuous period at Flinders University, marked by student-led protests including the now infamous month-long occupation of the Registry Building, which occurred the year of PAM's inception in 1974.

Half a century later, FUMA Director Fiona Salmon says it is fitting that FUMA reflect on the era, with many of the works on display drawn from the FUMA collection.

"We look forward to presenting this significant and timely exhibition. Beyond the long-overdue acknowledgement of PAM, it celebrates the enduring power of political printmaking and is poised to spark discussions at the nexus of activism, art and politics in the 21st century," says Ms Salmon.

If you don't fight ... you lose: politics, posters and PAM is a Flinders University Museum of Art exhibition supported by Arts South Australia, the Historical Society of South Australia, the History Trust of South Australia, the Gordon Darling Foundation and the Vera Moore Foundation.

Exhibition Details:

Exhibition dates: Monday May 6–Friday July 5, 2024

Opening event: 5pm, Thursday May 16, 2024

Location: Flinders University Museum of Art, Ground Floor, Social Sciences North Building, Flinders University, Bedford Park

[Exhibition website](#)

Featured artists: Ann Newmarch, Mandy Martin, Pamela Harris, Andrew Hill, Jim Cane, Robert Boynes, Robin Best, Christine McCarthy and Progressive Printers Alliance.



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