Visual Arts: Kristian Haggblom

I think working at Mildura Campus gives me more of an opportunity to engage with students in a sense on a higher or more sustained level because I’m not talking to a room full of forty faces as opposed I might have between 8 and 15 students in workshops. So I can spend more time with them and I can tailor my lectures to those needs or what the student interests are.

I think for Visual Arts and Graphic Design students the location is something to respond to. The Tri state location, in particular photography students, because they have all these things around us like Lake Mungo, the dessert, Broken Hill - they can use photographically within their work. I think this is something that we should be using to attract students here as well.

In 2009, I applied to the Australian Council for the Arts for a residency program. They have residencies in Italy, Germany, New York and they had recently taken on a new one in Finland. So I made that application in 2009 and was very quickly granted it and then it was coming up very soon. I had to make a decision of to go or not to go. I was told in November and I was to leave at the end of January. So I said yes and I went to Helsinki. I actually have half Finnish background so it was interesting for me to discover my roots. I spent 3 months on an island called Suomenlinna, which is just off of Helsinki in freezing temperatures, -30 - even lower. I spent 3 months there interacting with local artists and arts workers, giving lecturers at universities, I made a new series of work and since have brought two Finnish artists to Australia to participate in other exhibitions that I curate.

I graduated from my undergraduate degree in 1997 and soon after that I had my first solo exhibition, so I have been exhibiting for a number of years. I’ve spent a lot of time overseas in Japan and since returning in 2008, and taking a position at La Trobe, I’ve been showing in Melbourne, I’ve shown in Western Australia, and Sydney. A lot of that work came out of the residency, I mentioned in Helsinki, or work that I’m making with, I guess, new eyes from being away from Australia for so long and returning - that’s looking at tourist locations and tourist escapes and how we experience the Australian landscapes through mediated touristic experiences.