

# Media Release



The  
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Books  
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## Is Australian arts criticism failing?

As column inches shrink and bloggers and citizen reviewers abound, the Wheeler Centre asks key players in books, film, theatre and visual arts to turn the critical eye on criticism.

### Critical Failure

Monday 6 to Thursday 9 September 2010, 6:15PM - 7:30PM

The Wheeler Centre, 176 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

Arts criticism is about more than just a personal reflection on the work. Beyond the impact that a glowing or scathing review can have on the fortunes of a book, film, play or exhibition, good criticism is a crucial ingredient in building and developing the entire cultural scene. So what happens when critical culture is in disrepair?

In the first week of September, four panels across four art forms will review the state of criticism in this country. Does the web offer a new, more democratic critical environment? Who are our cultural gatekeepers? What role should reviewers play? What are the effects of celebrity culture on serious criticism? Featuring some of the finest thinkers and practitioners, this thought-provoking week will be chaired by broadcaster **Peter Mares** and will take critical engagement to the next level.

### Monday 6 September – *Film*

**Adrian Martin** is a film critic, writer and academic. He reviewed film for the *Age* from 1995 until 2006 and continues to write extensively on film.

**Fenella Kernebone** currently hosts ABC TV's *Art Nation* and has reviewed films, reported from international film festivals and interviewed filmmakers for *Triple J* and *SBS*.

**Mel Campbell** is a journalist, blogger and creator of *The Enthusiast*. She is also the film editor at *ThreeThousand*.

### Tuesday 7 September – *Books*

**Hilary McPhee** is an editor and writer. She also founded the iconic Australian press *McPhee Gribble*.

**Gideon Haigh** is a journalist and critic. He has written or edited over 20 books and recently, penned "Feeding the Hand that Bites: The Demise of Australian Literary Reviewing" for *Kill Your Darlings* journal.

**Peter Craven** is one of Australia's best known literary critics. With Michael Heyward, he edited the influential journal *Scripsi* and was the founding editor of the *Black Inc. Best Of* annuals and *Quarterly Essay* series.

**Rebecca Starford** is editor of *Kill Your Darlings* and an associate publisher at *Affirm Press*. Prior to this she was deputy editor at *Australian Book Review*. She regularly publishes in *The Age* and *The Australian*.

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The Wheeler Centre  
A Victorian Government initiative and the centrepiece of Melbourne's designation as a  
UNESCO City of Literature.

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## Wednesday 8 September – *Theatre*

**Julian Meyrick** is a director, theatre historian and deputy chair of PlayWriting Australia. Until recently he was associate director and literary advisor at the Melbourne Theatre Company.

**Alison Croggon** is the *Australian's* theatre critic, a blogger and poet. She was recently named “a must-read critic” by the *Guardian* newspaper.

**Stephen Sewell** is an award-winning playwright who has produced some of the most provocative Australian plays of the past twenty-five years.

**Cameron Woodhead** is a senior theatre critic for the *Age* and is a prolific reviewer of performing arts in Australia.

## Thursday 9 September – *Visual Arts*

**Patrick McCaughey** is best known in Australia as the highly visible and dynamic former Director of the National Gallery of Victoria. He now lives and works in the US.

**John McDonald** is the arts critic for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He has also been the chief curator of Australian art at the National Gallery of Australia and the editor of *Australian Art Review*.

**Naomi Cass** is the director of the Centre for Contemporary Photography as well as a curator and writer who has worked in the fields of contemporary art, craft and design.

**Peter Mares** has been a journalist and broadcaster with the ABC since 1987. He is currently the presenter of *The National Interest* on ABC Radio National.

All events will be chaired by Peter Mares, start at 6.15 pm and are free. Bookings are recommended through [wheelercentre.com](http://wheelercentre.com)

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