This presentation builds on preliminary work I did last year on the developing trope of blind justice in Western law. Bruegel’s Justicia appears at first glance to be a spatial representation of law—a snapshot, a mis en scène. But it is precisely about time. Law itself is revealed as anachronic, overlaying dissonant perspectives on the hitherto unperceived relationship between time, responsibility, and legal authority. At the same time, law is shown not merely to be an idea, a philosophy of time, but a visceral reality embodied in the flesh of those who perform it and suffer it. Justicia therefore takes as its method art’s anachronic capacity and affective expressiveness; and presents as its thesis the power of anachronic tension and affective experience in law. These insights were specifically pertinent to the situation of law in the sixteenth century, but they are of much broader significance than that.

Professor Desmond Manderson is an international leader in interdisciplinary scholarship in law and the humanities. He is the author of several books including From Mr Sin to Mr Big (1993); Songs Without Music: Aesthetic dimensions of law and justice (2000); Proximity, Levinas, and the Soul of Law (2006); and Kangaroo Courts and the Rule of Law—The legacy of modernism (2012). His work has led to essays, books, and lectures around the world in the fields of English literature, philosophy, ethics, history, cultural studies, music, human geography, and anthropology, as well as in law and legal theory. Throughout this work Manderson has articulated a vision in which law’s connection to these humanist disciplines is critical to its functioning, its justice, and its social relevance. After ten years at McGill University in Montreal, where he held the Canada Research Chair in Law and Discourse, and was founding Director of the Institute for the Public Life of Arts and Ideas, he returned to Australia to take up a Future Fellowship in the ANU College of Law and ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences.

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School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics
ANU College of Arts & Social Sciences

Enquiries

Colette.Gilmour@anu.edu.au

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