In 2011, Jill Smith will have been involved in art education for 42 years, 11 of these in secondary school teaching and 31 in tertiary teacher education. Jill’s professional engagement with her students has also been a deeply personal one, and the legacy of her teaching and relationships is extensive. Her mentorship has supported and guided teachers into, and throughout, their careers. She has supported their own artistic pathways and collected their works, and most generously contributed from her own collections to subsequent exhibitions. Many of Jill’s former students have successfully pursued careers in the arts, and a remarkable number of her pre-service students are today leaders in the Art Education field, accomplished professional artists, or in education administration roles, or have embraced combinations of these vocations in ways that have enriched the lives of our communities. While her principal focus has been in secondary school Art Education, her authority in this area, and the post-graduate paper she offers at Auckland University have also influenced teachers in the early childhood and primary sectors. Jill’s professional standing has informed her career-long engagements with the Department of Education, Ministry of Education and NZQA, through which she has contributed to the developments of the Curriculum, assessment and moderation practices, including those adopted for NCEA, and resource development for Visual Art and Art History. She remains a regular organiser for and contributor to workshop and forum opportunities for teachers. Increasingly during the past three years these contributions have reflected Jill’s experiences and preoccupations with the value of research and writing for the advancement of Art Education in New Zealand and internationally.

Jill has shared her knowledge and experience with a remarkably wide audience. As a foundation member of Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators, and Vice-President in 2001-2003, Jill has presented at nearly every conference since 1990. Her recent papers Engaging with a/rttography (in Dunedin) and Questions of culture, diversity and difference in art education in New Zealand (in Wellington) have given voice to Jill’s closely related commitments to art education research and art learning as a cultural phenomenon. Jill’s purvey has embraced wider audiences through her contributions to the New Zealand Art History Teachers Association and New Zealand Association for Research in Education, and through her active membership of, and invited addresses to, international groups including Art
Education Australia, the International Association for Education through Art and the Korean Association of Multicultural Education.

Like her conference profile, Jill’s publications in Art Education have made a substantial impact on attitudes and practices in our field over many years. She has published an astonishing number of articles in journals in New Zealand, Australia and Canada, including 8 peer-reviewed national and international publications and a substantial 5 sole authored chapter contributions to books in USA and Hong Kong during the last three years alone. Jill’s conference presentations and publications have always reflected her own preoccupations, most recently those developed through her own educational pathways. She received a Master of Education Degree in 2002, and in 2007 she graduated with the first Doctor of Education in Art Education in New Zealand. Her Master’s thesis on biculturalism in art education policy and practice, and her doctoral thesis Art Education in New Zealand: Issues of culture, diversity and difference on issues of multiculturalism in art education are unique and significant pieces of research. These projects draw together the threads of many years of commitment to an understanding of arts learning as cultural engagement.

Jill’s personal and professional projects reflect the inclusive and multi-dimensional philosophies of her teaching and research. The book Making Connections: John Bevan Ford Māori artist, co-authored with her husband Peter, realises the intimate melding of the personal engagements, cultural knowledge and commitment to the development of accessible and relevant teaching resources that characterise Jill’s deep concern about issues of learning, art and culture. Talking My Way Through Culture, Jill’s first solo exhibition in 2007, provided a tangible model of how research can be re-interpreted and re-presented as art works.

Jill’s contributions to Art Education have been honoured before. In 2002 she received both the Auckland College of Education Tertiary Teaching Award and the New Zealand Government Inaugural National Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award. The University of Auckland Staff Amalgamation Scholarship facilitated the completion of her Doctorate in Education, and her contributions to pre-service teacher education are recognised in the 2006 portrait by Glenda Randerson commissioned by the University of Auckland on the occasion of the 125th Jubilee of Teacher Education in Auckland.

Today, however, is an opportunity for a special audience to honour Jill: that of her peers in the world of Art Education. That the Association making this award embraces within it not only many of Jill’s own students, but also students from their own programmes who have themselves chosen Art Education as a vocation and enjoyed Jill’s knowledge, support and friendship is the most tangible and enduring evidence of her gift to education. This award is a most fitting acknowledgement of that gift.

Dr David Bell
President, Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators