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# BULLETIN



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## The Art of Archaeology: Response to Cyprus

by Craig Barker



Paphos Theatre wall painting, Diana Wood Conroy, gouache, pencil and watercolour, 1997-1999, 36 x 51 cm; SARF artists in the Paphos theatre in 2010; Corinthian capital, from Basilica Chryssopolitissa 2010-2011, Derek Kreckler with Jacky Redgate and assistance from Penny Harris and Bob Miller, digital photography on Baryta paper, 32 cm x 42 cm; Alexander Cambitoglou speaking at the opening of Response to Cyprus.

An exhibition of creative works was displayed in 2013 at the Centre for Classical and Near Eastern Studies of Australia (CCANESA) at the University of Sydney. The exhibition, growing from the University's excavations in Cyprus, explored the ongoing relationship between the visual arts and archaeological research.

*Response to Cyprus: Artists at the Paphos Theatre Excavation* was the result of a visit by a group of nine artists who visited Nea Paphos in Cyprus in 2010 during an excavation fieldwork season. The display in CCANESA added an exciting aspect to the activities of the AAIA and represented the fruitful collaboration between artists and archaeologists over a long period.

The Paphos excavations have a long tradition of working with visual artists; Emeritus Professor Diana Wood Conroy of the University of Wollongong has served as the project's artist-in-residence since 1995 and has overseen several generations of students who have worked at the site as archaeological illustrators or creative artists. "Including artists was an experiment to widen the parameters of research" wrote the excavation project's founder, Emeritus Professor Richard Green. "Artists", he suggested in 1996, "produce results of a different order". This relationship has continued as the excavations have progressed with exhibitions held in Wollongong, Canberra and Sydney.

The artists who worked on the site in 2010, with backgrounds in design, performance and visual arts, were part of the Senior Artists Research Forum (SARF) at Faculty of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, co-ordinated by Diana Wood Conroy. The project offered leading artists, some with senior academic positions, the opportunity to develop a doctoral research project that reflected on their existing body of work. The focus of study was to bring together theoretical perspectives, criticism and practice. By working on the excavation SARF members developed contexts for their research in the rich imagery and culture of ancient art and architecture of Cyprus.

The Sydney exhibition was formally opened on 10 July 2013 by Consul of the High Commission of Cyprus in Canberra, Andreas Hadjithemistos. A wide range of photographic and illustrative works were displayed. Corinthian capitals with their intricate acanthus decoration were taken from the disused Paphos theatre in the 5th century AD and found scattered over the ruins of the nearby Chryssopolitissa basilica. Jacqueline Gothe, Derek Kreckler and Jacky Redgate documented these capitals through photography; Redgate's analogue photographs with the 1977 'Diana' camera capturing an evanescent quality of ruin and loss. Near the theatre, the mosaics of the World Heritage listed Roman Houses of Dionysos and Theseus provided vibrant mythological contexts for visual works. The resonant images of Ganymede, Theseus and Ariadne, the birth of Achilles, and the retinue of Dionysos sprung to life in Derek Kreckler's photographs. The entrances to the ancient Paphos theatre were once vividly and colourfully decorated, shown in gouaches of excavated fresco fragments by Diana Wood Conroy. The coast of Cyprus is famous as the birthplace of the goddess Aphrodite, and the sea around Paphos with its changing colours was the poetic focus for Lawrence Wallen's digital prints. Tim Maddock, a theatre director, provided dramatic glimpses of contemporary Cypriot life in a series of images.

The relationship between archaeologist and artist continues to be explored at Paphos. The old and the new, the ancient and the contemporary, side by side.