



THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Art. Culture.
Antiquities.
Natural history.

Issue 18
October 2017

mus e



Ancient artefacts provide new insights

A word from the Director, David Ellis

In preparation for upcoming exhibitions in the Chau Chak Wing Museum, our curators have been conducting research into our collections that is revealing new significances and connections to people, locations and events across time and place.

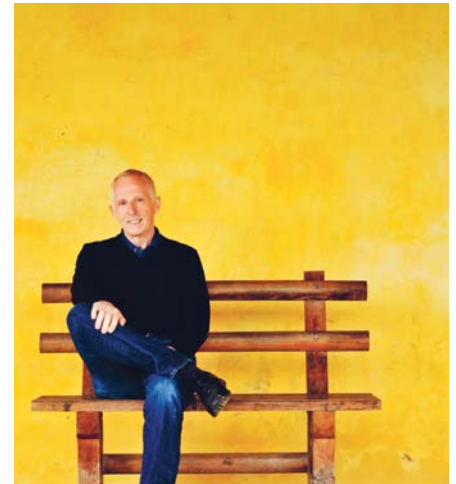
In this issue you can read about discoveries gleaned from ancient artefacts, including our collection of ibis mummies. Using non-invasive neutron tomography, the technology allows us to see into sealed containers assumed to hold mummified remains of ibises. The artefacts will remain pristine at the same time as our knowledge about them advances, and we look forward to sharing these and other discoveries.

The digitisation project is producing stunning images of artefacts and natural history specimens in the collections. The project enables digital access to images and associated data, making the

collections more widely available and useful for research and teaching. To date, more than 25,000 items have been photographed and associated metadata attached to digital records.

We recently purchased a fine three-volume set of Dru Drury's *Illustrations of natural history*, complete with 150 hand-colored engraved plates printed between 1770 and 1782. More than 26 of our Macleay insects are illustrated in this rare first edition, having been purchased, along with a large number of related specimens, by Alexander Macleay in London in 1805 when Drury's amazing collection was sold at auction.

The three volumes were purchased with financial assistance of several donors, among them Mary-Lynne Taylor who donated in memory of her husband, the late entomologist Ted Taylor. The volumes will be among many new items to be exhibited in the new museum.



David Ellis, photo by Martin Ho

Keep up to date with developments of the Chau Chak Wing Museum building at sydney.edu.au/museums

You can also follow us on twitter [@SydneyUniMuseum](https://twitter.com/SydneyUniMuseum), or find us on Facebook.

David Ellis
Director, Museums and Cultural Engagement

Sydney University Museums

Comprising the Macleay Museum, Nicholson Museum and University Art Gallery

The Macleay Museum and the University Art Gallery are now closed as we prepare for the opening of the Chau Chak Wing Museum in 2019.

The Nicholson Museum remains open: Monday to Friday, 10am to 4.30pm and the first Saturday of every month, 12 to 4pm Closed on public holidays.

The University is closed from 23 December 2017 until 7 January 2018.

General admission is free.

Become a fan on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.
sydney.edu.au/museums

Sydney University Museums Administration

+61 2 9351 2274

+61 2 9351 2881 (fax)

university.museums@sydney.edu.au

Education and Public Programs

To book a school excursion, an adult education tour or a University heritage tour

+61 2 9351 8746

museums.education@sydney.edu.au

Macleay Museum

Enquiries:

+61 2 9036 5253

macleay.museum@sydney.edu.au

Nicholson Museum

In the southern entrance to the Quadrangle

+61 2 9351 2812

+61 2 9351 7305 (fax)

nicholson.museum@sydney.edu.au

University Art Gallery

Enquiries

+61 2 9351 6883

art.collection@sydney.edu.au

Muse edited by Luke Parker.

This edition contains names and images of people who have died. We acknowledge that, for some people and communities, these may cause distress and sadness. Where possible, cultural permission to publish has been sought.

Produced by Marketing and Communications, the University of Sydney, September 2017. 17/6553
ISSN 1449-0420 ABN 15 211 513 464
CRICOS 00026A



Forest Stewardship Council (FSC®) is a globally recognised certification overseeing all fibre sourcing standards. This provides guarantees for the consumer that products are made of woodchips from well-managed forests and other controlled sources with strict environmental, economical and social standards.

In this issue

2 News

3 Sovereign poet

A photographic portrait of the royally talented Queen Sālote of Tonga.

4 In a digital world

An extensive digitisation project aims to make our collections more accessible.



6 Windows on the world

Looking into Grace Cossington Smith's fascination with views through windows.

10 Travellers to Cyprus, art from Australia

An exhibition of contemporary art explores Australian connections to Cyprus.

14 No bones about it

An inspiring visit to the Galleries of Comparative Anatomy and Palaeontology in Paris.

16 Of tell and tomb

On the career of archaeologist Basil Hennessy, a significant Nicholson collector.

20 A sacred animal

Looking in detail at one of Hennessy's special discoveries.

22 Not so very different

Historic photos reveal an extraordinary sports carnival.

25 The gift of history

A unique workshop highlights the often-overlooked history of women in the Pacific.

27 Artargentye – working together

A unique collaboration across collections.



Above: Working with the Macleay collections, photographer David James and object handler Einar Docker. See story page 4

30 Magic boxes

Unlocking the mysteries of the Macleay Museum's historic display cabinets.



32 On history's page

Our shared quest to reveal the secrets of the Nicholson's visitors' books.

36 Revealing details

Zooming in on a recently digitised object, a striking panoramic photograph.

39 Making history

All the latest museums news, from special guests to collecting awards.

40 Find your muse

For your diary: our upcoming events and programs.

Above: Fragment of a mosaic ribbed bowl, 75 BC – 50 AD, brown, opaque and white glass, Nicholson Museum, NM56.48.1. Photographed as part of the digitisation project. See story page 4

Front cover and above: Grace Cossington Smith, *Moss Vale window*, 1931, oil on canvas, 35.3 x 45cm, donated through the Hon. RP Meagher bequest 2011, University Art Collection, UA2012.86 See story page 6

Travellers to Cyprus, art from Australia



Craig Barker and Diana Wood Conroy have curated an exhibition that tracks a history of engagement by contemporary Australian artists with the archaeology of Cyprus.

Above: Bob Miller, *Paphos Theatre*, 2012, infrared photograph



Bob Miller, photograph of a fragment of a Venetian sgraffito bowl, with a woman's face in profile, inv. no. 8258, excavated from trench 12D, deposit 2867

Over the past two decades, Australian visual artists have participated in the University of Sydney's archaeological excavations at Paphos in Cyprus. This relationship will culminate in October 2017 with the exhibition *Travellers from Australia*, to be held in Paphos as part of the Pafos2017 European Capital of Culture festival. The exhibition explores some of the ongoing connections between archaeology and contemporary art.

The Paphos Theatre Archaeological Project has explored the architectural development of the Hellenistic-Roman theatre over the six centuries of its use in antiquity (c. 300 BC – 365 AD), as well as Late Antique, Medieval and post-Medieval activity on the site. Through the auspices of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus, and as a result of the generous support of

the Nicholson Museum and the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens, the project has increasingly explored the surrounding theatrical urban precinct, revealing key Roman infrastructure such as roads and a nymphaeum (fountain house).

When the first spade hit the ground at the World Heritage-listed site in 1995, it was not just archaeologists on the excavation team, but also artists, many from the Faculty of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong. "Including artists in an excavation was an experiment to widen the parameters of research," wrote the founder of the excavation project, archaeologist Emeritus Professor Richard Green, early in the history of the dig.

Making the imaginative connection between the Cypriot past and the Australian present has been the

subject of exhibitions held in Sydney, Wollongong and Canberra since 1996, exhibitions that prefigured the work of the 12 artists in *Travellers from Australia*. For the first time, the visual culture of the archaeologists and artists will come together in Cyprus itself in this exhibition.

The links between art and archaeology were strong in the 19th century when it was necessary for expeditions to take visual artists to record landscapes, architecture and artefacts. Their drawings, and later photographs, reproduced in publications such as the *Illustrated London News*, thrilled readers back in Europe with news of discoveries of ancient cultures in exotic locations.

By the 20th century, the two disciplines separated; an archaeological obsession with

evidence-based interpretation and critical analysis of finds allowed little room for an emotional or creative response. The artists and archaeologists exhibiting together in Pafos2017 are part of a broader renewal of the relationship this century. “By mixing artistic and archaeological images we get a new grammar of looking,” writes Derek Kreckler in the exhibition catalogue.

During the decades of the Paphos project, analogue photography was replaced by digital media, a process traced in the work of photographers Bob Miller and Rowan Conroy. Media artist Brogan Bunt, however, sees the irony of ephemeral digital platforms that cause what was new technology in 2006 to be unusable by 2017. For him, the ancient site has maintained its identity for millennia, while digital virtual heritage is far more fragile than the places it sets out to document and preserve.

Both artists and archaeologists are related in their passion for the material culture of the past, but each has a different way of looking and methodology for understanding the complexity of time and space. Animator Hannah Gee observes that animation “is for me, the physical, material perception of time.” For scenographer Lawrence Wallen, structures existing in the same place across different temporalities led him to identify the many phases of the theatre as a *spatial doppelgänger* from the perspective of time rather than site. The painter and ceramic artist Angela Brennan discerns that the artistic motif crosses between eras, travelling back and forth in a temporal instability, drawing vitality from being in constant circulation.

The archive and its typologies fascinate artists. Sigmund Freud thought that to recover the past was

to embark on a process like that of the investigation of the psyche. Sculptor and photographer Jacky Redgate is obsessed with collecting and retrieving objects, situations and experiences (living entities) into typologies. She reflects: “In my work I approach memories somewhat like an analyst, but perhaps more like a reflective archaeologist.”

Just as artists are preoccupied with the past, archaeologists are consummate artists in skillfully unpicking the fabric of earth. Both are embedded in understanding the development of *techne* or making; the ceramics, metalworking, stone carving, or weaving which were the basis of ancient civilisations. Sculptor Penny Harris points out that these early industries still resonate with contemporary crafts. Her casting and patination process makes a connection to the narratives of archaeology.



1. Derek Kreckler, *Capital, Basilica Chrysopolitissa*, 2010-11, digital photograph on Baryta paper; from documentation of Corinthian capitals in the Paphos Theatre, in Basilica Chrysopolitissa, and in the Apollo Hotel store

2. Diana Wood Conroy, *Flower and tendrils*, 1998, gouache drawing of a fresco from the Paphos theatre

3. Angela Brennan, *Fourteen pots*, 2016-17, stoneware



2.

The unknown builders and makers of the Paphos theatre understood their materials through centuries of innovation; knowing the specific clays and limestone of the region, the intense pigments for painting derived from minerals and earths, the luminosity of glass, and metal for casting coins, tools or jewellery. Contemporary artists in *Travellers from Australia* show a fresh 'grammar of looking' between art

and archaeology, and pay homage to the marvellous artistic lineage of the Paphos theatre. The exhibition is a testament to the strong cultural links between the two island nations, and a desire to think of antiquity more broadly than just the archaeological recording of material culture.

Travellers from Australia will be exhibited at the Old Powerhouse in Paphos from 2–15 October 2017.

More on the excavations can be found at the project's website: www.paphostheatre.org

Dr Craig Barker is Manager, Education and Public Programs, Sydney University Museums. Diana Wood Conroy is Emeritus Professor, University of Wollongong.



3.



Head of Tanit, coin, Greek, c.350-270 BC, Nicholson Museum, NM2004.713

Current exhibitions

Please note: the Macleay Museum and the University Art Gallery are now closed as we prepare for the public opening of the Chau Chak Wing Museum in 2019.

Nicholson Museum

- *Alpha and Omega: tales of transformation*
- *The sky and the sea: ancient Cypriot art*
- *Lego Pompeii*
- *Death Magic*
- *Memento: remembering Roman lives*
- *Tombs Tells and Temples: excavating the Near East*
- *Actors, Athletes and Academics: life in ancient Greece*

All Nicholson Museum exhibitions are ongoing.

Follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/sydneyunimuseum or find us on Facebook by searching for 'Sydney University Museums'.

All details are correct at the time of publication, however, events may change due to circumstances beyond our control. Please visit our website for up-to-date information: sydney.edu.au/museums

If you wish to contact the Macleay Museum, the Nicholson Museum or the University Art Gallery, please see inside front cover for our details.

MUSE

January 2018

Thursday 18 January, 10am-4pm Children's School Holiday Activity Day

Join us at the Nicholson Museum for a fun-filled day for kids aged 5-12 years.
Cost: free

Tuesday 30 January, 6pm Art and Performance: Two decades of archaeology at the ancient theatre of Paphos, Cyprus

Dr Craig Barker,
Sydney University Museums
Cost: free

February 2018

Saturday 3 February, 2-3pm Along the Silk Road*

Professor Alison Betts,
University of Sydney
Cost: free

Wednesday 7 February 2018, 6pm Colonial Mandarin: the life and times of Alexander Macleay

A Macleay Museum talk at the Nicholson: Botanist, educator and writer Professor David Mabberly AO, will talk on Alexander Macleay's world and launch James Donaldson's book *Colonial Mandarin*
Cost: free

Wednesday 21 February, 6 for 6.30pm Stories from the Storeroom: Amarna's frescoes reconstructed

In this exclusive event for Friends of the Nicholson Museum, key museum team members will present on ongoing research and conservation of the Nicholson Museum's Egyptian fresco from Amarna.

Cost: \$30 for Friends of the Nicholson Museum and their guests. Includes light refreshments.

* Sponsor of the 2018 series *Postcards from the Past*





Bichrome IV ware jug, Cyprus, Cypro-Archaic I period 750-600BC, Nicholson Museum, NM47.28, image by Michael Myers

The sky and the sea: ancient Cypriot art

Ongoing exhibition
Free admission

Explore the artistic traditions and unique style of ancient Cypriot art at the Nicholson Museum.

Nicholson Museum
The Quadrangle
The University of Sydney

Opening hours:
Monday to Friday, 10am to 4.30pm
First Saturday of each month, 12 to 4pm
Closed on public holidays.
sydney.edu.au/museums



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY