

# MUSE

ART . CULTURE . ANTIQUITIES . NATURAL HISTORY



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY

issue no.

**01**

MAR 2012





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## INTRODUCING MUSE A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

With a new year we bring you a new name for our magazine, along with a new design and layout. The name change from NEWS to MUSE better reflects the magazine's intent to provide a greater insight into the University's collections through the stories it reveals.

To kick off the inaugural issue, our curatorial and academic staff describe some of their favourite works from the Meagher Bequest. In the last issue I alerted readers to the passing of the Honourable Roderick (Roddy) Meagher and his generous bequest of artworks to the University. We have now taken possession of the collection, which comprises more than 1400 artworks, antiquities and decorative arts.

The drawings are worthy of special mention. Roddy had a passion for drawing and this genre features prominently among the 800 or so two-dimensional works in the collection, including pieces by Ben Nicholson, George Romney, Pierre Bonnard and Brett Whiteley. Power Professor Mark Ledbury will curate an exhibition of these drawings, which will open at the University Art Gallery in 2013. He will be assisted by students from

the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in researching the collection and shedding more light on 'attributed' works.

Coming up in 2012 we have a diverse program of exhibitions and events:

*Coral: art science life* opens in the Macleay Museum in February.

*Joseph Beuys and the 'Energy Plan'*, the first of four exhibitions marking the 50th anniversary of the JW Power Bequest, will open at the University Art Gallery in April.

Featuring at the Nicholson Museum in May will be a new exhibition – *50 Objects. 50 Stories* – tracing the history of the museum through its collections.

You may also notice we have changed our weekend opening times. We now welcome visitors on the first Saturday of every month (instead of Sunday), with each month featuring special talks and events. This makes it a very special day to visit with family and friends – we look forward to seeing you.

**DAVID ELLIS**  
DIRECTOR, MUSEUMS AND  
CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

### SYDNEY UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS

Comprising the Macleay Museum, Nicholson Museum and University Art Gallery

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MUSE edited by Michael Turner.  
Produced by Marketing and  
Communications, the University of  
Sydney, February 2012.

12/2780  
ISSN 1449-0420  
ABN 15 211 513 464  
CRICOS 00026A

Cover: Ivory relief from Fort Shalmanezar,  
Nimrud, 8th century BC. Excavated by  
Sir Max Mallowan 1950s. NM 59.3

Pictures by Rowan Conroy



This publication is printed on environmentally responsible paper, using vegetable-based inks, by SOS Print and Media, an FSC Chain of Custody certified printer.

Cover printed on Nordset by BJ Ball Papers. Nordset is an environmentally responsible paper manufactured under environmental management systems ISO 14001 and EMAS 2, using Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF) pulp sourced from sustainable, well-managed forests.

Text is printed on ENVI Recycled 50/50 by Dalton Paper, which is NCOS certified. This is a PEFC-certified paper, containing 50 percent recycled fibre, made from elemental and process chlorine free pulp derived from sustainably managed forests and non-controversial sources. ENVI Recycled 50/50 is Certified Carbon Neutral and Australian Paper is an ISO 14001 certified mill.

Below: Attic white  
ground lekythoi

# 50 OBJECTS 50 STORIES

**Michael Turner** reflects on 150 years of storytelling at the Nicholson Museum; stories old and new narrated by relics of the past.

*"The Nicholson Museum is probably the most engagingly presented museum in Sydney. Its style might be called neo-traditional from the way it exploits the sense of wonder of the old-fashioned museum."*  
(Christopher Allen, *The Weekend Australian Review*, 15–16 October 2011)

*"It's like a church in here and very much makes you feel as if the ghosts of the past are telling you their stories ... sublime."* (Nicholson Museum Visitors Book, 4 January 2012)



"The ghosts of the past telling you their stories ..." I like that. I like it a lot. What is the past after all but a trove of stories, a rich tapestry of experience, of truths and half-truths, of lies and deceptions – all depending on your point of view? The simple question "how did this object end up here?" transports us into the world of makers, users, writers, artists, finders, dealers, collectors, and of course you, the viewer. All objects, great and small, have their stories to tell – sometimes dramatic, often simple and mundane.

For example: an 8th century BC ivory relief from Fort Shalmanezzer at Nimrud (pictured on the front cover), excavated by Sir Max Mallowan, photographed, catalogued and conserved by his wife Agatha Christie, was removed from Iraq quite legally in the 1950s, and sold to the Nicholson Museum by Mallowan to finance further excavations. >

## Nicholson's companions were getting concerned about the presence of so many mummified dead bodies and body parts on board.

On 19 May, a new exhibition opens at the Nicholson Museum. *50 Objects. 50 Stories* delights in the joys of storytelling, allowing objects to act as a springboard into the adventures of archaeologists, collectors and curators across the ages. Here are two of those stories.

### A BOATLOAD OF BODIES

In 1856 Sir Charles Nicholson, Australia's first Baronet and Chancellor of the University of Sydney, returned to England for the first time in almost 25 years. The illegitimate grandson of a farm labourer, born in a little village on the Yorkshire moors, he now returned in triumph as "a man of substance". Later that year he travelled to Egypt to "escape the climate" of an English winter and begin the acquisition of his dream – a collection of antiquities for his new university.

Accompanied by his two friends Philip Rose and Henry Drummond Wolff (later grandees of the UK Conservative Party), Nicholson sailed down the Nile as far as Aswan. On the way the party stopped at Luxor (ancient Thebes) where he acquired this elaborate mummy coffin (pictured right and dating to the 8th century BC) along with an associated mummy. By this stage Nicholson's companions were getting concerned about the presence of so many mummified dead bodies and body parts on board: heads, hands, feet, not to mention birds and animals. Indeed Nicholson's eagerness to secure specimens was becoming "rather embarrassing".

Nicholson finally agreed that enough was enough. His son Sydney takes up the story: "On one occasion though, the party had left the boat for some expedition and on their return my

father found, to his annoyance, that yet another mummy had made its appearance on the deck. His servant apologetically explained, 'An Egyptian came, wanting to sell this: I told him we did not want it and to go away, but it was no use: so I threw an old blacking bottle at him. He picked up the bottle, extremely pleased, bolted with it and left the mummy behind.'

Hieroglyphs on the high-status coffin identify the deceased as Padiashaikhet, son of Horsiese. Recent scholarship suggests he may have been a member of one of the influential families controlling cult and administration in the Thebas area during the 25th Dynasty.

### SURVIVORS OF WAR

In June 1940, less than 36 hours before the Germans marched into Paris, Cambridge scholar Charles Seltman was evacuated back to England on a troop carrier plane. With him were three Attic white ground lekythoi (funerary oil vessels), each showing mourners beside a grave monument (pictured on previous page).





While working at the Sorbonne he had been asked by his good friend Dale Trendall (a Nicholson Museum curator), to see if he could find any such pots for sale in Paris, as none were in Australia at the time.

On 6 July 1940 Seltman wrote to Trendall: "The 3 vases are now packed together in a wooden crate in the Queen's College underground strongroom. Let me know if I am to use my judgment about sending them. The British Government arranges for cover of war risks for such merchandise as this, for I have sent several things to the USA since the war started."

On 12 March the following year, Trendall received a letter from Sydney shipping agents Dalgety saying: "We regret to inform you that, from advice received, the vessel [on which the three pots had been sent] is now considered lost by enemy action." However, a month later a crate arrived at the Nicholson Museum with no paperwork – inside were the three pots.

Trendall later explained that "presumably, as the result of the heavy demands now made on shipping space the case had been unable to find room in the first boat and was sent on by a later one." He goes on to say that the pots were "a most notable addition to the ever-growing wealth of masterpieces of art in Australia".

In December 1941, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, the Nicholson Museum was closed to the public and much of the collection was packed away. In March 1942 Trendall was granted a leave of absence "to undertake work of national importance to the

Commonwealth of Australia in its war effort".

Through the recent release of classified documents, the full extent of his war activities is now known. Recruited to decode Japanese encrypted messages at the Fleet Radio Unit in Melbourne, he was able to give early warning of Japanese plans for the invasion of Port Moresby, and pass on intelligence to the Navy before the Battle of Midway. He was also involved in recruiting talented University of Sydney students for the intelligence services, often interviewing them in the curator's office at the museum!

**Michael Turner is Senior Curator at the Nicholson Museum.**



# objects

# 50 stories

Left: Mummy coffin, dating to the 8th century BC

Above: Exhibition logo for 50 Objects. 50 Stories

All pictures by Rowan Conroy

# A TRAGIC TALE LOST IN THE SANDS OF TIME

**James Fraser** retells one of archaeology's most intriguing murder mysteries – the Palmer Sinai disappearance.





Opposite: Ill-fated adventurers: Palmer's team on archaeological survey in the Sinai, 1869. Palmer is pictured third from left. Photo courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund, London

Right: Map of Palmer's Sinai expedition

Below right: Oasis at Moses' Spring, © L.S.Baker

When preparing a lecture on spies and archaeology for the Nicholson Museum's Sunday lecture series, I happened upon the forgotten story of Professor Edward Palmer, an archaeologist/spy who led an ill-fated expedition into the Sinai in 1882. Palmer claimed he was searching for traces of the Israelite exodus in the Egyptian desert, but his expedition was unlike any other archaeological campaign. Why did he and his officers disguise themselves as Bedouins? Why did they travel with a Syrian Christian manservant and a Jewish cook? And why did Palmer have £3000 of gold sovereigns hidden in his saddlebags? But the most mysterious thing of all was that Palmer, his officers, his servants and the gold would never be seen again.

In truth, the Palmer Sinai Expedition was a hastily conceived response to the 1881 uprising of Arab nationalists in Egypt against the ruling Khedive and the British colonial power he represented. Britain was petrified that the Suez Canal – its 'highway to India' – was in peril, and feared that the Bedouins of the Sinai would join the revolt, threatening the canal itself. The British High Command desperately cast around for someone they could send to buy off the Bedouin sheiks. Palmer was an obvious choice.

### MULTI-TALENTED CHARMER

Palmer was an Orientalist at Cambridge, and had worked as an archaeologist in the Sinai. He was also known as an accomplished artist, poet, raconteur and hypnotist, and was well aware, as a colleague put it, of the "strange, weird charm that he held".

In June 1882 the navy dropped Palmer near Gaza, from where he journeyed undercover through Ottoman territory before slipping into the township of Suez, held by the Arab rebels. Palmer then rendezvoused with Lieutenant Harold Charrington of the Royal Navy and Captain John Gill of the Royal

Engineers, who hoped to sever the Ottoman-Cairo telegraph in the desert while Palmer bought off the various sheiks. In a fatal miscalculation, Palmer hired a Bedouin guide, Metter Abu Sufia, and asked him to provide an escort of 20 men. Perhaps Palmer should have been concerned when Abu Sufia appeared with only his teenage nephew. Escort or not, the expedition set out from Suez on 6 August 1882. They were never seen again.

Rumours filtered into Alexandria that Palmer was lost or kidnapped or killed. A concerned admiralty commanded

Palmer was ... known as an accomplished artist, poet, raconteur and hypnotist.



Below left: Bedouin camel caravan in the Sinai today, 'Camels & Bedouin', copyright Kate Pedley 2010.

Below right: Photo of the writer James Fraser

“The real murderers ... were not the men who were rightly hanged for being tools, but others.”

Colonel Charles Warren, of the Royal Engineers, to lead a rescue mission, which was subsequently published in the splendidly titled *Man-hunting in the Desert*. Warren was to later become famous when, as the head of the London Metropolitan Police, he led a very different manhunt for Jack the Ripper.

### LAND OF WHISPERS

Following the suppression of the Arabi revolt, Warren set out from Suez in mid-September. He tracked the expedition to Moses' Spring oasis, but there the trail went cold. After a month chasing ghosts in what he described as a "land of whispers", Warren finally learned that Palmer's guide had led him into an ambush in the remote Wadi Sudr. He located the ambush site, strewn with ransacked debris from the saddlebags, and followed the path to a nearby cliff. With grim foreboding Warren and his men were lowered down the side, where the remains of the missing expedition, partly eaten by wild dogs, awaited them at the bottom. The gold was nowhere to be found.

Warren spent the next few months hunting the tribesmen responsible, eventually apprehending Metter Abu Sufia and 11 others who were taken to Cairo and hanged. Yet there lingered

a suspicion that the killings were more than just an attack by Bedouin thieves. Had Arabi Pasha, the leader of the revolt, been involved? And had the Ottoman Turks, angered by Britain's invasion of Egypt, also played a part? "Things are known which are not easy to prove," one of Warren's officers hinted darkly. "The real murderers ... were not the men who were rightly hanged for being tools, but others."

The Palmer affair became legendary throughout the empire. In a state funeral at St Paul's Cathedral, a large plaque was unveiled that proclaimed "in memory of three brave men...who, when travelling on public duty into the Sinai desert were treacherously and cruelly slain". Yet the bones of five brave men lie in the tomb below, as Palmer, Charrington and Gill were interred with their Syrian servant and Hebrew cook as well. This was the first time that Arab, Christian and Jew were interred together in this bastion of Anglo Protestantism, although this was probably because no-one was sure just whose remains were whose.

James Fraser is a PhD student in Middle Eastern archaeology at the University of Sydney. He has worked on digs in Jordan, Syria, Greece, Cambodia and Australia, and currently runs a survey and excavation project investigating tomb monuments in the Jordan Valley.





# ARCHITECTURE ON SCREEN

Jacques Tati as Monsieur  
Hulot adrift in the new  
Paris. From *PlayTime*  
(directed by Jacques Tati,  
1967)  
© Les Films de Mon Oncle



During January the *Narelle Jubelin: Vision in Motion* exhibition was complemented by screenings of selected films on modernist architecture. **Antonia Fredman** outlines the film program.

Every Saturday during the Sydney Festival (7 to 29 January), lecture theatres in the School of Chemistry Building were enlivened by feature films, documentaries and shorts engaging with the themes of Narelle Jubelin's work.

A selection of abstract, experimental short films by students from the Bauhaus reflect Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's philosophy of unifying art and technology. These screened alongside

a 1931 documentary short by Ella Bergmann-Michel, celebrating a modernist home for the aged as a space for conviviality.

In the 1949 feature *The Fountainhead*, Gary Cooper stars as Howard Roark, the uncompromising architect figure loosely modeled on Frank Lloyd Wright. The modern skyscraper is cast as a monument to democratic freedom and individualism.

Architecture takes centre stage in Jacques Tati's satirical masterpiece *PlayTime* (1967). Amidst a homogenous landscape of International Style towers, the character of Monsieur Hulot innocently wreaks havoc, sparking moments of play, childlike wonder and joyful abandon.

The playful spirit of designers Charles and Ray Eames is captured in their short films *House: After Five Years of Living* (1955) and *Kaleidoscope Jazz Chairs* (1960). Modernist design is seen as a

prism, framing kaleidoscopic views of nature and everyday life. Organised as part of the public programs for the exhibition, this diverse selection of films gave viewers a glimpse into the complex and layered history of modernist architecture on the screen.

The multi-site exhibition *Narelle Jubelin: Vision in Motion* has been developed by the University Art Gallery at the University of Sydney, in association with Monash University Museum of Art, and the Anne and Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, University of South Australia. The project has been assisted by the Australian government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

*Vision in Motion* continues at the University Art Gallery until 30 March, the School of Chemistry Building lecture theatre foyer until 23 March, and the Sci-Tech library windows until 23 March.

**Antonia Fredman** is curator of the film program for *Narelle Jubelin: Vision in Motion*.



# JOSEPH BEUYS AND THE 'ENERGY PLAN'

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the JW Power Bequest, and showcase the superb international artworks in the collection, leading experts are curating a special series of exhibitions. **Donna West Brett** recasts the performance art of Joseph Beuys in a contemporary light.

The exhibition *Joseph Beuys and the 'Energy Plan'* will include many of Beuys' most extraordinary photographs and prints, highlighting his multidisciplinary interests in medicine, science, art, myth and history. His vast and diverse output includes drawing, printmaking, sculpture, installation and performance art.

The University acquired several of Beuys' artworks during the 1970s and early 1980s, under the watch of Elwyn Lynn, curator of the Power collection. How these works ended up in the collection is itself an interesting story.



Far left: Joseph Beuys, *Overcome party dictatorships now* (1971), photo-offset on paper, donated by Elwyn Lynn, 1973.

Below: Joseph Beuys, *Felt Suit* (1970), one of an editioned multiple made from felt and based on one of his suits. Hung on the wall from a wooden hanger, the suit stands in for Beuys' own body becoming both a self-portrait and a symbol for spiritual warmth.

The use of felt in Beuys' work relates to his experience of being shot down in the Second World War over Crimea where he was rescued by a group of nomadic Tartars; wrapped in fat and felt he survived the freezing conditions.

Both works from the JW Power collection, the University of Sydney, Managed by the Museum of Contemporary Art © Joseph Beuys/Bild-Kunst, licensed by VISCOPY



Werner Krüger, an established art critic and photographer, found an affinity with the works of Beuys and documented a large body of his installations and performances. Krüger later played a key role in advancing the JW Power collection. He was both a friend and advisor to Lynn for more than 12 years, during which time a number of works by important German artists were acquired.

One of Beuys' central experimental philosophies concerned the 'energy plan' – part of his expanded conception of art as a type of 'social sculpture'. His idea of the 'energy plan' as a source of creative freedom found expression through artistic forms including drawings, prints, photographs, lectures and performances. The concept was the basis of his now famous 1974 'I Like America and America Likes Me' performance, where he spent three days sharing a room and performing a series of actions with a wild coyote in a New York gallery, influencing such artists as Robert Morris and Eva Hesse.

In 1980 Beuys' drawing series *Energie Plan* was exhibited at the Kunsthalle in Bielefeld, accompanied by 60 Ciba-Chrome photographs of his work and performances recorded by Krüger. Each photograph was signed by Beuys on the front and Krüger on the back. Several of these photographs will be featured in the *Joseph Beuys and the 'Energy Plan'* exhibition alongside other famous works such as *Felt suit* from 1970.

Krüger describes his own documentation of the *Energie Plan* as "the transformation of Beuysian aesthetic-artistic creativity, his cosmos of ideas, his plastic imagery into photography. The individual photo reflects details and the entire installation reflects the authentic world of Beuys' ideas and images".

Donna West Brett is an art historian of post-war German art, and curator of the exhibition *Joseph Beuys and the 'Energy Plan'*, which opens on Saturday 7 April at the University Art Gallery.

# DRAWING ON OLD SKETCHES

## FOR NEW INSIGHTS

Ichthyologist **Tony Gill** explains the importance of William Sharp Macleay's fish sketches.

In 1963 the Macleay Museum acquired a sketchbook illustrated by William Sharp Macleay. The sketchbook was presented by Lady Stanham of Camden Park, Managle, along with a covering note explaining that Macleay illustrated it during his time in Havana, Cuba as British Commissioner and later judge in the court for the abolition of slavery (1825–35).

The sketchbook reveals his diverse interests: from Cuban architecture and scenery to detailed anatomical drawings of invertebrates. It also includes drawings of 10 fish species.

Apart from a paper on fish classification, William Sharp Macleay published little on fishes, unlike his younger cousin Sir William John Macleay who was a prolific author on ichthyology. Even so, William Sharp's illustrations reveal his extensive knowledge of zoology, and a remarkable ability to capture essential details of coloration, shape and other features.

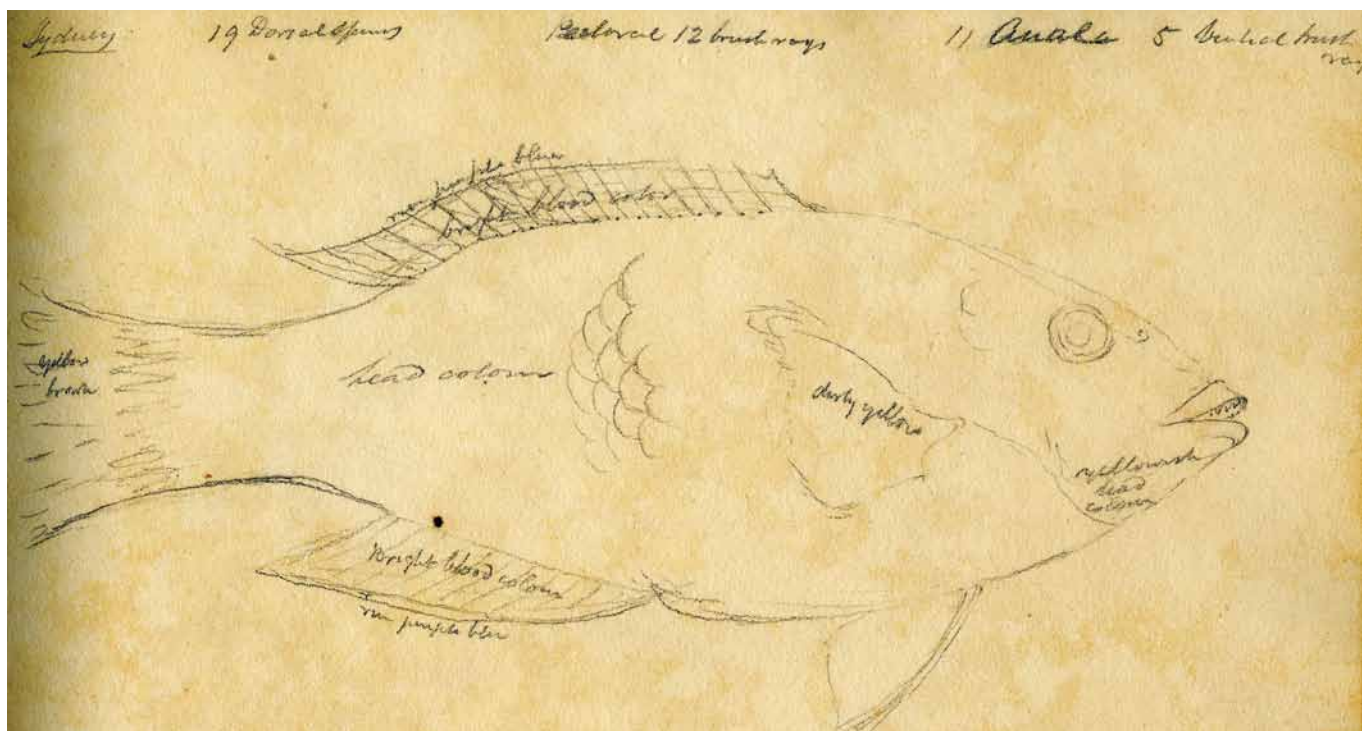
Seven of the fish are readily identifiable as common Cuban species, such as the watercolour of banded and spotfin

butterflyfishes. The other three sketches were almost certainly made in Australia, after Macleay's arrival in Sydney in 1839. They are some of the earliest known illustrations of these species.

The picture (above right) shows *Notolabrus gymnogenis* (crimsonband wrasse). Macleay's sketch is annotated 'Sydney', and includes fin ray counts and coloration details. The crimsonband wrasse is known to only inhabit waters in southern Queensland, New South Wales, and Lord Howe Island. It is a protogynous dichromatic species, meaning it changes sex and coloration once it reaches 20cm or so. Macleay's colour notes mostly agree with the male coloration.







The species was likely undescribed at the time Macleay made his sketch. Albert Günther, zoologist in the British Museum, first described it in 1862, based on a female specimen. Macleay's cousin, Sir William John Macleay, also described the species, in 1878 (as *Labrichthys nigromarginatus*) based on a male specimen.

The second sketch, also annotated 'Sydney', depicts *Cheilodactylus vestitus* (crested morwong). The sketch is well executed and includes coloration details that readily identify it. This species is found in eastern Australia, from southern Queensland to central New South Wales (just south of Sydney). Despite being a fairly common reef species, it was not described until 1879, 14 years after William Sharp's death. It was named by Melbourne-based French diplomat and naturalist Francois Louis de Castelnau.

The sketch of *Odax acroptilus*, unlike the other two Sydney sketches, is curiously labelled 'Havannah', but is clearly identifiable as a rainbow cale, a species that occurs around southern Australia (from northern New South Wales to southern Western Australia, including northern Tasmania).

The rainbow cale is also a protogynous hermaphrodite, changing sex and colour as it grows. Its considerable variation in coloration no doubt accounts for it being described as a 'new species' no fewer than eight times.



It was first described in 1847 by English zoologist John Richardson. The next three descriptions were by de Castelnau (twice in 1872 then again in 1875). The fifth time was by William Sharp's cousin Sir William John Macleay in 1878, who ironically named his 'new species' after his colleague Castelnau. Even more ironic, the eighth and final description (in 1888), was by the then director of the National Museum of Victoria (now Museum Victoria), Frederick McCoy, who named the species after Sir William John Macleay.

**Tony Gill is an expert on Australian fish species, and is Curator of Natural History at the Macleay Museum.**

Opposite page

Above left: Macleay's sketch of a crested morwong (*Cheilodactylus vestitus*)

Below left: *Cheilodactylus vestitus*. Photographer: Dave Harasti

Above right: Macleay's sketch of a rainbow cale (*Odax acroptilus*)

Below right: *Odax acroptilus*. Photographer: Dave Harasti

This page

Above: Macleay's sketch of a crimsonband wrasse (*Notolabrus gymnogenis*)

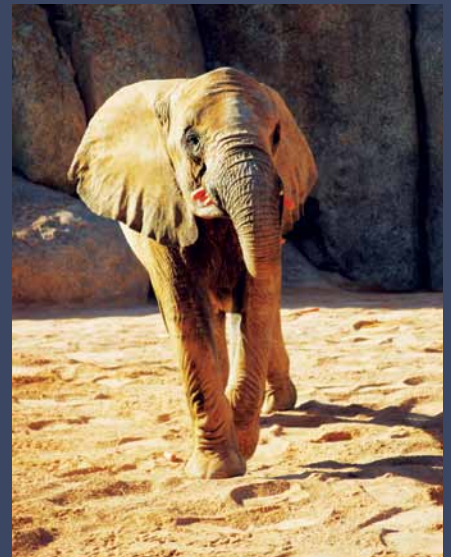
Below: A male *Notolabrus gymnogenis*. Photographer: Dave Harasti





# RIDING INTO HISTORY





**Sam Wood** recently retraced the 2200-year-old steps of Hannibal, the Carthaginian commander who almost destroyed Rome. He captured his adventure for a BBC TV documentary.

The idea of following in Hannibal's footsteps was born on a cycling holiday in the Pyrenees with my brothers. We were looking across the peaks after struggling up the notorious 'Tour de France' climb, the *Tourmalet*. Being history fans, we were wondering who else might have passed through this amazing mountain range.

Following Hannibal's 4000km trail from Spain to Rome was hugely appealing – history and bikes – what else would anyone want on holiday? Making it into a documentary for the BBC, on the other hand, was quite worrying!

My two brothers and I are a lucky combination, arguably well suited for this cycling, travel and history documentary expedition. Danny is a journalist, Ben is an IT developer, I'm an archaeologist, and we all studied history at university. Ben and I have criss-crossed Europe a few times on bikes. Danny, on the other hand, hasn't cycled much but knew how to present a documentary – something Ben and I, after a brief crash course on the BBC lawn in Shepherd's Bush, were still quite nervous about.

Our documentary, *On Hannibal's Trail* (a six-part series currently airing on BBC2) is the story of two epic

adventures: Hannibal's and ours.

Of course, I cringe when I describe our 4000km cycle as epic because I know that it isn't much compared to other cycling efforts, and certainly nothing compared to Hannibal's trip.

He started out from the Spanish city of Cartagena in 218BC with a force of more than 100,000 men and 37 elephants. For 15 years he wrought havoc on his enemy, inflicting, among other devastating blows, Rome's worst ever defeat at the Battle of Cannae. It was only when his homeland was invaded and Carthage threatened that he returned and was defeated at the Battle of Zama by Scipio.

In September 2009, after two years of researching, training and planning, we found ourselves on the port promenade of Cartagena about to start our journey. Robin, our director, and John,





our cameraman, were ready to film our send-off by members of the local Carthaginian Society, who were dressed up in their ancient Iberian outfits. It was a classic moment, but we were to find that cycling and filming weren't always such easy companions.

It was a real physical and psychological challenge and we underestimated the toll the filming would take. A typical day could involve filming in the morning for a few hours and then cycling during the heat in the middle of the day, filming again in the late afternoon, and then cycling some more; catching up kilometres, which occasionally led us well into the night.

### FEELING CLOSE TO HANNIBAL

In saying this, one of my best memories is cycling into the Alps north of Vaison-la-Romaine through the Gorge du Gas where Hannibal was possibly first ambushed. It was past midnight and pitch black, the atmosphere was foreboding and it was possibly one of the only times when I could say I was feeling like Hannibal and his men would have.

We could see the mountains looming around us in the night as we tried to speed towards camp. All we could hear was the whirring of our wheels and we had no idea what was out there. It was only the next day when we found out that one side of the road for the last 20km had a 500m drop off!

There were so many classic moments: riding through vineyards in France and standing at the top of the Alps looking down on Italy like Hannibal might have when he supposedly inspired his troops with a rousing speech. We also turned up at the Quirinale Palace in Rome to visit the only known bust of Hannibal, only to be almost refused entry due to our poor dress and generally grubby appearance – we had been cycling for six weeks!

Riding through Tunisia was amazing – intact ancient aqueducts still in use today lined skinny, fast-moving, heavily trafficked roads. Our slight diversion on the way to Zama was Dougga, a fantastically intact Roman town well worth the pain inflicted by bone-rattling rutted paths and umpteen police forces all out for some 'baksheesh' (tipping for services).

Even now it's hard for our brains to compute the whole trip. The Roman historian Livy described the battle with Hannibal as "*the most memorable war in history*". Hopefully, in a small way, we've stimulated more public interest – not just in riding bikes through beautiful places but in Hannibal's war and his Carthaginian civilisation.

We plan to be back on the road soon – Napoleon's march to Moscow was 200 years ago this year and Alexander the Great's march is a tempting but frightening possibility!

Sam Wood is a University of Sydney archaeology graduate. For more information on the Wood brothers' trips, visit [www.woodbrothers.tv](http://www.woodbrothers.tv)





# UNMASKING THE TRUTH

Pictured below: W.J. Woodhouse, the (very extravagant) tomb of Heinrich Schliemann shortly after his death, Athens 1890s

Below: Copy of the 'death mask of Agamemnon' Nicholson Museum NM 30.63

As part of his school's work-experience program, **Alex Johnston** spent a week in the Nicholson Museum. Here he describes his encounter with an artefact that may not be all it seems.



I had previously ventured into the museum's world of curiosity with my family, but attempting to observe the displays while fending off acts of aggression from my sisters was particularly difficult! This time, however, I was able to look around in peace.

While studying a sublime miniature replica of ancient Athens, a glint of gold caught my eye from a shelf nearby. On closer inspection I discovered it was a beautifully rendered golden mask, radiating light throughout the cabinet.

The mask was of a man's face, crafted in that instantly recognisable 'Greek' style, seen particularly in the detail of the closed eyes and eyebrows. It was the Mask of Agamemnon, legendary Greek leader of the Trojan War.

I was disappointed to learn from a guide that this extraordinary object was a replica, though its aesthetic beauty impressed me nonetheless. (The original is in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.) It was also surprising to discover that Agamemnon's face, as depicted by the mask, was not in the likeness of the mythological figure.

This mystery inspired a certain curiosity within me. After some research, I discovered many surprising facts. The mask, which dates back to 1550–1500 BC, was discovered in 1876 by Heinrich Schliemann, a German amateur archaeologist. Schliemann was famous for his involvement with an excavation at Hisarlik: the site of ancient Troy in

Anatolia (now Turkey). The dig was notorious in many archaeological circles because the destructive excavation methods used to search for Troy's mysteries were detrimental to the fragile site.

Agamemnon's mask was found at another of Schliemann's excavations, the Shaft Graves in Mycenae (Greece), over the face of a body inside a burial shaft.

The mask's authenticity has come under fire from various groups since it was first discovered, with many skeptics noting that Schliemann was prone to embedding artefacts from other locations into his digs, which may well be the case with this mask.

Other concerns have been raised about Schliemann's willingness to make duplicates of artefacts and pass them off as genuine, presumably to prove to his financial backers that his expeditions were both successful and groundbreaking.

It is also worth noting that Agamemnon's mask is stylistically different from other Mycenaean funerary masks found in the shaft tombs, due to its distinctive eyebrows, ears, beard and moustache. These features suggest it was made by a highly talented blacksmith.

Some of Schliemann's supporters agree with his claims about the mask, citing the characteristically Mycenaean V shape beneath the chin, which unfurls into a beard. However, many academics

have pointed out that, although this may be the case, it does not guarantee Schliemann was being entirely honest.

The main source of suspicion for most scholars is the moustache, the tips of which appear to have been added after the mask's original creation. Critics suggest that Schliemann ordered these additions to make the relic more impressive.

The exact truth of the mask's origin may never be known, and perhaps, in keeping with the mythological backdrop of this relic of the Trojan War, it's better to keep the intrigue alive.

**Alex Johnston is a Year 11 student from Turramurra High School.**



# PICKLES FROM THE PAST

A Macleay Museum natural history specimen with a 130-year-old tail gives **Rob Blackburn** plenty to ponder.

Every week two dedicated employees, Kit Streamer and Heather Sowden, open museum jars to refresh the preservative within and record the contents. This routine maintenance not only conserves the collection for many years to come, but is an opportunity to assess and record details not previously known, such as the length of this snake.

Many of the exterior labels on these jars have faded with time, though information can sometimes be found written in pencil on a sliver of paper stored within the preservative itself. On this jar (pictured right), the description: "The King Cobra, *Ophiophagus hannah*, India" gave clues to this animal's provenance. Further investigations in diaries and exchange books revealed more details.

Over his long career William John Macleay exchanged many specimens with other collectors in order to enhance the geographical breadth of his collections. It was quite common for him to conduct trade between India, Maldives, Mauritius, Sweden, USA, England, Russia, Papua New Guinea and various Pacific islands, exchanging specimens for money or for new and interesting items.

One such exchange was this magnificent King Cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah* Cantor, 1836), sent from Madras by Dr George Bidie around 1881. We do not know how Dr Bidie came to know Sir William, but the two became firm correspondents and exchanged many specimens.

Originally from Scotland, Dr Bidie worked for the Indian Medical Service from 1856, eventually becoming Surgeon-General in 1886. His research work and publications reveal a strong interest in natural history, which he put to good use between 1872 and 1884 as superintendent of the Madras Government Museum, in addition to his medical duties.

King Cobras are the longest extant venomous snake in the world, reaching lengths of up to 5.5m. This snake measures approximately 3m, which is not a world record but is the second longest natural history specimen in the Macleay, surpassed only by the skeleton of a pilot whale suspended in the museum's gallery.

Rob Blackburn is a Curatorial Assistant at the Macleay Museum.

Below: (left to right) Detail of head; the full stretch – Heather Sowden measures the length of the King Cobra

Bottom: *Ophiophagus hannah* back in clean ethanol solution.





# A UNIQUE HISTORY LESSON IN THE LAW SCHOOL

Harry J Wedge, *Germ warfare* (1994), synthetic polymer on canvas, University of Sydney Union Art Collection, © the artist

Next time you pass through the atrium of the new Law School building, you may find your gaze drawn to a remarkable painting mounted on the wall, which has a profound message. **Robin McKenzie** explains.

An initial glance at the simply drawn cartoon forms in this 1994 acrylic on canvas painting might suggest light-hearted subject material. However, closer inspection reveals an intriguing story behind the message and the messenger.

The painting conveys artist Harry J Wedge's unique and very personal perspective on the Aboriginal history of Australia, as depicted in much of his extensive body of work. The style, intensity and idiosyncratic cosmology present in Wedge's art bears some resemblance to Outsider Art. On the other hand, his message is highly political.

The painting's title, *Germ warfare*, refers to the devastating impact of the introduction of European diseases on Aboriginal people in the Sydney area during the first three years of colonial settlement. Against a streaked dark toned blue and red ground and apocalyptic sky, Aboriginal victims of all ages are seen writhing in the foreground, outlined in gold or white, with their hair characteristically on end and radiating out from their heads.

The viewer's eye is also drawn to the snowy white outfit of a European 'doctor', whose ambiguous (Wedge says 'proud') expression conveys that he is less than unhappy about the outcome. The Union Jack flies nearby, reinforcing the institutional culpability for the scene.

Wedge's powerful perspective on Aboriginal history emerged from his experience of injustice and dispossession as a Wiradjuri person born (c.1958) at the Erambie Mission in Cowra, NSW. He honed his views during a period of intense political activity and assertion of identity within Aboriginal communities in the late 1980s and 1990s and his time at Boomali Aboriginal Artists Cooperative in Chippendale, Sydney during the early 1990s. He exhibited there along with the founding artists, Brenda L Croft, Michael Riley, Bronwyn Bancroft, Jeffrey Samuels, Fiona Foley and Euphemia Bostock.

Purchased by the University of Sydney Union in 1996, this fine example of Wedge's work adds depth to the University's collection of Aboriginal art – some of which was displayed in the University Art Gallery's recent exhibition, *Freedom Riders: Art and activism 1960s to now*.

Robin McKenzie is a postgraduate student in the Department of Art History and Film Studies. She has an arts degree majoring in social anthropology and a law degree.





# A REMARKABLE GIFT

## THE RODDY MEAGHER BEQUEST

The history of collecting art in Australia contains few stories as alluring as Roddy Meagher's, one of the most passionate yet private collectors in Sydney. Sadly, he died aged 79 on 3 July 2011, leaving his collection to the University of Sydney.

In this special feature, four art historians, starting with **Professor Roger Benjamin**, reflect on his astonishing collection.

Pictured above: The home of Justice Roddy Meagher, 2009

Photograph: © Michael Myers, 2009





The late Justice Roderick Pitt Meagher was an eminent jurist, authority on equity law, author of textbooks and spellbinding lecturer, famous for his bons mots and scathing witticisms.

But behind the illustrious career was a gentle connoisseur, a man passionate for the visual arts, who spent his adult life collecting with the constancy of obsession, ever since his youth studying Arts at the University of Sydney. A student of Greek, history and the classics (fine arts was yet to be established at Sydney), Meagher was also drawn to contemporary art. His first purchase, in 1950 when he was just 18, was a monotype by *Sydney Morning Herald* art critic Paul Haefliger.

After Arts and his four years of Law, Meagher travelled in 1958, visiting "every museum and cathedral in Europe". This was a great visual education for a collector who trusted his own eye more than book learning. Once he was back in Sydney and had embarked on his career at the Bar, Meagher became a regular visitor to the city's art galleries, antique-dealers, even 'junk-shops'. His ordering principle was whether a work pleased him, and his vast collection today (numbering almost 1500 pieces) is held together by the true distinction of his eye for beauty.

As soon as his means allowed it, from the late 1960s on, Meagher made forays into the birth of modernism through French graphic art of the 19th century — Delacroix, Géricault, Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Bonnard, a Vuillard oil, Rouault aquatints and several works by Matisse and Picasso. The human face, the figure, and the female body were abiding focuses of his collecting.

Reflecting the Anglo-centrism of his generation, Meagher had a marked fondness for English art: the portrait drawings of

Romney, the landscape sketches of Gainsborough and Constable. Indeed modern British art of the mid-20th century is a great strength of the collection, which contains works by Augustus and Gwen John, Gaudier-Brzeska, Ben Nicholson, Graham Sutherland, even Lucien Freud and Frank Auerbach.

Nonetheless the mainstay of Meagher's collecting was the modern art of his hometown, Sydney. His collection features a broad range of Sydney modernists, from Roland Wakelin to Margaret Preston and Grace Cossington Smith. Sydney modernists Justin O'Brien, Jeffrey Smart, Margaret Olley, Brett Whiteley and Cressida Campbell are all present (as are Melbourne artists E Phillips Fox, Russell Drysdale and Clarice Beckett). The seminal figures of the abstract tendency for Meagher were the itinerant Ian Fairweather, John Passmore and Godfrey Miller.

Despite an earlier prediction that retirement from the Bench would mean a cessation of collecting, Meagher continued his compulsion without stint. He has lately ventured into Aboriginal abstraction with Eunice Napanangka, Emily Kngwarreye and George Tjapaltjarri and broached a new generation with Melbourne punk portraitist Steve Cox. Admirably, he made it his purpose to pass on that passion to a new generation of Australians through his splendid collection.

**Roger Benjamin is Professor of Art History in the Department of Art History and Film Studies, and Research Associate at the US Studies Centre. This is an edited version of an essay written by Professor Benjamin to mark the exhibition, *Collecting Passions: A century of Modernism from the home of Justice Roddy Meagher*, at the University Art Gallery in 2009.**

# AMAZING GRACE

**Dr Ann Stephen** reflects on the work of one of Meagher's favourite artists in his collection, Grace Cossington Smith.

Roddy Meagher's gift includes 16 paintings and four drawings by Sydney modernist Grace Cossington Smith. However, there are 22 works in all, because one painting is double-sided and a self-portrait was recently revealed on the back of one of the drawings.

Modern landscape is the core of this wonderful group of works ranging from Cossington Smith's garden, pastoral views, bushland and seascapes to an exquisite Italian scene. All are painted with her characteristic feathery brushstroke combining intense colour and powerful rhythms.

The earliest, *Black Mountain* (1931), features Canberra's dominating natural backdrop, then bare and treeless. A thick red band skirts the foreground, offset by complementary bands of green to indicate hedges and bushes. Thin red tracks, maybe fencing, form part of a larger spiral of lines that fan out, animating both sky and mountain. The pale ground contrasts with the blocky black silhouette along the high horizon.

Cossington Smith painted a dazzling later work, *From Assisi* (1949), during her visit to Italy. While the composition is a traveller's view, looking down the road framed by old buildings and distant mountains, the real subject is light. She loads a brush with colour, weaving loose horizontal rows from small dabs of paint.



These waves of unmixed colour form the sky, distant hills, houses and foreground path, creating an overall effect of shimmering haze.

Other key works include a war work, *Wardens' meeting* (1943), and *The ballet* (Les Sylphides) of 1937. When the latter was first exhibited, it was praised as investing "its subject with more movement and fantasy than any study of the same subject in Sydney". A creamy row of sylphs, framed by trees, encircle the central levitating ballerina who spirals in a yellow and pink bloom, her homage to Cézanne as much as Chopin.

**Dr Ann Stephen is Senior Curator of the University Art Gallery and Art Collections.**

Above: Grace Cossington Smith, *The ballet (Les Sylphides)* 1937, oil on board, © the artist's estate

Page opposite: Théodore Géricault, *Hercules and Antaeus* c. 1816, ink on paper, Photograph: © Michael Myers, 2010





## EMBRACING A BRUTAL BATTLE

**Emeritus Professor Virginia Spate** reviews a dramatic drawing by influential French artist Théodore Géricault, gifted by Meagher.

Théodore Géricault (1791–1840) did many drawings of classical subjects, as one would expect of a painter who received his training in the studio of Guérin, a pupil of the great Neo-Classicist, David. One such drawing was included in the Justice Roddy Meagher bequest. The drawing, titled *Hercules and Antaeus* (c. 1816), depicts two male bodies locked together in an almost erotic embrace that is actually a precursor to death.

The story of Hercules and Antaeus' struggle to the death – which Géricault depicted in at least two other drawings – relates to Géricault's fascination with the most extreme forms of human action. Antaeus was the son of the earth (Gaia) and the god of the sea (Poseidon). He drew his strength from contact with the earth, and was therefore almost invincible. He defeated all those whom he challenged to wrestle. Even Hercules, with his superhuman strength, could not vanquish him until he managed to lift him and thus to break his contact with the earth.

The drawing portrays the penultimate straining moment when Hercules has raised his antagonist's body above the ground, but Antaeus is just keeping his last contact with the earth through his outstretched toes, while Hercules is squeezing the life out of him. The drawing is spare and even crude, as if expressing the brutal simplicity of the encounter.

The single unshadowed line that flattens the interwoven bodies into one shape owes much to Neo-Classicism, but the dramatic physicality of this line is characteristic of Géricault. The artist brilliantly structures the composition by playing the top-heavy wrestlers with their bulging chests, biceps and shoulders against the dynamism of Hercules' splayed legs and Antaeus' desperately stretched leg and foot. Indeed, once his toe does leave the ground, the whole structure will collapse.

Emeritus Professor Virginia Spate is Power Professor of Art History and Visual Culture.

*This article is an edited version of a short essay written by Emeritus Professor Spate to mark the University's sesquicentenary in 1999.*



George 'Tjampu'  
Tjapaltjarri, *Untitled*, 2004,  
the University of Sydney.

## COUNTRY COMES ALIVE ON CANVAS

**Hannah Kothe** reflects on one of Roddy Meagher's more recent acquisitions, a bold painting by Pintupi painter, George 'Tjampu' Tjapaltjarri.

The bequest of Justice Roddy Meagher also includes works by several Aboriginal artists, the fine Pintupi painter, George 'Tjampu' Tjapaltjarri (c. 1945-2005) among them. The dazzling 2004 untitled painting by the artist and donated by the Meagher estate now hangs in the office of Professor Shane Houston, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy and Services) at the University.

Tjapaltjarri was born at Walla Walla (Pollock Hills) near Kiwirrkurra in Western Australia around 1945. He joined his brother to paint for Papunya Tula Artists during the mid-1970s and

was part of the Pintupi 'homelands' movement that saw Pintupi people resettle on their traditional lands from which they had been moved in the mid 1960s. He worked as a traditional healer in an outstation community medical clinic and then returned to painting in the late 1980s. The painting donated by the Meagher estate is one of the artist's more recent works.

The striking canvas has a deep orange background on which nearly a hundred rows of meticulously executed white dots, which bleed into one another, have been painted. The dots shimmer. The eye wanders across the canvas to see both the optic impact of the lines of dots on mass and then zone in on the delicate shapes formed by the negative shape around the dots. The gentle curves of the dotted lines guide the eye and the two shorter lines on one of the painting's edges frame the work, breaking the painting's powerful optical effect when viewed from a distance.

The artist's work is about his country and how it was shaped in mythological times by Tingari men who travelled across the land creating and shaping different sites. This painting refers specifically to the site of Yulkalara, west of Kiwirrkura, a site strongly associated with men's ceremonies. During the Dreaming a group of Tingari men passed through the site, travelling east through Tarkul, north of Mt Webb, finishing their journey in Lake Mackay. The stories of the Tingari men and the women and novices that followed them are enshrined in a number of song cycles and form part of the stories taught to initiated youth today.

**Hannah Kothe was until recently the Curatorial Assistant at the University Art Gallery and Art Collections. She has a First Class Honours degree in Art History (Indigenous Art).**

**Forthcoming is a biography on Roddy Meagher, called *Roddy's Folly: R.P. Meagher QC – art lover and lawyer* (Connocourt, March 2012) by Damien Freeman.**



# #KIDSINMUSEUMS

Seven-year-old **Bill Blake** explains why the Nicholson Museum is a great place for history-lovers of all ages.

I really like history, so I go to the Nicholson Museum a lot. I like it because I can learn about Pompeii and Egypt and Etruscans and Greeks. One of my first visits was Greek Marathon Day and I saw some guys dressed up in ancient Greek armour and I got to hold some real swords. They were blunt and very heavy. I tried on some helmets as well. That was really fun.

Another time I got to design my own amphora. I drew a battle scene between bandits and martial arts guys. During the school holidays I learned about Greek mythology and I got to dress up as Perseus – he's the guy who killed Medusa.

On Mummies Day, I helped wrap up another kid with bandages like a mummy, and saw a death mask. I was able to hold real Egyptian objects including a perfume bottle, a roof tile and a canopic jar, which is where ancient Egyptians put internal organs. I also held little figures that were meant to do all the chores for people in the afterlife.

When we were shown a Roman tap, I was the only one who guessed right what it was!

I really like Horus, the six-year-old boy mummy. We don't know how he died. I also like the cat mummy and the crocodile mummy.

During the school holidays, my friend Joshua and I visited the museum for a Roman day. We learned some Latin words and Roman myths, and got a chariot-driving licence. I drew a gladiator.

After I've been at the Nicholson I often go to the Glebe library and get out books about Greek and Roman mythology. I've read all the Egyptian myths so I know about Osiris, Isis, Horus and Seth. I can write my name in cuneiform and hieroglyphics.

I've really enjoyed reading *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* because I like hearing about warriors and heroes. Sometimes I listen to Greek mythology stories on CD in the car. At the moment, I'm listening to the Mahabharata. It's great when the gods grant people boons like sacred bows and arrows.

Michael Turner told me two things to always do in the museum: bring my torch (to shine on the sarcophagi) and touch the statues (if there's no sign saying not to). I learned that sarcophagus is from the Greek for flesh eater.

At home, I make ancient things out of Lego. I made an Egyptian pyramid, a Greek temple and Viking longships, and I play with mini-figures of Samurai, Roman and Spartan gladiators, and make them act out stories.

I'm looking forward to taking my friends to the Nicholson in 2012 and learning more about Rome.

Bill Blake (pictured below in the museum) is seven years old and lives in Glebe, Sydney. He writes children's theatre reviews for *Time Out Sydney* online, and has his own blog: The Blog of Everything:

<http://billybob7.blogspot.com>

Bill Blake gets hands on in the Nicholson Museum.



Kids in  
Museums



Left: Chiefly necave (kava) preparation from the island of Erromango, southern Vanuatu. The kava is prepared in the leaf-lined earth hole in the foreground, and then the macerated roots hand-squeezed to release the liquid. The round balls in the centre of the photo are the squeezed-out root remains of this process. Chief Umai(n)duru Jerry Taki from Umponyelo(n)gi village, southern Erromango, holds out a bent banana-leaf container to be filled up with the next kava liquid for drinking. Photo by and courtesy of D. Becker, taken at Vanuatu's 3rd National Arts Festival, held in Port Vila, on the island of Efate, November 2009.

Above right: Kava's ritual use as a link and sign of respect: an important moment during Vanuatu's 3rd National Arts Festival. A representative appointed by the Simanlou Council of Chiefs of Erromango presents a kava (necave)-filled leaf to a member of the Vaturisu Council of Chiefs of the island of Efate as a sign of respect and thanks to the land where the festival is being held. Photo by and courtesy of D. Becker, November 2009.

Below right: Rare vuloni yaqona kava filter in the Macleay Museum collections (cat. ETA.624) of the type still used in the interior of Viti Levu island, Fiji, into the late 19th century. Probably collected for WJ Macleay by AJ Boyd on Viti Levu between 1865 and 1882. Photo © Macleay Museum 2011.

# KAVA

## A PACIFIC ELIXIR

**Kirk Huffman** delves into the mysteries of kava, a historical, ceremonial and deeply spiritual drink imbibed with respect by thousands of Pacific males over many generations.





On 6 to 7 August 2011 the Australian Kava Movement hosted the First International Kava Conference in Australia. Distinguished Pacific Island speakers explored the critical roles kava plays within their societies, and spoke about the current prohibition on kava drinking in the ACT – a ban many feel is unsupportable and culturally insensitive.

For more on this story see *Explore 33* (4) Summer 2011

In English the word kava describes both a plant and a water-filtered solution made from its roots which is often consumed in ritually codified, spiritually charged occasions. This mood-levelling concoction has an extremely pacific effect – angry thoughts and behaviour are impossible when under the spell of fresh, strong kava.

The drink is made from *Piper methysticum*, a shrub found all the way from parts of Melanesia through most of tropical Polynesia and areas of Micronesia. Early Pacific Islanders considered kava a desirable and tradeable commodity. It had to be traded because, lacking flowers and seeds, it cannot reproduce naturally. The only way to duplicate the plant is to cut its branches and place them in suitable soil with the right amount of rain and light.

Well cut and wrapped fresh kava branches can be planted after sea voyages of up to two weeks. Dried roots can last longer. Thus, we can attribute the entire distribution of drinkable kava across the Pacific to the earlier maritime explorers of the region, long before the late arrival of European explorers. Accounts from central Vanuatu, for example, indicate regular canoes arriving from Tonga in search of good kava.

More than 80 strains of kava exist in Vanuatu. Ethno-botanical research also indicates Vanuatu as the likely centre for the shrub's initial domestication. This archipelago of islands has very ancient and complex kava-drinking traditions and Ni-Vanuatu oral traditions tend to link back to one particular area as the ultimate origin of the first drinkable kava. For reasons of cultural sensitivity, the location cannot be related here.

Peoples across the Pacific have their own origin stories for kava and distinct methods of preparation, use and significance. Newer types of men's kava-drinking circles have developed into social clubs that have spread to New Zealand and the United States. Kava *nakamals* ('bars') proliferate in Vanuatu and Kanaky/New Caledonia, while in parts of the central Pacific, kava-drinking has become integrated into Christian church life.

All kava needs to be skinned, masticated, grated or pounded before it is ready to be mixed with water and filtered. Common practice nowadays is to serve the kava in half coconut shells, filled from a large bowl. Well into the late 19th century, residents in the Viti Levu hinterlands of Fiji used a special filter called *vuloni yaqona*. The Macleay Museum holds one of these rare objects – an ancient accoutrement for the making of 'priestly' or 'chiefly'

kava. Chiefly kava is still being prepared in a leaf-lined hole in the ground on the island of Erromango in southern Vanuatu, where it is drunk from a leaf folded in the form of a canoe.

Traditional kava users know that long-term kava drinkers, when they die, are laid to rest with a secret marker inside their bodies – a small stone-like fibrous ball. Formed of a very strong concretion of kavalactones, this ball can survive for centuries in the lower stomach cavity area. In Tonga, this ball is called *mongea*. Finding one can be a real gift, as the *mongea* can be scraped and the powder added to one's own kava, greatly increasing its potency.

Kirk Huffman is Honorary Curator of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, Member of the Scientific Committee of the Museum of Tahiti and the Islands (Tahiti, French Polynesia), and an Honorary Associate of the Macleay Museum. He has been drinking strong fresh Vanuatu kava since 1973.





The Nicholson Museum recently rolled up its sleeves and got its hands dirty, becoming a major supporter of the ongoing Australian archaeological mission exploring the Hellenistic and Roman site of Nea Paphos in the Mediterranean island nation of Cyprus.

# THE NICHOLSON DIGS THE PAST







Above: members of the excavation team at Nea Paphos.



Above right: the excavations offer big clues about the urban layout of the Hellenistic and Roman town.

Right: sorting through objects to identify significant finds.



The Nicholson has a long relationship with the Nea Paphos dig, but the excavation season of October 2011 was the first time the Museum has taken a direct logistical role.

From 1995, excavations in the ancient theatre precinct have been conducted under the auspices of the Department of Antiquities of the Republic of Cyprus, with financial support from the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens (since 2009). The project is co-directed by University of Sydney archaeologists Emeritus Professor Richard Green and Dr Smadar Gabrieli, along with Dr Craig Barker from Sydney University Museums.

The October 2011 season was primarily a study season to allow the team to catalogue, photograph and illustrate ceramic and architectural finds from previous fieldwork seasons for publication. The team was also able to open two small trenches to the south of the ancient theatre.

One trench was in the centre of the Roman nymphaeum (water fountain): a 20x5m building with a mosaic floor and plastered walls. The second trench cleared part of the Roman road running behind the stage building. Both excavations offer big clues about the urban layout of the Hellenistic and Roman town that once existed south of the theatre.

One of the highlights of the season was being awarded a plaque by the President of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Yiannakis Omirou, in honour of

the 16 years of excavation work conducted by the Australian team. Mr Omirou was genuinely interested to hear about the Nicholson Museum's extensive collection of Cypriot antiquities.

It is a natural relationship for the Nicholson Museum to work in Cyprus. The museum is home to one of the largest and most significant Cypriot collections in the world (more than 1500 items). As well, this year marks the 50th anniversary of the passing of former Nicholson curator and Professor of Middle Eastern archaeology James Stewart, who conducted many excavations in Cyprus before and after the Second World War. The Nicholson's Cypriot collection has long been used for research and for teaching students who will be participating on the dig.

The Nicholson's direct involvement with the Nea Paphos excavations will provide a lovely synergy of interests in the archaeology of Cyprus, academic research, and the volunteer program. This gives members of the public the chance to get involved, and enjoy a working holiday in a spectacular setting alongside expert archaeologists and other volunteers.

The next fieldwork season will take place in October 2012, once more with the generous support of the Nicholson Museum and the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens. We will announce positions for students and volunteers in the coming months.

**Dr Craig Barker is Manager of Education and Public Programs at Sydney University Museums.**



# HOPPING IN STONE

Whimsical additions or a serious statement of local pride? **Craig Barker** points out some of the Quadrangle's more unusual residents.



First-time visitors to the Quadrangle of the University of Sydney are often surprised by the neo-Gothic architecture, and in particular by the gargoyles high on the walls, especially those around the Clocktower on the eastern side.

But look a bit closer next time. For a building so deliberately designed to replicate the 'dreaming spires' of Oxbridge, there is a surprising number of references to local flora and fauna.

Gargoyles are commonly associated with medieval gothic architecture in which fantastical, mythical, ghastly or eerie stone-carved creatures serve as a waterspout or a drain from a building; water passing through the mouth of the carved creature.

The word 'gargoyle' originates from the French gargouille, meaning throat. While most commonly depicting fantastic creatures, real animals were incorporated into the repertoire of stonemasons from the 12th century.

In architectural terminology, non-functional and purely decorative carved creatures were called 'grotesques'. Most of the creatures on the Quadrangle are technically grotesques, but today the word gargoyle is used interchangeably for both carvings, and so it is at the University of Sydney.

### GARGOYLE GUARDIANS

Medieval superstition held that gargoyles also frightened away evil spirits. The most famous gargoyles are those adorning Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, but they were a regular feature on many other medieval religious and institutional buildings. The revival of Gothic architecture in Victorian times saw the gargoyle reappear; particularly on buildings attempting to create a sense of age and tradition.

In the late 1850s as construction was taking place on the Quadrangle's eastern range, the Clocktower and the Great Hall, stonemasons working under the direction of colonial architect Edmund Thomas Blacket carved the gargoyles on the front lawn before erecting them into place high on the Clocktower. Three masons were known to have worked on the decorative carvings: Edwin Colley, James Barnett and master carver Joseph Popplewell.



If certain accountants had had their way, the gargoyles might never have even existed. In 1859, a Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly was established to enquire into the University's expenditure. There was apparently some derision at "griffins, unicorns or other monstrous shapes" being added to the building, with one committee member wondering how the features would "serve to develop a high type of architectural taste". Fortunately the gargoyles survived the budget.

If you stand in front of the Clocktower today and look up, you will see not just a series of mythical creatures, but other animals such as a dog, ram and monkey. The eagle-eyed will also spot something you won't find on Notre Dame – the world's first kangaroo-shaped gargoyle (pictured on the page opposite). Located on the base of the north-easternmost turret, the kangaroo stands with his ears high. He has rightly become famous among those who know he is there, even if he has been humorously described on one blog as looking "like Skippy at the end of a three-day ice binge".

The kangaroo is not the only local to adorn the building. A crocodile is visible on the interior side of the Clocktower, while a pair of kookaburras sit above the external entrance of

The eagle-eyed will also spot something you won't find on Notre Dame – the world's first kangaroo-shaped gargoyle.

the northern staircase foyer. Blacket and his stonemasons were obviously intent on adding a local flavour to the English atmosphere they were creating. In similar spirit, when the Macleay Building was extended by architect Leslie Wilkinson in 1923, a kangaroo and a kookaburra were incorporated into the Gothic façade which overlooks the Botany Lawn.

The kangaroos, crocodile, and kookaburras demonstrate that even at the height of British imperialism and the deliberate recreation of an 'Oxbridge' atmosphere in the southern hemisphere, there was still an attempt to ground the new building within its Australian environment.

**Dr Craig Barker is Manager of Education and Public Programs at Sydney University Museums.**

# SYDNEY UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS

## DONOR HONOUR ROLL FOR 2011

Our sincere thanks to all of the generous individuals and organisations who have supported the university's museums and collections over the past year.

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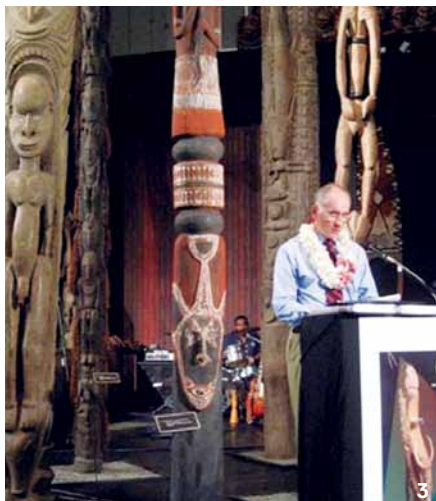
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# EVENTS



## SNAPSHOT OF 2011

**IN 2011 WE HAD  
85,600 VISITORS**

### OUR VISITORS ENJOYED:

- 6 new exhibitions
- 13 children's workshops
- 53 public lectures, talks and forums
- 7 study days
- University heritage tours (attracting 1545 people)
- teaching and learning sessions (attended by 9200 primary/secondary students, 700+ tertiary students, and 440 staff members)
- 1400 new items accessioned into our collections.

1. Curator of the Jeffrey Smart exhibition, Mark Ledbury, Power Professor of Art History with Ann Stephen, Senior Curator, University Art Gallery
2. Michael Turner, Senior Curator, Nicholson Museum with Gwenth Jones on her presentation of \$10,000 towards the Max Le Petitt and Gwenth Jones Nicholson Museum Prize
3. Alain Waquet, French Ambassador to Papua New Guinea (PNG) at the launch of *Living Spirits with fixed abodes*, B. Craig (2011) in the National Museum and Art Gallery of PNG. The Macleay Museum's senior curator Jude Philp was one of the Australian delegates invited to the launch.
4. Volunteers Karen Carrejo and Alina Kozovski at the opening of *Jeffrey Smart: Unspoken*
5. Speakers at the Macleay's Pacific History day last October (from left to right) Rex Rumakiek, Vanessa Smith, Michael Waterhouse, Fergus Clunie, Katerina Teaiwa, Leah Lui-Chivizhe, Leo Tanoi, Kirk Huffman

# WHAT'S ON

## AT SYDNEY UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS

Public events are subject to change. For further information and to view the latest timetable, visit our website at [sydney.edu.au/museums](http://sydney.edu.au/museums) and click on 'What's on'.

Please see the inside front cover for contact details for the Macleay Museum, the Nicholson Museum and the University Art Gallery.

### MARCH

**Saturday 3 March, 12 to 2pm**

**Exhibition opening**

**CORAL: ART SCIENCE LIFE**

Talks by scientists and artists who contributed to the exhibition

Official launch at 1pm by Professor Maria Byrne (One Tree Island Research Station)

Cost: free

Venue: Macleay Museum

**Saturday 3 March, 2pm**

**Free *Cities of the World* Saturday afternoon lecture**

**NICOSIA: A CITY DIVIDED**

Dr Craig Barker

Venue: Nicholson Museum

**Wednesday 14 March, 6.30pm**

**Friends of the Nicholson Museum AGM**

**NEWS FROM ATHENS**

Lecture by Dr Alastair Blanshard (University of Sydney)

Cost: Free for members of the Friends of the Nicholson Museum only

Venue: Nicholson Museum

### APRIL

**Saturday 7 April, 2pm**

**Free *Cities of the World* Saturday afternoon lecture**

**SO LONG! NEW YORK**

Lance Richardson

Venue: Nicholson Museum

**Thursday 12 April, 6.30pm**

**The 2012 Sir Charles Nicholson Lecture**

**PANDORA, RAPUNZEL AND THE PANTOMIME OF SOULS: LEGAL MILESTONES ON THE TRAIL OF ABDUCTED AND ORPHANED ANTIQUITIES**

Norman Palmer CBE QC FSA (London)

Cost: \$40 and \$25 for Friends of the Nicholson Museum

Venue: Nicholson Museum

**Wednesday 18 April, 12 to 1pm**

**Floor talk**

**JOSEPH BEUYS AND THE 'ENERGY PLAN'**

Donna West Brett, exhibition curator *Joseph Beuys and the 'Energy Plan'*

Cost: free

Venue: University Art Gallery

### MAY

**Wednesday 2 May, 12 to 1pm**

**Floor talk**

**JOSEPH BEUYS AND THE 'ENERGY PLAN'**

Tony Bond, Assistant Director, Curatorial Services, Art Gallery of New South Wales

Cost: free

Venue: University Art Gallery

**Saturday 5 May, 2 to 4pm**

**WHAT DOES BEUYS MEAN TODAY?**

**A contemporary art symposium between artists and curators including Tom Nicholson, Tony Bond and Donna West Brett**

Philosophy Lecture Room, The Quadrangle,

Sponsored by the Power Institute

**Saturday 5 May, 2pm**

**Free *Cities of the World* Saturday afternoon lecture**

**THE STONES OF PARIS**

Patricia Anderson

Venue: Nicholson Museum

**Wednesday 16 May, 6pm**

**Sydney Writers Festival event**

**THE SONS OF CLOVIS: ERN MALLEY, ADORE FLOUPETTE AND A SECRET HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN POETRY**

Author David Brooks speaks on the amazing Ern Malley hoax and Katherine Anderson will read a selection of the poems.

Cost: free

Bookings are essential as places are limited.

Venue: Macleay Museum



**Thursday 17 May, 6.30pm**

**Exhibition opening/book launch**

**50 OBJECTS. 50 STORIES. COLLECTING HISTORY AT THE NICHOLSON MUSEUM**

With David Malouf

Cost: \$40 and \$25 for Friends of the Nicholson Museum

Venue: Nicholson Museum



## JUNE

Saturday 2 June, 2pm

Free *Cities of the World* Saturday afternoon lecture

### ROME WITH OVID: A CITY OF POETRY

Dr Anne Rogerson

Venue: Nicholson Museum

Wednesday 20 June, 6pm

### MUSICAL SOIREE

An evening of performances by the Classic Strings Quartet (Sydney Conservatorium of Music) and the only Australian exhibition of Dr onacloV's multi-disciplinary visual work *Reefs on the Edge*

Cost: \$25 includes light refreshments

Bookings are essential as places are limited.

Venue: Macleay Museum

## HERITAGE TOURS AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Sydney University Museums offer extensive school and adult education programs and group heritage tours.

For more information email us at [museums.education@sydney.edu.au](mailto:museums.education@sydney.edu.au)

All details are correct at the time of going to press but events may change due to circumstances beyond our control. Visit the online events calendar on our website closer to the event for up-to-date information at [sydney.edu.au/museums/events\\_exhibitions/index\\_public\\_events.shtml](http://sydney.edu.au/museums/events_exhibitions/index_public_events.shtml)

Or follow us online at

[twitter.com/#SydneyUniMuseum](https://twitter.com/SydneyUniMuseum)

Find us on Facebook at

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sydney-University-Museums-Nicholson-Macleay-University-Art-Gallery/129233170489008>

## ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

### Ongoing activities

From now until September: Monday to Friday 10am to 4.30pm and the first Saturday afternoon of every month

### CONSTRUCT A REEF

From now to September we're asking kids to build a reef using arts and craft materials. Decide upon a creature to make, follow the instructions – and don't forget to sign your artwork. The person at the desk will help you put the finished work in the reef and give you a thank you card. Watch our coral reef grow over the weeks.

Cost: free

Venue: Macleay Museum

### April school holidays

Wednesday 11 April, 10am to 4pm

### UNDER THE SEA

Explore an octopus's garden with a fun day of arts and craft in the Macleay Museum as we build a reef in the museum. Hear talks from one of University of Sydney's marine biologists about what reefs are and how this amazing ecology works!

Activities for five to 12 year olds through the day.

Cost: free

Venue: Macleay Museum

Friday 13 April, 10am to 4pm

### ANCIENT GREEK MYTHS

As part of the Sydney Greek Festival 2012, kids take over the Nicholson Museum with a fun-filled day of arts and craft sessions, hands on with genuine ancient Greek artefacts and myth and Greek drama performances. Dress up like a hoplite!

Activities for five to 12 year olds through the day.

Cost: free

Venue: Nicholson Museum

Thursday 19 April, 4 to 6pm

### CHILDREN'S FILM NIGHT

Join us in the Nicholson Museum for a rare opportunity to watch a classic kids film surrounded by antiquities. Bring a cushion and enjoy.

Cost: free

Venue: Nicholson Museum



Pictured right: Carmel, Wallace's Cocoon #8 2009, on exhibition in the Macleay for Coral: art science life. Photograph: Tim Gresham



## MACLEAY MUSEUM

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# CORAL: ART SCIENCE LIFE

13 FEBRUARY - 1 SEPTEMBER 2012

Examining the boundaries of our concern for the coral reefs and spongy life forms that sustain life on the Queensland and NSW coast, this exhibition includes new works by Jenny Pollak, Carmel Wallace, Jacky Redgate and Debra Dawes; insights into current research into coral at the University of Sydney; and paintings by Torres Strait Islander school students.



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Image: background CONWAY (design); foreground *One degree of separation* © Jenny Pollak 2012.