

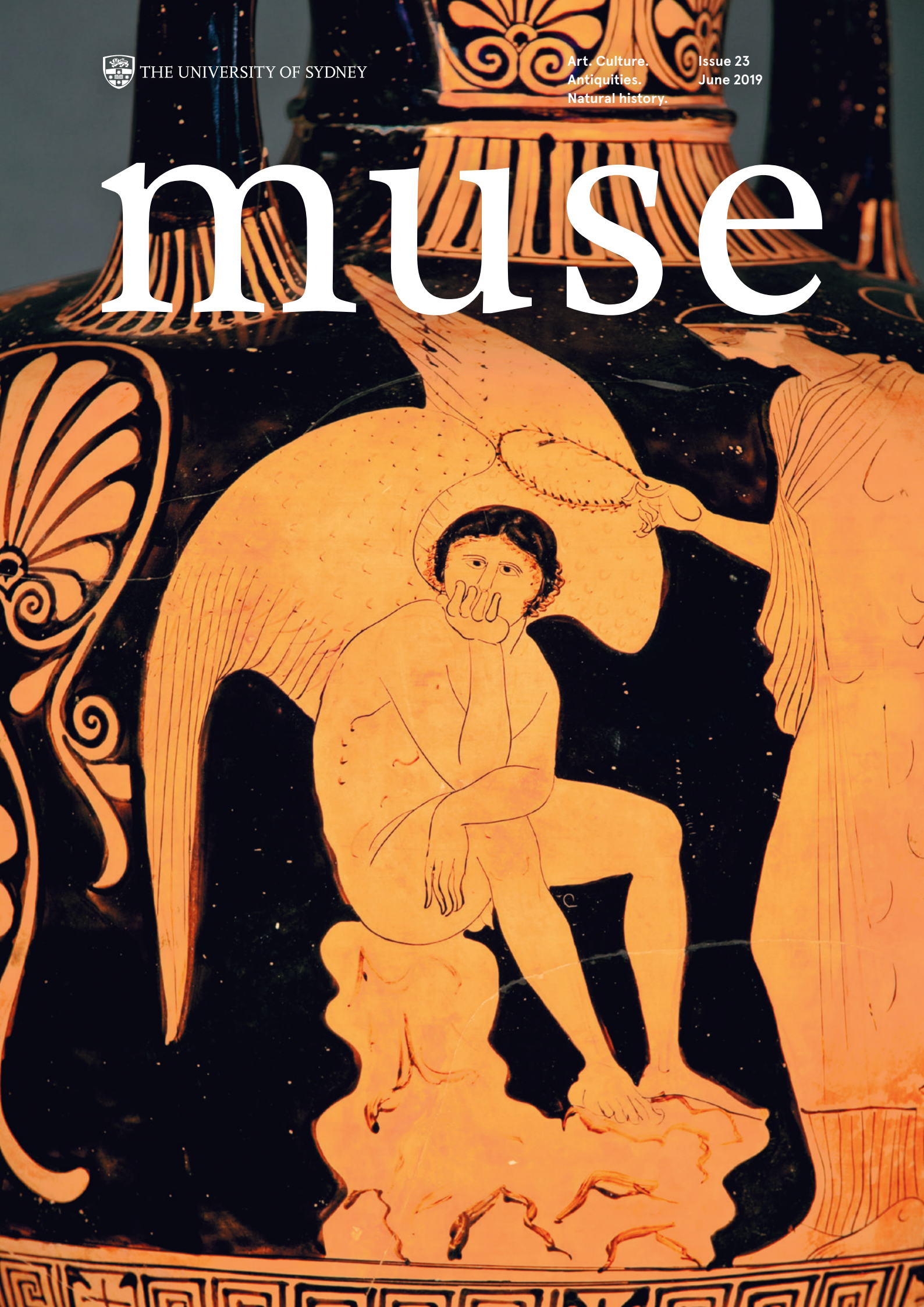


THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Art. Culture.
Antiquities.
Natural history.

Issue 23
June 2019

muse



Dodo meets Hollywood

A word from the Director, David Ellis



As we move closer towards the opening of our new museum, each issue of *Muse* will feature an update on the building progress. Currently, the complex pour of the cantilever structure is being undertaken. The builders, FDC, and our own Campus Infrastructure Services (CIS), have undertaken many projects, but building a museum is a first for both.

A public building housing remarkable and precious objects involves a myriad of specific requirements. Maintaining a consistent climate, for example, is imperative if we are to protect our treasures and borrow objects from other institutions. Walls need additional strengthening to hang heavy artworks, security and storage needs to be several notches above general expectations, and then there is the quality of finishes and materials ... the list goes on! The builders, CIS and museum staff have a whole new regard for each other's expertise.

On the subject of expertise, *Muse* typically features discoveries from the collection by staff and other contributors, and there are few

things that excite a curator more than solving mysteries. Recently discovered correspondence in the Nicholson Museum has revealed the much-loved peacock mosaic is not Sicilian, as long thought, but is in fact from the Via Appia in Rome. Unlocking more secrets, a recent discovery in the storeroom is a Jewish child's ossuary dating from the Roman era.

In this issue, we compare a scanning electron microscope's imagery with artist Margaret Preston's exploratory flower dissections, with both modes of looking helping us to understand plant structures. Such close looking is what new infrastructure in our museum will encourage, enabling us to develop teaching and undertake interdisciplinary collaborations.

The extraordinary breadth of our historic photography collection is evident in two stories, poles apart. The first features possibly one of the earliest photographs of a live animal, and the second documents the making of a silent movie in 1920 rural Queensland. 2019 is the centenary of the Bauhaus in Germany, and in this

issue we learn about a collaborative publication and travelling exhibition that traces the émigré artists who came to Australia.

Once again, our indebtedness to our generous supporters is demonstrated, this time through the acquisition of a black-figure vessel, acquired and named in honour of the much-admired long-term Honorary Curator of the Nicholson Museum, Emeritus Professor Alexander Cambitoglou. Finally, we feature weevils from the Macleay collection, tiny individuals with the potential to be 'the food of the future'.

Surprises abound! I hope you enjoy this issue.

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.

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.

General admission is free.

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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.

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In this issue

2 News

3 On the way up

The floors and ceilings for the lower levels of the Chau Chak Wing Museum have been poured. Next up is the fourth floor: a complex challenge in concrete pouring.

4 A rare bird: the tooth-billed pigeon

An 1863 photograph of the tooth-billed pigeon may be one of the earliest photos of a living animal.



6 Ajax and Achilles

Featuring the Trojan war heroes, our new Cambitoglou Amphora was acquired through the generosity of two benefactors.

9 The child within

In the 1950s, fragments of an ornately decorated limestone ossuary were excavated in a Roman-period tomb at Jericho. Now reassembled for display, research reveals it was the ossuary for a child.

10 Unbe-weevil-ble numbers

An entomological numbering project draws attention to the secret life of weevils – their diversity and impact on humans.

12 Hollywood comes to Murgon

A recently catalogued photograph album reveals some early film history of Australia.

14 Nicholson's peacock mosaic

Previously believed to be Sicilian, the celebrated peacock mosaic is revealed to be from the Via Appia outside Rome.

16 Looking through the nano lens

Researchers from art history, chemistry and nanoscience have come together to explore different ways of looking at art and the natural world.



18 Bauhaus Diaspora and beyond

On the centenary of the Bauhaus and its ongoing influence, we preview an upcoming exhibition and publication.

23 Making history

See what our guests and staff have been up to.

24 Find your muse

Upcoming events and programs.



Hongi's hikoi

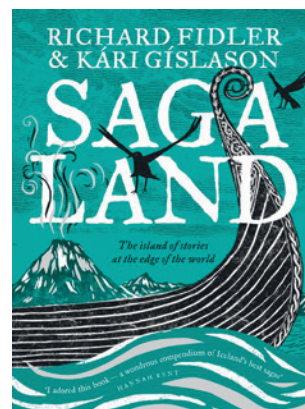
In late February 2019, a carved wooden bust from the Macleay collections, representing the famous Māori chief Hongi Hika, went on loan to the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra for the exhibition, *Ta Moko Māori Markings*. University of Sydney

staff respectfully ensured that Māori *kawa* (rules) and *tikanga* (protocol) were followed during the temporary relocation. A *karakia hiki taonga* (relocation blessing) was carried out by Ngāpuhi community members including Brent Reihana, Marama Kamira, Marcia Hau, Harina Haare and myself. This ensured that Hongi was acknowledged appropriately and that his transportation would occur safely and respectfully. It was an honour to be the *kaitiaki* (cultural guardian) during this process. For the next few months, Hongi has pride of place as part of the exhibition in Canberra.

For more information about Hongi Hika, please visit the website:

– www.hongishikoi.com

Brent Kerehona
(BA '07 MTeach '09 UWS)



Fidler and Friends

In a wonderful evening in early May, ABC broadcaster Richard Fidler and author Kári Gíslason spoke about their experiences researching the Icelandic sagas that led to their book, *Saga Land*. Both highly accomplished storytellers, Richard and Kári described blood feuds, dangerous people, and tales of those compelled to kill the ones they love. Yet despite their violence, the sagas present incredibly touching stories about what makes us human, set against the spare beauty of Iceland itself. Richard and Kári concluded the evening by singing a haunting Icelandic lullaby. A Friend of the Nicholson emailed the next morning, "What an entertaining, informative and fun night – a splendid evening!" This was the second time that Richard Fidler has spoken to the Friends of the Nicholson Museum, after talking about Byzantium in 2017. Both Richard and Kári are about to publish books on Prague and Iceland respectively. We hope to hear them speak at the Nicholson Museum again soon.



Onwards to Oxford

Regular Nicholson researcher and *Muse* contributor, Ana Silkatcheva, has earned a place at the University of Oxford to pursue her Doctorate. On top of this achievement, she has also been awarded a scholarship to assist with overseas student tuition fees and a stipend. The HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani Scholarship in Islamic Art and Architecture will enable Ana to research the mosaics of the Islamic

period in the Levant, placing them into their late Antique (Byzantine) context. This will be an expansion of her work on Byzantine mosaics in Jordan, completed for her Master of Arts (Research) at the University of Sydney. We wish Ana all the best and look forward to further news from Oxford.

Dr Paul Donnelly, Associate Director,
Content, Chau Chak Wing Museum

Dr Jamie Fraser, Senior
Curator, Nicholson Museum



This image, from March 2019, shows the third floor overlaid with each areas function. The main entrance foyer, coming off University Place, can be seen mid-left.

On the way up

Paul Donnelly gives insight into the exciting progress of the Chau Chak Wing Museum.

The Chau Chak Wing Museum continues to make rapid progress since the last edition of *Muse*, and remains on schedule for a July 2020 opening. We can add several milestones, including the pouring of the second-level floor comprising display galleries, three object-based learning studios, the café and a terrace.

The second level now has a ceiling, courtesy of the pouring of the third-floor entry level above. The western end of this entrance level can be seen in the photograph above, which has been overlaid with the functions identified including the foyer, shop, and multipurpose room.

It is exciting to see the front entrance of the new building, consciously placed by the architects, Johnson Pilton Walker, on a direct axis with

the door of the Great Hall opposite. As was the intention, there is no doubting that this is the University of Sydney's museum.

The especially complex preparation of the fourth floor is underway. It is not so much the floor of the fourth level that poses a difficulty as much as the soffit ceiling of the third floor below. Together with the central lightwell, the soffit ceiling is considered a crucial architectural element. It forms the base and continuation of the side walls of the cantilevered box surmounting the sandstone-coloured precast sections below.

The whole of the box is poured in situ; an extremely complex process. The contents of numerous cement trucks must match and merge to form a seamless whole. Contributing to the difficulty is the usual protuberances

of an institutional ceiling – lighting track, fire compliance, wi-fi beacons among many other things – that have to be allocated a void in the underside of the pour. There is no moving them once tonnes of concrete are in place!

It is understandable that the rapid progress of the last few months will slow down to accommodate these new challenges. In the meantime, the detailed and exciting preparation for exhibitions continues, with museum staff responding to the first stage of design concepts prepared by the four design companies dedicated to designing the exhibitions, along with finessing object lists, and conserving and preparing our incredibly diverse range of objects for display.

Designed by Sydney architects Johnson Pilton Walker and built by FDC Construction NSW, the Chau Chak Wing Museum will bring together the University's Macleay and Nicholson Museums and University Art Gallery, and in the process gain a significance and heightened profile ideally poised to showcase some of Australia's most significant artistic, scientific and archaeological collections.

Dr Paul Donnelly is Associate Director, Content, Chau Chak Wing Museum

A rare bird

The tooth-billed pigeon

Didunculus strigirostris

Behind this carte-de-visite photograph lies a Sydney story about the tooth-billed pigeon, *Didunculus strigirostris*. Jan Brazier explores the tale of how this “nearest living ally to the extinct dodo” came to Sydney.



Didunculus strigirostris, carte-de-visite photograph: TS Glaister, Sydney, 1863, donated by JP Ramsay, 1996, Macleay Museum, HP96.79

In Samoa, where *Didunculus strigirostris* is endemic, it is known as the manumea or red bird. It is currently listed as endangered and in 1863, when this image was taken, it was thought to be possibly extinct. Therefore, it caused great interest when a living specimen came to Sydney.

The first description of the species was by naturalist Sir William Jardine, from the only known specimen in England which was in his collection. The skin was purchased by Lady Harvey at a sale in Edinburgh. Jardine's description of what he

named *Gnathodon strigirostris* was published in 1845 in the *Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, *Gnathodon* meaning 'toothed jaw'. Ornithologist John Gould made a drawing from this specimen, published in his fifth volume of *The Birds of Australia*.

When it was found that the genus name *Gnathodon* had already been used for a mollusc, the name changed to *Didunculus* or 'little dodo', given by Titian R Peale, a naturalist on the United States Exploring Expedition to Samoa in 1838–40, in his report published in 1848.

On 19 August 1862, physician and naturalist Dr George Bennett wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* his 'Observations on the Tooth-billed Pigeon'. A member of the Acclimatisation Society of New South Wales (NSW), Dr Bennett recounted what was known of the species, adding that he had been trying for some time to procure the bird and naturalise it in NSW, and that he hoped to find out if the bird still existed. He wrote again on 3 September, having received notes on the pigeon, sent by the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria and compiled by Reverend John Stair,

John Gould, *The Birds of Australia* (London, 1848), Vol. V, Plate 76, *Gnathodon strigirostris*, Jard. Image courtesy of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Sydney Library



... this “nearest living ally to the extinct dodo” had been brought to Sydney by JC Williams

a former missionary in Samoa. In June 1863, John Williams, British Consul in the Navigator Islands (Samoa), took “a living specimen of this peculiar bird” to Sydney, a young bird in immature plumage from the island of Upolu. On 24 July, Williams arranged for another bird, an adult from the island of Savai’i, to be brought to Sydney. The Acclimatisation Society of Victoria reported at its meeting on 18 August in a letter from Williams that a second bird had arrived in Sydney, offering the pair for 50 pounds “having failed to effect a sale to Dr Bennett” (*Argus*, 20 August 1863).

The council decided to write and authorise Dr Bennett to purchase the birds to present jointly to the London Zoological Society. At the meeting of the Acclimatisation Society of NSW on 24 August, Dr Bennett informed the members that he had purchased the pair of pigeons “at a very high price” to send to London. He had

decided to take sole responsibility and expense, aware of the risk of casualties (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 August 1863). Sadly, the older bird died on 14 September, and was preserved in spirits.

The surviving bird was shipped on 12 January 1864, to arrive safely in London on 10 April, then placed in the Zoological Society gardens in Regent’s Park the next day. The bird had laid an egg during the voyage, determining it as a female.

From this story, we can identify this photograph as being of the immature bird taken in 1863. The Macleay Museum has three copies of the carte-de-visite donated by the son and grandson of EP Ramsay.

On 15 July 1863, EPR (Edward Pierson Ramsay) wrote about the *Didunculus strigirostris* in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, noting that a living specimen of this “nearest living ally to the

extinct dodo” had been brought to Sydney by JC Williams. Ramsay, a keen ornithologist and later curator of the Australian Museum (1874–94) was granted permission by Williams to examine his specimen several times, from which he wrote his observations in *Ibis*, the *International Journal of Avian Science*, published in January 1864. He noted the wonderful colours of the pigeon: “The head, neck, and upper part of the chest are of a dull, slate-blue colour, the feathers on the back of the head and neck and on the lower sides of the neck having a gloss of metallic green in some lights.” The Australian Museum now holds 12 specimens.

The photographer, Thomas Skelton Glaister, had a studio at 253 Pitt Street, Sydney. In this story, we don’t know who organised for it to be photographed – it may have been Ramsay. Although it is a black and white image of a colourful bird, it remains a rare early photograph of a particular bird, and one of the earliest portraits of a living animal.

Jan Brazier is Curator, History Collections, Macleay Museum



The newly acquired Cambitoglou
Amphora, NM2018.136

Ajax and Achilles

Unveiling the Cambitoglou Amphora

In October 2018, a newly acquired vase was unveiled to the Friends of the Nicholson Museum as the 'Cambitoglou Amphora'. It honours Professor Alexander Cambitoglou, who served as Honorary Curator of the Nicholson Museum from 1963–2000. Dr Jamie Fraser tells the story.

This handsome amphora is the Nicholson Museum's most recent acquisition. With considerable pathos, it depicts a key moment in the Trojan War when Ajax carried the body of Achilles from the battlefield at Troy; Achilles' feet hang limp, his helmet and shield borne on Ajax's back. The vase is attributed to the Antimenes Painter, the celebrated master of black-figured ceramics who worked in Athens in the late 6th century BC. It was probably exported to Vulci in Italy and eventually placed inside a tomb. But how did this remarkable object find its way to Sydney?

Although we do not know the circumstances of its discovery, the amphora appeared on the European market in the early-mid 20th century, purchased by M. Bernard Bottet. A painter and art dealer with a passion for archaeology, Bottet had worked on several digs in France before leading his own excavations in 1946 at the Baume Bonne cave in Provence, where he discovered an important sequence of Paleolithic and Neanderthal remains.

With broad interests in ancient and contemporary societies, Bottet amassed an astonishing collection of archaeological and ethnographical artefacts from across the globe. Most objects were collected before the Second World War, and certainly all were acquired by 1969, when Bottet made the last of his extensive, handwritten inventories. Significantly, Bottet listed the amphora's purchase as 250 'old francs', which demonstrates its acquisition before the introduction of the 'new franc' on 1 January 1960.

The collection remained in the Bottet family until 1989, when it was split in a series of auctions. The last of these sales was the 2012 auction *Objets du Hasard* in Paris, in which the amphora was sold as 'Lot 41'. When



Image from the 2012 *Objets du Hasard* catalogue, which sold the final portion of the Bottet collection at the Drouot Richelieu auction house in Paris; the vase now called the Cambitoglou Amphora was depicted as 'Lot 41'

the amphora reappeared at Sotheby's in London in 2018, I found myself perched nervously in my pajamas on the couch at 3am, bidding over the phone on behalf of the Nicholson Museum.

I was keen to acquire the vase. Although a familiar subject, the Trojan War is poorly represented in Australian collections, and I had no doubt the vase would quickly find itself used in undergraduate teaching. The amphora also lends itself beautifully to a Trojan War display that Assistant Curator Candace Richards is developing for the Chau Chak Wing Museum.

However, the Nicholson Museum can only acquire new objects by drawing on donated funds. Fortunately, two generous bequests made the purchase possible. The first was made in 2010 by Shirley Joan Atkinson, who had been Professor Cambitoglou's Departmental Secretary in



Above: Professor Alexander Cambitoglou (bottom row, left) and Mary Tancred (second from left) with the Ladies Committee of the Association for Classical Archaeology. image © archives of the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens
Below: Antimenes Amphora NM77.1, purchased with funds donated by Mary Tancred



Above: Professor Alexander Cambitoglou at the unveiling of the Cambitoglou Amphora in the Nicholson Museum on 17th October 2018

the 1960–70s. Following her retirement, she volunteered for the Chancellor’s Book Sale, and left bequests to the Chancellor’s Committee and for research into microsurgery and otolaryngology, in addition to the Nicholson Museum.

The second bequest – which provided the lion’s share of the purchasing fund – was donated by Mary Tancred, who died in 2003. Tancred had a long involvement with the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens (AAIA), an institute established by Professor Cambitoglou, and through the AAIA she supported the Nicholson Museum. Indeed, Tancred made an initial donation in 1977, when she funded the acquisition of the celebrated black-figured Antimenes Amphora, which depicts one of the Labours of Herakles. The newly acquired amphora is an extraordinary companion piece to this vase, linked doubly by the Antimenes Painter who created them and Mary Tancred who helped fund their acquisition.

It is important to acknowledge that Tancred specified her bequest be used for the acquisition of an object in honour of Professor Cambitoglou. In doing so, she not only gifted the Nicholson Museum the funds to enhance its collection, she presented us an opportunity to celebrate Professor Cambitoglou’s service. We realise this opportunity by naming the vase the ‘Cambitoglou Amphora’.

Dr Alexander Cambitoglou arrived in Sydney in 1962 as Senior Lecturer in Classical Archaeology, and quickly became Honorary Curator of the Nicholson Museum in 1963 and Professor of Classical Archaeology in 1964. He found a museum with extraordinary depth, but one that had yet to shake the dust of its Victorian past. From 1962–66, Professor Cambitoglou shut the museum to reconfigure its rooms into new, contemporary galleries with updated displays.



The museum reopened on 23 September 1966. Cambitoglou described the arduous transformation, then invited Professor Trendall (Honorary Curator 1939–54) to declare the museum open. The transcripts of these speeches are held in the museum’s archives. “Our first difficulty,” Professor Cambitoglou reflected, “was to prepare a modern display in a building that does not lend itself to the needs of a modern museum.” The Gothic windows were sealed, the ceiling lowered, new cases introduced. Professor Trendall described the transformation as a fairytale, “revealing so much beauty that was previously hidden from us beneath a disguise”.

Reading these speeches, I am struck by Professor Cambitoglou’s ambition to create something beyond itself. Acknowledging the difficulties his team had faced, he remarked: “It is only because of our faith that we were contributing something important to our University, to the city of Sydney, and indeed to Australia that we had the strength to carry out our task. Since there is no other Museum of Antiquities of this magnitude in the country, the Nicholson Museum’s importance extends beyond the University’s grounds; it is the Australian National Museum of Antiquities.”

The bequests by Shirley Atkinson and Mary Tancred reflect the esteem in which the Nicholson Museum was held under Professor Cambitoglou’s curatorship. By naming the vase the Cambitoglou Amphora, we honour the spirit of these bequests and celebrate one of the most influential figures to have shaped the Nicholson Museum in its 159 years.

**Dr Jamie Fraser is Senior Curator,
Nicholson Museum**

The child within

In the 1950s, archaeologists discovered fragments of a small limestone chest in a tomb at Jericho. It was identified as a Jewish ossuary and sent to the Nicholson Museum. Sandra Gordon takes a closer look at the recently restored object.

Ossuaries were used specifically in tombs of the elite during the Roman period as secondary burial receptacles for bones collected from the original resting places after the body had decomposed – a practice known as *ossilegium*. The most concentrated and prolific use of ossuaries occurred in Jewish burials in the Roman province of Judea from the late 1st century BCE until the First Jewish Revolt (c.66–70 CE). The use of ossuaries declined and eventually ceased around the time of the Second Jewish Revolt in 135 CE.

The Nicholson ossuary is small at 20 cm in height, with an inner ledge which may originally have been for a lid. As it is not of sufficient dimensions to house adult or adolescent bones, the ossuary was almost certainly created for a child, the size typically used to contain the bones of a newborn baby. The only decoration is on the front panel, which is incised in freehand and consists of three metopes enclosed in a linear zigzag frame. Two of the metopes are decorated with a crosshatched or net pattern which was used mainly in the depiction of *nefesh* (meaning 'soul' in Hebrew) funeral monuments. The pattern is reminiscent of Roman *opus reticulatum* brickwork, examples of which are seen in the walls of the winter palaces of Herod the Great at Jericho. The central panel is divided into 15 squares, each with a diagonal cross. Known as the 'lattice' pattern, this motif may depict gates or doors to a tomb, temple, an outer court or, perhaps symbolically, a sacred portal. The zigzag or fingernail pattern was a common framing device on ossuaries.

The decoration of the Nicholson ossuary combines standard ossuary motifs to create a unique design which perhaps depicts gates and columns in a wall of a temple or mausoleum. As the ossuary is clearly for a small child, it is possible this was a bespoke design with some familial connotation specific to the child within. Although the meaning of the decoration is now lost, this small ossuary, with its special purpose in the context of Jewish burial customs of 1st century CE Judea, is a poignant and unique addition to the Nicholson Museum collection.

Sandra Gordon is a PhD candidate, Department of Archaeology, the University of Sydney



A Jewish ossuary from Jericho, Nicholson Museum, NM2018.134

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Neotropical diamond weevils are used in jewellery, in the framed insect trade and for studies on photonic crystal microstructures; these weevils have grand names such as *Entimus imperialis*, *E. nobilis* and *E. splendidus*; Macleay collections NHEN.3794, NHEN.3805 and NHEN.3809



Last year, the Macleay Museum embarked on the biggest numbering project since 1964, when Jenny Anderson and Elizabeth Hahn heroically undertook the job of bringing the collections into 20th century museum practice – cataloguing and documenting the Macleay's tens of thousands of objects and specimens, which includes Australia's oldest entomological collection.

Internationally and locally, insect collections have not been numbered because of their size, and also the

date, more than 37,000 dry-pinned specimens have been meticulously numbered. Of these, the weevils (family Curculionidae) from the modern curated cabinets were the first to be completely catalogued at 25,231 individuals.

About 97,000 species of weevils worldwide have been recorded as of 2018. This makes them one of (if not *the*) largest animal family existing today. They are so diverse that taxonomists still cannot agree on how to classify them. The two features they all share are being herbivorous,

About 97,000 species of weevils worldwide have been recorded as of 2018. This makes them one of (if not *the*) largest animal family existing today.



technical proficiency in taxonomy and conservation of your average entomological curator. As museums continue to change, so too the Macleay collections, which last year hired me to begin the job of numbering the 300,000 specimens housed at the University.

Why do they need numbers? Well, for starters, it's not ideal to refer to an individual as "that red bug", or "*Parastratiosphecomyia stratiosphecomyioide*". Numbers also enable us to keep track of specimens moved for exhibition or borrowed by researchers. Even to simply value them for insurance purposes, precise details are required.

Starting in 2017, all the entomological collection drawers were photographed. Then, beginning with the weevils, each specimen was given an individual number, tagged and catalogued into the collection management system database. To

and having a snout which ends with their mouths. This allows them to chew through a plant's tough outer covering (think tree trunks, nutshells or seed coats) and feed on the tissue within. Female weevils also use their noses to bore holes, in which they deposit eggs to keep them safe from predators and the weather. This snout is often credited as the reason for the weevils' evolutionary success.

Alas, poor weevils, everybody hates them. They are not welcome in our gardens and household foods, and in agriculture they range from being a minor nuisance to the worst enemy ever, capable of destroying whole crops. Almost every known plant species is attacked by at least one type of weevil. However, being the 'bad guy' is not the only story about them.

Weevils have been used to control pest plants; sometimes they are so effective, countries will willingly

import them as exotic control agents. They have been used as animal models for insect studies on mimicry and defence mechanisms. Some species will pollinate their host plants: *Rhapalotria slossoni* is a specialised example – the rare Coontie cycad and Atala butterfly in Florida are dependent on this hero for survival. Fossil weevils, that lived on specific host plants, are used to reconstruct ancient ecosystems.

More than 2000 species of insects are eaten by about 80 percent of the world's nations. For example, the larvae of palm weevils (*Rhynchophorus* spp.) are said to be a rich source of protein, trace elements and calories. They are a delicacy throughout tropical Africa, South America and Southeast Asia, where selling them supplements farmers' incomes and helps during food shortages. Given our growing human population, plus lower environmental impact of farming insects for meat (versus livestock, poultry and fish), these and other bugs are already being touted as the 'food of the future'.

By being a problem, weevils also create huge job opportunities to 'solve' them. The Global Market for Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is already valued at more than \$92 billion and is expected to be worth a whopping \$151 billion by 2025. Rising temperatures from climate change tend to favour insect growth, and a growing awareness to minimise pesticide use leads to research for better control methods.

Some of the Macleay collection weevils will be on display in the Chau Chak Wing Museum from mid-2020.

Matthew Huan is Collections Officer, Sydney University Museums



Hollywood comes to Murgon



What's the connection between an Australian tennis player, Aboriginal stockriders, and a silent film, *Romance at Runnibede*? The story starts with an old photo album, as Chris Jones explains.

Floris St George was a successful Australian tennis player in the 1920s. She competed at Wimbledon and reached the final of the Australian Open in 1922. The Macleay collection has a photograph album that visually documents her life, and as you would expect there are many photographs of Floris and her friends playing tennis and socialising. However, there are three images in the album of 'Murgon, Queensland' that tell quite a different story, providing a window on Australian cinema at the tail end of the silent era, as well as a dark chapter in Australian history.

The caption on the first image says, "Eva Novak, Jim and co at Murgon, Queensland 1927". The image is a group of people playing cards around a table. In the background is a movie camera. What is going on in this intriguing scene?

"Jim" was Floris' husband, James Edward Wayland, a stage and film actor known as Roland Conway. Eva Novak was an American film actor who had come to Australia in 1926 to act in the silent film, *For the Term of His Natural Life*. The image captures the film crew taking a break during the shooting of the silent film, *The Romance of Runnibede*.

The film is based on an incident from the novel of the same name by Australian author Steele Rudd. Much of the film centres around a cattle station called Runnibede and follows Dorothy Winchester (played by Eva Novak) who has returned to her father's station in North Queensland after four years of school. She is kidnapped by a group of local Aboriginal people who believe she is the reincarnation of a queen. She is pursued by two men who love her: Tom Linton, a stockman on her father's property, and Sub-Inspector Dale, a mounted policeman. Roland Conway plays Dorothy's father, Arthur Winchester.

Eva Novak, James Wayland, Virginia Ainworth and others, Murgon, Queensland, 1927, Macleay Museum, HP91.29.4.75





Eva Novak, James Wayland and film crew at Murgon, Queensland, 1927, MacLeay Museum, HP91.29.4.73

The film was directed by Americans; Eva's husband William Reed initially directed until Scott Dunlap arrived in Australia. American actor and director Wallace Worsley, who was in Australia at the time, visited the set and provided advice. The film was produced by American businessman Frederick Phillips and William Reed. However, despite the strong American influence, all actors were Australian (except Eva), and author Steele Rudd provided some funding. It is certainly an Australian film, telling an Australian story in the Australian landscape.

Eva had returned to America in January 1927 after filming *For the Term of His Natural Life*, but returned by the end of May that year to start the new film, finishing at the end of June. During filming, the crew actively engaged with the local community, attending a ball at the Anglican church, horseriding, and meeting local celebrity, Aboriginal boxer Jimmy Jerome. Eva stayed in Australia and in 1928 toured with the film as it was screened around the country, performing scenes live for the audience before the film started.

While studio filming was done in Rushcutters Bay, much of the filming was done at Barambah Station, just outside of Murgon. The local Aboriginal population featured significantly in the film, which included a corroboree and other

ceremonies. Some newspapers reported as many as 400 Aboriginal extras participating in the film. The newspaper also talked about Aboriginal stockriders rehearsing stunts. These men would likely have worked at Barambah Station, which regularly employed Aboriginal men as stockmen, station hands and brumby runners. The photograph of Jim surrounded by Aboriginal children and newspaper reports about Aboriginal involvement in the film belie the situation for the Aboriginal community in the area.

Barambah, later renamed Cherbourg, was an Aboriginal reserve. Between 1905 and 1938, the population on the reserve increased significantly with 2079 documented removals of Aboriginal people to Barambah during this period. This increase in population was the result of government policies which forcibly removed large numbers of Aboriginal people from various parts of Australia to Barambah. Life was difficult on the reserve which lacked adequate housing, sanitation, education and medical facilities. The community was seen as a cheap labour force for the Barambah Station, and this is perhaps one reason the location was selected for filming. It is important to understand the wider context when reading newspaper reports and looking at photographs.

The State Library of New South Wales has images in their collection of the production of *The Romance of Runnibede*. However, Floris' images show a more intimate and personal side of the filmmaking process. They document the downtime between shooting, and provide a hint of the excitement that happens when Hollywood comes to town.

Chris Jones is Assistant Collections Manager, Sydney University Museums



James Wayland and local children, Murgon, Queensland, 1927, MacLeay Museum, HP91.29.4.74



Unlocking the secrets of Nicholson's peacock mosaic

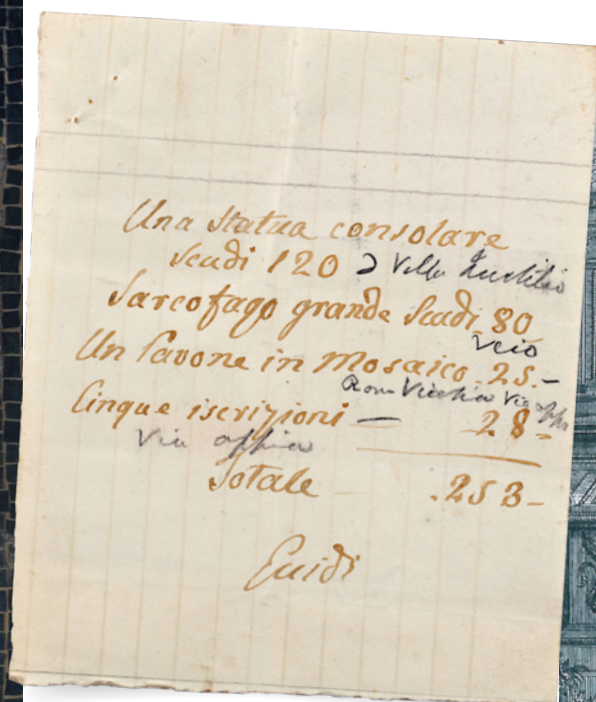
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The discovery of a historical receipt has provided new insight into the origins of the celebrated peacock mosaic, one of the first artefacts donated by Sir Charles Nicholson. Eleanor Munro tells the story.

Nicholson's peacock mosaic is a stunning example of a Late Roman work from the 4th and 5th centuries AD. Mosaics were commonly used to decorate the walls and floors of important buildings throughout the Empire. They were often made with tesserae (small cubes) made from stone or marble; the finest mosaics used tesserae of glass or gold. The Nicholson peacock is made from green, yellow, white, red and black stone tesserae and green and blue glass tesserae, making it a dynamic, high quality example of Ancient Roman decorative arts.

The symbology of the peacock is intriguing. During the Roman period, the peacock was the sacred bird of the goddess Juno and associated with the god Bacchus. As the empire became Christian, the peacock became a symbol of immortality.

For decades, the mosaic was thought to have originated from



Opposite page: The peacock mosaic, Nicholson Museum, NMR.1062
 Above: The historic receipt
 Right: 'The Via Appia' as imagined by Luigi Canina in *The Appian Way*, edited by Ivana Della Portella, published by Arsenale Editrice, 2004

Nicholson's peacock mosaic may have originally adorned the floor or wall of one of the tombs beside the Via Appia.

Sicily; an assumption largely based on stylistic comparisons. This view was to change. In 2018, Assistant Curator Candace Richards found, hiding on the uppermost shelf in the corner of the Nicholson storeroom, a box of historical correspondence between the Nicholson Museum and other cultural institutions around the world. A project began: to review the correspondence in the hope that it would reveal new information about objects in the collection. One of the first documents to be reviewed was a list of purchases beautifully written in Italian, in gold ink on a small, square, scrap of thickly textured paper. This piece of paper was to deliver important information about the origins of Nicholson's mosaic.

Dr Ted Robinson from the Department of Archaeology translated the Italian to reveal that "a mosaic peacock" had been bought for 25 scudi from "Rome, ancient Via Appia" by a person called Guidi. Although the list is not

dated, scudi were coins used by the Papal States prior to 1866. In addition, Dr Robinson surmised that Guidi was likely Giovan(ni) Battisti Guidi, who was excavating in Rome during the 1840s and 1850s and selling antiquities. It seems reasonable to assume that when Nicholson donated his peacock mosaic to the University of Sydney in 1860, he provided these records of purchase as part of the donation.

So, how does this new information change our understanding of the mosaic? Previous interpretations placed the mosaic in a domestic context, suggesting it would have decorated the floor of a Roman villa. However, by placing the mosaic along the Via Appia, this new evidence calls for a revision. The Via Appia, or *regina viarum* (the Queen of Roads), was the first of the great roads to be built by the Romans, after Censor Appius Claudius Caecus organised for the stone-paved

road to be constructed in 312 BC. Once completed, the road provided quick and direct access between Rome and Capua in Campania. The first 10 kilometres of the Via Appia outside Rome were lined with tombs, monuments and inscriptions.

Rather than being a domestic decoration, Nicholson's peacock mosaic may have originally adorned the floor or wall of one of the tombs beside the Via Appia. Further research into these tombs could provide a greater understanding of the context and meaning of Nicholson's peacock. Intriguingly, this is just one of four items mentioned on the invoice, which may in time provide more insights into the origins of other artefacts donated by Sir Charles Nicholson.

Eleanor Munro was a curatorial assistant in the Nicholson Museum, and the liaison officer for the Friends of the Nicholson, until April 2019.



Margaret Preston,
Flannel Flowers, 1924,
oil on canvas,
University Art
Collection, UA1990.269

Margaret Preston is a central figure in the modernist Australian art movement. Renowned for her still life of Australian native flora, Preston's art captures a sense of the texture, shape, solidity and often the very sensation of her subjects. There are many works by Preston in the University Art Collection, including *Flannel Flowers* (1924), which was the inspiration for our research project linking art and science, a chance to explore how each of our disciplines 'sees', as well as the nature of close looking.

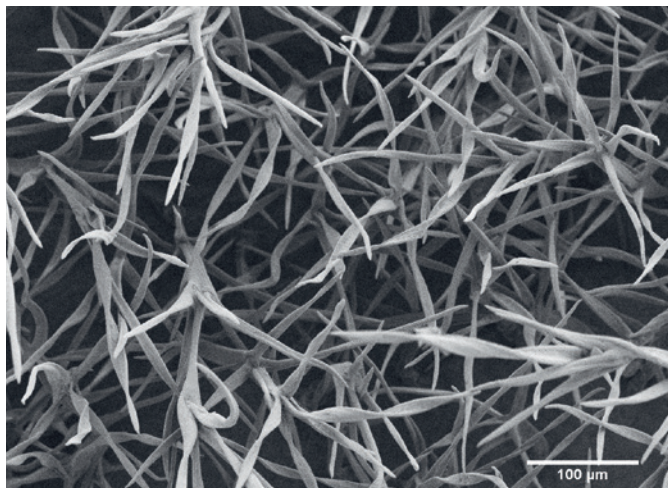
The project linked researchers from the University of Sydney Nano Institute, School of Chemistry and Department of Art History. Our collaboration has resulted in some fascinating research into Preston and the nano surfaces of Australian plants. Early outcomes led to innovations in the use of art and the natural flora on our campus, for both University teaching and the engagement of broader audiences for citizen science projects and school programs.

Our interdisciplinary project came together in 2017 as a result of a grant from the Sydney Social Sciences and Humanities Advanced Research Centre, which called for research collaboration between the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Sydney Nano Institute on 'Human Perspectives on the Nano-Scale'.

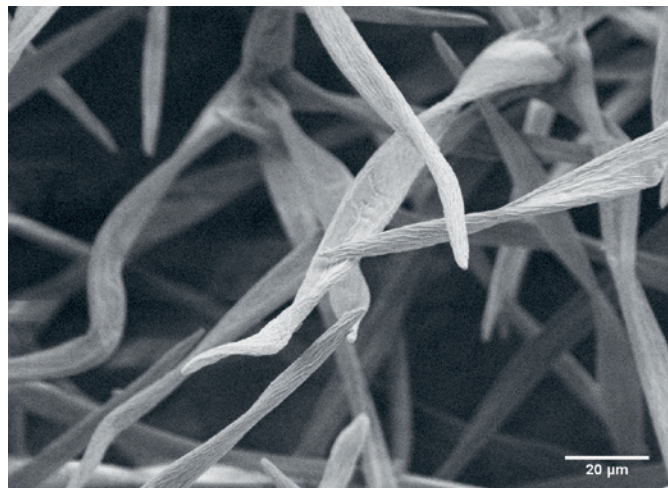
Looking through the nano lens

—

Researchers from art and science come together in a project that examines approaches to the art of looking at nature.



Scanning electron microscopy images of a flannel flower at high magnification. Images: Anthony Katselas



“When I am painting flowers, I’ll pull one of its kind to pieces. I will know exactly how it’s formed.”

Our project, the Nano Lens, is made up of a core team of University of Sydney academics: Dr Chiara O’Reilly, Director of Museum and Heritage Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences; and Associate Professor Chiara Neto and Dr Alice Motion, both from the School of Chemistry and Sydney Nano. We were thrilled to use the University’s own collection of still life work by Margaret Preston as a focus for our research. Preston’s painting, *Flannel Flowers*, shows a deep understanding of the structure and function of flowers. The composition is carefully arranged and despite its simplistic appearance, it is surprisingly complex; overlapped, the bunch of flannel flowers jostle in the vase, a single stem on the table. Preston establishes a sense of the flowers’ softness, both in her application of paint and the muted colours used.

Preston studied her subjects closely. In a radio interview with Sydney Ure Smith in 1945 for 2FC Radio, she described how she studied the natural world in detail, including through dissection: “When I am painting flowers, I’ll pull one of its kind to pieces,” she explained. “I will know

exactly how it’s formed. When I’ve done this, I draw from another one. I do this with all my flowers. I make studies of them.”

Preston’s process of detailed observation, including the study of the subjects’ elements and transformation, was used by our team as an invitation to explore similar subjects with nanoscience – if we drilled down into their details beyond the level of the human eye, what would we reveal?

The team focused on three subjects familiar to Preston and found on campus: banksia, flannel flower and kangaroo paw. Samples were collected and prepared for a scientific study that mirrored Preston’s close observations. The samples were examined using scanning electron microscopy that enabled us to ‘zoom in’ and look at how the flowers and leaves were formed at a level of detail far too intricate and minute to be observed by the human eye. We also measured the surface properties of our specimens, including how well they repelled water, a property called hydrophobicity. Nature provides many inspirations for scientists developing

hydrophobic synthetic surfaces for various applications, ranging from medical devices to paints. The collaboration inspired us to open our research to wider audiences, and we have been exploring its use in teaching and outreach, with a citizen science project in development. We, like many before, have realised the synergy between art and science and the surprising ways in which they both intersect and inspire the other discipline.

Preston’s renown as an artist has belied the importance of her contribution to innovation in the art of looking. Projects like the Nano Lens offer a new way to focus on Preston’s work and explore her subject matter. Our collaboration has given us all a new appreciation for her art, revealed new aspects about the nano structures of Australian plants and allowed us to develop content that we are applying in teaching and to engage the broader public audience.

Dr Alice Motion is Lecturer in Chemical Education and Outreach, School of Chemistry, Sydney Nano.

Associate Professor Chiara Neto is an ARC Future Fellow, School of Chemistry, Sydney Nano.

Dr Chiara O’Reilly is Director, Museum and Heritage Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.



Bauhaus Diaspora and beyond

This year marks the centenary of the establishment of the Bauhaus in Germany, an important and influential art school. Ann Stephen explains its influence in Australia, through the collective presence of many émigré artists, designers and architects.



The Bauhaus influence was felt from preschool children to primary and secondary students, among art teachers and within educational policy, and critically, among tertiary students in art, design and architecture schools across Australia and New Zealand. It has exerted a profound influence upon practitioners across all of these disciplines.

In 1926, the Australian expatriate artist J.W. Power wrote of his interest in the Bauhaus:

"I have not been in Germany since 1910 and then only in the south, but of recent years I have endeavoured to keep up with their newer developments by means of books, magazines and photographs. I know Eric Mendelsohn's work by pictures fairly well and also Walter Gropius who built the marvelous new art school or "Bauhaus" at Dessau, and I have Einstein's book on their modern painting and one or two others. I should love to see the interiors you speak of ... I see that both of them [Klee and Kandinsky] have been appointed art masters at the Dessau Bauhaus and if the resume of their course of teaching in the last number of Cahiers d'art is true, it must all be very wonderful. I should like very much to exhibit in Berlin.

Power kept abreast of developments in contemporary German art and architecture and was clearly excited about the Bauhaus, its teaching and the new buildings at Dessau. Just seven years after its founding in Weimar in 1919, the reputation of the new institution was growing rapidly. While the return of Australian artists, designers



Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack supervising students making constructivist lanterns, Wickersdorf, Germany, 1926
© Chris Bell

and architects who had been touched by the reformist methods and principles of Bauhaus teaching had an impact on the education of other Australian creatives, it was the arrival of émigrés and refugees fleeing Europe in the late 1930s that had the most significant and enduring influence. These émigrés sought to transform the direct experience and influence of Bauhaus ideas and principles into new pedagogies that linked art and design education to social reform.

The rise of fascism and the resulting European, largely German-Austrian, diaspora of the interwar period and its aftermath, brought many Jewish émigré and refugee modernists to live in Australia and New Zealand. Significantly, these horrendous upheavals delivered three former Bauhäuslers to Australia. One, Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, is relatively well known, although he primarily focused his activities in Australia on art education rather than active engagement with the art world.

The other two Bauhäuslers are less known: Gertrude Herzger-Seligmann and Georg Teltscher. They had also trained at the early Weimar Bauhaus like Hirschfeld-Mack. Teltscher was more closely associated with Oskar Schlemmer at the Bauhaus – in particular with theatre and re-envisioning the idea of the stage. Like Hirschfeld-Mack,

he made one of the well-known postcards for the 1923 Bauhaus Week in Weimar, highlighting both cabaret and theatre. In 1940, both he and Hirschfeld-Mack were among more than 2500 men who were rounded up in the United Kingdom as ‘enemy aliens’ and deported to Australia on the infamous prison ship, the SS Dunera, and subsequently interned in the Australian camps at Hay, Orange and Tatura. There, Teltscher designed prison camp currency. Unlike Hirschfeld-Mack, he chose to return to London after his release in 1942.

Gertrude Seligmann (who subsequently married fellow student Walter Herzger) enrolled at the Bauhaus in 1920 and initially studied under Johannes Itten and Paul Klee. After completing the preliminary course, she was directed to the weaving workshop like other female students where she developed wide-ranging skills in hand- and jacquard-weaving. She was also a gifted musician, who played with Klee and the famous composer, Paul Hindemith.

In recovering her life and work, we identified Herzger-Seligmann as a significant and overlooked jeweller and weaver who worked for four decades in Sydney and experienced the profound difficulties of being a refugee. In fleeing Germany, she lost contact with an avant-garde circle that had sustained her early career. For the rest



Above: Gertrude Herzger-Seligmann, Sydney, c.1940, photographer unknown, collection of Ann Kinsela, Sydney
 Right: Gertrude Herzger-Seligmann, *Southern Cross brooch* c.1960, photograph © Bruce Eeles



The free and exploratory pedagogical experiments of the Bauhaus that influenced generations of artists and practitioners across the globe continue as signal exemplars nearly one hundred years later.

of her life in exile, Herzger-Seligmann led a precarious existence juggling part-time factory work with occasional teaching and piecework. Following the death of her daughter in a car accident, she recorded in her diary the pain and desolation of living alone: "GH. Hold out a little longer ... so lonely! Passed jewellers shops, no love for jewellery whatsoever!"

Hirschfeld-Mack presents a more public and sustained link between the Bauhaus and Australia. He was not only a student at the Weimar Bauhaus – he also taught the first colour seminar at the Bauhaus in the wake of the dismissal of Itten. He is renowned for the *Farbenlicht Spiele* (Colour-Light Play), a proto-kinetic mechanical device for colour/music fusion. Between 1922 and 1925, he staged an experimental media form with colour and light linked to music, using machines to play his colour-music scores. For the current exhibition tour, the multimedia artist Michael Candy has assembled a reconstruction to demonstrate this most celebrated Bauhaus experiment with colour and light. We are most grateful for the support of Penelope Seidler in realising this aspect of the project. Hirschfeld-Mack's focus on art education meant a much lower profile than the high-profile Harry Seidler, the most ardent representative of second-generation Bauhäuslers in Australia.

Today, much contemporary art, design and architecture is concerned with questions of borders and the plight of refugees as a result of a global turn in many quarters against inclusive communities. At the same time, education in art and design schools and universities is the subject of intensified critical debate, concerning the academy's instrumental moves to quantify creative practices and research. The free and exploratory pedagogical experiments of the Bauhaus that influenced generations of artists and practitioners across the globe continue as signal exemplars nearly one hundred years later.

**Dr Ann Stephen is Senior Curator,
 University Art Collection**

The anthology *Bauhaus Diaspora and beyond: Transforming Education through Art, Design and Architecture*, by Philip Goad, Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, Harriet Edquist and Isabel Wünsche, is co-published by Power Publishing and Miegunyah Press in July 2019.

The exhibition *Bauhaus Now!* will begin its tour at Buxton Contemporary, Melbourne, in July 2019. It will then travel to the Museum of Brisbane in 2020 before concluding at the Chau Chak Wing Museum in 2021.

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Making history

1. Mr Soterios Tsouris, President of the Cyprus Community of New South Wales, Her Excellency Martha Mavrommatis, the High Commissioner for the Republic of Cyprus in Canberra, and Sydney University Museum's Dr Craig Barker in the Nicholson Museum's exhibition of Cypriot antiquities.



1.



2.



3.

2. and 3. University of Sydney medical students being creative in the Nicholson Museum in April 2019 with educator Catherine Hickson. The Art+Med program uses art to train future medical practitioners in the skills of visual observation and description.

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Whether you want to view an exhibition or attend a talk, we have plenty on offer.

For more information and to view the latest timetable, visit sydney.edu.au/museums and click on 'What's on'. Unless otherwise stated, all events take place at the Nicholson Museum.



Free Nicholson Museum tours

Regular free tours of the Nicholson Museum take place 3.30–4.30pm each Monday afternoon.



July

Saturday 6 July, 2–3pm*

**Dido, Cleopatra Selene, and Kahina
the Jewish Berber Queen**

Iain Shearer FRAS

Cost: free

Travellers in Time series

Wednesday 10 July, 6pm

Batavia

Peter FitzSimons,

Sydney Morning Herald

Cost: \$40, \$30 for Friends of the Nicholson Museum and their guests, \$10 for students

Bookings:

nicholson.museum@sydney.edu.au

Thursday 11 July, 10am–4pm

**School Holiday Activity Day:
Ancient Egypt**

A free fun day of activities for children aged 5–12.

Left: Interior of the wooden coffin base of the woman Merneith, 1070–945 BC, Thebes, Upper Egypt, Nicholson Museum, NMR.27.4

Above: Persian green-glazed vase, 12th Century, University Art Collection, UA2018.21

Opposite, left: Details of a French human male anatomical clastic model, 1861, by Louis Thomas Jérôme Auzoux, Macleay Museum, SC1998.23

Opposite, right: Marble bust of the Roman Emperor Caracalla, Nicholson Museum, NM2019.34

August

Saturday 3 August, 2–3pm*

**Discovering women artists
in 16th and 17th century Italy**

Dr Kathleen Olive, Academy Travel

Cost: free

Travellers in Time series

Thursday 22 August, 6pm

**Being Collected Lecture 2019:
A celebration of Redfern
community art**

Distinguished Aboriginal public art practitioners, teachers and artists explore participatory, connective approaches towards art making and the social responsibility of art in the public realm.

Facilitated by Matt Poll

Cost: Free

Tuesday 27 August, 6pm

***Beloved Days* (2015), film screening**

Join us for a screening of the award winning documentary from Cyprus.

Cost: \$40, \$30 for Friends of the Nicholson Museum and their guests

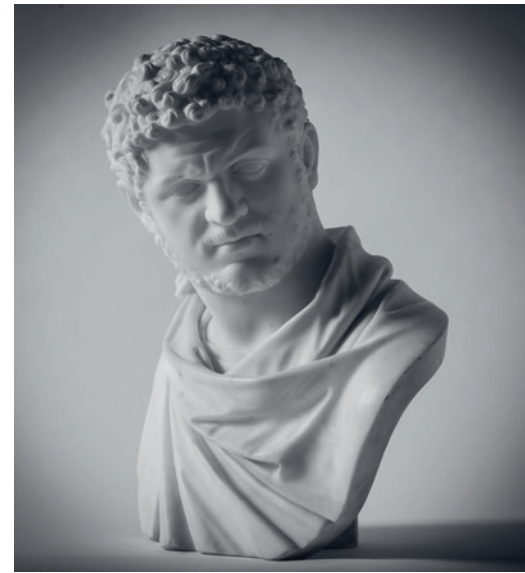
Bookings:

nicholson.museum@sydney.edu.au

Saturday 31 August, 10am–4pm

University Open Day

The Nicholson Museum will be open to the public.



Current exhibitions

Nicholson Museum

- *Connections*
- *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*
- *The Art of Storytelling*

Unless noted, 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.

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September

Saturday 7 September, 12–1pm

Geometric Greek Pottery Masterclass

Dr Stavros Paspalas, Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens
Cost: \$25

Friends of the Nicholson Museum only

Saturday 7 September, 2–3pm*

Kokoda Track archaeology

Dr Matthew Kelly, Curio Projects
Cost: free
Travellers in Time series

Wednesday 11 September, 6pm

Maritime archaeology in the Black Sea

Dr Drago Garbov, Black Sea Maritime Project
Cost: \$40, \$30 for Friends of the Nicholson Museum and their guests, \$10 for students
Bookings: nicholson.museum@sydney.edu.au

Thursday 12 September, 4–5pm

Geometric Greek Pottery Masterclass

Dr Stavros Paspalas, Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens
Cost: \$25
Friends of the Nicholson Museum only

October

Wednesday 2 October, 10am–4pm

School Holiday Activity Day: Ancient Rome

A free fun day of activities for children aged 5–12.

Saturday 5 October, 2–3pm*

Vivified Vikings

Alix Thoeming, the University of Sydney
Cost: free
Travellers in Time series

Wednesday 16 October, 6pm

Osirian Cult Songs: How noisy were Ancient Egyptian funerals?

Professor Martin Bommas, Macquarie University
Cost: \$40, \$30 for Friends of the Nicholson Museum and their guests, \$10 for students
Bookings: nicholson.museum@sydney.edu.au

* The 2019 *Travellers in Time* free Saturday lecture series is sponsored by Academy Travel.

Connections

Connections explores how certain objects in the collections are intimately connected to objects held by museums overseas.

By examining these links, we learn more about the objects themselves and the circumstances that caused them to rest eventually on opposite sides of the globe.

Current exhibition
Nicholson Museum



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Assyrian wall relief, from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib, Nineveh, Iraq, 700-680 BC, excavated 1847-51 by Sir Austin Henry Layard, purchased from the Layard family in 1951, Nicholson Museum, NM51.323

