



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

FACULTY
OF ARTS
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SCIENCES

THAT WAS THEN THIS IS NOW

CONTEMPORARY ARCHAEOLOGY IN AUSTRALIA

FEBRUARY 16-17, 2012

9:30am – 4.30pm
Eastern Avenue F19
Seminar Room 312
University of Sydney 2006

CONVENORS

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This two-day workshop explores the role of contemporary archaeology and the state of research in Australia. It is aimed at exploring the methods, theories and subjects currently informing this nascent field of study. What role might Australian scholars play in advancing this area of research?





 THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY



Room Latin 1 S224 on the ground floor of the Quadrangle. If you enter through the clock tower (pictured above) turn left and go along the corridor behind the Jacaranda Tree.

We will also put up signs.

**THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW:
CONTEMPORARY ARCHAEOLOGY IN AUSTRALIA**

16th-17th February 2012

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SCHEDULE OF PRESENTATIONS

THURSDAY 16TH FEBRUARY

Time	Paper Title	Presenter
8.30-9.15	Registration	
9.15-9.30	Introduction and Housekeeping	Ursula Frederick and Annie Clarke (U. Syd)
9.30-10.00	Valley of the Cable Ties: exploring contemporary material culture from aerospace to domestic space	Alice Gorman
10.00-10.30	The Scale of the Urban World: the Trantor-Coruscant problem	Roland Fletcher
10.30-11.00	Morning Tea	
11.00-11.30	The Material Culture of Mourning Road Death: The Pacific Highway in Focus	Jennifer Clark
11.30-12.00	Not What it Seems–The Archaeology of Film Sets and other Facsimiles	Jeannette Hope
12.00-12.30	“The Radium Water Worked Fine until His Jaw Came Off” – The changing role of radioactivity in the 20th century	Robert Maxwell
12.30-1.00	Psychoarchaeology: Mrs L Weidenhofer and I	Steve Brown
1.00-2.00	Lunch	

Time	Paper Title	Presenter
2.00-2.30	Narrating the past in the present: understanding archaeology and heritage in a modern context	Annie Clarke (UQ) and Annie Ross
2.30-3.00	Aboriginal Settlements in Sydney	Peter Read
3.00-3.20	The charmed landscape of love	Denis Byrne
3.20 -3.50	Restoring sacred space through destruction and decay - new meanings to old concepts in contemporary Southeast Asian heritage discourse	Anna Karlström
3.50-4.15	"I thought we had just thrown that away!"	John Greenwood
4.15-4.45	Afternoon Tea	
4.45-5.15	Panel Discussion	
5.30	Nags Head for Beer, Wine, Pub Grub and More Discussion	

FRIDAY 17TH FEBRUARY 2012

Time	Paper title	Presenter
9.00-9.30	New ways of telling: The communicative potential of typography and graphic design in relation to the understanding and representation of place.	Alison Barnes
9.30-10.00	Living History: Re-enactment communities and the search for belonging	Lee Grant
10.00-10.20	Contemporary Sculpture and the Archaeological Record	Martin Rowney
10.20-11.00	Morning Tea	
11.00-11.30	Archaeology and the Supermen	Darran Jordan
11.30-11.50	Big Fight – small voices: Echoes of WWII in the Solomon Islands	Martin Gibbs
11.50-12.10	She'll be right, just leave 'er: A case of differential survival on abandoned railway lines in southern New South Wales	Peter Howard
12.10-12.30	The Significance of the Sea in Contemporary Archaeological Discourse: Gazing at Prehistoric Seafarers	Steven John Vasilakis
12.30-1.30	Lunch	

Time	Paper Title	Presenter
2.00-2.30	Graffiti Archaeography	Samantha Edwards-Vandenhoeck
2.30-3.00	Signs of communication: an archaeology of contemporary Indigenous graffiti in Jawoyn Country, Northern Territory	Jordan Ralph
3.00-3.20	The Other Side of the Tracks: an archaeology of doing graffiti	Ursula Frederick
3.20-3.40	Leaders and followers, kings and queens: relationships between graffiti practitioners of commissioned and non-commissioned streetscapes in Perth, Western Australia	Jane Fyfe
3.40-4.00	Battlefield or Gallery? A comparative analysis of contemporary mark-making in Sydney'	Andrew Crisp
4.00-4.30	Afternoon Tea	
4.30-5.00	Panel & Discussion	

ABSTRACTS

New ways of telling: The communicative potential of typography and graphic design in relation to the understanding and representation of place.

Alison Barnes

School of Humanities and Communication Arts, University of Western Sydney

In discussing the potential of interdisciplinary collaboration, Pearson & Shanks state that 'different ways of telling' (2001: 131) are required which need to 'leave space for the imagination of the reader' (2001: 159). Focusing on the communicative potential of graphic design and typography to contribute to the understanding and representation of place, and viewing typography as 'language in performance' and the book as a temporal space, this presentation proposes that it is possible to position the book as a space of interactive, multi-sensory exploration. It highlights examples of practice-led research that use design interventions in relation to format, materials, structure, navigation and typography in order to engage the reader with place in an experiential way, making them a participant in the revealing and unfolding narrative.

Reference: Pearson, M & M. Shanks 2001, *Theatre/Archeology: Disciplinary Dialogues*, London, Routledge

Psychoarchaeology: Mrs L Weidenhofer and I

Steve Brown

University of Sydney

At a recent session of the UK Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) conference a session was held titled *Psychoarchaeology: Theories, Method and Practice*. Kenneth Brophy defines psychoarchaeology as 'the study of the specific affects of archaeological sites on the emotions and behaviour of individuals and communities, offering a means to reflect on the way that traces of the past are mediated to us through the present landscape.' In many ways it is a critique of phenomenological approaches that attempt to filter out the modern landscape (NOW) in order to reinforce stereotypical interpretations of the past of places (THEN) (cf. Cummings and Whittle 2004).

In the first part of the presentation I present an overview of the history and practice of psychogeography and provide a brief overview of the TAG discussions on using some of the ideas and practices of psychogeography within an archaeological context. Secondly, I will present a narrative, drawing of auto-archaeological, phenomenological and psychoarchaeological methods, centred on a gift card recovered from my house in the Sydney suburb of Arncliffe.

Reference: Cummings, V. and A.W.R. Whittle 2004, *Places of Special Virtue: Megaliths in the Neolithic Landscapes of Wales*, Oxbow Books.

The charmed landscape of love

Denis Byrne

University of Technology Sydney & Country, Culture & Heritage Division, NSW.

There is a considerable literature on the heritage of trauma, war, and violence but there is curiously little directed to what might be thought of as the other end of the spectrum of human experience: pleasure, happiness, and love. In explaining why he felt compelled to write his book, *A Lover's Discourse*, Roland Barthes (2002, originally published 1977) observed that a 'lovers discourse' accompanies the state of being in love and although this discourse is spoken by 'thousands' – indeed by most people at some time in their lives – it is, 'warranted by no one; it is completely forsaken by the surrounding languages: ignored, disparaged, or derided by them' (2002: 1). It seems to me that heritage is one of those languages that forsake it. Barthes, in the same work, remarks on the fetishism that accompanies the experience of love: how objects (and one could say, places) associated with the loved one absorb their power, a power 'which will impregnate everything it comes in contact with, even if only by a glance' (2002: 173). Inspired by Barthes, this paper looks at the material world of a love affair that went wrong in Hong Kong in 1960.

Reference: Barthes, R. 2002, *A Lover's Discourse*, Vintage, UK.

The Material Culture of Mourning Road Death: The Pacific Highway in Focus

Jennifer Clark

University of New England

Roadside memorialisation is a well established response to sudden and unexpected death on the road. It is also a well-documented international phenomenon. Between 1986 and 2009 fatality rates on the Pacific Highway averaged up to 47 each year. This continual loss of life alarmed government and the public leading to a multi-billion dollar road improvement program as well as the erection of what seems to be a constant stream of new roadside memorials. This paper introduces roadside memorialisation as a common response to road death and particularly examines the memorials on the Pacific Highway over a period of six years. The paper discusses the ways in which memorialisation is a dynamic activity in a dynamic road space. Although the phenomenon of memorialisation is ongoing, the material culture is quite ephemeral. How can contemporary archaeology help us to understand a rapidly changing physical landscape?

Narrating the past in the present: understanding archaeology and heritage in a modern context

Annie Clarke and Annie Ross

School of Social Science, The University of Queensland

Heritage places may have been created in the past, but they exist in the present and are consequently given meaning in and for the present. Often the present-day

meanings given to sites and objects from the past may vary from the original meanings assigned, depending upon the ontology of the user of the site. In this paper we review concepts of the phenomenology of ancient places that are narrated in a modern context and focus on the different interpretations of the past, and the archaeological record specifically, that are created by different users of heritage. We particularly compare interpretations of the archaeological record by archaeologists and Aboriginal traditional owners of sites, using a case study from North Stradbroke Island, southeastern Queensland.

Battlefield or Gallery? A comparative analysis of contemporary mark-making in Sydney

Andrew Crisp

Independent Scholar

This research has adapted conventional archaeological survey methodologies and applied them to a 21st century dataset, namely graffiti found in the public spaces of two Sydney suburbs, Miranda and Newtown. Through the application of conventional archaeological methods to the contemporary landscape I have shown how an archaeological approach can test, and thereby validate or refute general assumptions and proposals generated within other disciplinary frameworks. This research has made a two-fold contribution to future investigations of graffiti. Firstly, this distinctly empirical study has produced an analysis of detailed trends for graffiti distribution and an insight into contributing factors. Secondly it offers a methodological framework for future studies of graffiti throughout the world. The contrast of graffiti type and distribution between the study areas in Miranda and Newtown present compelling regional examples of what Iveson (2010) describes as the 'wars on graffiti and the new military urbanism'. This study presents a way for archaeologists to apply traditional archaeological methodology to a contemporary context and in doing so contribute to the understanding of a significant yet largely stigmatised urban phenomenon.

Graffiti Archaeography

Samantha Edwards-Vandenhoeck

School of Communication Arts, University of Western Sydney

This paper introduces a methodological framework in which the material traces of graffiti from the recent urban past can be interpreted. It expands on Michael Shanks's postulations which explore the connections between photography and archaeology – known as *archaeography* – as situated modalities that intervene in the detritus of past cultural practices in the here and now. It rests on the premise that photography and archaeology are reflexive mediations which can breathe new life into the re-articulation of socially constructed artefacts, poetisation of the urban experience and place. In this framework the archaeographer becomes an active participant in the reproduction and dissemination of the counter visual rhetoric embedded in graffiti texts. Drawing from the projects' psychogeographic mappings

and virtual image archive, readings from the researchers own empirical encounters in the encoded territories of graffiti production in Sydney's inner suburbs will be considered.

The Scale of the Urban World: the Trantor-Coruscant problem

Roland Fletcher
University of Sydney

Archaeology offers time perspective and spatial scale to our view of the future. Because the development of human settlement patterns has been consistent over long time spans and the limits on the extent and residential density of settlements are both simple and well-known the behavioural boundary conditions that will constrain future settlement growth can be specified. Rates of growth, the differential histories of compact and dispersed settlements and the successive future limits on settlement size can be predicted along with the magnitudes of material change and energy consumption that will be required for urban expansion to a planetary scale – the creation of Trantor and Coruscant. What the assessment shows is that the issue with contemporary urbanism is not that industrial cities are very large but - far more worrying - that they are not, as yet, especially large at all. The appraisal also shows that the visions of future cities which we accept as normal are actually absurd. Our images of Trantor and Corsucant are as ridiculous as the vision a hunter-gatherer in Eurasia 25,000 years ago might have had of the cities of today.

The Other Side of the Tracks: an archaeology of doing graffiti

Ursula Frederick
School of Art, The Australian National University

In recent years archaeologists have demonstrated a concerted interest in understanding the motivations and machinations involved in contemporary mark-making activities. In this paper I aim to further those insights by turning away from the wall and focusing my gaze on the ground. Instead of examining graffiti itself I investigate a large surface scatter comprising aerosol cans and other material culture of graffiti production. The results, I suggest, reveal how archaeology can help to recuperate the social in what is generally maligned as 'anti-social' behaviour.

Leaders and followers, kings and queens: relationships between graffiti practitioners of commissioned and non-commissioned streetscapes in Perth, Western Australia

Jane Fyfe
University of Western Australia

Using an informed and formal approach to the recording of graffiti a small team with links to the graffiti artists, and (somewhat surprisingly) the growing graffiti retail community in Perth to record targeted sites and explore the social and economic

relationships between those who paint for money, and those who don't. Using a similar approach to that used to record Indigenous rock art, position, juxtaposition, superposition and supraposition will be part of the formal recording process over the next six months, while focused interviews and direct observation and discussion will inform the interpretation of the data.

Big Fight – small voices: Echoes of WWII in the Solomon Islands.

Martin Gibbs

University of Sydney

With most of the adult male Solomon Islanders who participated in WWII now deceased, recent work with communities to locate heritage places and understanding the past and present significance of WWII has shifted to those who have previously been considered non-participants in the conflict: that is, women and children. This short presentation looks briefly at the continuing and changing significance of WWII sites and stories in the Solomon Islands and in particular examines two WWII era songs from Kia Village on Santa Isabel.

Valley of the Cable Ties: exploring contemporary material culture from aerospace to domestic space

Alice Gorman

Department of Archaeology, Flinders University

Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics, Australian National University

During a recent survey of the former NASA satellite tracking station at Orroral Valley in the ACT (1965-1985), large numbers of plastic cable ties were recorded, prompting an investigation into their history, manufacture and use in aerospace industry. However, what makes this artefact type so extraordinary is its migration into the domain of everyday life, to the point where cable ties are both ubiquitous yet unnoticed by those who use them. This paper is a preliminary exploration of how cable ties demonstrate the value of archaeological approaches to the contemporary past.

Living History: Re-enactment communities and the search for belonging

Lee Grant

Social Documentary Photographer

Re-enactment communities or living history groups have a long history beginning in ancient Rome but its popularity has grown considerably, as both an historical interest and form of escapism, since the 1960s.

As a photographer I am interested in the formation of communities and the way in which belonging to such groups is organised, represented and imagined. To date, I have photographed anachronistic groups such as medievalists and more recently

have looked at the modern phenomenon of celebrity through the lens of impersonators, notably the Elvis impersonator.

In conveying the performative aspects of re-enactment, I am seeking to understand the relationship between the past and the present and the ways in which imaginary landscapes - historical or fictional - are both created and idealised.

“I thought we had just thrown that away!”

John Greenwood

Cultural Heritage Conservation, Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Canberra

Contemporary archaeology is a new and exciting concept. But there's the rub. New paradigms bring new responsibilities. The archaeological conservator has the task of preserving the material remains, if they are to remain then they need to be conserved. Contemporary life brings a great variety of stuff made from an increasingly complex variety of materials, plastics, modern metals, polymer based paints, synthetic materials made of god knows what. In my experience archaeologists do not have much idea of what things are made of, how they react with the environment and their preservation. Is there then a role for the contemporary conservator?.

Not What it Seems – The Archaeology of Film Sets and other Facsimiles

Jeannette Hope

River Junction Research

The set of Cecil B. DeMille's 1923 epic film, *The Ten Commandments*, is now a registered archaeological site in the state of California (CA-SBA-2392H), where the remains of a massive facsimile of Egyptian architecture are preserved in the desert. Not so easy to spot as film sets are modern facsimiles of recent historic structures, as I discovered in western NSW when I dutifully recorded and photographed a wooden structure that turned out to be a set for the TV drama 'The Road from Coorain'. Hundreds of films, TV series and commercials have been filmed in Australia since the early 1900s, and while most have used existing buildings as locations, purpose built sets have been common, and traces may be left behind in the landscape or even intentionally retained as 'historic' items. Facsimile structures have been built for other purposes, such as investigating the effect of nuclear explosions on equipment and buildings. This practice predates nuclear testing, as evidenced by the remains of a mock battleship near Wentworth on the Murray River, used for bombing practice in 1942. Further complications arise when structures recycle earlier genuine historic fabric, often in unexpected ways. This will be a brief tour through the film, wartime and recycling history of western NSW, with implications for elsewhere in Australia.

She'll be right, just leave 'er: A case of differential survival on abandoned railway lines in southern New South Wales.

Peter Howard

University of Sydney

For several decades railways provided the main form of transporting goods and people across the state of NSW. This role largely came to an end 30 years ago after a period of lengthy decline. As part of my PhD research I have looked at a small group of abandoned railway lines in the south eastern part of the state. A preliminary field survey has shown that structures on different lines survive different lengths of time. As one might expect, this appears to be based the length of time since the railway in question ceased to operate, however what makes these surviving structures interesting is how it tends to be lines which have been closed longer which have more intact structures. This paper will explore some of these sites and the possible reasoning behind this differential survival.

Restoring sacred space through destruction and decay - new meanings to old concepts in contemporary Southeast Asian heritage discourse

Anna Karlström

ATSIS, University of Queensland

In mainland Southeast Asia Buddhism dominates as religious practice. In this context, the notion of material impermanence also governs the perception of reality. Approaches to materiality in Buddhism are related to the general ideas that things are important from a contemporary perspective and primarily as containers for spiritual values, that the spiritual values carry the connection to the past, and that heritage is primarily spiritual in nature and has little to do with physical structure, form and material authenticity. In this presentation I will explore the concepts of restoration, destruction and consumption (based on fieldwork in Laos) and argue that preservation and restoration are active processes of materialisation and that destruction and decay are necessary for the appreciation of certain heritage expressions.

Archaeology and the Supermen

Darran Jordan

University of Sydney

Popular culture representations of archaeology proliferate through various genres and media types. Comic books have a consistent history of archaeological representations from the 1930s onwards. Examination of the ways in which archaeology has been represented throughout the history of comics illustrates changing societal attitudes towards it. Recent use of the comic book medium as a storytelling format capable of communicating archaeologically specific messages demonstrates underutilised ways of engaging with the general public. This paper draws out the various trends of representation and posits impacts on contemporary

archaeology as well as ways archaeology can utilise comic book representation into the future.

“The Radium Water Worked Fine until His Jaw Came Off” – The changing role of radioactivity in the 20th century.

Robert Maxwell
University of Sydney

Radioactivity was embraced by the public well before it was understood by the public. In the first decades of the 20th century radioactive materials were marketed in a myriad of forms, from cosmetics to health aids, in ceramics and on time pieces. During this period ‘radioactivity’ meant innovation, health and modernity. By the close of WWII, it had become a simile for death and apocalypse. Over the course of the 20th century a major ideological shift occurred regarding radioactive material and material culture. This paper explores the changing role of radioactivity in 20th century culture and its value as an indicator of technological, cultural and ideological evolution.

Signs of communication: an archaeology of contemporary Indigenous graffiti in Jawoyn Country, Northern Territory

Jordan Ralph
Flinders University

This paper emerged as part of the archaeology honours degree at Flinders University, Adelaide and is a collaborative project with the Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation. It involves the study of contemporary graffiti and oral histories within three Jawoyn communities in the Northern Territory (Barunga, Beswick and Manyallaluk). This research examines the role that governmental policy, has had on human behaviour and place-making and mark-making behaviours in the archaeological record. This research into cross-cultural exchange in post-contact Aboriginal Australia explores the themes of domination, resistance and the use of landscape. The results of this research has found that the contemporary graffiti from the Barunga-Wugullar region, NT is an internal method of personal communication between community members, rather than a method to propagate political and social messages as found in other communities.

Aboriginal Settlements in Sydney

Peter Read
University of Sydney

Much controversy attends the history of Aboriginal people of Sydney. It is widely believed that they had disappeared by 1850 (but where to?), or had left no physical evidence of their presence (but why not?), or, if they were there, were not Aborigines at all (but if not -who were they?). Using research carried out towards

the website historyofaboriginalsydney.edu.au, I shall demonstrate that both Traditional Owners and very many Indigenous newcomers, have always lived in large numbers in Sydney, and have indeed left a physical presence, and were indeed Aborigines. It's true that some living area or town camps like the Police Paddock at Rooty Hill have been built over. But it may be that surface archaeology would very soon uncover evidence of the town camp at Narrabeen, and oral history will very soon reveal the dynamics of the Gully at Katoomba. I shall consider a number of sites, and demonstrate that the most obvious physical remains are those of the official reserve at Sackville. This Hawkesbury River site, extraordinarily, appears to be of no interest to anybody. I shall conclude with the moving testimony of Gordon Briscoe, standing where once the dormitory stood at the Mulgoa Childrens Home. He laments 'The evidence of our past has been torn asunder'.

Contemporary Sculpture and the Archaeological Record

Martin Rowney

Consultant Archaeologist, Sculpture student

All places have an individual historical and cultural signature. This signature includes tangible elements (artefacts, documents, photographs, etc) and intangible elements (events, conversations, dreams, etc).

Through sculpture I have been exploring the relationship between art and archaeology and how both disciplines can explore and present these different historical/cultural signatures in different ways.

My presentation will discuss some of this exploration and some of my observations about the way the public conceptualise the archaeological record and its relationship to their own materials goods. Some of my work aims to connect people to the idea that their own 'stuff' can be, or might become, part of the archaeological record.

The Significance of the Sea in Contemporary Archaeological Discourse:

Gazing at Prehistoric Seafarers

Steven John Vasilakis

University of Sydney

As far as maritime cultural studies are concerned, the introduction of maritime cultural landscape theory has shifted the archaeological gaze from dominant land-based perspectives towards understanding the complex nature and relationship between humanity and the sea. While this methodological approach, which investigates both material- (e.g. sea- and landmarks, ship types, dockyards) and cognitive non-material remains (e.g. place-names, seafaring knowledge, oral histories), has increasingly influenced Australian maritime archaeological research, in Mediterranean maritime cultural studies this innovative approach has yet to be implemented. The aim of this paper is to briefly outline the significance of using current Australian research in maritime cultural landscape theory as a model for investigating Prehistoric Aegean maritime culture.