

Museums, Collecting, Agency: a symposium**Tuesday 1st – Wednesday 2nd April, 2014****Australian Museum, Sydney**

The Museums, Collecting, Agency symposium explores questions of agency as they relate to museum and museum-like practices of collecting, particularly in connection with histories of colonialism and their legacies. In this it contributes to lively engagements within museum scholarship on the role of objects and colonialism. Advancing these discussions the symposium focuses on the question of agency and its implications for understanding ethnographic museum collections and collecting practices. Recent scholarship exploring the agency of Indigenous subjects in the processes of anthropological collecting has de-individualised the work of anthropology in the formation of ethnographic collections and anthropological knowledge, establishing them not as the exclusive output of the European scientist-collector, but rather as a product of collaboration and contestation made in exchange between anthropologists and Indigenous subjects. This symposium continues this trajectory by turning attention to the range of human and non-human actors involved in ethnographic museum collections. In this it seeks to investigate the ways in which the agency of such collections come to be distributed across human subjects and non-human entities, such as objects, tools, technologies, texts, theories and cosmologies. Investigating the friction as well as the flows of their agency, this symposium aims to explore the heterogeneous agents through which ethnographic collections come to be assembled.

Keynote Speakers include:

Ann Salmond, Distinguished Professor of Māori Studies and Anthropology at the University of Auckland.

Salmond is well known for her books on Māori culture, and more recently on the early encounters between Europeans, Māori and Pacific peoples. Her next book is *Te Ao Tawhito*, which examines Māori life just before first contact with Europeans. Currently she is researching the activities of her great grandfather James Macdonald on the Dominion Museum ethnographic expeditions 1919-23. She has also been active in many areas of New Zealand cultural life, sitting on the boards of the Historic Places Trust, Te Papa and the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology.

Phil Gordon, Head of Aboriginal Collections at the Australian Museum, Sydney.

Gordon advises Aboriginal communities on issues such as Aboriginal Museum outreach and repatriation of Aboriginal human remains and other significant cultural property as well as providing advice for various government agencies on cultural heritage issues and policy development. He plays an important role in working with cultural centres and keeping places in setting up and planning, as well as advising on ongoing training needs. He has published on Indigenous aspects of museum and

heritage management, policy and practice in many books and journals and spoken at numerous conferences on related issues.

Paper Presenters include:

Philip Batty is Senior Curator, Anthropology, at Melbourne Museum. He has a wide range of interests including the history of Australian anthropology, Aboriginal material culture and art, Aboriginal media, intercultural politics, and cultural theory. He is the former director of the National Aboriginal Cultural Institute (Australia) and has produced several television documentaries, published widely, and curated a number of exhibitions.

Tony Bennett is Research Professor in Social and Cultural Theory in the Institute for Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney. He has written extensively on the relations between anthropology and museums, most notably in *The Birth of the Museum* (1995) and *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (2004). His most recent book is *Making Culture, Changing Society* (2013).

Fiona Cameron is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney. She has published widely on museums and their agency in contemporary societies around 'hot' topics. Her recent books include the co-edited collections, *Theorizing digital cultural heritage* (2007); *Hot topics, public culture, museums* (2010); and *Climate change, museum futures* (forthcoming) and a co-authored monograph, *Compositions, materialities, dynamics: Theorizing digital cultural heritage for a complex, entangled world* (forthcoming).

Aaron Corn is an Australian Research Council Future Fellow in Ethnomusicology at the Australian National University. He is a Co-Director of the National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia, an expert network that responds to Indigenous aspirations to develop strategies for cultural survival in the digital age. His publications include *Reflections and Voices: Exploring the Music of Yothu Yindi with Mandawuy Yunupingu* (2009).

Brenda L Croft is from the Gurindji/Malngin/Mudpurra peoples in the Northern Territory on her paternal side, and Anglo-Australian/German/Irish heritage on her maternal side. She has been involved in the arts and cultural sectors for three decades as an artist, arts administrator, curator, academic and consultant. Croft is a Senior Research Fellow with the National Institute for Experimental Arts, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales.

Nélia Dias is Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology (ISCTE-IUL Lisbon). Her research interests include the practices of collecting artifacts, the cultural underpinnings of physical anthropology collections and the history of French anthropology. She is currently working on the changing relations between museum practices and the governance of metropolitan and colonial populations in former French Indochina. She is the author of *Le Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro. Anthropologie et Muséologie en France* (1991) and *La Mesure des sens. Les anthropologues et le corps humain* (2004)

Ben Dibley is a Research Associate at the Institute for Culture and Society, the University of Western Sydney. He has research interests in social and cultural theory, museums, colonialism and the

environment. His has recent publications in *New Formations*, *Museum and Society*, *Transformations*, and *Australian Humanities Review*.

Stephen Gilchrist graduated from the Master's of Arts Politics at New York University and is currently lecturing in fine arts at the Power Institute for Fine Arts, Sydney University. In 2012 Gilchrist curated a comprehensive survey of Aboriginal art from the Owen and Wagner Collection at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College. Gilchrist has worked in a variety of museums and galleries and is currently working on PhD on Contemporary Aboriginal art.

Rodney Harrison is a Lecturer in Museum and Heritage Studies at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. His research engages the material histories of colonialism and heritage, archaeologies of the present, the uses of the past in contemporary societies, and, archaeology and museums. His publications include *Unpacking the Collection: Networks of Material and Social Agency in the Museum* (co-edited, 2011); *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (2013) and *Reassembling the Collection: Ethnographic Museums and Indigenous Agency* (co-edited, 2013).

Michelle Horwood is a PhD candidate in Museum & Heritage Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. She has worked as a heritage consultant and as curator at the Whanganui Regional Museum. She is co-author of *Te Ara Tapu, Sacred Journeys* (2008). Her current PhD research aims to progress innovative ways for Māori communities to initiate and develop on-going relationships with museums that hold collections of their ancestral heritage when they are geographically remote.

Ira Jacknis is Research Anthropologist at the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, UC Berkeley. His research specialties include the arts and culture of Native North America, modes of ethnographic representation (photos, film, sound recording), museums, and the history of anthropology. He is the author of *The Storage Box of Tradition: Kwakiutl Art, Anthropologists, and Museums, 1881–1981* (2002), *Carving Traditions of Northwest California* (1995), and the editor of *Food in California Indian Culture* (2004).

Garry Jones is an Indigenous printmaker, painter and sculptor and has exhibited locally, nationally and internationally. Jones was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in 2003 and since 2007 has lectured in Creative Arts at the School of Visual Arts at the University of Wollongong. In 2000 he won the Australian Indigenous Heritage Art Award, Art of Place, in the works on paper category. Jones is currently pursuing a practice-led PhD in visual arts, at the Australian National University, focusing on the role of visual arts in urban Indigenous identity and community cultural development.

Sean Mallon is Senior Curator Pacific Cultures at Te Papa, and is currently undertaking a PhD in Anthropology at Victoria University of Wellington. He has published widely in the areas of Pacific material culture, history and art. His most recent research projects include work on Samoan tattoo, curating an exhibition and producing a co-edited book on New Zealand and the people of the Pacific, *Tagata o le moana* (2012); and contributing to a multi-authored book, *Art in Oceania: A new history* (2012).

Conal McCarthy is Associate Professor and Director of the Museum & Heritage Studies programme at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He has published widely on Māori art, museum display, and current museum practice, including the monograph *Museums and Maori: Heritage*

professionals, indigenous collections, current practice (2011). His next book is *Museum practice: Critical debates in contemporary museums* (forthcoming).

Wayne Ngata descends from the tribes of Te Aitanga a Hauiti, Ngāti Ira and Ngāti Porou. His particular area of scholarship is Māori literature, specifically the language of mōteatea (traditional chant). He is a long-time supporter of the renaissance in local Māori art as a platform for tribal intellectual, social and economic development and has developed strong working and research relationships with regional, national and international museums. He is Principal Investigator on the Nga Pae o te Maramatanga project: Te Ataakura: Re-connecting voyage collections in archives and museums through the creation of digital taonga.

Registration:

Please register on line at: [....](#)

Partner Institutions:

Institute of Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney; Australian Museum; Museum and Heritage Program, University of Sydney

Program Committee:

Tony Bennett, Fiona Cameron (Chair), Ben Dibley, Conal McCarthy, Matt Poll, and Emma Waterton.

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