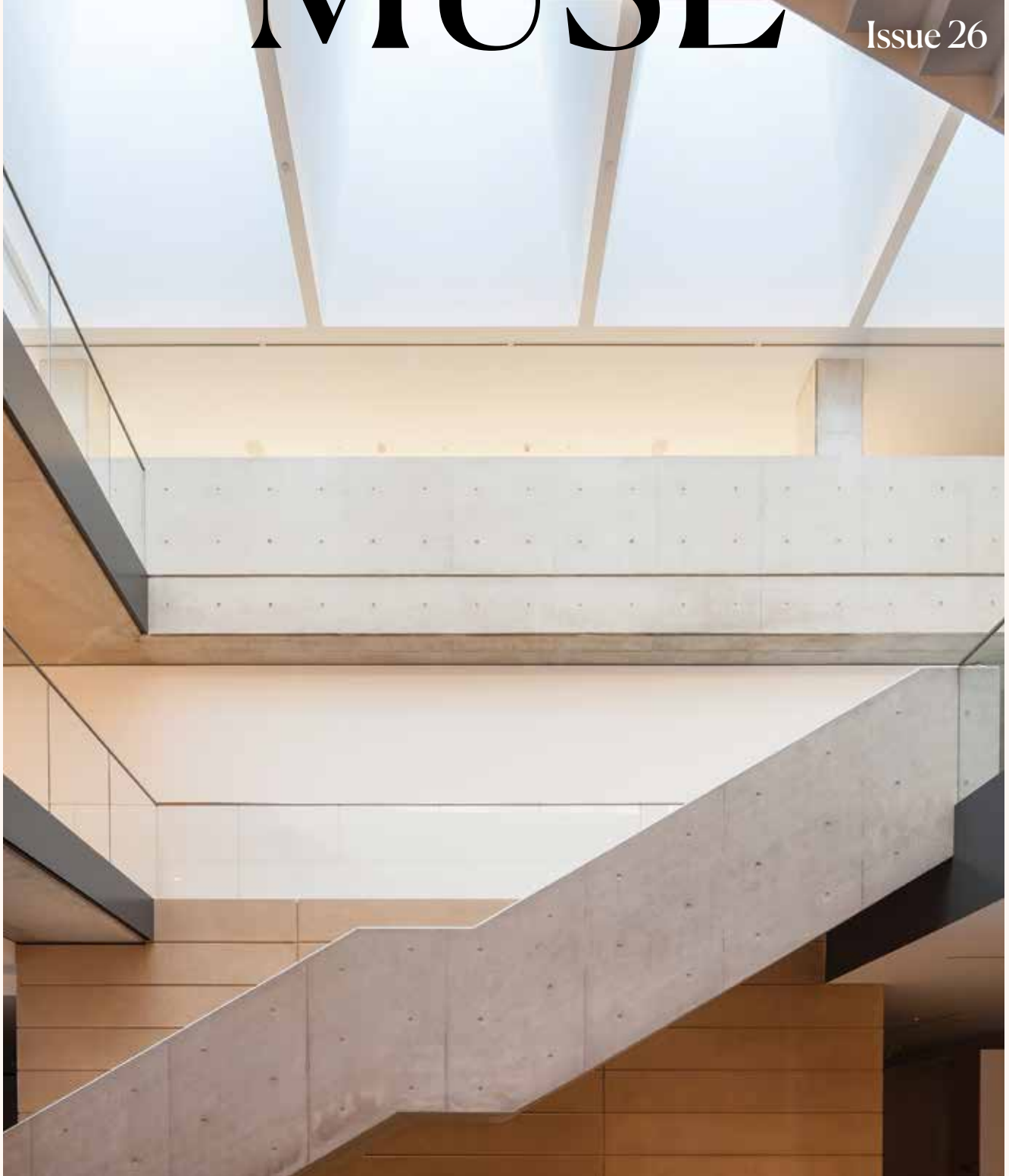


\$5

# MUSE

Issue 26



Find the unexpected



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY

CHAU CHAK WING  
MUSEUM

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## A message from our Director

The Chau Chak Wing Museum building and its new exhibitions are complete. Following many years of planning, the University of Sydney is now home to a state-of-the-art building that would not have been possible but for private philanthropy totalling \$22.5 million, and a demonstration of the University's confidence in the museum collections and programs.

This is a transformative project that propels the Nicholson, Macleay, Power and University Art collections onto the world stage. The bespoke learning facilities and extensive galleries will embed the collections in the education and wellbeing of a greater breadth of students and staff. The broader public have far more access thanks to free entry seven days a week, numerous exhibition spaces, and an expanded range of public programs. There are many surprises even for those visitors familiar with the University's collections. More than 70% of what is on display has not been seen for

at least 20 years, indeed some parts of the collection have never been on public view, before and new acquisitions are revealed.

Both the museum and collections are the outcome of benefaction and continue to grow and flourish with that same engagement and support. Even before we broke ground, the potential of the new museum inspired the generous 2018 bequest of Neville H Grace. Many of his 63 Australian impressionist paintings can be seen among the opening displays. This is one spectacular outcome of the increased profile, relevance and accessibility of the Chau Chak Wing Museum as a public gateway and symbol of a contemporary university's place in an interdisciplinary world.

We cannot wait to welcome you through our doors when you can see for yourself the spectacular potential of the Chau Chak Wing Museum.

*David Ellis, Director  
Chau Chak Wing Museum*



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sydney.edu.au/museum

Corner of University Avenue and Parramatta Road,  
opposite the Quadrangle and Fisher Library  
Camperdown Campus  
The University of Sydney

**The Chau Chak Wing Museum comprises:**

- Nicholson Collection: antiquities and archaeology
- Macleay Collections: natural history, ethnography, historic photography and science
- University Art Collection

**Education programs**

School programs including tours and workshops will run in alignment with NSW government advice.  
See [sydney.edu.au/museum/education](http://sydney.edu.au/museum/education)  
[museums.education@sydney.edu.au](mailto:museums.education@sydney.edu.au)

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This issue of Muse was published to coincide with the opening of the Chau Chak Wing Museum, 16 November 2020.

Edited by Renae Coles and Luke Parker

Produced by the University of Sydney, November 2020  
Designed by Dialogic Studios

This issue 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.

**Cover image**

Staircase in the Chau Chak Wing Museum  
Photo: Brett Boardman

**What's On pages**

David Daymirriṅu Maḷangi  
1927–1999, Manharriṅu clan, Dhuwa moiety  
worked Milingimbi and Ramingining  
*Biw'yunnaraw warrakan ṅaṅili dawurr, black cockatoo feather fan*  
c. 1984  
feathers, beeswax and wood  
49.0 x 34.5 x 1.5 cm  
collected by D Mundine 1980s, purchased JW Power  
bequest 1984–85, JW Power Collection, University of Sydney,  
managed by Museum of Contemporary Art, PW1984.86

**JW Power**

*Paysage* (Landscape)  
1934  
oil on canvas  
50.9 x 66.3 cm  
Edith Power Bequest 1961, University Art Collection,  
managed by Museum of Contemporary Art, PW1961.24

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# What's on



**GULULU DHUWALA  
DJALKIRI: WELCOME  
TO THE YOLŪ  
FOUNDATIONS**  
*Until August 2021*

Produced in collaboration with the Yolŷu community, this major showcase of art from eastern Arnhem Land explores 100 years of Yolŷu knowledge sharing through painting and sculpture.



**OBJECT/ART/  
SPECIMEN**

An interdisciplinary exhibition introducing the diverse collections of the Chau Chak Wing Museum through six evocative themes, exploring human experience and methods of understanding the world.



**COASTLINE**

Artists have always been captivated by the ocean. *Coastline* explores the space where land meets sea, bringing together over 40 artists across five centuries.



**JW POWER: THE HUMAN  
CALCULATOR**



**INSTRUMENTAL:  
COLLECTIONS  
FROM SCIENCE**

Instruments from the history of calculating and computing.



**THE BUSINESS OF  
PHOTOGRAPHY:  
THE 19TH CENTURY  
STUDIO**

*Until August 2021*

Turning a lens onto the first commercial photography studios in NSW.



**MEDITERRANEAN  
IDENTITIES**

Homer named the Mediterranean a 'wine-dark sea', with its dangers disguised by its beauty. Discover the ancient cultures that thrived on these shores.



**ROMAN SPECTRES**

Ghostly faces and names recorded in stone are reanimated through stories of life in the vibrant cities of the Roman world.



**AMBASSADORS**

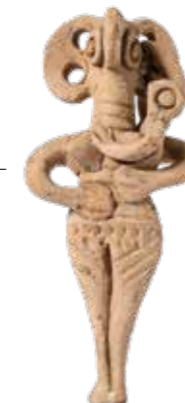
Objects as ancestors, collections as consultation tools: meet eight Nations of Aboriginal Australia. *Ambassadors* is the Museum's ongoing display of First Nations culture and heritage.



**THE EGYPTIAN GALLERIES**

*The Mummy Room and Pharaonic Obsessions*

From 19th century Egyptomania, to the cutting-edge science revealing new ideas about life in ancient Egypt, two new exhibitions explore our fascination with the land of the Pharaohs.



**CROSSROADS: ANCIENT CYPRUS**

Working across clay, stone and metal, Cypriot artists developed rich creative traditions making Cyprus one of the cultural powerhouses of antiquity.

**CONTEMPORARY ART  
PROJECTS #1:  
DANIEL BOYD**

*Until June 2021*

*Pediment/Impediment* is the Museum's inaugural contemporary art project in the Penelope Gallery. Daniel Boyd's immersive installation incorporates objects from the Nicholson and Macleay collections to examine the Enlightenment origins of the museum.



**NATURAL SELECTIONS:  
ANIMAL WORLDS**

The most intriguing bird, mammal, fish and shell specimens from the Macleay Collections of natural history are on show in *Natural Selections*, an exhibition exploring the vital role museums play in contemporary science.



**ANIMAL GODS**

Classics meets classification: ancient Greek epics retold with natural history specimens.



**ANCIENT CULTURES OF  
THE MIDDLE EAST**

From Ice Age villages to the Islamic world, encounter some of the earliest cities, writing, and religion.



**IMPRESSIONS OF GREECE**

Artefacts are forever connected to the places from where they came. Explore Greece as William J Woodhouse saw it.



**AUSPICIOUS: MOTIFS  
IN CHINESE ART**

*Until November 2021*

Discover how auspiciousness permeates Chinese culture and daily life.

# Behind the scenes

Revealing the recent projects undertaken by our conservation and collections management staff.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID JAMES

## Moving large objects

Most of the items in our collections can be lifted by one or two people, packed securely in a tub, and transported in a truck to their new home. However, a small number of collection objects are large and heavy and require a different approach, working with a variety of specialists.

From our Egyptian collections, an ancient red granite column capital weighing 3.6 tonne was the heaviest item to be moved into the new museum. Created in the likeness of the goddess Hathor, the first step in moving this sculpture was to use jacks and chocks to raise its steel frame, so that skates could be placed underneath. Tacking like a sailboat, Hathor was moved across the former Nicholson Museum's floors. A forklift was then used to complete the slow and methodical journey to the new museum. It took two days to move Hathor across campus and into the new Egyptian Galleries.

*The Student*, a 1953 modernist sculpture by Tom Bass (see page 42), was originally located at the entrance to University Avenue but was temporarily moved to Botany Lawn, next to the Macleay building, while the new museum was under construction. Once the build was complete, the sculpture was moved to its new home

in the museum forecourt. To move *The Student* we worked with stonemasons and a truck-mounted crane operator. They each brought their expertise to ensure the safe relocation of the 1.2 tonne sandstone sculpture.

The articulated skeletons of a pilot whale and dugong are amongst our oldest natural history specimens. Suspended in the Macleay Museum since the 1970s, they are now on display in our *Natural Selections* exhibition. To get them down, we worked with expert riggers who created a rigging setup to enable the skeletons to be lowered manually with a pulley. While not as heavy as the two stone sculptures, they are large and fragile, too large in fact for both the passenger lift and the stairwell of the Macleay Museum. We removed a window from the Macleay stairwell and fed the boxed skeletons through gap, lowering them to the next level with the manual hoist.

Moving precious, heavy and delicate collection items such as these required both creative solutions and collaboration to ensure a safe passage to their new homes in the Chau Chak Wing Museum.

Chris Jones is Collections Manager, Documentation, Chau Chak Wing Museum



Moving Hathor through the Quadrangle



Preparing the whale skeleton for suspension



Lowering *The Student* into place in the museum forecourt



One of many birds being cleaned by Madeleine Snedden for *Natural Selections*.



Alayne Alvis cleaning a large oil painting, *Height of Summer*, John Coburn, 1985 in the new conservation lab.



An Egyptian limestone sarcophagus lid belonging to Tasheritmin (Ptolemaic period) undergoes conservation treatment in preparation for *Object/Art/Specimen*.



Gemma Torra Campos cleaning the LEGO model of Pompeii, ready for the *Roman Spectres* exhibition.

1200  
cotton buds

used to clean the Egyptian limestone sarcophagus lid.

72  
hours

spent conserving tomb doorway pieces from the ancient Egyptian tomb of Pafherner and Shepenhor

2252  
objects

on display at opening that have not been seen for over 20 years

71 birds

cleaned and packed ready for exhibitions across the museum

3.6  
tonnes

of granite makes up the heaviest object in the new museum, the Hathor column capital

700,000  
years

is the age of the oldest human-made object on display: an Acheulean axe

# Inhabiting an empty building

PAUL DONNELLY



What is a museum without its collections? Cavernous spaces wait to be filled and refined architecture has a moment untouched by occupancy.

With the completion of the Chau Chak Wing Museum building in July, this issue of *Muse* sees the last of the regular building updates spanning two years of construction. Museum staff are, for the first time, working in the same building and already the ‘tea urn’ discussions are bearing fruit with easier communication and exchanging of ideas. There are also the personal exchanges: who knew there were other jam makers in the museum?

For the last week of July, we had the unusual experience of inhabiting an empty building – never again will the museum be a blank architectural space. To cap off the series covering the development of the building, we thought this issue would be a good opportunity to share the museum in its ‘pristine’ state. Both the architects, JPW, and the builders, FDC, engaged professional photographers Brett Boardman and Anthony Fretwell to capture the museum in this brief phase. We hope you enjoy this selection from the hundreds of exterior, interior, and detail photographs they took before the building began its transformation from a finished building, into a museum ready to welcome its visitors.

*Dr Paul Donnelly is Deputy Director, Chau Chak Wing Museum*



Opposite: The Chau Chak Wing Museum front exterior, photo: Anthony Fretwell.

Clockwise from top left: Chau Chak Wing Boardroom, the Ian Potter Gallery for temporary exhibitions, the outdoor terrace, Level 2 galleries, Level 1 staircase, empty *Coastline* and *China* galleries. Photos: Brett Boardman.

# Designing the floating box



Renae Coles interviews Kiong Lee and Graeme Dix from Johnson Pilton Walker, the architects behind the Chau Chak Wing Museum building.

How would you describe the Chau Chak Wing Museum building to someone who had never seen it?

If it was someone searching for it on campus, we would say to look for the 'floating box'.

But that would be just to find it. For us, it is the relationship of building, place and purpose that we would most want to convey for those who have never been before – the experience of entering through the low slot, the pervasive sense of light and the unexpected framed views and vistas.

When this site was suggested for the museum, the established landscape caught our imagination – the avenue of grand figs on one side, the soft rolling lawn and the 'forest' of glorious trees along Parramatta Road.

Today, the new Museum is still hidden behind the trees. It is not until when you turn into the University gates that the building reveals itself.

We think we have achieved what we set out to do: a building that sits comfortably with the landscape and its important neighbours, and one that presents confidence in our time and for the University's future.

How did you arrive at the 'floating box' concept?

We were designing for the vistas, the grand old trees, the parkland setting, and views to and from the Great Hall. We designed from the outside in, and the inside out. We wanted the edges to be blurred, to be both inside and outside, shaded and inviting like under a tree.

On another level, the floating box is simply the temporary exhibition gallery. Since it does not require windows, we could use the walls as structure and have this wonderful opportunity for deep overhangs and cantilevers.

The entrance to the museum is on Level 3. Can you explain why much of the museum sits below ground level?

We were convinced that the new museum building must be of similar scale to the Fisher Library on the other side of the University Avenue axis, so that the experience of entering the campus through this gateway was accentuated. Being constrained by height, we could only go deeper underground to fit all the areas required by the museum brief.

The entrance is at the top of the hill around University Place. The sloping site allowed us to create a series of cascading sheltered outdoor terraces so wherever you are in the museum, you always have a sense of the outside.

Opposite: Kiong Lee and Graeme Dix on the Level 3 staircase. Photo: David James.

Below left: The entrance to the museum lines up with the doors of the Great Hall. Photo: Anthony Fretwell.

Below right: The museum sits nestled in the established landscape. Photo: Brett Boardman.





Windows throughout the museum offer stunning views over Victoria Park and surprising glimpses of the surrounding landscape. Was this an intentional acknowledgment of the site and its rich history?

The land the museum sits on always was and always will be Aboriginal land. The land reminds us that an understanding of place has its beginnings from the First Peoples.

This was our starting point: we wanted to understand its natural setting and its human history.

This site, just above the upper reaches of Blackwattle Bay, has a long human history with a natural confluence of tracks connecting the sandstone coastline of the east with the hinterland of the west.

There is growing recognition that around us is a Gadigal world view that is invisible to many. Understanding the language is a first step to gaining insight into that world, and landscape is a medium for communicating Indigenous knowledge.

#### What materials are featured and why were they selected?

The museum is in the oldest part of the campus, alongside the Great Hall and Quadrangle, both over 150 years old. The choices of material were perhaps obvious and, in the end, simple.

We wanted the building to express our time and yet be timeless, and be robust, easy to maintain and weather gracefully.

Concrete is used as the material of the floating box as it enables structure and cladding to be one, making the engineering efficient and the construction straightforward.

The plinths and terraces below mediate between the wider landscape and our experience as people within it - the human scale. They were made as impossibly large 'sandstone' blocks 3.6 m wide by sometimes 7m tall. Although they are precast concrete, they are coloured by natural sands and express the craft of their making, in the surface finishing and in how they are put together.

#### A large skylight floats above the museum's atrium. What part has light played in the overall building design?

For us, thinking about light and shade is integral to design, and the same applies to opportunities with artificial lighting.

The atrium skylight is designed to bring controlled daylight deep into the building. On a practical level, this balances out glare, making it easier to look out through the building.

It is also the changing nature of daylight that animates the spaces, catching the attention of visitors. The changing seasons or passing clouds – every moment is different. It is worth visiting just for this experience!

*Renae Coles is Marketing Communications Officer, Chau Chak Wing Museum*



From top left: Light and shadow on the museum exterior, the concrete 'floating box', Level 3 views out to Victoria Park, the museum atrium. Photos: Brett Boardman.



# Together, at last

PAUL DONELLY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID JAMES



As three University collections become one, the *Object/Art/Specimen* exhibition puts the flamboyant next to the understated next to the profound, as a tasting plate of a new and multifaceted museum experience.



*Object/Art/Specimen* is the introductory exhibition for the Chau Chak Wing Museum. Situated at the entrance level in the Power Gallery, it is unashamedly a visually splendid celebration of the diversity of our collections, as well as a demonstration of the intellectual and inspirational benefits of bringing together three museum collections under one roof. Six multi-faceted themes demonstrate the ability of these collections to address a myriad of existential and philosophical issues concerning the world today. Featured prominently are four of the cedar cases from the original Macleay Museum placed on a 20m long plinth, making them both objects in themselves as much as containers for objects. Subtly stamped on their flanks with the royal insignia, 'VR [Victoria Regina] MAR 1890', in *Object/Art/Specimen* these cases provide a fitting physical and emotional bridge to our museums' past, and an intervention in what is otherwise a startlingly modern building. Visitors to the Chau Chak Wing Museum will recognise most of the 18 exhibitions at opening as clearly from their respective

Nicholson, Macleay or University Art collections. On occasion, conceptual degrees of blurring, comprised of meaningful proximity or juxtaposition have been embraced. For example, the *Animal Gods* exhibition which features both Nicholson and Macleay objects, or the paintings by JW Power installed in proximity to a display of scientific instruments. By necessity as the introductory exhibition, *Object/Art/Specimen* is the only truly blended exhibition in the CCWM that incorporates, in roughly equal measure, all its constituent collections – an entrée showing the potential of the collections to address interdisciplinary themes relevant to today's world. An important premise of the exhibition is betrayed by the title. Depending on a person's perspective, one person's object is another's art or specimen in innumerable combinations. In this way, *Object/Art/Specimen* is decidedly not a display of 'treasures'. In order to be truly representative the exhibition has, of course, many significant items including a taxidermy Thylacine, a rare annotated volume of *Principia*

Previous page, clockwise from left: Limestone 'Strike' ostrakon (fragment) with hieratic writing, 20th Dynasty (1153–1136BC) reign of Ramses IV-Ramses VI, New Kingdom, Thebes, Upper Egypt, Nicholson Collection, NMR.97  
Attic white ground lekythos, 450–425BC, Athens, Greece, Nicholson Collection, NM53.26  
Spirit specimen, *Hippocampus maculatus*, Sea horse, Europe, Macleay Collections, NHF.269  
Chocolate-on-white jar, Middle to Late Bronze Age, 1150–1500 BC, Pella, Jordan, Nicholson Collection, NM89.51  
Terracotta animal figurine, 2250–1750BC, Harappa, Pakistan, Nicholson Collection, NM48.45



Opposite page: Surveying instrument, Theodolite, 1890–1920, Troughton & Simms, London, England, Macleay Collections, SC1995.14  
Part of ceramic lid from coffin, Late Bronze Age, 19th or 20th Dynasty (1550–1070BC), Bubastis, Lower Egypt, Nicholson Collection, NM62.603  
Taxidermy specimen, *Cicinnurus regius* (Linnaeus, 1758), 1870–1890, King Bird of Paradise, Papua New Guinea, Macleay Collections, NHB.2317  
Skull and lower jaw, *Thylacinus cynocephalus* (Harris, 1808); thylacine, Tasmanian tiger, Tasmania, Australia, Macleay Collections, NHM.1000  
Toy rattle, Uruk period (4000–3100 BC), Iraq, Nicholson Collection, NM35.90  
Above, left: Mounted specimen, *Thylacinus cynocephalus* (Harris, 1808), Tasmania, Australia, Macleay Collections, NHM.496  
Alan H Sonstif, *The Earth of Sydney*, 1981, mixed media sculpture, University Art Collection, UA2018.3.1-40  
Above, right: Orrery (mechanical astronomical model), c.1892–1909, Parkes & Hadley, England, Macleay Collections, SC2009.35  
Left: A diversity of scarab beetles arranged in nineteenth century taxonomic fashion, Macleay Collections, NHEN.37468 – NHEN.43595



Clockwise from left:  
Ethel Carrick Fox, *Flower market southern France*, c. 1926, oil painting, University Art Collection, UA2018.44

Attic white ground lekythos, 425–400BC, Thanatos Painter, Athens, Greece, NM47.20

Model of a dicot leaf, 20th century, SC2017.3

Crystal models, Krantz, Dr Friedrich Ludwig Robert, Germany, Selection of: SC1991.58.1–124

by Isaac Newton (from the University's Rare Books collection), paintings by Russell Drysdale and Ethel Carrick Fox, and a limestone mummy coffin. Pointedly, however, they are shown within their respective themes on an equal footing with less conventionally renowned objects. By way of example, a group of vibrantly coloured purple, red and green eclectus parrot specimens lay in proximity to Robert Indiana's famous 1960s *LOVE* screen-print and our 14th century Flemish oil of Adam and Eve. The connection? You will have to visit to find out!

Appropriately in the context of *Object/Art/Specimen*, this approach equates to a 'de-canonisation' of the collection that removes hierarchy and cuts across the conventions of significance. The conceptual underpinning of the groupings is based upon six broad themes that echo the tripartite form of the title:

- Sex, love, death
- Chaos, pattern, order
- Land, environment, climate
- Exploration, trade, colonialism
- Performance, ritual, belief
- G-forces, extra-terrestrial, the universe

The outcome is a spectacular array of material, a 'harmonious cacophony' to be enjoyed both as a broad canvas in its whole, and more closely in its individual parts.

The thought-provoking and beautiful work of New York artist Mark Dion was an inspiration for *Object/Art/Specimen*. In his Johns Hopkins University installation, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Dion notes how his tightly grouped display "provides us with an awesome, expansive visual impression that evokes wonder, stimulates curiosity, and produces knowledge through a direct and variegated encounter with the physical world." It is this effect we hope visitors to *Object/Art/Specimen* will similarly enjoy.

*Dr Paul Donnelly is Deputy Director, Chau Chak Wing Museum*

# Moroccan ‘moon’ mosaic

CANDACE RICHARDS



He'd just come back from a mission to the moon, but another surprise was waiting. A treasure gifted to Apollo 12's Richard Gordon joins our collections.



Left: Pankration wrestler mosaic, Morocco, 100–300 AD, purchased with funds from the Joyce Marchant bequest 2018, Nicholson Collection, NM2018.135

Right: The Apollo 12 Prime Crew, (L-R) Charles Conrad Jr., Richard F. Gordon Jr., and Alan L. Bean. Image source: NASA.

Since 2018, we have been keeping one of our most recent acquisitions under wraps, a North African mosaic panel featuring Pankration wrestlers. It was acquired through a bequest from long-time Friend of the Nicholson Collection, Joyce Marchant. Now installed in the exhibition *Roman Spectres*, we are thrilled to reveal its unusual ancient and modern histories.

The mosaic shows two men engaged in a Pankration competition. This sport was one of the fiercest combat games that made up the suite of boxing-wrestling style competitions of the Panhellenic Games (including the Olympics), which continued into the Roman period. The only off-limits moves were biting and eye or face gouging. The move depicted here is a heel-hook, in which the kneeling figure is about to use his competitor's ankle to flip him onto his back and claim victory.

The mosaic comes from Roman North Africa, where, like many regions of the Roman Empire, mosaics decorated the floors of wealthy individuals' homes. Sporting and gladiatorial mosaics were a common motif throughout the Mediterranean during the Imperial period, up until the late 4th to early 5th centuries AD.

This panel was part of the Moroccan royal collection until it was gifted to Apollo 12 astronaut Richard Gordon by King Hussan II in 1970. The Apollo 12 mission succeeded the first landing on the moon by 4 months, launching on

14 November 1969. While the mission began ominously with two lightning strikes just after take-off, the three astronauts, Charles Conrad (Commander), Alan Bean (Lunar Module Pilot) and Richard Gordon (Command Module Pilot), successfully made their round trip to the moon with Conrad and Bean spending a total 31.6 hours on its surface. Upon their return, the Apollo 12 team were sent around the world on a goodwill tour by then US President, Richard Nixon. They were greeted by royalty, government officials and prominent citizens, and in Rabat, Morocco, the astronauts were gifted with golden swords, medals of honour and, for Pilot Gordon, this piece of Moroccan history.

This mosaic is just one of the new acquisitions from the Nicholson Collection on display in the Chau Chak Wing Museum: in *Pharaonic Obsessions* you'll find an intricately detailed one-metre long wooden boat model from ancient Egypt; in *The Mummy Room*, a faience bead net used for decorating a mummy, and in *Animal Gods* the 'Cambitoglou amphora,' made in ancient Athens, here surrounded by butterflies from the Macleay natural history collections to retell the events of the Trojan War.

*Candace Richards is Assistant Curator, Nicholson Collection, Chau Chak Wing Museum*



For too long, exhibition spaces have treated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and objects as somehow homogenous. For the new Chau Chak Wing Museum, the University's collection has been reshaped to reflect the many nations that created it.

# SHAPING AMBASSADORS

MATT POLL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID JAMES



The Macleay Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island collections have already had several lives – first as personal items, then within a private collection, and later as teaching implements in University departments, often thanks to philanthropic bequest. Today, the collections are the consultation tools that the Chau Chak Wing Museum is using to connect and engage with Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on common ground. Over several years, my consultative research process has involved connecting Indigenous staff, students and community visitors to the collections as well as actively participating in events such as the Darwin Art Fair and the annual general meetings of Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Art Centres (ANKA).

The outcome of this work is the *Ambassadors* exhibition, the museum’s permanent display of First Nations culture and heritage, a result of sustained communication and dialogue with various individuals, communities, and remote art centres.

Many contributions, insights and perspectives over many years have been formative in shaping how the *Ambassadors* exhibition has come together. The exhibition is the result of inspiration from community leaders such as Linda Burney MP, the first Indigenous female MP elected to the House of Representatives. Ms Burney, wearing a Kangaroo skin cloak made by artist Dr Lynne Riley for her maiden speech in parliament, was an early starting point for exploring the power

Previous page, clockwise from top:

*Bigg-unn*, shield, Jirrbal and Girramay language association, ETH1123

*Eboro*, musical instrument, Iwaidja language association, ETM.1080

*Murruwaygu*, shield, Wiradjuri language association, ETH1124

*Ngurti*, coolamon Nyikina Mangala language association, ETD.1117

All Macleay Collections.

of art in community restorative justice. In the exhibition, an excerpt from Senator Burney’s maiden speech, delivered in Wiradjuri language, accompanies shields provenanced from the Wiradjuri peoples. This is one example of the way the voices of community members have authored interpretive layers to the materials on display in *Ambassadors*.

As museums around the world increasingly become spaces of transformative engagement with First Nations peoples, it is important that the collections embrace the languages and contemporary needs of community members to reflect how the collections portray the rich and unique story of Australia’s First Nations’ past. Through proactive processes of engagement and collaboration, the objects and their histories are presented as instruments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to engage with new narratives, and to encourage deeper engagement with Aboriginal worlds. This strategy seeks a more ethical and competent version of the Aboriginal worldview and experience.

Included in the *Ambassadors* displays are objects from the original Macleay bequest, some of the oldest Australian bark paintings in any collection. Collected from the Iwaidja people of the coastline of the Northern Territory, they were first exhibited at the Linnaean Society of New South Wales in Sydney in 1876.

Consultation is not a supply and demand process; many artists and community members passing through Sydney while conducting other research, business or performing, generously engaged with the collections. Sometimes it was as if the objects themselves were assembling people together in their own arrangements. The Tiwi Ngarukuruwala (we sing songs) Strong Women’s Group visit was a day that informed an entirely new way of thinking about positioning of Tiwi objects in relations that were not apparent from existing collection stories. Consultations and conversations, held in the storerooms with the objects, have added new interpretive layers. One thing that was consistently reiterated was that these objects were ambassadors, holding knowledge across generations.

The final selection of objects represented in each of the *Ambassadors* encompass conversations over decades.

The more than 100 objects assembled, from

the nations of 25 different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups, are shown across eight different display cases. Dispersed throughout the museum, they operate as a disruption to the orthodoxy of past exhibition practices where Aboriginal culture in museums was authored by non-Indigenous people. The independence and autonomy of each Aboriginal nation is respectfully acknowledged, while at the same time a glimpse of a deeper thread that connects and illuminates the intricacy of many different nations is revealed. *Ambassadors* seeks an alternate pathway for the display of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community heritage. Museums are changing – a new layer of consultation with community is becoming central to the collections’ biography.

*Matt Poll is Assistant Curator, Indigenous Heritage and Repatriation, Chau Chak Wing Museum*



Opposite page: *Jill nga*, headband, Wik-Mungkan language association, ETA.1032

*Bera*, fishhooks, Sydney language association, ET2014.1871, ET2014.1872

*Riji*, pearl shell, Bardi language association, ETA.2009

Below: Detail of pearl shell headband and engraved pendant with ochre.

All Macleay Collections.

# No longer under wraps

PAUL DONNELLY

The wonders of the University's collection of ancient Egyptian mummies will be given new life in *The Mummy Room* of the Chau Chak Wing Museum, where mystery meets technology.

Below: CT image of the mummy of the boy Horus, Nicholson Collection, NMR.26. Images by Simon Bird and John Magnussen, courtesy of MMI, Macquarie University Hospital.

Right: A CT scan revealing the mummy's toes. Image: Macquarie Medical Imaging.

The building of the Chau Chak Wing Museum brings many opportunities to display our collections in ways we dared not even dream about before. *The Mummy Room* is one of the exciting outcomes of our expanded space, giving us the ability to present rich and engaging displays for students, teachers and the broader public.

*The Mummy Room* is one half of our new 200 sqm Egyptian galleries and highlights four mummies from the Nicholson Collection, featuring extensive research undertaken in the recent 'Mummy Project' led by Jamie Fraser, formerly Senior Curator of the Nicholson Museum. The other section, *Pharaonic Obsessions*, is curated by Assistant Curator Candace Richards, and explores the western world's fascination with Egypt and ultimately, the stories behind our own collection. The two parts of the gallery are separated by an entranceway featuring a dramatically illuminated granite head of Ramesses II. This element of theatre by the designers of the gallery, Studioplusthree, permeates both galleries.

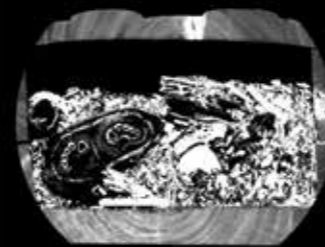
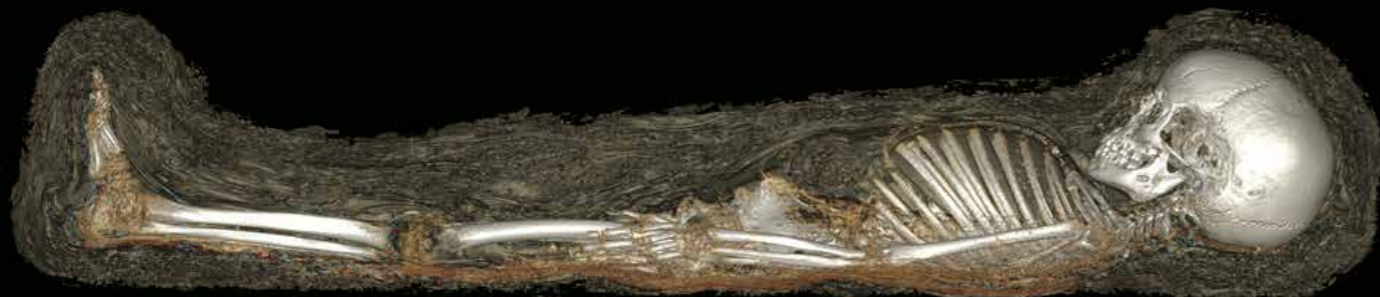
In *The Mummy Room*, visitors are greeted by the spectacle of Padiashiakhet's polychrome coffin standing upright in splendid isolation at the centre of the gallery. The other three mummies in the exhibit are accompanied by interpretative multimedia visualisations. The most revelatory is for the boy Horus, whose lifesize tabletop

screen features mesmerising scans by Macquarie Medical Imaging.

The adult mummies of Meruah and Mer-Neith-it-es lie underneath lifesize monitors set seamlessly in the walls behind. Mer-Neith-it-es has the most varied presentation, including pioneering colourisation of her coffin lid by the School of Creative Industries at Newcastle University, harnessing the elemental clues gleaned from the results of vibrational spectroscopy by Sydney Analytical at the University of Sydney. She can now be seen again in her original glorious colour. Mer-Nieth-it-es saw fame in 2017 when the excavation of her jumbled remains by Dr Conni Lord went viral on the web and the discoveries were named among the top research projects undertaken at the University that year. Artefacts from her coffin will be displayed including some of her 7,000 beads once composed as a decorative netted shroud. .

*The Mummy Room* has been conceived in the spirit of, 'Speak my name', a phrase often found at tomb entrances, invoking eternal presence. That same phrase now greets museum visitors millennia later and, despite the passage of time, it is with this intent we hope the mummies are approached and understood, with dignity and respect.

*Dr Paul Donnelly is Deputy Director, Chau Chak Wing Museum*



## SEEING INSIDE CROSS SECTION OF THE COFFIN OF MER-NEITH-IT-ES

CT Scans conducted by Macquarie Medical Imaging (MMI) allow the visitor to travel through the whole length of the coffin while the remains were still within. Travelling through the grain of the wood is mesmerising in itself.

Coffin of the scribe, Padiashaikhet, Thebes, Egypt, 25th Dynasty (725-700 BC), donated by Sir Charles Nicholson 1860, Nicholson Collection, NMR.28.1-3



ANN STEPHEN

## Reframing the Enlightenment

Artist Daniel Boyd transforms museum objects by questioning, even contradicting, their original intentions.

“So don't come this way, you will find no monuments. (Don't sing our land, its song is enclosed in these ditches.) ... The lifeless streets haven't even the charm of ancient things: our past doesn't belong to us ... The favour to grant you, Western mariner, is indeed to read your oeuvre diagonally, to apply other seas to you, other shores, other darkneses ... Thus out of the opacity of the world, out of seasonless suffering we surface dreaming of beauty borne to misfortune.”

Édouard Glissant, *On a deficiency of monuments, Poetic Intention*, 1969 translated by Nathalie Stephens, 2010

The artist, Daniel Boyd has developed a strong affinity with the Martinique poet and intellectual, Édouard Glissant (1928–2011). For both, the idea of darkness acts as a form of resistance to Enlightenment ideas and the 'light' of western civilisation. In his new project *Pediment/Impediment*, Boyd employs such opacity to examine the Enlightenment origins of the museum – the subject of the inaugural exhibition in the Penelope Gallery, the contemporary art project space, at the Chau Chak Wing Museum.

In a career just short of two decades, Boyd has regularly plundered archives and museums for the source material of paintings and installations in order to imagine a decolonising vision. In 2005, he repainted versions of colonial portraits – of captains, governors, kings and knights of the realm – adding pirate patches and copperplate nicknames to these 18th century English colonialists. In 2011, he worked for three months in the British Museum researching the First Fleet collection, as he explains:

“I actually used the *Endeavour* voyage as a starting point. The



landscape of Cooktown – where they stopped to repair the ship after they’d hit a reef – was a way to speak about other things too ... a way of exploring my great-great grandmother’s connection to that area and her relationship with my great-great grandfather from Vanuatu, Samuel Pentecost.”

Boyd’s immersion in the archive coincided with his adoption of an all-over dotted surface in his paintings, which blurred their photographic origins under a curious form of pointillism, like *Untitled (MINC)* 2012, on display in another exhibition at the CCWM, *Coastline*. From then on, all his paintings would be covered by a constellation of globules made from semi-translucent glue that illuminate and refract light across the painted image. Such screens are not mechanical but hand-made and frequently

Previous page: Daniel Boyd, installation using a model of the Acropolis at Athens (NM2008.4), 2020.

Below: The artist at work, Daniel Boyd working in the former Nicholson Museum.

**For *Pediment/Impediment*, the artist has veiled the entire Penelope Gallery in myriad pinpoints of light and darkness.**



smudged with charcoal or oil paint to conceal as much as to signify. The process produces a tension between the photographic ready-made, that Boyd employs, and the artist’s touch, which variously animates or darkens with each glutinous drop, as he brings the archival object into the sphere of art.

Recently, when Boyd embarked on several architectural projects, most notably a permanent pavilion to honour all Aboriginal people killed in war at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, the dot screen assumed a three-dimensional character, becoming the fabric of the structure. Its walls, made from small pools of two-way mirrored glass, darken and fragment the surroundings, breaking down the surroundings into individual lenses.

For *Pediment/Impediment*, the artist has veiled the entire Penelope Gallery in myriad pinpoints of light and darkness. As the eyes slowly adjust, one can make out a miniature plaster model of the Athenian Acropolis enclosed in a vitrine at its centre. This remarkably accurate tableaux was made in 1895 by renowned German architectural model-maker, Henrich Walger, for the Metropolitan Museum, and then copied for other museums, like the Nicholson. It is flanked on either side by two trapezoid frames, holding a selection of 19th century, life-sized plaster casts from the University’s collection. These reproduction copies of classical sculpture were the stock teaching aides of universities, art schools and museums for over three centuries, until abandoned by modernism. Sitting on the dappled mirrored glass, their massive weight dematerialises in shadows, reflections and silhouettes. Overlooking these relics of Enlightenment learning are two heads, mounted on either end wall, facing one another. One is black, labelled ‘Aboriginal Australian’ the other, ‘Kaukassian’ (an earlier German variant of Caucasian); the ghoulish heads are teaching aides of a 19th century schoolroom.

In the gallery’s mottled half-light, the transplanted second-hand versions of western civilisations are occluded, allowing other ways of seeing. These effects are similar to Boyd’s memorial, which, in the words of the artist is “an opaque space where the world we see is not in our own reflection, but the reflection of many”.

*Dr Ann Stephen is Senior Curator, University Art Collection, Chau Chak Wing Museum.*

# From the shores of the Mediterranean

CANDACE RICHARDS



The University's  
extraordinary collection  
of Hellenic, Etruscan and  
Roman artefacts take  
pride of place in the new  
Nicholson Galleries.

Perhaps the Nicholson Collection's most evocative item of the ancient Mediterranean is our shell encrusted transport amphora, hauled from the Bay of Naples' ocean floor in the 19th century. It was made in the second century BC, around the time between the second and third Punic wars (201–149 BC), most likely in a workshop in Pompeii. The collection's founder, Charles Nicholson, acquired this piece during his 1857–58 European and Egyptian sojourn collecting antiquities that exemplified the ancient cultures dotted around the Mediterranean Sea.

Continuing this legacy, the Nicholson Galleries in the Chau Chak Wing Museum are brimming with artefacts from the shores of the Mediterranean. Spread across several exhibitions, these objects offer insights into the distant past and are touchstones for the ongoing connections between our modern

Transport amphora, possibly Pompeii, Italy, 200-130 BC, found in the gulf of Naples, Italy, donated by Sir Charles Nicholson 1860, Nicholson Collection, NMR.1031.1



world and the ideas and people of antiquity.

When visitors arrive on level two of the Chau Chak Wing Museum, they are greeted by ghostly remnants of the Roman world in the exhibition *Roman Spectres*. 2000-year-old marble portraits encircle the headless statue of an unknown Roman man, alongside a columbarium inspired façade, filled with memorials to long-gone parents, children, freed people, and slaves. These nameless faces and faceless names represent individual lives as well as the diversity of the thriving multicultural Roman empire in the Mediterranean.

Moving through the light-filled central atrium, visitors next encounter *Mediterranean Identities: across the wine-dark sea*, an exhibition that takes its name from Homer's evocative description of the sea in *The Iliad*. This poetical phrase brings to mind the cultural interplay of the region in

the first millennium BC; with the sea becoming like a wine krater, a mixing bowl where different influences and identities met and interacted, with both positive and negative effects throughout history. The exhibition explores the impact of this interplay on the material culture of the ancient Hellenic Mediterranean, and the varied expressions of identity across Hellenic states and their neighbours during this period.

The epic tales of *The Iliad* and *Odyssey* take place over ten-year periods and, since their origins as oral histories, there have been many versions. In *Animal Gods: classics and classification*, we retell key events of these stories through the world of natural history. In the 17th century, scientist and physician, Carl von Linné (Linnaeus), established the scientific practice of taxonomy to classify the natural world by family and species. He drew on a wide

Cover: Marble head of a woman, Roman, 1st century AD, The Hon R P Meagher bequest, donated 2011, Nicholson Collection, NM2012.11  
Photo: Louise Cooper and Stefanie Zingsheim

Below: Terracotta female figurine, Boeotia, Greece, 550-500 BC, acquired before 1962, Nicholson Collection, NM62.788



**“I believe that the earth is very large and that we who dwell between the pillars of Hercules and the river Phasis live in a small part of it about the sea, like ants or frogs about a pond, and that any other people live in many other such regions.”**

Plato, *Phaedo*: 109a–b (Translation: H Fowler 1966)

Warrior headed aryballos, Rhodes, Greece, 600-550 BC, donated by the Classical Association 1946, Nicholson Collection, NM47.1



range of sources for names and, when it came to butterflies, relied heavily on the ancient world, using the characters of Greek and Roman mythology to name individual butterflies as well as other animal and plant species. In this exhibition, specimens interspersed with classical antiquities become the characters in our retelling of the Trojan War and Ulysses' adventures.

The thematic continuity between ancient and modern Greece is explored in an intimate space dedicated to the exhibition, *Impressions of Greece*. Named after the final public lecture delivered by William John Woodhouse in 1936, the exhibition pairs antiquities with photographs of early modern Greece, captured by Woodhouse between the 1890s and 1930s. Our debut installation looks at monuments and artefacts of the Bronze Age,

the Classical Period and Byzantine-Eastern Orthodox Greece. Future installations will examine costume and dress, democracy, sport, architecture, archaeological discoveries and more.

In Plato's dialogue *Phaedo*, he described the Mediterranean as a populated pond and that there were many such places around the world. His words were part of a treatise on the soul and I've found myself drawn back to his expression of global similarity throughout the development of the new museum. Individually, our collections seemingly represent singular shores, but drawn together we are reminded of the interconnection of places and ideas throughout history.

*Candace Richards is Assistant Curator, Nicholson Collection, Chau Chak Wing Museum*



Miyalkkurruwurruwun (group work by women) made at Ramingining. *Ganguri, long yams* c.1984, bark-fibre string, paperbark, ochre, 133.5 x 69.9, collected by D Mundine 1980s, purchased JW Power bequest 1984–85, JW Power Collection, University of Sydney, managed by Museum of Contemporary Art, PW1984.132

# FOUNDATIONS:

DEVELOPING THE YOLŪ EXHIBITION, *GULULU DHUWALA DJALKIRI*

For the YolŪ people of eastern Arnhem Land, the foundation of their knowledge is expressed through art. A visually striking new exhibition shares the power of this idea.

REBECCA CONWAY

The University of Sydney holds close to 1000 items of YolŪ cultural heritage. Most recently we acquired an award-winning video work for the current exhibition. Other works were created and brought here, some nearly 100 years ago. Together, they represent three major centres of YolŪ settlement and art-production – generations of art and artists from Milingimbi/Yurrwi Island, Ramingining, and Yirrkala in eastern Arnhem Land.

Through these collections we see

the concerns, politics, key players and artists who were actively engaging with *balanda* (non-Indigenous) academics in order to make them understand the veracity of their culture. We also see glimpses back millennia, to creation times and *wanŷarr* (ancestral beings), the influences that shaped the YolŪ people, their land and waters. Proudly, YolŪ continue to develop within this deep inheritance.

Indigenous art historian, Stephen Gilchrist in his introduction for the

book, *Djalkiri: YolŪ art, collaborations and collections* (to be launched in conjunction with the exhibition) comments that, “...working with either historical collections or contemporary objects demands a commitment to the unvoiced dimensions of works of art, their cultural signification, biographical elements and political potency. Indigenous curation is premised on this cultural mandate to speak with and listen to the objects.”

How do you honour this, especially when one is a non-Indigenous curator

Installing the exhibition September 2020. Final tweaking of the design and layout was done over the phone with our Yolŋu collaborators in Arnhem Land.



working with Indigenous collections? We need to think deeply about who can speak most meaningfully for collections, who most needs to listen, and how such conversations and interactions can be facilitated in present circumstances.

I have been privileged to have been mentored by several Yolŋu Elders and academics. One of my most influential was Gupapuyŋu clan leader and honorary doctorate of the university, Dr Joe Neparrŋa Gumbula (1954–2015) who I worked with at the university from 2009. He urged me and others like me, "... to start digging into that whole historical message". He said, "It isn't just for *balanda* anthropologists [or curators] to find and give the information, there should be a mixture. We are all brought up in this

world, we all have different cultures to be respected."

Flash forward to 2018, when a group of six Elders, representatives of the three Yolŋu communities we hold work from, came to Sydney to view the collections and advise and direct us how to develop the exhibition from their perspective. In a presentation to university alumni, Rirratjŋu clan leader and artist, Wanyubi Marika, stated, "We are being taught in our own professional manner to become a professor or doctor or whatever. We sit it in that 'lab', that *dalkarra* [knowledge base of Yolŋu law, songs, sacred business]. First, you have to be an artist ... then you are going into another level of qualification, you are qualified to go step by step. In a similar way that you are learning in



universities, we have the same thing."

Art embodies the spiritual and philosophical foundations of the Yolŋu people, it traces *djalkiri* (ancestral footsteps) and expresses Yolŋu *rom* (law). For Yolŋu, artworks are documents, preserving knowledge and in many ways are read like texts. "These things here – we dance, we sing; today these paintings help us tell the story in the right way" said Tolbert Dharramanba a Director at Bula'bula Arts, Ramingining, during the project. His father, the artist Jimmy Wululu Gaykamaŋu (1936–2005), is represented extensively in the 1980s JW Power collection.

There are more than 40 clans and many Yolŋu *matha* (languages). Yolŋu *miny'tji* (clan designs) as represented through their art are core aspects of their intellectual property. Rich with metaphor and complex interrelationships, they signal and protect deeper meanings. Visually striking, the exhibition we have developed collaboratively over the last two years, showcases the *miny'tji* of more than 20 Yolŋu clan groups and over 100 artists. More than 350 works have been grouped to represent the artists' clan inheritances and estates and to loosely map from east to west the geographical and cultural landscape of much of eastern Arnhem Land.

The title of the exhibition developed by the Yolŋu project team is an invitation, *Gululu dhuwala djalkiri: welcome to the Yolŋu foundations*.

Rebecca Conway, is Curator, *Ethnography, Macleay Collections, Chau Chak Wing Museum*. She has co-curated the exhibition with Matt Poll, Assistant Curator, *Indigenous Heritage and Repatriation*, and representatives of *Milingimbi Art and Culture, Yurrwi Island, Bula'bula Arts, Ramingining, and Buku-larrŋgay Mulka, Yirrkala Art Centre*.

Opposite, below: Mawalan Marika, Rirratjŋu clan, Dhuwa moiety, *Djan'kawu*, 1947, ochres on bark, 64 x 48 cm. Collected at Yirrkala, R & C Berndt 1946–47, transferred from the Department of Anthropology 1974, Macleay Collections, ETP2012

Left: Joe Dhamanydji, Daygurrurr-Gupapuyŋu clan, Yirritja moiety, works Milingimbi / Yurrwi, *Gupapuyŋu djalumbu* Gupapuyŋu clan hollow log, 2016, ochre on stringybark (*Eucalyptus* sp.), 100 x 20 cm, Milingimbi Art and Culture, Russell Robertson bequest 2018, Macleay Collections, ET2018.7

Below: George Milpurrruru Malibirr, 1934–1999, Ganalbiŋu – Gurrumba Gurrumba clan, Yirritja moiety, worked Ramingining, *Gumaŋ/Gurramatji, magpie goose*, c.1984, ochre and synthetic polymer on wood, 57.3 x 14.8 x 11.4 cm, collected by D Mundine 1980s, purchased JW Power bequest 1984–85, JW Power Collection, University of Sydney, managed by Museum of Contemporary Art, PW1984.103



# On Natural

# Selections



Exhibition preparation can be both challenging and rewarding. Drawing on specimens from the Macleay Collections, our aim with the exhibition *Natural Selections* was to provide insight into natural history collections: what they contain; how they developed; how specimens were acquired, and what they are used for. That's a lot of ground to cover.

The natural history in the Macleay Collections consists almost exclusively of zoological specimens collected in the 19th and late 18th centuries, a time of European expansion and colliding cultures, which led to an international trade that propelled animals into the world's museums. The 'network' section of the exhibition makes explicit how thousands of specimens were collected, traded and purchased for scientific and educational purposes, travelling along defined networks of commercial trade.

*Cacatua leadbeateri* (Vigors, 1831), Widyagala [Wiradjuri language], Leadbeater's cockatoo, collected c. 1880, donated by Macleay Family 1865-1892, Macleay Collections, NHB.1649. Photo: Louise Cooper and Stefanie Zingsheim

A crackle of cockatoos, a shiver of sharks, *Natural Selections* brings together a cornucopia of specimens to highlight the history, diversity and ongoing importance of natural history collections.

TONY GILL

Natural history specimens are used for numerous purposes, including some yet to be imagined and realised. For example, they help us document the form and distribution of species, critical for developing theories on how species evolved in response to Earth history, such as sea level changes and continental drift. They also provide critical base information for detecting shifts in distribution patterns, particularly as a result of environmental change in the Anthropocene. *Natural Selections* includes examples of these issues using specimens from the Macleay's bird, mammal, fish and shell collections. A particular favourite is the cattle egret acquired from Madagascar well before the species was first seen in Australia.

The primary role of natural history specimens in the museum context, however, is in taxonomy, the study

of identification and classification of biological species. This was also the passion of the Macleay family members who gifted the collection to the University, and it was important that we devoted a large part of the exhibition to that topic. The engaging Cacatuidae (cockatoo) specimens are exhibited to explore taxonomic work and definitions of the 21 recognised species. Cockatoos were chosen because they are familiar to most Australians and tourists, and are readily observed alive in the Sydney area, including the University campus.

There were challenges with coming to grips with cockatoo taxonomy for me as a fish taxonomist. Taxonomic naming of animals is governed by the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, and it might seem reasonable to suppose that over the past two hundred years codified rules and regulations would mean

that taxonomists share similar study methods, regardless of the type of organism they worked on. However, there is little agreement among taxonomists in even fundamental things, like what criteria are important for regarding a population a separate species and not just some variant of another species. The taxonomy of different groups often reflects the historic decisions taken over the past 200 years, when species knowledge was dynamically changing.

Born in European science, today natural history is in a dynamic period as Indigenous people increasingly contribute ideas, knowledge and different classificatory principals to the worldwide heritage of knowledge about life on earth.

*Dr Anthony Gill is Curator, Natural History, Macleay Collections, Chau Chak Wing Museum.*



Above: Kong Xianlan, *Sharing Presents with Poor Disciples*, 1880-1930, glass lantern slide, University Art Collection, UA2010.81

## Auspicious beings in Chinese art

Not just an accumulation of signs of good fortune, prosperity and virtue, 'auspicious' is a word that articulates a complex, dynamic view of positive forces in Chinese culture. It inspires people in their daily lives and, as a new exhibition demonstrates, it has richly inspired art.

SHUXIA CHEN

*Auspicious: motifs in Chinese art*, the inaugural exhibition of the Chau Chak Wing Museum's China Gallery, explores the themes of fortune, prosperity and virtue that have long inspired the arts of China. The exhibition was initiated by Dr Stephen Whiteman, previously from the Department of Art History, now at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London. After taking over the project in 2019, I have added

dimensions to the idea of being auspicious, and how such aspiration is manifested through the signs and materiality of objects.

The signs of auspiciousness are ubiquitous in Chinese culture. We find it in daily life, spiritual beliefs, scholars' cultivation and temporal-spatial perceptions. Drawing from three important local collections – the Chau Chak Wing Museum, the Powerhouse Museum

Right: *Guanyin standing on a wave*, Dehua, Fujian Province, China, Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), porcelain, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, A6031.

and the Art Gallery of New South Wales – the exhibition presents a wide range of symbols through over 60 carefully selected objects. It includes representations ranging from gods, immortals and mythical creatures, to sacred animals and seasonal flora, as well as allusions to puns, classic texts, folklore, ancient cosmology and numerology. As part of China's broader visual and material cultures, these auspicious beings appear in decorative and fine works of art, architecture, furniture and books, in both vernacular and sacred objects. Themes of auspicious wishes connect the works across a spectrum of media, including bronze, ceramic, jade, wood, paper and glass.

The exhibition includes four sections, and each presents the themes of fortune, prosperity and virtue grouped by the functionality of the objects.

'Into Life' comprises familiar domestic objects such as plates, bowls, vases, tea sets, hairpins and even an ancient pillow, to show how auspicious symbolism is intrinsic to Chinese daily life. Through export wares, auspicious symbols also travel beyond China, to southeast Asia and Europe.

The idea of worship and being blessed is one auspicious Chinese practice. In 'Gods, Sages and Immortals', we find that Chinese spiritual life has traditionally been infused with a combination of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and mythology. Some of these religious aspirations were introduced overseas through both the Chinese diaspora and foreign travellers. For example, two sets of lantern slides and rare pictorial books on the life stories of Buddha and Confucius were taken back to Sydney from



Shanghai in the 1920s by Australian Presbyterian missionary, John Whitsed Dovey (1887–1956).

The earliest and most influential belief in Chinese culture would be the philosophy of uniting the three spheres of heaven, Earth and man. In 'Guardians of Space', a *Boju* mirror from the Han Dynasty 206 BC – 220 AD, the oldest object in this exhibition, abstractly depicts the Earth as a square with twelve characters (the Earth branches of Chinese zodiac), and heaven as a circle embracing the Earth. The twelve Earth branches are signs for recording time and seasons. Ancient Chinese spatial and temporal orientations are united in one everyday mirror.

Objects are often the visual manifestation of our thoughts, beliefs, status and ideals. If the decorative and symbolic stationery 'On the scholar's desk' could tell us their perception of auspiciousness, it might be: to pursue serenity through self-cultivation and to bring virtue to the world through official work in the court.

Not simply an accumulation of luck or superstition, auspiciousness denotes many meanings. I hope our audiences will come away from this exhibition understanding the scope and significance of auspicious objects in all aspects of Chinese life.

*Dr Shuxia Chen is Curator, China Gallery, Chau Chak Wing Museum*



*Imperial birthday dish with peach*, Jingdezhen, China, Kangxi period, 1662–1722 Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) porcelain with famille verte decoration Art Gallery of New South Wales, 141.1971

# Head above water

KATRINA  
LIBERIOU



The only way to stop an ocean is with a camera. The *Coastline* exhibition brings together restless and affecting oceanic images, captured by artists pondering the vastness of the sea.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude  
*Wrapped coast, one million square feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia* 1969  
gelatin silver photograph  
122.2 x 162 cm  
purchased with funds from the JW Power bequest, 1969  
JW Power Collection, The University of Sydney, managed by the Museum of Contemporary Art, PW1969.5

“We are like islands in the sea, separate on the surface but connected in the deep.”

William James [1842 – 1910]

The liminal space between land and ocean is a potentially contentious zone of identity, sovereignty, politics, trade and displacement. It is also a place to witness extremes of weather, a place for leisure, hopes and dreams. It can be destructive or life giving. Surrounded by water, as the largest island continent, artists living and working in Australia, as well as in New Zealand, a country of two main islands, have a rich history of photographing the seas and oceans. The exhibition *Coastline*, which I co-curated with Ann Stephen, showcases major historic treasures from the University Art Collection. While the exhibition encompasses five centuries

of painting, several artists who use the medium of photography, provide a major contemporary focus for *Coastline*.

The earliest photograph in the show documents Christo and Jeanne-Claude's iconic work *Wrapped coast, one million square feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia* (1969). In 1969, Sydney textile entrepreneur and art patron, John Kaldor, invited Christo and Jeanne-Claude to Australia to exhibit and lecture; the artists proposed to wrap a piece of coastline for seven weeks. Materials were tested at the University of Sydney before a loose-weave polypropylene was chosen. *Wrapped coast*, in front of Prince Henry Hospital at Little Bay, became the first Kaldor Public Art Project.

For four decades, Catherine Rogers has undertaken the series, *Horizons: Oceans of Australia 1978 – ongoing*. She has circumnavigated the continent from the Arafura sea in the far north, following the coastline through the Coral Sea, the South Pacific Ocean, Tasman Sea, Bass Strait, the Indian Ocean and the Timor Sea. On exhibition are eight black and white photos from the series, made at different times and with different technologies, yet with the horizon line always positioned at the centre of the work, giving equal weight to the sea and the sky. Rogers observes that her approach to this strangely deceptive subject “is a bland literal record of something which is in constant change, and that the ‘borders’ of many seas are unclear and hotly contested”.

Rogers' oeuvre is part of a larger tradition that includes Australian photographers such as Harold Cazneaux with his seascapes, beaches and cliffs of Sydney, to the striking Antarctica compositions by Frank Hurley and luminaries such as Max Dupain, Fiona Hall, William Yang, Anne Zahalka and James Tylor, for whom the sea permeates their work in some way. Rogers' photographs are symbiotic with the work of international greats such as French

photographers Gustave Le Gray (1820–1882) and Francois Puyplat (b.1937), each with their respective practices that span from the advent of photography, through to today. There is of course the sublime and minimalist Japanese photographer, Hiroshi Sugimoto (b.1948) whose own seascapes coincide with those of Rogers, although unknown to each other.

In contrast to such land-based work, the diptych by Simryn Gill, is taken from aboard a fishing boat on the Strait of Malacca. The rocking motion of the sea is visually captured by their slight tilt, and emphasised by the placement of the photographs, with the right image installed higher than the left, to align the horizons. The wash of a vessel fills the bottom third of the vertical images, indicating that a voyage is underway. Historically, the Strait of Malacca was the passage for Asian migration through the Malay Archipelago. Today it is a major traffic route of global trade. The title, *Sweet Chariot No. 7* (2015) is derived from the African-American gospel song ‘Swing low, sweet chariot’ which expressed the longing of transported slaves for their home.

Two major portraits dominate the gallery space, the photographic work of Fiona Pardington from the series *Ahua: A beautiful hesitation*. These images of life casts, originally made on the Dumont d'Urville expedition through Oceania, between 1837–40 were originally intended to illustrate a hierarchical and deeply racist classification of the peoples of the Pacific. The series is the result of Pardington's four-year project documenting the casts of Maori, Pacific and European heads, in New Zealand and French ethnographic museums. The series has a personal resonance for Pardington as it includes one of her Māori ancestors from her *iwi* (tribe), Ngāi Tahu.

*Katrina Liberiou is Assistant Curator, University Art Collection, Chau Chak Wing Museum*

Catherine Rogers  
*Horizons: Oceans of Australia* 1978 – ongoing, pigment ink on cotton paper, dimensions variable purchased with funds from the Alan Richard Renshaw bequest 2020 University Art Collection, selection from UA2020.28-43





# Securing the shadow

JAN BRAZIER



Curator Jan Brazier explores how a curious phrase common to 19th century photographers reveals the existential fears and longings of the time.

Henry Goodes, who ran a photographic studio in Mudgee from the mid-1860s, had printed on the backs of his carte-de-visite portraits not only the details of his studio but also the poetic line – ‘Secure the shadow ere the substance fade.’ This is part of a couplet, a saying popular with commercial photographers in the 19th century:

*Secure the shadow ere the substance fade,  
The light of Heaven the pencil, Nature the artist.*

The origins of the expression are a mystery. It can be found in use in the United States in October 1841 by Vermont photographer, J Marsh, which is only two years after the announcement of photography as a new technology in France in 1839. Travelling daguerreotypist, JW Newland, used the saying in his advertisements when visiting Hobart in November 1848. Newland had travelled to Australia from North America.

Another popular variant of it is used by Elijah Hart, photographer in West Maitland, in 1857:

*Of those for whom we fond emotions cherish,  
Secure the shadow, ere the substance perish.  
(Northern Times 16 December 1857)*

‘Secure the shadow’ became part of the language of photography in the 19th century,

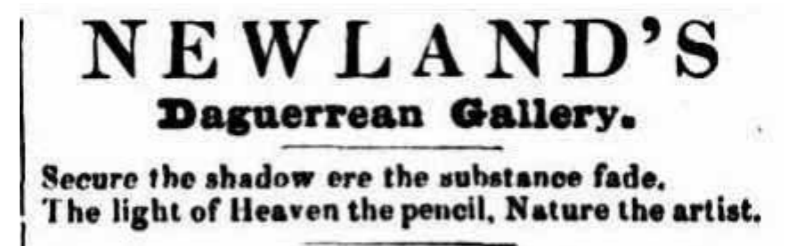
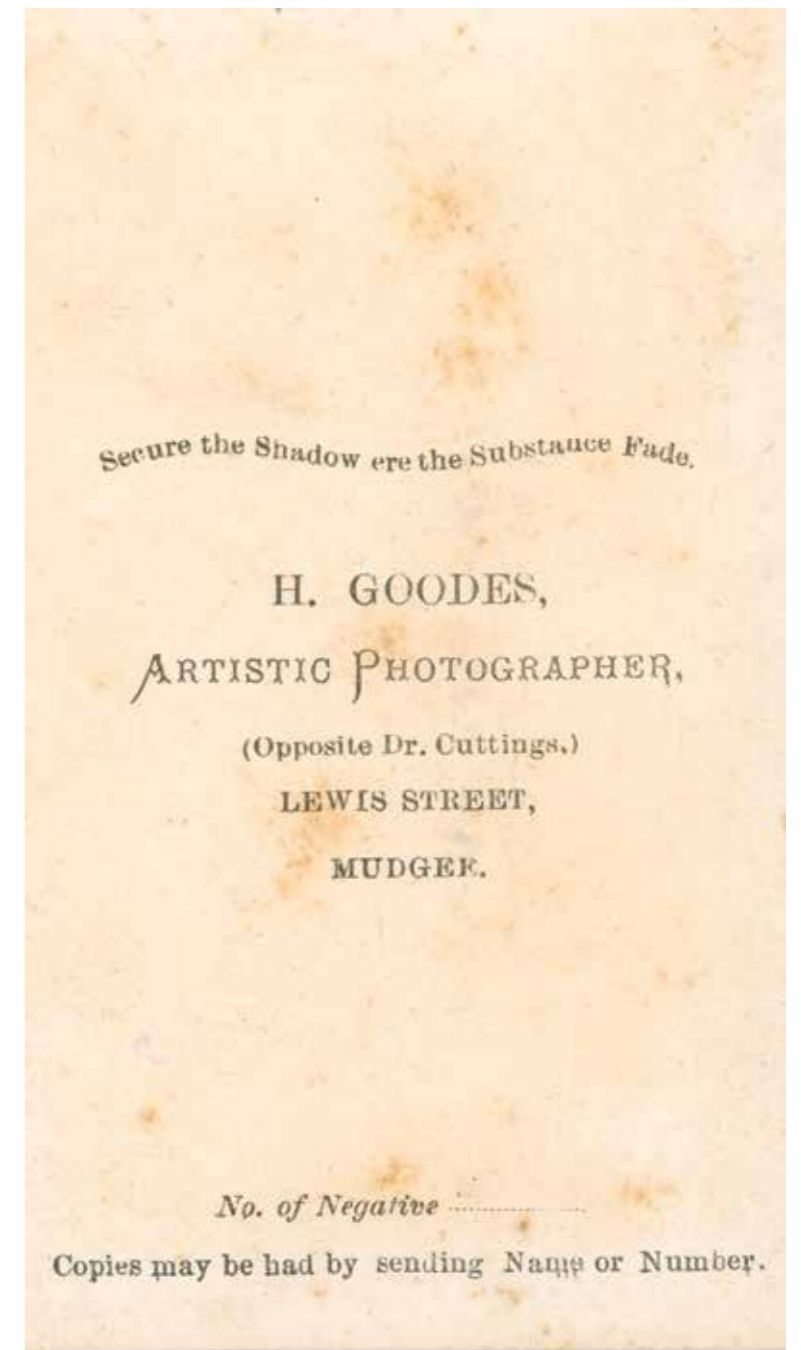
to be found in newspaper advertisements and articles. Some photographers attached the name ‘Shakespeare’ to the saying, inaccurately. Certainly the Bard is evocative on shadows and substance: ‘Life’s but a waiting shadow’ from *Macbeth*, and from Sonnet 53, ‘What is your substance, whereof are you made / That millions of strange shadows on you tend?’. Photography in its very essence is about capturing a moment in time: WH Fox Talbot, inventor of the negative/positive process called it ‘the art of fixing shadows’.

The meaning of the saying was readily understood by the readers – ‘secure the shadow’ being code for ‘get your photograph taken now’. The phrase was often used in published accounts instead of the word ‘photographed’. In 1888, in describing the champion load of wheat, the *Cootamundra Herald* reported that ‘The local photographer secured the shadow of the team and driver.’ (18 February 1888)

The saying is imbued with the sense of the brevity of life, and changes wrought by passing years. Henry Goodes had earlier been a daguerreotypist in Brisbane in 1856. In advertising his new rooms, he wrote of the self-interest in securing likenesses of those whom they love ere they pass to ‘that bourne from whence no traveller returns’. This is actually Shakespeare, a reference to *Hamlet*. Goodes continued that ‘Having often met with those who would willingly give ten times the ordinary cost, could they recall the lost opportunity of securing the likenesses of some dear departed one’. He then ended with a clarion call: ‘to Mothers, Fathers, Sisters, Brothers, Lovers and friends – indeed to *all* – secure to yourselves while yet you may a faultless likeness of those who are near and dear to your’. (*Moreton Bay Free Press*, 17 November 1856)

The triumph of photography was the democratisation of the portrait – an individual could have themselves taken from babyhood to old age, and family albums captured families across generations. In our digital age, have we secured our shadows in a portrait that can be viewed over 150 years in the future as that taken by Henry Goodes can still be?

*Henry Goodes’ portrait is on view in the Business of Photography exhibition. Jan Brazier is Curator, History, Macleay Collections, Chau Chak Wing Museum*



Opposite page: [Portrait of a man with two young girls] c.1865-85 Macleay Collections, HP85.42.854

Top: reverse side of the photograph

Above: *Colonial Times* (Hobart) 24 November 1848



Tom Bass beside the maquette, with *The Student* (unfinished) in the background, 1953. University Art Collection, UA 1955.5

## Carving *The Student*

*The Student* sculpture by Tom Bass was recently relocated to the forecourt of the Chau Chak Wing Museum. The sculptor's son, artist Tim Bass, shares his memories of his father producing the work.

My father won a competition for a sculpture at the University's entrance, organised by Denis Winston, the foundation chair of Town Planning at the University in 1953.

As a student at East Sydney Technical College (now the National Art School), he had done quite a lot of carving, as part of the sculpture

curriculum. He was impressed by the work of Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth in addition to monumental sculptural traditions from classical Greek, Cycladic, Egyptian and Romanesque sculpture.

I imagine the sandstone would have come from somewhere up near Gosford. He didn't want a striated

stone, but an even textured and even coloured stone. We were living in Minto, at a time when it was a remote dairying community. I remember him drawing on the original block of sandstone, with black paint, the broad areas for removal/excision. It was amazing as a small child to imagine how he was going to turn a huge block into something more refined. He carved *The Student* in the open air, with stone chips flying everywhere. He wore a bandana on his head, like a pirate. I remember most of all the sound of the carving – he used a range of different steel chisels and a hammer; each made a distinctive ringing sound or note as he made a double hit. That went on for months.

My father had not been to university, and in his mind, it was a place of almost sacred importance. *The Student* is a contemplative image, of absorption in reading, studying and thinking – it's not didactic. Stone is a perfect medium if you think of it having an internal life and the process of carving being to reveal something within, almost as if the subject already exists inside the stone and has to emerge. It's a romantic idea. He would be delighted to see *The Student* at the entrance to the new museum, particularly as it is now exposed to the sun at all hours of the day and through the seasons.



# You can give the past a future

The Chau Chak Wing Museum has become a reality thanks to the generosity of donors inspired by our unique collections and world-class research. Your donation can support the acquisition, conservation and display of incredible artworks, rare specimens, and precious objects.

To support the Chau Chak Wing Museum and its collections of art, science, culture and antiquities, please see [sydney.edu.au/museum](http://sydney.edu.au/museum) or use the form below. Alternatively, contact us to discuss your benefaction ideas in person.



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An anatomical model of the human eye sheds light on teaching methodologies.

## Sight to behold

KELSEY MCMORROW

They say that the eyes are the windows to the soul, but this model of an eye instead provides a window into ways that we learn about the physics of human vision.

This anatomical model eye was designed for use as a teaching aid. Its manufacturer is unknown, although a partial label suggests it was made in the USA. Dating from the mid-late 20th century, this model can be disassembled, dividing in two to allow students to study the internal components of the human eye. Inside are several removable parts, including a hollow sphere to represent the vitreous body, a clear disc to represent the lens, and a coloured disc representing the iris and cornea. The model is hand-painted and at 15 cm is a much-enlarged scale compared to a real-life eye!

Anatomical models such as this have long been used as educational tools, particularly in the study of medicine. This model, however, came into the museum collection from the University's School of Physics.

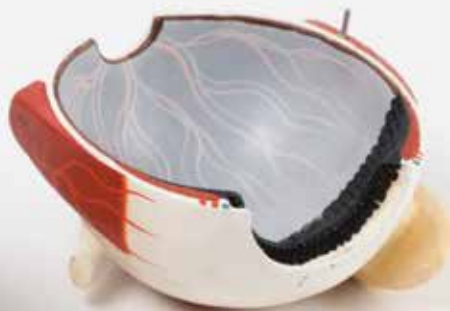
In the study of physics, such a model was used to help students understand the ways in which the eye functions as an optical system, refracting (bending) light to produce focussed

images. Light rays bounce off objects and enter the eye through the cornea, passing through the aqueous humour, lens and vitreous body. Each of these parts refracts light rays, eventually bringing them to a sharp focus point on the retina. Here, the light is converted into signals and sent to the brain via the optic nerve. The brain then decodes the signals, transforming them into the images we see.

Through taking apart the model, the basic anatomical components of the eye can be separated, identified and considered in terms of how they contribute to image formation. By handling these pieces, the spatial relationships of the parts and how they interact with one another can be better understood.

Today, models such as this one remain valuable teaching aids. Despite technological enhancements that have enabled hyper-realistic computer-based representations of the eye, physical anatomical models retain their usefulness as tactile alternatives to the 'real thing'.

*Kelsey McMorrow is Curatorial Assistant, Science, Macleay Collections, Chau Chak Wing Museum*



The model eye shown partially disassembled, Macleay Collections, SC2017.150

# Hands-on learning in the Museum

We offer a wide range of educational program and activities based around our collections. Here a student of ancient history is examining a lekythos from ancient Athens.



The Chau Chak Wing Museum brings unprecedented access to all kinds of objects, such as this ingenious hand-cranked apparatus for modelling the phenomena of wave motion in order to teach transverse and longitudinal waves. The rich veins of enquiry of such an object are almost limitless; students could be directed to consider the unique design, teaching practices in a pre-digital age, the human compulsion to understand difficult concepts visually, or the changing nature of scientific endeavour.

The new Academic Engagement program is dedicated to ensuring that University of Sydney staff, and students from all faculties and schools, access the museum in meaningful ways for learning and teaching. Curated encounters with exhibitions and object-handling sessions in our state-of-the-art teaching spaces will be available for both University of Sydney students and students of all ages from schools and the broader community. Object-based learning is a powerful learning tool used to engage a broad range of learning styles. Best of all, it is lots of fun and a unique experience to work face-to-face with our collections.



Wave motion apparatus  
Macleay Collections, SC2009.55

For more information and to visit, see [sydney.edu.au/museum/education](http://sydney.edu.au/museum/education)



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