

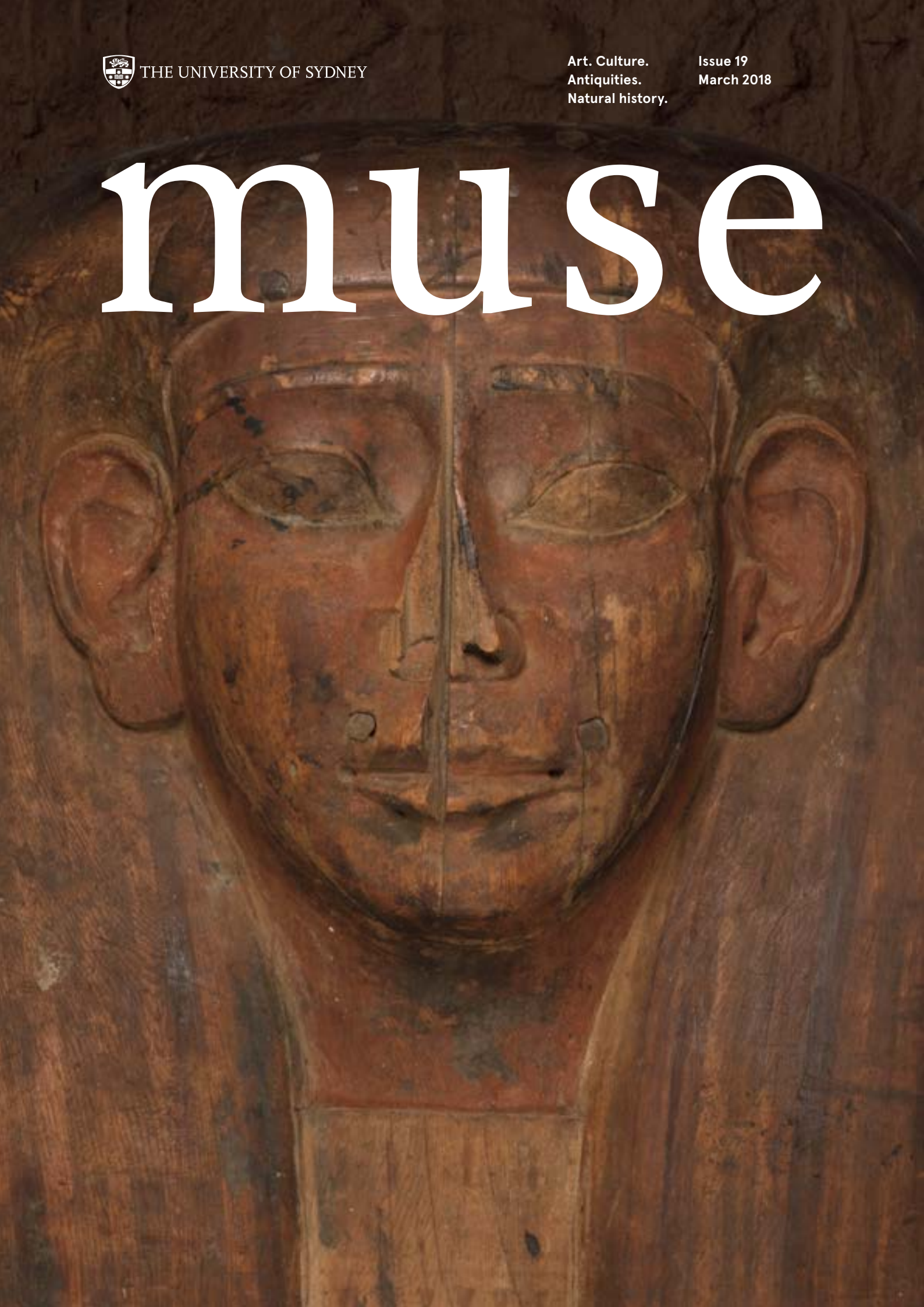


THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Art. Culture.
Antiquities.
Natural history.

Issue 19
March 2018

mus e



From the ground up

A word from the Director, David Ellis

In 2018 we'll be watching as the new Chau Chak Wing Museum emerges from the ground and enthusiastically planning the opening exhibitions and programs.

The current activity is a clear reminder of how close we are to starting construction, and how complex a task it is to build a 21st century museum.

Dr James Flexner of the Department of Archaeology organised archaeological testing of the museum site in mid-2017, providing a great opportunity for student training. The excavations bore out the prediction of previous heritage assessments – that there was unlikely to be much by way of contextual remains – but that didn't stop the students and volunteers gaining valuable experience and enjoying the thrill of finding old coins and pottery.

In this issue we will hear how preparations for an exhibition of cultural heritage from the Yolngu people began with respectful consultation with the Yirrkala, Ramingining and Milingimbi communities in Arnhem Land.

Our Egyptian material is one of our many treasures and a renewed program of analysis has been conducted on our four mummies. The results, benefiting spectacularly from the latest scanning technology, will be incorporated within the new gallery of the Chau Chak Wing Museum.

Around this time last year I reported on a new project: the conservation, cleaning and assembly of hundreds of plaster fragments that comprised a section of pavement from Armana, the ancient capital of the 18th Dynasty in ancient Egypt. This precious decorated pavement is quite literally coming together.

The first section of three has been reassembled and its colours are now clean and bright. It is ready for display in the new museum. This meticulous, time-consuming work was in a large part supported by generous donations for the conservation of these collections. Its companion section (stage 2) now awaits treatment by contracted specialist conservators.

Two elements of the University's history return home in the form of a cast of a Parthenon frieze, previously



David Ellis, photo by Martin Ho

in the Nicholson, and a set-design by Frank Hinder for the 1963 Student Union Theatre production of *The Bedbug*. Both reflect teaching and learning at the University and will make fine additions to the new museum, where one of our priorities is to extend the opportunities and benefits of the collections to students.

Keep up to date with the project at: sydney.edu.au/museums

You can also follow us on twitter @SydneyUniMuseum, or find us on Facebook.

David Ellis
Director, Museums and Cultural Engagement

Muse edited by Luke Parker.

This edition contains names and images of people who have died. We acknowledge that, for some people and communities, these may cause distress and sadness. Where possible, cultural permission to publish has been sought.

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In this issue

2 Buku-manapanmirri Coming together
Community consultation in Arnhem Land is part of an exhibition of Yolgnu culture being developed for the new museum.

6 News

7 Wish upon a fish
Students contribute to the naming of new fish species.



8 From Bauhaus to Bedbug
A recent acquisition enriches the University's history of interdisciplinary, experimental art and drama.

11 Return of the warrior
Casting new light on an object that has returned to the Nicholson after 50 years.

14 Dig this!
Students make fascinating findings during test digs on the Chau Chak Wing Museum site.

16 The Mummy Project
Opening an ancient coffin provides some astonishing discoveries.

21 Fragments of history
First impressions are deceptive with sherds of blue-and-white ceramics.

24 Sphere of influence
A spherical sculpture is more complex and intricate than it appears.

27 Good hair day
A portrait has close ties to hairdressing in ancient Rome.

30 Drawing inspiration
TAFE design students use the University's collections to bring their works to life.



Cover and above: Coffin for the lady Mer-Neith-it-es. NMR.29. See story page 16

Above: (Florence) Helen Wark, textile study, Indo-Portuguese chasuble detail, UA1990.325 See story page 32



32 A stitch in time
Watercolours of textiles by a former student are still exquisite, 100 years later.

34 Scenes from the Nile
Part 2 of our feature on a significant fresco-painted floor from Amarna in ancient Egypt

36 Voyage in time
Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay's great-great nephew retraces a momentous journey.

38 Donor honour roll for 2017
We say thank you to the donors who are making an enormous difference to our achievements.

39 Making history
All the latest museums news, from special guests to collecting awards.

40 Find your muse
For your diary: our upcoming events and programs.

Above: Marble portrait of a Roman woman, second half of the first century AD. Donated through The Hon R P Meagher bequest 2011. Nicholson Museum, NM2012.11 See story page 27

Sydney University Museums

Comprising the Macleay Museum, Nicholson Museum and University Art Gallery

The Macleay Museum and the University Art Gallery are now closed as we prepare for the opening of the Chau Chak Wing Museum.

The Nicholson Museum remains open: Monday to Friday, 10am to 4.30pm and the first Saturday of every month, 12 to 4pm Closed on public holidays.

General admission is free.

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Buku-manapanmirri Coming together

Preparing an exhibition of artworks by Yolngu people for the new Chau Chak Wing Museum, Rebecca Conway starts with a visit to their homelands.



Yolngu people own and manage a vast land and saltwater estate. Aerial view on flight between Yurriwi-Milingimbi and Nhulunbuy. We flew more than 200km via Galiwinku-Elcho Island, of Warrumpi Band 'My Island Home' fame, to the township of Yirrkala. Photo: Rebecca Conway

Recent archaeological investigations in Arnhem Land date the earliest known occupation of the Australian continent to about 65,000 years ago. Included among the findings are ground ochre and mica-rich minerals used for pigments. A conservative estimate suggests Australia's First Peoples have been producing art in this country for some 3500 generations.

Since the 1920s, staff of the University have visited and worked with Yolngu people. The result of these shared endeavours is a rich collection of Yolngu cultural heritage here at the University of Sydney.

Representing the work of many important artists, the material includes paintings on bark and masonite, large-scale wooden and woven sculptural works, historic photographs, and ceremonial and domestic objects. The items come from three main geographic centres: Yurriwi-Milingimbi, Ramingining and Yirrkala.

We are developing an exhibition for the University's new Chau Chak Wing Museum that will showcase the generations of art and knowledge of the Yolngu people housed at the University of Sydney.

Historic collections held in museums, art galleries and archives are part of the continuum of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's cultural heritage and practice. Art in its broadest sense continues as a principal means of communicating and expressing the richness of clan and community identities, religious knowledge and important messages about Yolngu rights and responsibilities passed down through time.

A vital part of developing our exhibition is consulting with the communities, artists and descendants whose heritage is represented in our collections. We hope to inform people about what we hold and engage with the community to better document and understand the materials. We are

also seeking advice about the best approach for the exhibition, including how we embed Yolngu interpretation and philosophies into its design.

In September 2017, Assistant Curator, Indigenous Heritage Matt Poll and I visited art centres in each of the main areas where the artworks were created to get these discussions underway. In Ramingining, independent curator Djon Mundine OAM joined us. He played an integral role in acquiring works there in the 1980s. Our trip was incredibly positive and productive.

In 2018 we will bring artists from the region to Sydney so we can continue working together on this major endeavour.

To find out more about the art centres and communities, please visit: www.bulabula.com.au www.milingimbiart.com www.yirrkala.com

Rebecca Conway is Curator, Ethnography in the Macleay Museum



Map source: CartoGIS Services, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University



On the far outskirts of Ramingining we were privileged to be invited to visit the Country of Charlie Djurritjini, neighbour to David Gulpilil. Here, Charlie points out over the dry season Arafura Swamp towards Garr, Spider Island, one of many important sites in the landscape. Matt Poll faces the challenge of trying to record audio in high wind. Photo: Rebecca Conway



Part of our visit to Milingimbi involved discussion of the series of Larrakitj poles acquired by the University that featured at 'Makarrata: Bringing the past into the future', a peace-making event between the community and cultural institutions in August 2016. It was great to catch up with senior artist and Art Centre Director, Raymond Bulambula (far right), as well as other senior representatives to celebrate the recent signing of the Milingimbi Makarrata Resolution. This document describes the spirit in which we intend to work together now and into the future, which was an outcome of the event. Photo: Rebecca Conway



Women's business in Ramingining; following a string-making demonstration by master weaver Julie Djulibing Malibirr and her daughter, Matjarra, they discuss the symbolism in University artworks with Macleay curator, Rebecca Conway. Photo: Matt Poll



One of four large-scale murals in Yirrkala celebrating four decades of Yolngu land rights battles, 1976-2016. Painted by Melbourne-based artists Mike Makatron and Cam Scale, this mural replicates an important historic photograph of seven Marika men, Rirratjingu clan warriors who were the core of the struggles. Part of their activism was painting their rights. Together with other key representatives of the community, they produced the Yirrkala Bark Petitions that were sent to Federal Parliament in 1963. Many of the men in this mural as well as other significant artists have works in the Macleay collections. Photo: Rebecca Conway



Ishmael Marika and Matt Poll compare a 1940s bark painting, collected by Ronald Berndt in Yirrkala, with a contemporary work by a descendant of the artist. Ishmael is an award-winning emerging artist and a director at the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre. He produces, directs, films and edits work that documents the activities of the Yirrkala community and surrounding outstations as well as producing his own multimedia projects. Photo: Rebecca Conway



Tribute to a friend

In October 2017, Lynette Jensen donated a remarkable collection of seven copper-plate engravings from the 17th and 18th centuries, each depicting the celebrated Vatican Hermes statue that was found in 1543 in Rome. During his time at the Nicholson Museum, former senior curator Michael Turner recognised the similarities between the Vatican and Nicholson Hermes statues, and determined that they were in fact two of at least six Roman marble copies of a Greek Praxitelean bronze. As Jensen writes, the donation is a fitting tribute to Turner “in recognition of his energising work at the Nicholson Museum, exemplified by his recognition of the identity of the statue”.

Bauhaus legacies

Senior Curator Dr Ann Stephen interviewed North American art historian T'ai Smith about her book *Bauhaus weaving theory: From feminine craft to mode of design* at the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools conference in Canberra in late September 2017. Smith spoke about how Bauhaus weavers such as Anni Albers, Gunta Stözl and Otti Berger challenged assumptions about the feminine nature of their craft and questioned how value and legitimacy are established in the art world. You can access an e-book version of *Bauhaus weaving theory* through Project Muse: muse.jhu.edu/book/35700



Excavations at Paphos in Cyprus 2017

In October 2017 the Paphos Theatre Archaeological Project conducted its 18th season of excavations at the World Heritage-listed site of the theatre of Nea Paphos. An official Nicholson Museum excavation, in collaboration with the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus, the theatre was a venue for performance for more than six centuries, from 300 BC until the late 4th century AD.

Excavations this season focused on understanding the theatre's eastern *parodos* (entranceway) and nearby *nymphaeum* (water-fountain). Team members also participated in an international conference and curated an exhibition, *Travellers from Australia*, as part of the program of the European Cultural Capital festival. A 3D virtual reality model of the theatre was constructed by LithodomosVR, enabling viewers to understand the size and scale of the Roman theatre. The model can be downloaded from the GooglePlay and iTunes app stores.



Navigobius kaguya. Photo by SK Tea.

Wish upon a fish

The Macleay Museum offers the opportunity for school students to help name new species of fishes described by the museum's Natural History Curator, Dr Tony Gill, and colleagues.

The winning names are announced once the descriptions of the new species have been prepared and officially published in scientific journals, a process that can take months. Two such species were recently published in the animal taxonomy journal *Zootaxa*.

By coincidence, both species names refer to heavenly bodies. The first species, named by students participating in the University's Spectacular Science sessions in November 2016, was published in October 2017 with the name *Pseudochromis stellatus*. It's a species of dottyback fish from Indonesia. The "stellatus" part of the name is Latin for "starry" and refers to the star-like yellow spots on the upper part of the body.

The second species was named by students participating in education workshops as part of '2071: A Performance About Climate Change' at the Seymour Centre in June 2017. The species, an unusual type of goby from the

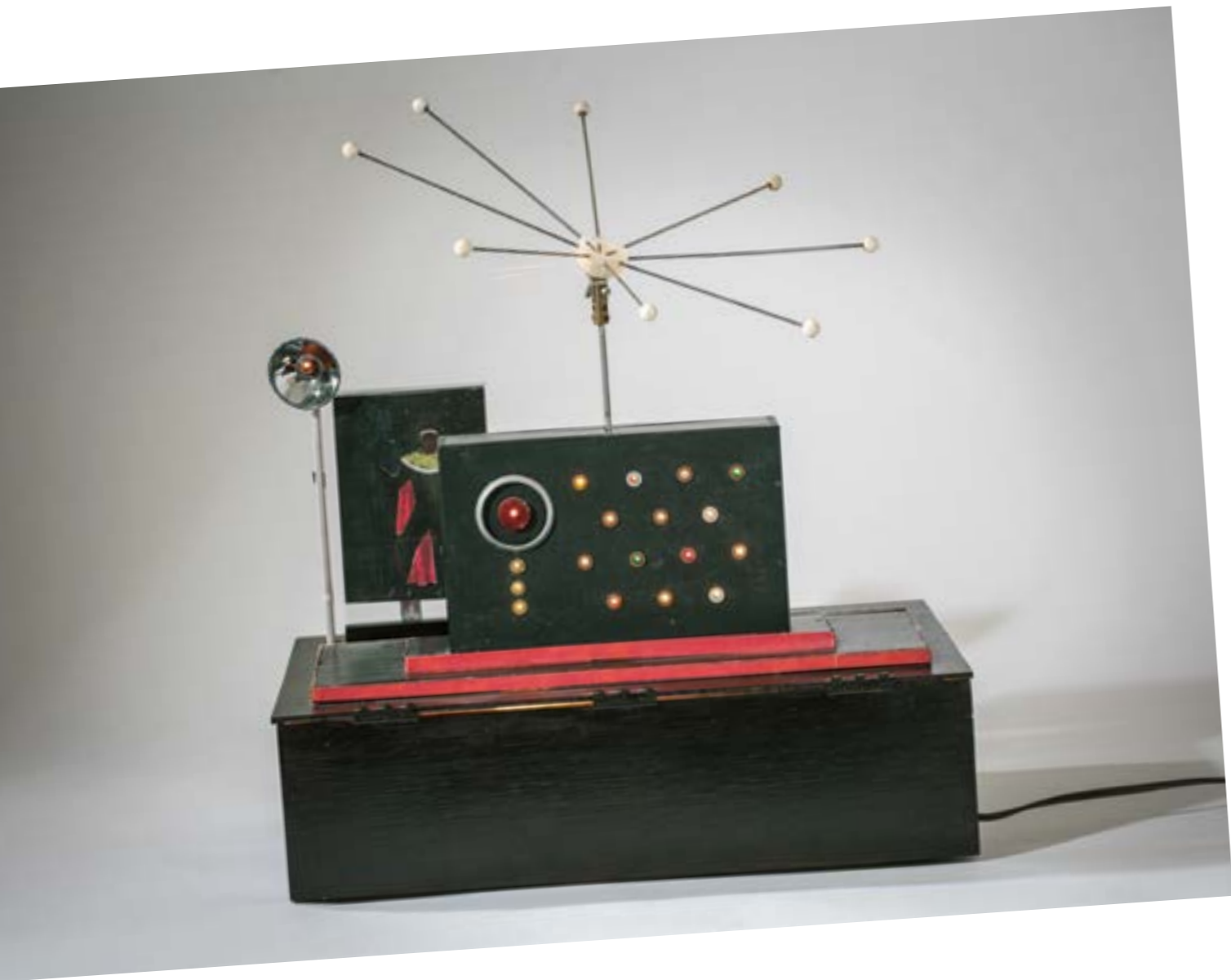
Philippines and Japan, was published in November 2017 with the name *Navigobius kaguya*. It is named after Kaguya-hime, the Moon Princess from the Japanese folktale *Takekoto Monogatari* ('The tale of the bamboo cutter'). It alludes to the yellow spots on the first dorsal-fin, which resemble the graphics in moon phase charts, and acknowledges that the species is found in Japan.



Pseudochromis stellatus. Photo by MV Erdmann.

From Bauhaus to Bedbug

Dr Ann Stephen introduces a recent acquisition, revealing the University's long history of interdisciplinary, experimental art and drama.



Frank Hinder, *The Bedbug*, 1965, maquette in wood with motors, lights and fibre-optic cables, purchased with funds from the Renshaw Bequest, University Art Collection, UA2017.23

Sydney artist Frank Hinder (1906–92) was fascinated by light and kinetic effects, in part inspired by the Bauhaus idea of combining art and technology. In 1927 he took the unusual step of travelling not to Europe but to the United States, after studying under Italian artist Antonio Dattilo Rubbo and at East Sydney Technical College with sculptor Lyndon Dadswell. At the Chicago Institute of Art he became a convert to the formal language of cubism and theories of dynamic symmetry.

He married American sculptor Margel Ina Harris in 1930, and together they attended American modernist Emil Bisttram's summer school at Taos, New Mexico, an art-and-nature colony. Returning to Australia in 1934, the Hinders would become part of a small group of Sydney avant-gardists who experimented with abstraction, including Ralph Balson, Grace Crowley and Rah Fizelle.

The Hinders closely followed international art movements, and were early to purchase a copy of László Moholy-Nagy's book on the new Chicago Bauhaus, *The new vision: fundamentals of design – painting, sculpture, architecture*, published in 1939.

Inspired by such experiments, the Hinders collaborated on set design, sculpture and fountains. Frank Hinder would spend the war years in the army's camouflage unit, which he later described in the formal terms of geometric abstraction: "My work was connected with light, colour, tone, shadows, optical effects and illusions and so on – all for a very different purpose but nevertheless related to problems which concern the artist."

In 1958, when Frank Hinder became head of art at Sydney Teachers' College at the University of Sydney, he would, alongside teaching, work on many student theatre and puppet productions. Among the most acclaimed was his design for Vladimir Mayakovsky's revolutionary epic *The Bedbug*, performed at the Student Union Theatre in 1963.

The University Art Collection recently acquired Hinder's model of the stage design for *The Bedbug*. The black-and-red set, with a flashing sci-fi screen, looks like a transistor radio topped by a twirling, five-pronged antenna. Set in a "futuristic conference hall", the design includes an electronic voting system that, when plugged in, lights up in green and red with bells and buzzers.

Sydney University Museums conservator Alayne Alvis, who examined the mechanism, believes Hinder updated the model in 1988 with a combination of the then latest fibre-optics and an incandescent bulb, and also signed the base.

"The bulb rotates under a series of fibre-optic cable ends, which are placed in a circle roughly mimicking the track of the bulb," Alvis says of the ingenious gadgetry.

"The other ends of the cables are placed in the vertical 'wall' element of the maquette. The light from the bulb is transmitted through the optical cable and is visible at the wall. As the light moves under or away from the end of each cable, the brightness increases and decreases. A further refinement is the placing of coloured plastic over some of the cable ends on the wall, so the light appears

Frank Hinder, *The Bedbug*, 1965, interior view





Left: Frank Hinder, *Dawson memorial*, 1968, kinetic sculpture in wood, acyclic, aluminium, electric motor, lights, found objects, wire, coloured gels and plastics transferred from the Sydney College of Advanced Education 1990 University Art Collection, UA1990.571



Below: Frank Hinder, *Dawson memorial*, 1968, interior view

green or red. A tall antenna-like device also contains cable illuminated by the bulb. The end is placed in a reflector which diffuses the light, and a hole behind the wall allows light to strike the rotating 'starburst' device."

Hinder's involvement in stage production gave him a working knowledge of lighting that would form the basis of his major late series of box-like sculptures, collectively known as *Luminal Kinetics*. These constructions mostly look like early television sets projecting a play of abstract coloured light across their screens. But when opened up they reveal how their extraordinary effects were made from everyday domestic objects: sink filters and toys, such as Meccano, combined with coloured gels and Perspex, lit and run by small electric lights and motors.

It was in the early years of the Weimar Bauhaus (1919-33) that artists such as Moholy-Nagy and German-Australian Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack first experimented with machines for making light projections. Hinder would have known of the Australian Bauhausler, Hirschfeld Mack through his Bauhaus

book of 1963, which described his 1923 *Farbenlicht-Spiel* (Colour light play), developed for Bauhaus parties and accompanied by music.

One early cylindrical *Luminal Kinetic* is the *Dawson memorial* (1968), transferred to the University Art Collection from Sydney Teachers' College. There is an intriguing connection between both of these Hinder works: the *Luminal Kinetic* was made as a tribute to drama colleague David Dawson, who had produced *The Bedbug*. Both works testify to the interdisciplinary role an artist such as Hinder played in the University's teaching, long before Sydney College of the Arts became part of the University.

The museum is currently developing an exhibition on the *Bauhaus Diaspora* and is keen to gather any recollections from former students who were involved in the production of *The Bedbug*, whether as a student, staff or audience member.

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

Return of the warrior



As a museum object comes back home after half a century, Dr Paul Donnelly reveals its significance – and the role of renowned artist Lloyd Rees.

Plaster cast of relief slab in the British Museum from the Parthenon, Athens, XXXI South Frieze. Donated by Alan and Jancis Rees in memory of Lloyd Rees, 2017. Nicholson Museum NM2018.129 Photographed in situ at the Lloyd Rees house, Northwood, Sydney in 2017

Photographs of the Nicholson Museum prior to the 1960s show a multitude of sculptures and sculptural reliefs from antiquity dominating the cluttered scene. It gradually becomes apparent, however, that these are familiar antiquities from renowned international collections and could not possibly be genuine artefacts. What we are seeing are exact copies – casts of the originals, typically in plaster – not marble.

Plaster casts of objects from antiquity – mainly Greek, Roman, and Egyptian – had been acquired between the 1890s and 1940s by successive curators at the Nicholson Museum for teaching and inspiring students. Casts were big business around the world, as evidenced in the Nicholson archives by the 1910 catalogue *British Museum List of casts from sculptures etc. in the Department of Antiquities*, manufactured and sold by Brucciani & Co. in Goswell Road, London.

That this was “printed by order of the Trustees” demonstrates how complicit the British Museum was in “democratising” objects in its collection for institutions and collectors around the world. The Nicholson catalogue is annotated by lines and crosses marking examples identified for purchase, almost certainly by William John Woodhouse, curator from 1903–37, who was largely responsible for expanding the cast collection.

The motivation for acquiring casts was simple: they offered the opportunity for detailed study of some of the world’s best art and, unlike photographs, communicated the exact scale of the original works and allowed multiple views in varying light.

In one of his regular columns in the *Union Recorder* of 5 October 1933, Woodhouse described this advantage. In discussing the cast of an original Greek relief from about 490 BC held in the Athens National Museum, he noted sculptor Alexnor’s “bungled attempt at foreshortening is hardly noticeable in a photograph, but is apparent at once in the cast”.

Casts also enable an accurate understanding of scale. During my first visit to Athens as a student I still remember my surprise at the variable sizes of Acropolis dedicatory sculpture – even after four years of intense slide tests in Greek art and archaeology at the University. However, this was the 1980s, by which time most of the Nicholson’s casts had become redundant and the opportunity to observe comparative scale was diminished.

During the 20th century, casts began to fall from favour around the world and at the Nicholson Museum this came to a head in the 1960s when a minimalist, modern aesthetic ushered in a purist appreciation for original works. Casts were never

intended to deceive, but as museums pursued a broader public the divide between genuine and copy became blurred, confusing the visitor and, as a corollary, demeaning the rarity and significance of original material.

It was at this time that a young Professor Alexander Cambitoglou arrived at Sydney from Greece via Oxford. As curator, Professor Cambitoglou applied a mid-century aesthetic, and in this modernisation of the museum the casts had no place. Contrary to the campus myth that the casts were buried under the Quad’s paving, surviving lists from the 1960s reveal a great deal of effort was made to transfer the casts to other departments within the University, as well as institutions and NSW high schools. There were many willing recipients.

More recently there has been a new appreciation of plaster casts and over the past decade, the Nicholson has attempted to retrieve some of these items, but with little success.

This is why an invitation to visit the harbourside home of the late renowned artist and former teacher at the University, Lloyd Rees (1895–1988) came as a pleasant surprise – a life-size plaster cast of a block from the southern frieze of the Parthenon was set onto a veranda wall. Depicting a speeding four-horse chariot (*quadriga*) with driver and foot soldier

Interior views of the Nicholson Museum in the 1930s with the plaster cast in situ.



(*hoplite*), it certainly looked more spectacular than the £1/6/6 against which a pencil X is marked in the Brucciani catalogue.

Slab XXXI (as it is now known) is regarded as one of the masterpieces of the Parthenon and a good choice for representation in a teaching collection. There was no doubt it was originally from the Nicholson. In AD Trendall’s *A guide to the principal casts of Greek and Roman sculpture in the Nicholson Museum*, 1941, the slab is detailed on page 43:

74. Slab XXX. Charioteer.
In the British Museum.
In the chariot are the driver and an armed warrior, wearing a Corinthian helmet. Rivet holes by the horses’ manes show where bronze reins were attached. The treatment of the horses’ heads, which was especially admired by Ruskin, shows vigour and freedom

conspicuous even among the sculptures of the Frieze.

The journey from the Nicholson to Rees is not as strange as may first appear. The casts were a great favourite of Rees for teaching drawing and art history to architecture students from 1946 to 1986. Eminent architects including Penelope Seidler and Philip Cox reminisce fondly of their time with Rees, drawing for hours in the Nicholson Museum.

The Parthenon cast of the charioteer and soldier is the one to return to the Nicholson among the other seven relief sculptures in the collection originally connected to that temple. There are, however, other relief casts from the Parthenon at the University, including in the southern vestibule of the Quad (and one-time entrance to the original Nicholson) where there are two metopes (marble panels on the temple’s external

walls) and four frieze slabs. There are also five more frieze slabs in the original Dining Hall of the Women’s College at the University of Sydney, which were acquired by the college’s first principal, Louisa Macdonald (1892–1923), who was an archaeologist and author of the original Nicholson catalogue on pottery and lamps (1898).

Our newly returned orphan block was clearly one of Rees’s favourites and we can reasonably speculate he would be pleased at his role in its return to the Nicholson, together with another story and layer of significance. Given his own appreciation of casts and the way he used them in teaching, he would no doubt approve of the renewed respect for plaster casts. We look forward to displaying it in the Chau Chak Wing Museum.

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

Dig this!

With construction of the new Chau Chak Wing museum about to begin, a group of archaeology students dug test pits. Dr James Flexner describes the invaluable experience.

A small silver coin, a brown glass fragment with the letters "OTHS" embossed on the surface, some sherds of a flowerpot. These are just some of the fragments of history uncovered by University of Sydney students and volunteers over four weekends in June and August 2017.

As part of the development of the new Chau Chak Wing Museum site, we decided to involve students and dig a few test pits around the area of the old tennis courts. I've long had an interest in university campuses as heritage places – since my days as a PhD student at the University of California, Berkeley, where I helped colleague Kim Christensen excavate a 19th century feminist's house as part of her PhD research. As Sydney is Australia's oldest university, this dig represented a golden opportunity.

Working within NSW heritage guidelines and with the University's Campus Infrastructure Services (CIS) health and safety requirements, the team's work was limited to the top 50 centimetres of each 1 metre by 1 metre trench that was then backfilled at the end of each weekend.

The area had been identified in a previous survey as having little to no potential for recovering significant relics; nevertheless, we had to be sure we were indeed not disturbing anything of State Significance.

Our goals for the dig were multiple: first, to provide a practical, hands-on opportunity for students; second, to gather data on the recent landscape context of the new museum; third, to collect, if possible, an assemblage of artefacts that might form part of the Nicholson Museum's teaching collections; and, finally, to offer a model for how this kind of partnership between the Archaeology Department, Sydney University Museums and CIS might work should future opportunities arise.

Senior Archivist Nyree Morrison, of the University's Archives and Records Management Services, provided historical research on the old tennis courts, which first appear in the University Calendar in 1923.

Over our four weekends of fieldwork we uncovered layers of sediment that relate to recent construction activities in and around campus. The deposits included fill brought in, probably from the cutting of Parramatta Road, and to build up the area that eventually became today's University Avenue, a main entrance to the University. Intriguingly, we found some layers of clay, gravel, and crushed sandstone that might be evidence of an earlier entrance road, perhaps slightly west of the current road.



Images from left to right:

Beer bottle, porcelain teacup, and clay tobacco pipe fragments from the museum site

Ceramic sherds from the museum site

Students and the dig mascot working on a test pit

All images by James Flexner



While the overall deposit was quite disturbed and must be from the last 50 years or less considering there was plastic present throughout, we did find a few artefacts of note. There was the aforementioned 1927 silver three-pence coin, a few sherds of Rhine pattern ceramic dishes, some tobacco pipe fragments, and a fragment of European gunflint. These last few items are evidence from an earlier era, but again we have to be careful about interpretation as they were found in a much more recent fill layer. And the "OTHS" bottle fragment? It's from the now defunct Tooth's Brewery, which was just down the road on Broadway.

The implication that university students drank beer and spent (well, in this case, lost) money will probably surprise no one. However, these traces do point to a time in the University's history long before smartphones, lecture recording and learning management software were essential to everyday activities.

Further, the tennis courts themselves were an important locus of student life on campus, particularly for women students. The tennis courts were formerly found in the Quadrangle, but apparently they were moved down to the location of the future museum so female athletes could play tennis in peace, away from the wolf-whistling harassment from male students that was more prevalent (or more likely to be tolerated) at the time. The wooden building that stood near the tennis courts was once the Women's Sport Clubhouse.

One of our project's goals was to bring this story to light as part of the interpretation of the location of the new museum, alongside the more widely acknowledged stories of the local Gadigal people, Grose Farm, and the first classes on campus in 1859.

Aside from a few interesting glimpses into campus history, this dig represented an excellent (if reasonably limited) opportunity for students to get some hands-on experience with real-world excavation conditions. The method of digging test pits ahead of development to identify archaeological remains is common throughout Australia. Further, the materials we identified could be found just about anywhere in NSW.

One of the many things that made the dig engaging, instructional and fun was having a mixture of students and volunteers, from people who have worked for years as professional archaeologists in Sydney and elsewhere, to students who had never dug before. They included a student from the Uni 2 Beyond program, which supports students with intellectual disabilities to experience university life.

I am now working with another group of student volunteers to analyse the materials we excavated and develop a report for Sydney University Museums ahead of accessioning this assemblage into the Nicholson's teaching collections. These fragments of the University of Sydney will live on as reminders to students and visitors about the recent past on campus.

Dr James Flexner is a Lecturer in Historical Archaeology and Heritage at the University of Sydney



1.

The Mummy Project

“Speak my name so I may live again” is inscribed on many Egyptian tombs. Dr Jamie Fraser describes opening an ancient coffin to uncover surprising secrets.

When we recently opened the coffin of the lady Mer-Neith-it-es at the Nicholson Museum, we expected to find a few residual bandages and bones from a mummy removed by tomb robbers in the 19th century. We could not have been more wrong.

The anthropoid coffin of Mer-Neith-it-es (image 1) is elegantly carved from imported cedar wood or cypress pine, and dates to the 26th Dynasty, circa 664-525 BCE. It was purchased in Egypt by Sir Charles Nicholson (Chancellor of the University of Sydney, 1854-62), and was one of the original 408 Egyptian objects that formed the core of his donation of antiquities to the University in 1860 to found a museum.

The ghosted hieroglyphs on the lid name the occupant as Mer-Neith-it-es, a noblewoman who served the Mistress of the Temple of Sekhmet. However, the intricately decorated exterior has faded, and the coffin lies within a perspex case in the museum’s Education Room, overshadowed by the vibrant coffins of Meruah and Padiashiakhet that have been admired in the galleries for decades.

1. Coffin for the lady Mer-Neith-it-es. NMR.29.
2. Mixed remains with the coffin NMR.29.



2.

In his 1948 *Handbook to the Nicholson Museum*, Professor of Archaeology Dale Trendall (1909-95) listed the coffin as empty, although the museum database notes that it contains “mixed debris”. We had no idea what this would comprise, as the coffin had not been opened for 20 years, but presumably not very much, given Trendall’s comments and the coffin’s unremarkable presence in the Nicholson collection since its accession 160 years ago.

And so, one quiet Friday in June 2017, we removed the lid.

We placed the lid, carved to resemble the woman it enclosed, with serene eyes and lips curved in a gentle smile, on an adjacent table. Peering into the casket, we were astonished by what we saw: far from residual scraps, the coffin was filled with a miscellany of bones, bandages, beads and other materials (image 2). Were these the remains of a single mummy that had been ransacked by tomb-robbers looking for amulets and jewels? Were we, in fact, looking at the heavily disturbed remains of Mer-Neith-it-es herself?

The Mummy Project

Such was the genesis of the Mummy Project at the Nicholson Museum. The project aims to investigate scientifically all the mummies in the Nicholson collection, including the mixed remains inside the coffin of Mer-Neith-it-es.

The museum houses three complete mummies, all part of Sir Charles’s original bequest: two adult mummies he purchased within the coffins of Meruah and Padiashiakhet, and the mummy of a boy called Horus, currently on display. These mummies were X-rayed and CT-scanned in 1997-98 under the direction of Dr Karin Sowada, and Horus was scanned again in 2009 by Dr Janet Davey and Michael Turner.

Yet the remains inside the Mer-Neith-it-es coffin have never been studied.

Imagine this coffin has been shaken like a cocktail shaker, and you can perhaps picture the jumble of remains inside. The coffin’s torso and head are piled high with layers of bandages and chunks of resin that was poured over the



3. The coffin NMR.29 being CT scanned at Macquarie Medical Imaging, and filmed by the ABC for current affairs program, 7.30.

4. Professor John Magnussen places the mummy of the boy Horus NMR.26 into the CT scanner.



5. CT images of the mummy purchased in the coffin of the lady Meruah NMR.27 (images by Simon Bird and John Magnussen, courtesy of MMI, Macquarie University Hospital).

6. A cone beam CT image of the skull of the mummy purchased within the coffin of the priest Padiashiakhet NMR.28 (images by Kirstin Geyer and John Magnussen, courtesy of MMI, Macquarie University Hospital).

mummy as a preserving agent; a leg bone lies against the coffin's shoulder, rib bones jut erratically from bandages, part of the jaw lies near the coffin's feet. Hundreds of tiny faience beads, once laid over the mummy as a beaded net, are scattered throughout.

To find such an assemblage in 2017 is extraordinary – and a striking testament to the richness and depth of the Nicholson collection. Coffins were usually purchased in the 19th and early 20th centuries with complete mummies, although the mummy they contained was not always the coffin's original occupant. On the rare occasion coffins were obtained with mummified debris, curatorial staff usually disassembled the remains seeking objects for display.

Excavating the remains

How should we deal with such an unexpected assemblage? When faced with a similar jumble inside a Ptolemaic coffin in 2013, the Museum of Ethnology in Burgdorf, Switzerland, decided to excavate. This was a significant decision. Human remains must always be treated with care and respect, and such ethical considerations rightly prevent us from using invasive or destructive techniques when studying well-preserved mummified remains. In the case of the Burgdorf coffin, the knowledge gained through

excavation far outweighed the disturbance that these excavations would cause, as the remains had already been damaged by robbers.

Like the Burgdorf Museum, we too decided excavations were appropriate in the case of the Mer-Neith-it-es coffin. Not only are the remains already heavily disturbed by tomb robbers, but the excavations would allow us to conserve the intermingled bones, bandages, beads and debris that are susceptible to Sydney's humidity and heat. Excavations would also enable us to learn far more about the life and death of the individual the remains represent. These excavations are scheduled to begin in 2018.

CT-scanning the mummies

It is an old archaeological paradox that an excavation is at once an act of conservation and destruction, as the materials recovered can never be reassembled in the way they were found.

While excavations inside the coffin would conserve the individual remains, they would also remove the jumble of materials that in itself is a remarkable artefact of 19th century antiquarianism. Before we removed a single bone or bead, we therefore wanted to record the materials as accurately as possible.

We were fortunate to partner with the extraordinary team at Macquarie Medical Imaging (MMI) at Macquarie University Hospital to CT scan the remains. On Sunday 10 December 2017 we found ourselves travelling across the Sydney Harbour Bridge with the Mer-Neith-it-es coffin and the complete mummies of Horus, Meruah and Padiashiakhet packaged in crates.

MMI is Australia's most technologically advanced medical imaging practice. Its GE brand CT scanner is only a few months old, and the facility houses a smaller Newtom brand Cone Beam CT scanner capable of imaging a skull to an incredible 75 microns. There was considerable enthusiasm for the project amongst the staff, including radiologist Professor John Magnussen, radiographers Simon Bird and Kirstin Geyer, and Chief Research Facilitator Dr Marg Pardey. Although Professor Magnussen had previously scanned Egyptian mummies for the Australian Museum, this was the first time he had scanned four in one day.

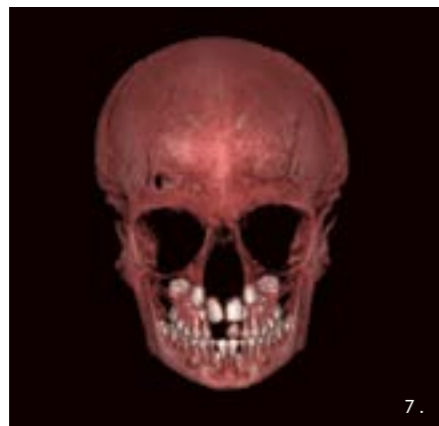
The excitement filling the scanning rooms was far more boisterous than the incredulous silence that fell when we had opened the coffin in June: the mummies needed to be unpacked from their crates and manoeuvred between the two scanners, which were operated simultaneously (images 3 and 4).

We also had a film crew from the ABC's current affairs program 7.30 following the story; and we had invited several experts to collaborate with MMI, including Egyptologist Dr Conni Lord, bio-archaeologist Dr Estelle Lazer, anatomist radiologist Professor Dzung Vu, and forensic odontologist Dr Alain Middleton. There is, it turns out, a finite number of people who can hustle around a computer, eagerly awaiting the images expertly produced by the radiographers.

The aim was to capture thousands of images for analysis over coming months. However, the unprocessed images were immediate and incredible, and all four mummies quickly yielded new discoveries.

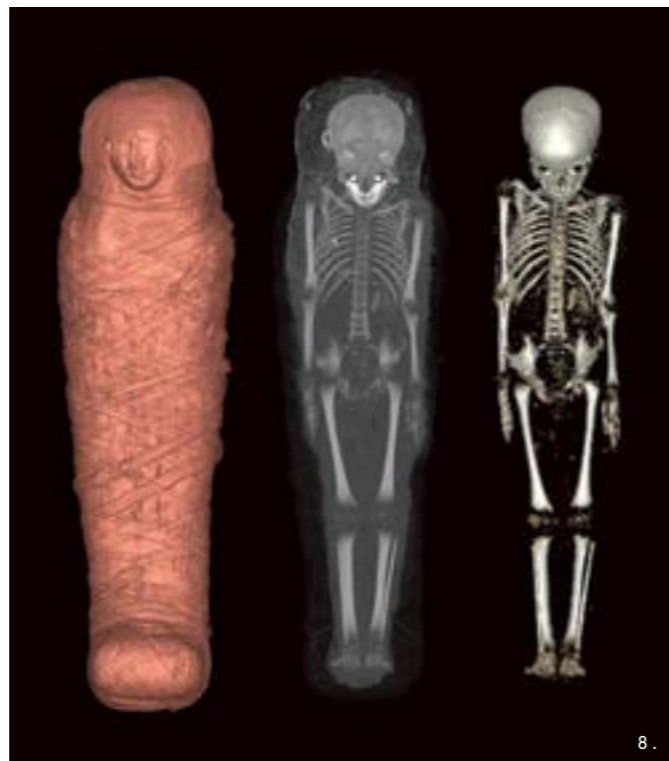
While the remains inside the Mer-Neith-it-es coffin were indeed mixed, the scanner detected two mummified ankles, feet and toes, consistent with a single person; the fused ends of some of the bones suggest the person was at least 30 years old.

The Cone Beam CT images of the Meruah mummy (image 5) showed significant post-mortem damage to the head: the lower jaw was twisted, and several teeth had slipped into the empty skull.



7. CT image of the skull of the boy Horus NMR.26 (Image by Kate Handel, Simon Bird, Kirstin Geyer and John Magnussen, courtesy of MMI, Macquarie University Hospital).

8. CT image of the mummy of the boy Horus NMR.26 (images by Simon Bird and John Magnussen, courtesy of MMI, Macquarie University Hospital).



More surprisingly, the Roman period mummy purchased in the 25th Dynasty coffin for Padiashiakhet (image 6) had the knuckles of both hands and several toes on one foot severed off cleanly, presumably by 19th century dealers trimming the mummy to fit it within a smaller coffin for ensemble sale.

The moment I will never forget was when CT Radiographer Kate Handel (a CT application specialist from GE), generated a haunting image of the skull of the boy Horus, his upper front baby tooth missing, his adult teeth about to descend (images 7 and 8). We fell silent at that image, until images also revealed two thin, diamond-shaped objects, possibly made of resin or wax, that had been placed over the boy's eyes so he could see in the afterlife.

The Mummy Room in the Chau Chak Wing Museum

We are only at the beginning of the project. Once analysed, the CT data will generate an extraordinary amount of information concerning the life, death and mummification of these four people. The excavations within the Mer-Neith-it-es coffin will enable us to handle the bones directly, helping us understand aspects of diet and disease.

It was common for Egyptian tombs to have inscribed on their walls a refrain "speak my name so that I may live again". The most exciting part of the project will take place when we integrate these discoveries in a purpose-built Mummy Room in the Chau Chak Wing Museum.

The mummies and remains of Horus, Meruah, Padiashiakhet and Mer-Neith-it-es will be displayed alongside digital CT animations showing what lies within the bandages or beneath the coffin's lid. By marrying science and Egyptology, the Mummy Room will say these people's names and so help them live again.

Dr Jamie Fraser is Senior Curator, the Nicholson Museum.

The Nicholson Museum is grateful to Macquarie Medical Imaging, whose staff were so generous with their time, expertise and enthusiasm, scanning the mummies at no cost.

Fragments of history



Don't be fooled by first impressions. Ana Silkatcheva explores the significance of sherds of Islamic ceramics held in the Nicholson collection.

1. Safavid blue-and-white bowl, Nicholson Museum, NM64.139

Blue-and-white glazed pottery is often associated with China, as it is one of the most celebrated of Chinese wares. So it was not surprising that several trays holding hundreds of blue-and-white pottery sherds in the Nicholson storeroom had been registered initially as "Chinese porcelain".

But a closer examination revealed they were neither porcelain nor Chinese; while they do have a strong link to China it is not the direct one assumed by the early cataloguer.

Instead, these are fragments of copies of Chinese porcelain made in Persia (now Iran) under the Safavid dynasty in the 16th-18th centuries AD.

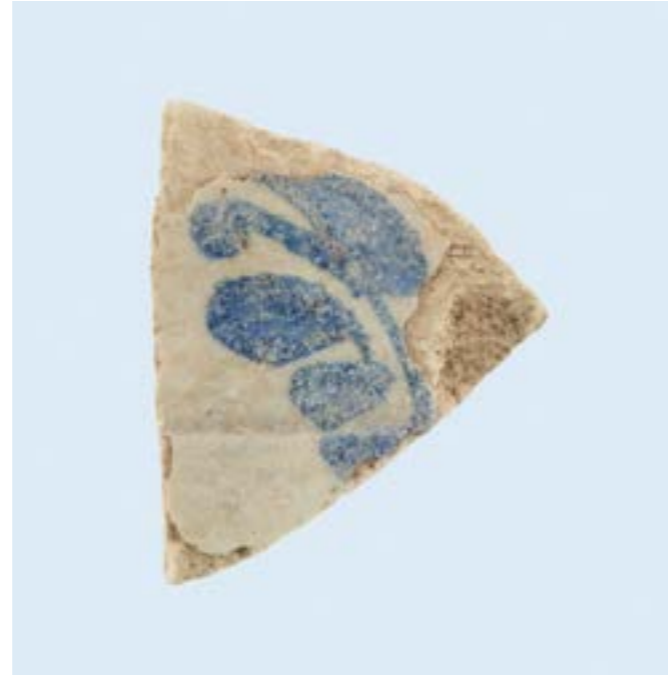
Fine Chinese ceramics – no matter their decorative scheme – are renowned for their beautifully fine, white, translucent body that gives out a wondrous ring when struck: porcelain. The secret to making porcelain lies in both the raw materials and the manufacturing techniques. White kaolin clay and porcelain stone, both granite-based

minerals, were mixed, fermented for months, then fired in an extremely hot kiln.

These rare materials and specialised techniques made China the only producer of fine porcelain wares for more than a millennium. Its products were highly coveted everywhere, but nowhere more so than in lands under Islamic rule, where Chinese ceramics were so popular that they were heavily and closely imitated, from the decorative schemes of the vessels to their shapes. After all, a cheaper



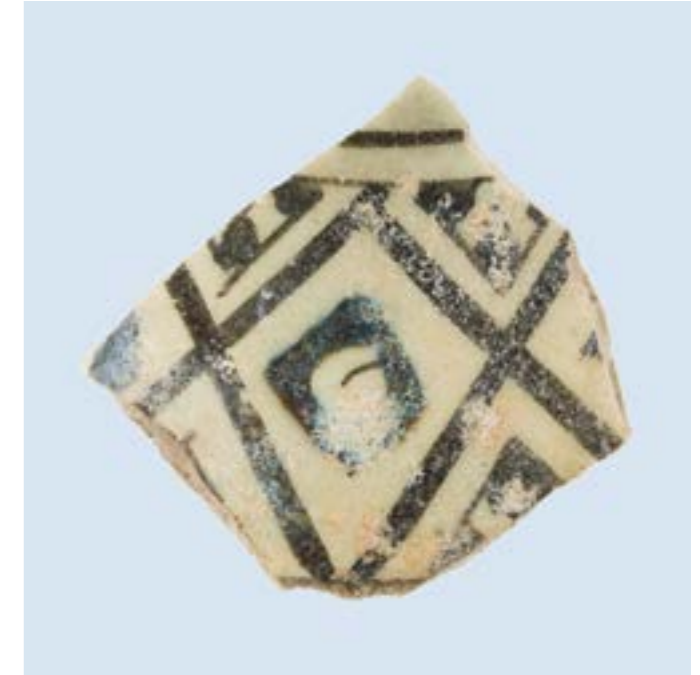
2. Safavid blue-and-white octagonal dish, Nicholson Museum, NM64.133



3. Fragment of Abbasid blue-and-white, Nicholson Museum, NM64.135.117



4 and 5. Fragments of under-glaze painted stone-paste from Syria or Egypt, Nicholson Museum, NM62.567 and NM64.135.93



product that was a fair imitation of a more expensive one could attract customers who desired, but could not afford, the real thing – just as modern consumers may buy imitations of luxury brands.

Among the hundreds of Safavid blue-and-white sherds in the Nicholson, a fragmentary bowl and a small reconstructed dish attest especially closely to the trade relationship between Persia and China in the early modern period. The exterior walls of the bowl (image 1), which faithfully reproduce the form of Chinese examples, are decorated with a wreath of flowers connected by undulating stems, and filled out with leafy scrollwork.

To a casual observer, the decoration resembles designs on Chinese wares. But a mark on the base gives the game away: instead of the expected reign mark formed of

several Chinese characters, there is a series of squares of diminishing size, set one inside another. This was a Persian approximation of complex Chinese ideograms (graphic symbols representing an idea or concept).

The octagonal dish (image 2) is a similarly close imitation, but one that is likewise not quite right. It presents a lion frolicking with an embroidered ball. While this was a common motif on Chinese ceramics, here the lion is rendered with a distinctly Persian interpretation of its features. And the exterior of the shallow dish, not easily visible at a casual glance, is punctuated by motifs that are completely new, local inventions. Overall, though, the effect is strong enough to fool a less discerning consumer.

Production of copies under the Safavids was the culmination of many centuries of trade and mutual

influence between China and the Islamic world, a connection that led to a veritable revolution in ceramic technology in the medieval period (9th century to the 15th century). Other sherds in the Nicholson's collections help tell this story.

The wild popularity of Chinese exports in 9th century Iraq, under the Abbasid caliphate, led local potters to innovate in order to imitate. The first innovation was an opaque white glaze, achieved through the addition of tin. While the secret was revealed when a tap on the vessel produced more of a “thunk” than a ring, and the earthenware beneath the opaque glaze could not pretend to pass light through it, the visual effect was a compelling simulation of fine Chinese wares.

But the Iraqi potters were not content to make copies, establishing their own decorative techniques that owed

nothing to the Chinese. Painting vegetal sprays, palmettes and Arabic calligraphy on the opaque white ground in pigments made from cobalt ores – at the time a mineral known only in Mesopotamia – produced a striking blue-on-white effect once described as looking like “ink on snow” (image 3). While the much later Chinese version of blue-and-white is best known around the world, the Iraqi invention occurred much earlier.

As time moved on, Abbasid blue-and-white fell out of use, but the hunger for Chinese porcelain refused to abate in the Islamic world. In subsequent centuries, potters in Syria and Egypt continued to experiment with materials for ceramic products, and their efforts led to the invention of a new, man-made ceramic body that lent itself to decoration like nothing before.

Potters discovered that a mixture of crushed quartz, crushed glass, and a fine white clay formed a fabric that was finely textured, a bright white throughout, and presented a white ground without the need for opaque colourants in the glaze. This was stone-paste. Its arrival heralded a revolution in the ceramic craft, leading to a worldwide zenith in splendid pottery decoration.

From the 12th century the Egyptians and Syrians, joined by the Iranians, excelled at the production of beautifully decorated vessels, with designs in cobalt blue, black, and brown painted under a colourless glaze (images 4 and 5).

By the 14th century, China was importing cobalt from Mesopotamia, and had developed its famed blue-and-white decorative scheme. The influx of these wares into the

Islamic world prompted a flood of imitations, and the versatile, new, white stone-paste body was exploited to produce faithful recreations. The fine texture of stone-paste allowed copies to be as thinly potted as the porcelain originals. These trends continued under the Mamluks, the Ottomans, and the Safavids.

Few museums in Australia have Islamic objects in their collections; these fascinating ceramic sherds in the Nicholson reveal the prominence and relevance of the Islamic world to global history. The Chinese connection is just a single aspect of a captivating, multifaceted story.

Ana Silkatcheva is an archaeologist specialising in the material and visual culture of the Islamic world.



Sphere of influence

Post-war Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz is known for her intriguing textile sculptures. Katrina Liberiou analyses a spherical work that resists easy interpretation.



All images: Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Organic structures and soft forms*, installation view, National Gallery of Victoria, 1976

Czarna Kula, Black Ball II (Spher) (1968) is a sculpture by Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz (1930–2017) that was purchased for the Power Collection after Abakanowicz’s retrospective at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the National Gallery of Victoria in 1976.

Abakanowicz travelled to Australia at the invitation of the Crafts Board of the Australia Council in conjunction with the Polish People’s Republic. During her three-month visit she gave interviews, held workshops and travelled to Queensland – visiting the Great Barrier Reef – and to Central Australia where she visited Uluru and Kata Tjuta. As part of this same trip she visited Papua New Guinea with her friend, Australian artist Jutta Feddersen.

Czarna Kula, Black Ball II (Spher) as the title indicates, and on first impression, presents as a black ball. However, on closer inspection, the work reveals a complexity and intensity of technique, material and form. A hollow spheroid tapestry, it is made of woven fibre, including sisal and rope, and contains a steel structure and hanging ring that allow it to be suspended.

The work is part of a series of major fibre works known as *Abakans*, made between 1967 and 1972, which propelled Abakanowicz onto the international stage. The term *Abakans* – coined in the 1960s by Polish art critic Anka Ptaszkowska, taken from the first part of the artist’s surname – was eventually adopted by Abakanowicz. It resonated with the close, psychological relationship the artist had with the works. The practice of making the

Abakans was organic, not just in terms of the material, but in the process of making them; they were never pre-planned and developed their individuality and associated mystery as they were constructed.

“I like working the form with my hands, I exert control over its every details,” Abakanowicz has said. “The movement of my hands corresponds to the natural rhythm of my body, to my breath. This rhythm determines the number of logical activities that can be performed from morning until evening, from my morning until my evening.”

Along with several other Polish artists, Abakanowicz was invited to exhibit at the first *Biennale Internationale de la Tapisserie* in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1962. In preparation she experimented – her flat, woven wall hangings became immense sculptures and her *Abakans* were born.

These large-scale sculptures contributed to a rupturing of the art/craft debate that took hold in Europe in the late 1960s. Abakanowicz’s process of weaving – by hand, “off loom” – and of using coarser fibres such as sisal, rope, horsehair, hemp and flax, as opposed to the traditional tapestry materials of cotton and wool, triggered a fibre revolution. In contrast, many of the traditional tapestries exhibited at the Biennale by artists such as France’s Jean Lurçat were made by professional weaving workshops in Aubusson, Beauvais or Paris.

Part of this rupturing was that Abakanowicz conceived her works as installations, creating whole-gallery



Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Czarna Kula, Black Ball II (Spher)*, 1968
 spheroid tapestry, rope, sisal, black dye, steel
 JW Power collection, The University of Sydney,
 managed by Museum of Contemporary Art, PW1976.1
 installation view, *Organic structures and soft forms*,
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 © Estate of Magdalena Abakanowicz and courtesy
 Marlborough Gallery, New York

led a privileged country life, and she was fascinated by Polish peasant folklore that spoke of myths and spirits. When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, when she was nine, their situation changed forever. The family was forced to flee their home in 1944. They effectively had to go underground, become anonymous, and hide their background.

This experience gave Abakanowicz the impetus to reinvent herself. In 1949 she commenced studies at the Gdansk Academy of Fine Arts, an interdisciplinary art school that fostered collaboration between forms. It was here that she was first introduced to textiles. Wanting to be part of the new cultural centre of post-war Warsaw, Abakanowicz transferred to the Academy of Fine Arts in 1950.

There were challenges and benefits of attending the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts – all classes had to be approved by Communist officials and the official “style” was “social realism”, which contrasted to Gdansk where freedom of expression was encouraged. However, it was here that Abakanowicz studied under teachers who were to have an enormous impact, particularly renowned Polish textile artist Eleonora Plutyńska, who taught textiles with an emphasis on traditional hand-weaving.

Plutyńska had travelled Poland to discover and preserve ancient weaving techniques. Abakanowicz studied materials and natural dyes and, perhaps most importantly, how to improvise and create directly onto the loom without producing preparatory drawings. This approach was a natural fit for Abakanowicz, whose practice drew heavily on Polish folklore, customs and nature.

Abakanowicz was a remarkable artist who had a long and rich exhibiting history, including representing Poland at the Venice Biennale in 1980. Today her work is held in collections worldwide. She was at the forefront of the art/craft debate of the 1960s and a leader in the revitalisation of figurative sculpture in the 1970s and 80s.

Czarna Kula, Black Ball II (Spher) is one of only two of Abakanowicz’s fibre-based works held in Australian collections, and visitors will have the opportunity to see it in the new Chau Chak Wing Museum.

Katrina Liberiou is Assistant Curator of the University Art Collection

environments; by placing works in relation to one another she created spaces for the viewer to experience an intimacy with the works. No longer being restricted to the loom, her works became limitless; her largest *Abakans* were more than 8 metres high. Working in a small studio, she often only saw the completed works once they were installed in the exhibition space.

The *Abakans* reference the human body; however, *Czarna Kula, Black Ball II (Spher)* is ambiguous and could be indicative of a growth or mass that could invade the body, the psyche or the natural environment. Even the material used evokes the body; it could be hair, veins, muscle or viscera. The colour is not a solid black; there are shades of brown and a deep mulberry.

Abakanowicz designed the *Abakans* for the viewer to get close to, to be in their presence, to feel their warmth and take in their earthy, wooded smell. It’s an intense work, generating an unsettling emotional response, with an ambiguity that leaves lingering questions. Like her other works, *Czarna Kula, Black Ball II (Spher)* references and was influenced by Abakanowicz’s personal history – she experienced first-hand the intense chaos, trauma and destruction of World War II, which stayed with her and became a recurrent theme in her work.

On her father’s side, Abakanowicz’s family were *szlachta* (nobility) from a long line of Tatars, a nomadic Turkic-speaking people who lived in west-central Russia, Kazakhstan and western Siberia. Her mother’s family were Polish aristocracy. In Poland, Abakanowicz’s family



Good hair day

Coif, bouffant or curl? New research into the identity of a portrait in the Nicholson collection is closely tied to hairdressing in Ancient Rome, explains [Candace Richards](#).



1.



2.

Hair is rarely acultural. Throughout history, one's choice of cut, colour and coiffure could make a bold personal statement, in either accepting or rejecting social norms, cultural attitudes and political affiliations. In the Roman imperial period, portraits of the Emperor, imperial family and local elite served an important propagandistic function and the choice of hairstyles, for both men and women, played a key role in visual messaging.

A marble portrait of a young woman in the Nicholson's collection has a bold mass of curls perched like a cloud over her forehead. The rest of her hair is parted in the centre, and the combed, wavy tresses are gathered softly into a bun at the nape of her neck using a braid of her own hair to secure it in place. Traces of red pigment over the curls show that the portrait, like most other marble sculpture in the Roman world, was originally painted. But who is it?

In AD 79, following the death of his father, Vespasian, Titus became emperor. In stark contrast to the increasing extravagances of the Julio-Claudians, culminating with the

debaucheries of Nero's reign, this new dynasty of the Flavians sought to impose control, civic order and conservatism on the empire.

These ideals were expressed through a change in the Emperor's portrait style, specifically, the depiction of ageing – realistic, serious faces sent a message of wisdom and experience. The Nicholson collection's portrait of Titus, reworked from an earlier portrait of the Emperor Claudius, followed these trends by showing a furrowed brow and a more aged face.

Depictions of Flavian women were subtler, and they were rarer than portraits of women in the previous era. However, their hairstyles were extravagant, and we believe our portrait was made during this period.

The new leadership of the Flavians was also the beginning of a new style of coiffure for Imperial and elite women across the empire. As time progressed, the band of curls, as seen in our portrait, became higher and higher, forming a dominating tower of strictly controlled locks that could stand well above the woman's head.

Some scholars suggest that while women's faces were still presented as idealistic rather than realistic, the strict structure of hair reflected the civic order and control also visible in images of the Emperor.

The contrast of the Nicholson portrait's hairstyle with her softly depicted facial features gives us further clues to her identity. She has a somewhat plump face, with almond eyes and softly closed lips in a serene expression. This combination of curls and full face follows closely the portraits known of Julia Titi Flavia, daughter of the Emperor Titus.

However, it is almost impossible to determine if this portrait was intended to be of Julia herself, or of an elite woman who fashionably styled her hair in the latest trends of the day.

The towering structures, braided intricacies and lengths of hair needed to complete such extravagant looks required a range of equipment that was usually hidden from view in the final portrait. To understand how these coiffures were constructed, we must turn to other areas of the archaeological record.

At the site of Diospolis Parva in Egypt, Flinders Petrie and his team uncovered the houses and necropolis of the Roman citizens who lived there. Included in the finds, particularly from women's graves, were wooden and ivory combs, mirrors and hairpins, both plain and decorative. Those made of ivory and bone were carved with geometric designs, and wooden pins may have had gold plated decoration wrapped around the ends, which would be visibly nestled in a woman's hair.

Further evidence from Egypt is seen in the realistically painted mummy portraits preserved from the Fayum region. These famous artefacts date between the first and third centuries AD, and are vital to understanding, among other things, the changes in fashion and ornamentation among society's elite. They also help to inform and date sculpted works.

One mummy portrait in the Nicholson collection, possibly from the third century AD, shows the recurring fashion of a mass of loose curls rising in a tier above the face, which is here shown held in place by a simple golden diadem with a central gem and pearl ornament.



3.

Wigs were also used to augment a person's appearance. Roman wigs were made from human hair and worn by both men and women. In the early Imperial period, Ovid suggests the long blonde locks from Germanic captives were a prized commodity, and later accounts suggest black hair from India was also valuable. Both of these colours would have been hard to affect with dye, unlike the red and auburn hues that could be produced using naturally occurring pigments.

The red hair, as indicated by the curls of our portrait, could have been the woman's natural or dyed colour.

Sadly, the ancient sources do not comment on the colour of Julia Titi's hair. However, another portrait held in the Getty collection in Los Angeles also has traces of red pigment around her curling coiffure, lending support to the theory that this sculpture could indeed be of the Emperor's daughter.

Candace Richards is Assistant Curator, Nicholson Museum



4.

1. Bone, wood and gold plated hairpins, Roman period, 30 BC - AD 395. From the EES excavations at Diospolis Parva in Egypt, directed by Sir Flinders Petrie 1898-99. Donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund 1900. Nicholson Museum, NM00.124.1, NM00.124.9, NM00.151, NM00.154

2. Wooden comb, Roman period, 30 BC - AD 395. From the EES excavations at Diospolis Parva in Egypt, directed by Sir Flinders Petrie 1898-99. Donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund 1900. Nicholson Museum, NM00.168

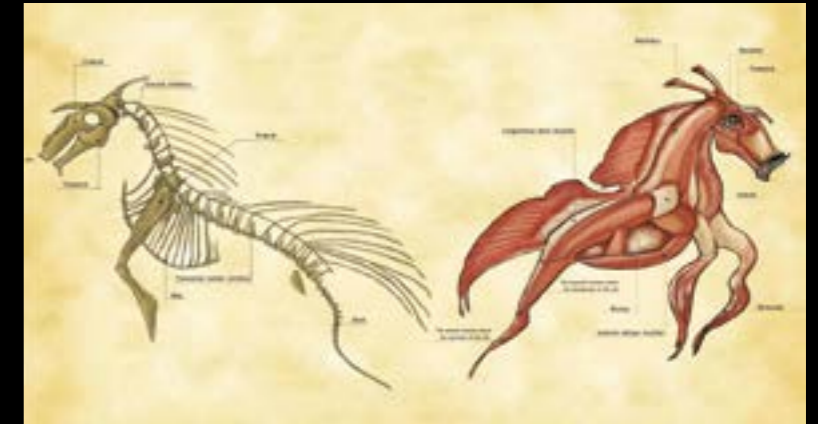
3. Portrait of a young woman painted on a wood panel, possibly late second or third century AD. Purchased 1979. Nicholson Museum, NM79.1

4. Marble portrait of the Emperor Claudius, AD 41-54, reworked to portrait of Emperor Titus AD 79-81. Purchased 1964. Nicholson Museum, NM64.325

Page 27: Marble portrait of a Roman woman, second half of the first century AD. Donated through The Hon RP Meagher bequest 2011. Nicholson Museum, NM2012.11



Sylvia Gluchowska
 Left: roe deer sketch
 Below: creature design



Jadarah Karanikas
 Left: creature design
 Above: skeleton muscles for creature

Drawing inspiration

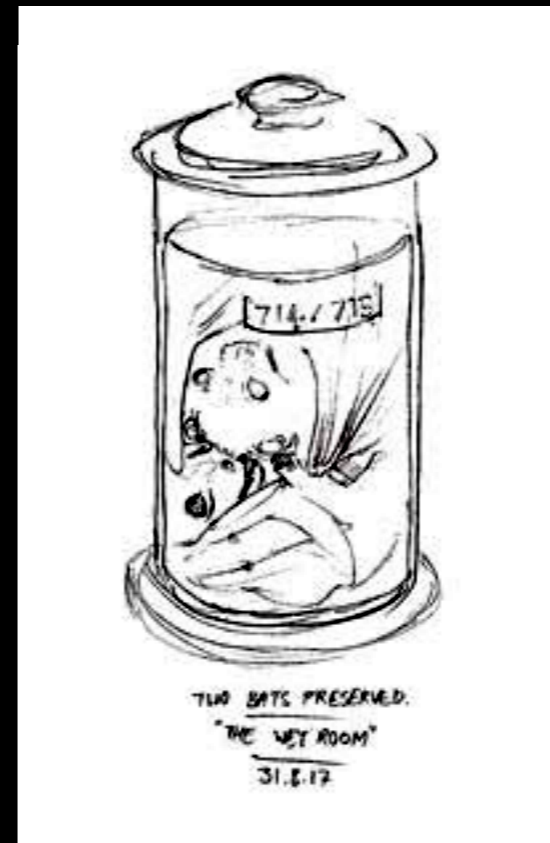
Students from TAFE NSW Design Centre in Enmore have been using the University's collections as inspiration for their works, writes Barry Dean.

To bring to life the imaginary creatures shown here, students from TAFE NSW Design Centre studied the natural history collections of the Macleay Museum and the University of Sydney's School of Veterinary Science's bone collection.

TAFE design students have been engaging with the University's collections every year since 2007. The students are focused on developing the knowledge and skills to become concept artists and designers for the digital games and film industry.



Eleanor Kenway
 Right: concept narrative
 Below: bats in the wet store sketch



As part of their major project for the Advanced Diploma of Creative Product Development, students were asked to design an original animal with evolutionary specialisations, and to create artwork that detailed its skeleton, muscles and external appearance.

Armed with sketchbooks and watercolours, the students worked from skulls and complete skeletons at the University of Sydney School of Veterinary Science, and in the Macleay Museum they made rapid sketches in the entomology stores and wet collection (specimens stored in fluid). The observational drawings they produced on their visit provided invaluable research material.

Barry Dean teaches at TAFE NSW Design Centre Enmore.



A stitch in time

In the early 1900s a former student made exquisite watercolours of textiles in a London museum. [Chris Jones](#) looks at her work, which is held in the University collections.

(Florence) Helen Wark graduated from the University of Sydney with a Master of Arts from the School of Classical Philology (Latin) in 1905. This early interest in the ancient world was to echo through her life as educator and craftsperson.

After graduating Wark travelled to Italy and England, studying at the British Institute in Rome and the Royal College of Art in London. She stayed in a residence for female students at Lexham Gardens, Kensington – a short walk from both the college and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A).

During her time in London Wark made watercolour studies of textiles in the V&A collections, including of Italian, English and Spanish textiles, and Persian prayer carpets. Her drawings focus on details and edgings, showing the colours, stitching and construction.

One study is a detail from the Syon Cope, made in England around 1310–20. This cope, made from linen, embroidered with silk, silver-gilt and silver thread, is a cape-like vestment that would have been worn at Christian church ceremonies. The garment is decorated with scenes from the Life of the Virgin and the Life of Christ and the Apostles.

The Syon Cope is unique among surviving examples of *opus anglicanum*, the Latin term for English work, used to denote high-quality English embroidery. The detail Wark has drawn illustrates St Michael slaying a two-headed dragon.

Following her return to Sydney in 1912, Wark gave a series of talks. She gave a lantern slide lecture titled 'Early Christian Art in the Catacombs at Rome' at the Young Women's Christian Association in April, and to the Sydney University Women's Union in July.



On 14 October 1912 she gave a talk at the Women's College titled 'The Art of Embroidery', covering early embroidery examples from Egypt in the 15th century BC, and how the practice flourished with ancient Greeks and Romans.

Wark traced the development through Europe, with special mention of England: "One of the most remarkable pieces of embroidery in the world, the famous Bayeux Tapestry, is now generally believed to be the work of Englishwomen," she said. She finished by talking about William Morris and John Ruskin, showing examples of

ancient and modern embroidery, and photographs of some famous pieces.

Wark was appointed lecturer in applied arts at Sydney Teachers' College in 1914. She used the drawings she made during her time in London to inform her teaching and inspire students. The drawings remained in the college's collection when she retired in 1945 until they were transferred to the University Art Collection in 1990 along with the rest of the college's art collection.

Chris Jones is Assistant Collections Manager, Sydney University Museums

Top left: Textile study, border of 17th century Italian chasuble, UA1990.316

Top right: Textile study, centre panel of 18th century Austro-Hungarian chasuble, UA1990.323

Bottom left: Textile study, UA1990.328

Bottom right: Textile study, 17th century Spanish embroidered velvet and silk panel, UA1990.319

Opposite page: Textile study, detail from Syon Cope, UA1990.315





Scenes from the Nile

Part 2

Dr Wendy Reade continues her story of the conservation of the Nicholson Museum's important fresco-painted floor from Amarna in ancient Egypt.

In Issue 16 of *Muse* in March 2017, I reported on the progress of the conservation of an unusual fresco-painted pavement from the floor of the Maru-Aten building at Amarna, Egypt.

Created in the reign of Akhenaten in the mid-14th century BC, this structure housed water pools and painted scenes of Nile River plants and birds. At the time of that report, the painted plaster fragments had been cleaned and consolidated, but were yet to be joined and set on a bespoke support, a process that challenged our ingenuity and resulted in a unique solution to an old problem.

While the placement of the pieces of the fresco jigsaw was reasonably straightforward, it was not a simple matter to adhere them together. The pavement had been laid on an uneven earthen substrate, reflected in the curves and varying thickness of the pavement pieces.

The abraded edges of the fresco fragments also made it difficult to align joins correctly. Inevitably some joins needed adjustment by heating and softening the adhesive with a hairdryer until it was possible to gently reposition the joins.

Over such a large surface, a very small misalignment of one join becomes magnified in subsequent reconstruction. Once reconstructed, there were still chips and small areas missing from the pavement.

I used casting plaster to complete the jagged edges of the panel, and to fill holes in the pavement, but not chips and gouges. Following the philosophy of minimal intervention, I only filled where necessary to provide strength and protection, and to minimise visual disruption. It was important to colour the white plaster fill to blend with the pavement so as not to catch the eye, but at the same time closer inspection should distinguish modern repair from the original.

These same principles of minimal intervention with maximum stabilisation applied when designing a support. It had to be a purpose-made construction that would support the weight of the panel evenly by conforming to its contours. It was one of the project's greatest challenges, as the base support should ideally be light but strong, and rigid enough to prevent any movement of the pavement that would undoubtedly see it shatter again.

In the past it has been popular to set wall paintings in plaster, encasing them in a solid heavy block that cannot be removed without endangering the fresco, and which hides the reverse. The advantage of a floor fresco is that it doesn't have to be mounted vertically on a wall: the Amarna pavement will be displayed horizontally as it would have been seen in antiquity.

This gave us the option of making a moulded support that would serve for both storage and display, the idea being that the fresco would sit on it without being set into it, allowing the pavement and support to be separated if necessary. Casting plaster proved to be the most sympathetic and versatile material, but it is very heavy.

The challenge was to make a support of plaster that was both lighter and stronger than just plaster on its own.

I set two layers of a thermoplastic resin lattice, used to make casts for broken limbs, into the plaster to provide structural strength. To make the plaster lighter in weight, I bulked it out with fumed silica, resulting in a weight saving of more than 50 percent without loss of strength.

Turning the reconstructed pavement over safely was also a challenge. With the object sandwiched between padded boards strapped together to prevent any movement or damaging pressure, it took a team of six to execute the turn deftly. Finally, the modified plaster support was constructed in several pours then levelled to provide a flat, stable base.

With the development of a successful treatment methodology, the conservation of the remaining three related panels has begun – a precious opportunity to repair one of Egypt's rarer treasures. The four panels will be on display in the Egyptian galleries in the new Chau Chak Wing Museum.

Dr Wendy Reade is Conservator, Sydney University Museums

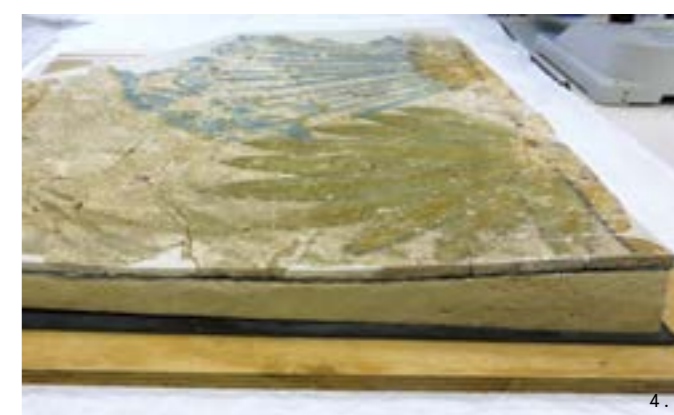
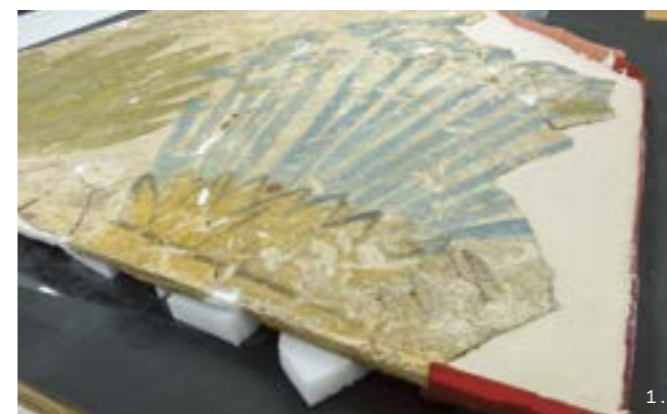
1. The pavement supported by foam blocks, as the edges and holes are filled with casting plaster.

2. The tricky stage of turning the pavement over ready to mould a support.

3. With medical thermoplastic lattice moulded to the reverse of the pavement, ready to pour the casting plaster.

4. The pavement resting on the moulded support.

Opposite page: The pavement conserved. Maru-Aten floor fresco, depicting papyrus plants, Amarna period, 1352-1323 BC, donated by the Egypt Exploration Society, 1925, Nicholson Museum, NM64.415.3





Long-awaited greetings.

Voyage in time

Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay was a Russian explorer and scientist who was based in New Guinea in the 1870s. His descendant, Nikolai Nikolaevich Miklouho-Maclay, reports on a commemorative journey.

In 2017, ahead of Papua New Guinea's 42nd Independence Day celebration, a Russian expedition prepared for a voyage to the Rai Coast of Papua New Guinea.

On 15 September, we arrived on the north-eastern coast of Madang, PNG. It was here, on September 20, 1871, that the 25-year-old Miklouho-Maclay landed after a 10-month passage from the Imperial seaport of Kronstadt on the Vityaz corvette. Unlike my ancestor's meetings with local people – which was often a nervous, dangerous and difficult encounter – the villagers met us with great honour.

Gathered on the shore in festive dress, residents from the three villages near where Miklouho-Maclay lived (Bongu, Gumbu and Gorendu),

gladly greeted the expedition team from "Maclay's village" (Russia). "Maclay has come back and has called the rain," they said to us, glad to have the long-awaited rain and to be reconnecting with their Russian history.

To this day, the great humanist Miklouho-Maclay is venerated on the Rai Coast, with legends about him passed down through the generations, and where even children are named after him. It was just the same in Soviet Russia, where schoolchildren would learn about the history of the Rai Coast in geography and with Miklouho-Maclay's diaries.

The contemporary expedition team, which included academic and curatorial members of the Russian

Academy of Sciences, stayed in Bongu village where the descendants of Tuya, Miklouho-Maclay's first friend on the island, lived. A newly built house was given for the expedition team's use, and everyone was accommodated comfortably on the cocoa matting and mattresses.

On 16 September 2017 the local people, together with the expedition team, celebrated the Independence Day of Papua New Guinea. Miklouho-Maclay had fought for independence and against colonisation and slavery (known in his time as "blackbirding"). We were honoured by the visit of PNG's Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare, who was the first prime minister after independence from Australian administration in 1975. Some 3000 coastal people came to

commemorate Miklouho-Maclay's landing with the placing of soil from his homeland at his memorial.

The opening of the photographic exhibition at the Divine Word University in Madang on 22 September 2017 was another important event. Here we presented photographs of Miklouho-Maclay's objects and drawings from the collection of Peter the Great's Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

My great-great uncle's history is also connected inextricably with Australia, so our next stop was Sydney, where Miklouho-Maclay lived and worked in the 1870s and 1880s. Here Nikolai Nikolaevich married Margaret Robertson Clark, the daughter of the Premier of New South Wales, Sir John Robertson. The expedition team visited sites where he worked, including the Australian Museum, the

Macleay Museum, and the Watson Bay Marine Station, the biological research station he founded for the focused study of marine fauna.

In 1887, Maclay and Margaret moved to Russia, where he died after a long illness. Margaret and their two sons, Vladimir and Aleksandr, returned to Sydney, and their descendants have ensured the memory of Miklouho-Maclay and his humanitarian and scientific work were kept alive.

For me, Miklouho-Maclay is a good example for the youth of the world. His firm temper, consistency of aim, decency and commitment to the principles of humanity once made him the hero of many books in the Soviet Union. In the period after the Second World War, two films were produced about him, multi-volume editions of his diaries were published, and books about him were popular.

Citizens of both Russia and Papua New Guinea cherish his memory. The goals for our expedition were to establish cultural connections and cooperation with the leading universities of Papua New Guinea and Australia, carry out scientific research, continue working with the people of the Rai Coast and recognise anew the achievements of the man UNESCO named a "Citizen of the World".

For more information, pictures and stories about the work of the Miklouho-Maclay Foundation, visit: www.mikluho-maclay.ru

Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay is the great-great nephew of Nikolai Nikolaevich Miklouho-Maclay



Once located at Watson's Bay Marine Station, this sandstone plaque with Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay's insignia is now in the Macleay Museum collection.



At the Mitchell Library reading room, with family member Janie Maclay, the widow of Paul Maclay, grandson of Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay.

All images courtesy and © of the Maclay Foundation 2016.

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Making history



1. Joe Fidler, ABC Radio's Richard Fidler and Senior Curator Dr James Fraser before Richard's lecture on his book, *Ghost Empire*, at the Nicholson Museum in September 2017.



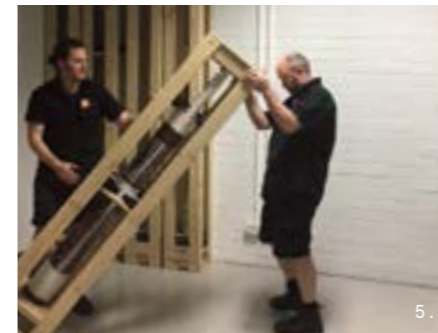
2. Dr Craig Barker with Dr Elena Poyiatzi-Richter of the Leventis Municipal Museum in Nicosia in Cyprus with a Renaissance portrait of Caterina Cornaro in the exhibition *Secrets of a Royal Portrait*.



3. A delegation from the National Museum of China was welcomed to the University by Associate Director, Content, Dr Paul Donnelly, Senior Lecturer and Associate Curator, Dr Stephen Whiteman, and Vice-Principal (External Relations), Tania Rhodes-Taylor.



4. Dr Jude Philp, Senior Curator of the Macleay Museum, with Matthew Connell, Principal Curator, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, on the day of his talk, 'From Euclid to the Computer: tracing a line through mathematics', at the Nicholson Museum.



5. Owen and Tom, from International Art Services, installing new storage crates made for a recent acquisition of Larrakitj poles from Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

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For more information and to view the latest timetable, visit sydney.edu.au/museums and click on 'What's on'.

Unless otherwise stated, all events take place at the Nicholson Museum.

Free Nicholson Museum tours

Join Nicholson Museum staff every Monday from 3.30–4.30pm, for a collection tour with a different focus each week.

Cost: free

March 2018

Saturday 3 March, 2–3pm

Bad Blood in Byblos: Politics and Murder in Mesopotamia*

Dr Louise Pryke, Macquarie University

Cost: free

Thursday 15 March, 5.30pm

Interlocutors in the archive: Aboriginal women and the collection of anthropological data

Professor Jakelin Troy, University of Sydney

Cost: free

Wednesday 21 March, 6 for 6.30pm

Latest research on Egyptian mummies at the British Museum

Dr Marie Vandenberg, British Museum

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

Includes light refreshments.

Tuesday 27 March, 6pm

Antony and Cleopatra

Dr Kathryn Welch, University of Sydney

Cost: free

April 2018

Saturday 7 April, 2–3pm

Mosaics of Paphos*

Jennie Lindbergh, AMBS Heritage

Cost: free

Saturday 7 April, 3–4pm

Ancient Greek Art in the Nicholson Museum

A guided tour of the Nicholson Museum's Greek collection for the Greek Festival of Sydney 2018.

Cost: free

Wednesday 11 April, 12–1pm

Free Seniors Week Heritage Tour of the Quadrangle

Cost: free

Wednesday 11 April, 6pm

Illuminating the past: using vibrational spectroscopy to unravel the hidden secrets of objects

Dr Elizabeth Carter, Sydney Analytical

Cost: free

Tuesday 17 April, 10am–4pm

School holiday activity day: Funny faces – portraiture throughout history

Cost: free

Monday 16 April, 6 for 6.30pm

The Genealogy of the Tyrant from Sophocles and Aristotle to Shakespeare

Professor Edith Hall, Kings College London

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

Includes light refreshments.

Thursday 19 April, 10am–4pm

School holiday activity day: A Bug's Life

Cost: free

Thursday 26 April, 10am–4pm

School holiday activity day: Ancient Greece

Including the launch of Stella Tarakson's children's books *Here Comes Hercules* and *Hera's Terrible Trap*.

Cost: free

May 2018

Wednesday 2 May, 6 for 6.30pm

Decline and fall: Reflections on Rome and the USA

Rt Hon Bob Carr, former NSW Premier

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

\$10 for students. Includes light refreshments.

Saturday 5 May, 2–3pm

Digging Australia: Tales from the Australian trenches*

Ben Churcher, Academy Travel

Cost: free

Wednesday 9 May, 6pm

Sydney and the birth of quantum astronomy

Professor Peter Tuthill, Sydney Future

Fellow, Institute of Astronomy

Cost: free

Friday 18 May, 3.30–4.30pm

Connections

Dr James Fraser, Nicholson Museum

Free museum tour for International

Museums Day

Cost: free

Wednesday 30 May, 6 for 6.30pm

Some impressions of Greece

Candace Richards, Nicholson Museum

Cost: free



*The 2018 *Postcards from the Past* free Saturday lecture series is sponsored by Academy Travel.



June 2018

Saturday 2 June, 2–3pm

The pursuit of Liberté: Australian artists in 1920s Paris*

Dr Olivia Meehan, Academy Travel

Cost: free

Wednesday 20 June, 6pm

Pompeii of the Pacific: the archaeology of volcanic disasters in Papua New Guinea

Dr Robin Torrence, Australian

Museum

Cost: free

Thursday 21 June, 6 for 6.30pm

Turquoise Mosaics from Mexico: Putting the Aztecs Under the Microscope

Caroline Cartwright, British Museum

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

\$10 for students. Includes light

refreshments.

Left: Seymchan meteorite, Magadan district, Russia, SC2017.301

Above: Botanical sample, Khus khus (*Chrysopogon zizanioides*), SC1977.153.12

Current exhibitions

Please note: the Macleay Museum and the University Art Gallery are now closed as we prepare for the public opening of the Chau Chak Wing Museum.

Nicholson Museum

- *Alpha and Omega: tales of transformation*
- *The sky and the sea: ancient Cypriot art*
- *Lego Pompeii*
- *Death Magic*
- *Memento: remembering Roman lives*
- *Tombs Tells and Temples: excavating the Near East*
- *Actors, Athletes and Academics: life in ancient Greece*
- *Sustaining the Seas*

All Nicholson Museum exhibitions are ongoing.

Fisher Library

Sydney's women in the field: Phyllis Kaberry and the Abelam, an exhibition commemorating the UNESCO Memory of the World listing of the anthropological materials in the Macleay collections and the University Archives. Until August 2018.

Follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/sydneyunimuseum or find us on Facebook by searching for 'Sydney University Museums'.

All details are correct at the time of publication, however, events may change due to circumstances beyond our control. Please visit our website for up-to-date information: sydney.edu.au/museums

If you wish to contact the Macleay Museum, the Nicholson Museum or the University Art Gallery, please see inside front cover for our details.



Mosaic of a peacock, 4th to 5th century AD, Sicily, Italy.
Donated by Sir Charles Nicholson 1860, Nicholson Museum NMR.1062. photographer: Rowan Conroy

Alpha and Omega: tales of transformation

Until September 2018
Free admission

The 24 letters of the Greek alphabet introduce 24 stories of transformation and metamorphosis from Greek and Roman history and mythology, illustrated with objects from the Nicholson Museum, the Macleay Museum and the University Art Collection.

Nicholson Museum
The Quadrangle
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