

Call for papers

Sydney Institute of Criminology

Art and Antiquities Crime Conference

Combatting Art and Antiquities Crime: Australian and Transnational Perspectives

November 21 – 22, 2025 |

Law Foyer, Level 2, The University of Sydney Law School

The Sydney Institute of Criminology is convening a conference to explore Australian and transnational perspectives on art and antiquities crime, with the aim of fostering collaboration between researchers and practitioners both locally and globally. The event will address a range of criminal activities affecting cultural property, including fraud, forgery, looting, theft, money laundering, illicit import/export, and vandalism—issues that remain underrepresented in Australian legal and policy discourse.

Although Australia's art and antiquities market is relatively small, the consequences of such crimes are far-reaching, particularly in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. Fraud and forgery in this domain, as well as in modern and contemporary art, are of growing concern. The conference will also spotlight ongoing challenges in repatriation and restitution. According to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), over 100,000 cultural items remain housed in overseas institutions, primarily in the UK, Europe, and North America. Despite governmental efforts to facilitate repatriation, many objects have yet to be returned, often due to the absence of binding legal obligations. Additionally, past acquisitions by Australian museums warrant critical examination to inform future ethical practices. The conference will hence also explore ethical acquisition practices and issues relating to provenance research and private collections.

Recognising the inherently transnational nature of art crime, the conference will incorporate international perspectives. Cultural property crimes frequently span multiple jurisdictions, complicating legal responses due to divergent laws on good faith purchase, criminal liability, and import/export regulations. Practical challenges also arise, such as discrepancies between national databases that hinder the detection and recovery of stolen items.

This interdisciplinary forum seeks to engage stakeholders across law enforcement, journalism, legal practice, diplomacy, academia, and cultural institutions. By bringing together experts in criminology, law, archaeology, museum studies, political science, international relations and economics, the conference aims to deepen understanding of current initiatives and identify pathways for future research and policy development in the field of art and antiquities crime.



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Confirmed speakers include:

- Robyn Sloggett, *University of Melbourne*
- Donna Yates, *Maastricht University*
- Michaela Boland, *Journalist*
- Melanie Pitkin, Senior Curator, *Chau Chak Wing Museum*
- Damien Huffer, *University of Adelaide*
- Julien Cooper, *Macquarie University*
- Tom Gyorffy, *King's Counsel retired from Victorian Bar*
- Stacey Kim Coates, *University of Sydney*
- Ian McDonald, *Special Counsel with Simpsons*
- Gabriella Coslovich, *Journalist*
- Saskia Hufnagel, *University of Sydney*
- Richard Bott, *Macquarie University*

The conference will be preceded on the evening of the 20th November 2025 by the **Sir Charles Nicholson Lecture at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, University of Sydney**. This year's lecture will be presented by **Associate Professor Donna Yates, Maastricht University**.

We invite abstract submissions for papers to present at the 2025 Sydney Institute of Criminology Art and Antiquities Crime Conference

Potential topics to consider include, but are certainly not limited to, the following:

Fraud and Forgeries, both at domestic and international levels	Antiquities trafficking
Fine art collection and the art market	Illicit trade in human remains
Fine art theft	Policing and Transnational Crime
Art and Technology	Roles of law enforcement on the local, national, and international stages
Restitution of art and antiquities	Money Laundering and Financial Crime
Private collections and provenance	Provenance Research

Submissions must include: (1) a paper title and abstract – 250 words and (2) a short biography – 200 words

Presentation time will be ca. 20 minutes with 10 minutes question time.

Deadline for Submission: 12AM GMT on October 24, 2025

Please direct all questions and submissions via email to: saskia.hufnagel@sydney.edu.au

NOTE: All submission materials, papers, and presentations must be made in English.

The conference proceedings will be published as an edited volume. If you are interested in contributing to the publication, please indicate this when submitting your abstract. A draft paper will be required two months after the end of the conference for inclusion in the proceedings.



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