

## Matter in Place

**Date :** December 13, 2009

Special Issue: SITES - A Journal of Social Anthropology & Cultural Studies

*Edited by Patrick Lavolette & Bronwyn Labrum (Massey Univ)*

It will perhaps be obvious to most readers here that the title for this special material culture issue of the NZ journal SITES, which was also used for an afternoon symposium in November 2007, was inspired by a now classic line from Professor Dame Mary Douglas' celebrated book *Purity & Danger*. In her insightful analysis of the conceptual workings of pollution and taboo, with the intention of outlining the ways in which such issues as hygiene and defilement are culturally constructed and socially structured, Douglas penned the well cited phrase "Dirt is matter out of place" (1966: 44).

Undoubtedly, this definition has come to stand as shorthand for a plethora of research on waste, rubbish and the foreboding. In relation to revalidating the significance of local issues in material culture studies, there might be some mileage in turning this maxim on its head - to suggest, with only partial facetiousness, that 'place is matter out of dirt'.

Indeed, our *Matter in Place* discussion forum was held in the same year that marked Mary's untimely passing as a lingering cancer victim. With this and several other Douglasesque pearls of wisdom fresh in the minds of many people around the world during those months after her death, the idea of commemorating as well as appropriating the thinking of someone so influential to the overall ethos of material culture studies seemed to make sense. Our ambition was really quite simple - to highlight some antipodean examples of the work being done in this field of study. The matter of our analysis was not dirt, rubbish or waste, however. Instead, we wanted to emphasise more generally the tangible manifestations of the local in an ever globalising world - the material significances of 'sites' if you will.

The issue comprises an editorial, six articles and six book reviews. It can be accessed at:

[SITES](#)

Titles of articles as follow:

*Editorial - Matter in Place*

Lavolette & Labrum (SVMC, Massey Univ)

*River Ownership: Inalienable Taonga and Impartible Tupuna Awa*

Marama Muru-Lanning (Auckland Univ)

*Mana Taonga and the Curatorial Process at the National Museum*

Huhana Smith (Te Papa Tongarewa)

*The Lapita Motif that 'Got Away'*

Wendy E. Cowling (Univ. of Waikato)

*Intangible Heritage and the Tangibility of a Sensorial Soundscape for Japanese ama Divers*

Kumi Kato (Univ. of Queensland)

*Topogenetic Forms in New Georgia, Solomon Islands*

Tim Thomas (Univ. of Otago)

*Placing the Traveller: The Banal Geographies of Travelling Documents*

Matthew Henry (Massey Univ.)

Book reviews by David Sutton, Diana Young, Tim Webmoor, Graeme Were, Ross Hemera and Ian Wedde of the following works:

Miller, D. (ed) 2005, *Materiality*. Durham: Duke Univ. Press.

Woodward, I. 2007, *Understanding Material Culture*. London: Sage.

Bender, B. et al. 2007, *Stone Worlds*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

Gibson, S. et al (eds) 2008, *Looking Flash*. Auckland: AUP.

Skinner, D. 2008, *The Carver and the Artist*. Auckland: AUP.

Vannini, P. (ed) 2009, *Material Culture and Technology in Everyday Life*. New York: Peter Lang Press.