

2014

Symposium

University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life



INSTITUTE OF CULTURE AND SOCIETY

DATE

Tuesday 1 April 2014 –
Wednesday 2 April 2014

VENUE

Australian Museum,
Sydney

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

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

ONLINE REGISTRATION

<http://bit.ly/HVWDVM>

CONTACTS

Fiona Cameron
f.cameron@uws.edu.au

Ben Dibley
b.dibley@uws.edu.au

MUSEUMS, COLLECTING, AGENCY: A SYMPOSIUM

Partner Institutions: Institute of Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney; Australian Museum; Museum and Heritage Studies Programme, Victoria University of Wellington; Museum and Heritage Program, University of Sydney

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

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS INCLUDE

Phil Gordon, Head of Aboriginal Collections at the Australian Museum, Sydney. Gordon advises Aboriginal communities on issues such as Aboriginal Museum outreach and repatriation of Aboriginal human remains and other significant cultural property as well as providing advice for various government agencies on cultural heritage issues and policy development. He plays an important role in working with cultural centres and keeping places in setting up and planning, as well as advising on ongoing training needs. He has published on Indigenous aspects of museum and heritage management, policy and practice in many books and journals and spoken at numerous conferences on related issues.

Huhana Smith of Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga and Ngāti Tūkorehe, is an academic, environmentalist, curator, researcher and artist based in the Horowhenua district of Aotearoa New Zealand. Her qualifications include degrees in visual art and museum studies, and she completed a PhD in Māori Studies at Massey University. She is currently Research Leader Māori for the project Manaaki Taha Moana: Enhancing Coastal Ecosystems for Māori, and Honorary Research Associate at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Formerly Dr Smith was Senior Māori Curator at Te Papa, and led the team developing the Tokyo National Museum cultural exchange exhibition from 2004-2007 culminating in *Mauriora* (2007), and from 2010-14 the exhibition *E Tu Ake: Māori Standing Strong* which has toured France, Mexico, Canada, and the US. Huhana has written and edited several books on customary and contemporary Māori art and visual culture, and has been a consultant for a number of museums, as well as continuing to practice as an artist/painter.

2014

Symposium



University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life

PAPER PRESENTERS INCLUDE

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ben Dibley is a Research Associate at the Institute for Culture and Society, the University of Western Sydney. He has research interests in social and cultural theory, museums, colonialism and the environment. His recent publications include *New Formations, Museum and Society, Transformations, and Australian Humanities Review*.

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

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

2014

Symposium



University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life

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

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

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

Sean Mallon is Senior Curator Pacific Cultures at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa where he has worked in various roles since 1992. He is the author or lead editor of five books including *Tatau: Samoan tattoo, New Zealand art, global culture* (2010) and *Tangata o le Moana: the story of New Zealand and the people of the Pacific* (2012). He was co-author of *Art in Oceania: A new history* (2012). He has curated exhibitions including *Paperskin: the art of tapa cloth* (with Maud Page) (2009); *Tangata o le Moana* (2007), *Voyagers: discovering the Pacific and Tatau/Tattoo* (2002). He has been a council member of The Polynesian Society since 2008. He is currently undertaking a PhD in Anthropology at Victoria University of Wellington.

Kylie Message is Associate Professor and Head of the School of Archaeology and Anthropology at the Australian National University. Her research explores the role that museums play as sites of cultural and political exchange, specifically in relation to political reform movements and social activism. She is author of *Museums and Social Activism: Engaged Protest* (2013), *New Museums and the Making of Culture* (2006) and co-editor of volumes that include *Compelling Cultures: Representing Cultural Diversity and Cohesion in Multicultural Australia* (2009) and *Museum Theory: An Expanded Field* (forthcoming).

Conal McCarthy is Associate Professor and Director of the Museum & Heritage Studies programme at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He has published widely on Māori art, museum display, and current museum practice, including the monograph *Museums and Maori: Heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice* (2011). His next book is *Museum practice: Critical debates in contemporary museums* (forthcoming).

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

2014

Symposium

University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life



Conference Program

DAY 1

9:20 Welcome

Introduction:
Fiona Cameron and Ben Dibley

9:30-10:30 Keynote

'But We Said Sorry!'
Phil Gordon

10:30-11:00 Morning Tea

11:00-12:30 Panel 1: Collecting Memories: Indigenous Engagement with Museums Collections

The Instability of Truth: Aspects of Developing a Specific Indigenous Methodology on Experimental Practice-Led Research
Brenda Croft

A Work in Progress
Gary Jones

TBA
Stephen Gilchrist

12:30-1:30 Lunch

1:30-3:00 Panel 2: Museum, Field, Colony 1

Native Anthropologists in British Columbia, ca. 1900–50
Ira Jacknis

Postcolonial Legacies? On the Emergence of 'Indigenous' Objects and Subjects from Ethnographic Museum Collections
Rodney Harrison

Taonga and Māori, Museums and Collecting 1900-1940
Conal McCarthy

3:00-3:30 Afternoon Tea

3.30 Tour of Australian Museum collections

6:00 Symposium Dinner

Venue: LaMint, Vietnamese restaurant, 62-64 Riley Street, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010.
(\$55, not included in conference registration)

2014

Symposium



Conference Program

DAY 2

9:30-10:30 Panel 3: Museum, Field, Colony 2

The Agency of Collections: Museums and the Ordering Differences
Tony Bennett

From Managing Cultural Difference to Ordering Ethnicity: A Relation between Two
Museums
Nélia Dias

10:30-11:00 Morning Tea

11:00-12:30 Panel 4: Articulations of Indigenous Agency in the Pacific

'The right, right one ...': Ethnographic Authority, Agency and the Post-Colonial Museum
Sean Mallon

Kia Tipu Anō Te Whaihanga: Rebuilding Legacy Through Cultural Collaboration
Wayne Ngata

Worlds Apart: Transformative Partnerships Between Museums, Collections & Source
Communities
Michelle Horwood

12:30-1:30 Lunch

1:30-3:00 Panel 5: Indigenous Agency and Activism: Critical Reflections

Assemblage Theory, Museums and the Problem of 'Indigenous Agency': Some Critical
Reflections
Philip Batty

Gumbula and the Great Homecoming of Collected Yol u Heritage
Aaron Corn

Curatorial Activism, Indigenous Agency and Contemporary Collecting at the Smithsonian
c. 1960s/1970s
Kylie Message

3:00-3.30 Afternoon Tea

3.30-5:00 Closing Keynote

He Tau Whakawhiti: Shifting from Repositories of Objects to Agents of a Holistic
Reconnection—An Environmental Response to Indigenous Museum Collections
Huhana Smith

2014

Symposium

University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life



Abstracts

KEYNOTE PRESENTERS

'But We Said Sorry!'

Phil Gordon, Australian Museum

This keynote presentation discusses the history of Aboriginal involvement in cultural institutions with particular reference to museums over the last 30 years. What we have witnessed over time is a series of ebbs and flows in respect to Indigenous employment in the cultural sector that has gone hand in hand with the relative prominence of Indigenous cultural issues and related policy directions at federal and state government level. The employment of Indigenous people and cultural rights peaked in the 1980s and 1990s and since then we have seen a contraction of funding and employment in the sector evidenced most recently in the dissolution of the ATSIC. There is a general feeling among Aboriginal people that discussions in broader Australian society in respect to cultural rights and policy has declined since the Sorry apology because for many Indigenous rights are now seen as resolved. What is the future for Indigenous employment and cultural policy in the museum sector?

He Tau Whakawhiti: Shifting from Repositories of Objects to Agents of a Holistic Reconnection—an Environmental Response to Indigenous Museum Collections **Huhana Smith, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga and Ngāti Tūkorehe**

The challenge for collection-based museums is to respond to indigenous ontologies and heritage practices which extend beyond current models. The relationships between museums and source communities are difficult. Disparate groups often do not have the will or opportunity to work well in partnership with *tangata whenua* (local people). Even when there is a relationship, the collections are still governed by protocols through which the museum remains principle 'owner' and extends some access but limited use rights for *kaitiaki* (cultural guardians). This keynote briefly surveys the active history of indigenous agency in relation to museum collections in Aotearoa New Zealand and then reviews contemporary developments in co-management with reference to an environmental research project to restore an important coastal environment in the Horowhenua region led by *iwi* and *hap* (tribe and subtribe). In this case study, people have been brought together to create successful action plans to address the severe ecological decline of waterways. All the diverse elements within these revered ancestral lands, including objects and practices, can be regarded as *taonga tuku iho* (treasures handed down), a concept which stretches western thinking about the material, natural and spiritual world. Could a 'whole of systems' approach be applied to museum collections to reconnect objects to ancestral communities and landscapes? Would this transform their collecting practices, harnessing greater collaboration with communities for their mutual benefit? Through the idea of *tau whakawhiti* (shifting order or place), might museums be 'transposed' from repositories of protected objects to agencies, which facilitate community development using the collections as resources? In exploring these questions, and sketching out some possible answers, a range of objects, exhibitions, landscapes and art works are offered to construct an effective methodology for both heritage conservation projects and for current museum practice.

2014

Symposium

University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life



PAPER PRESENTERS

Assemblage Theory, Museums and the Problem of 'Indigenous Agency': Some Critical Reflections

Philip Batty, Melbourne Museum

Assemblage theory proposes that agency is disbursed in nature, and can best be understood as the product of social collectives made and re-made in a multiplicity of ways across a variety of contexts. In short, the notion that agency is an immutable property residing within the bounds of a single human subject or an exclusive group of subjects, is rejected. Moreover, the link between agency and intentionality – of a political nature or otherwise – is downplayed or denied.

In the light of these theoretical understandings, how do we approach the notion of 'Aboriginal agency' within museums, where such agency is commonly equated with overt political intentionality; both by Aboriginal people themselves and non-Aboriginals? Indeed, all major state museums in Australia currently operate programs that actively solicit the intentions of indigenous peoples with regard to the exhibition, representation or repatriation of indigenous collections. Underlying such programs one can also find notions of an essentialised Aboriginal agency that is closely defended by Aboriginal people and often supported by museum management. Here, the suggestion that Aboriginal agency is non-intentional and dispersed across a wide field of social relations (that must invariably encompass non-Aboriginals), can be seen by the promoters of an essentialised Aboriginal agency as part of an insidious form of neo-colonialism.

Although some adherents of assemblage theory (of which I include myself) recognise these kinds of anomalies, it seems to me that they require a more thorough-going examination as they beg a number of questions that remain unanswered or inadequately so. In this paper, I draw on my experiences as a senior curator of anthropology at Melbourne Museum to explore and hopefully shed some light on these and related issues

The Agency of Collections: Museums and the Ordering Differences

Tony Bennett, Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney

In this paper I consider the kinds of agency that museums perform by virtue of the kinds of ordering they bestow on the materials they collect. My central concern is with how early twentieth century anthropological museum orderings of the relations between different populations were related to different ways of operating on the relations between different groups. My discussion will range across three such instances: the evolutionary displays organised by Baldwin Spencer at the National Museum of Victoria; the life-groups installed by Franz Boas at the American Museum of Natural History; and the ethnographic vitrines of the Musée de l'Homme under the direction of George Henri Rivière and Paul Rivet. My purpose, in comparing and contrasting these instances, is to identify the relations between museum practices and the organisation of different templates for managing relations of cultural difference. This will involve (i) a consideration of the relations between Spencer's work and the role of race in organising the relations between white and Aboriginal Australia; (ii) a consideration of the relations between Boas's collecting and exhibition practices and of the subsequent development of the Boasian culture concept on the development of assimilationist policies in 1920s and 1930s America; and (iii) the part played by the Musée de l'Homme in the deployment of ethnology in differentiating and managing the relations between the varied populations of Greater France.

2014

Symposium

University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life



Gumbula and the Great Homecoming of Collected Yol u Heritage

Aaron Corn, Australian National University

This paper explores my work with the Yol u elder and scholar, Neparr a Gumbula, to discover the recorded legacy of his family history in public collections worldwide. Having collaborated with Gumbula since 1996, this work spans our investigations into the AIAS documentary film, Djamalbu [sic Djalumbu]; through the stores of state collections in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Paris, Geneva, Paris, London, Washington, Chicago, Berkeley and Cambridge; and into the curation of Gumbula's own exhibition, Makarr-Garma, at the University of Sydney's Macleay Museum in 2009. Through this process, Gumbula devised influential new paradigms for identifying and accessing Yol u heritage materials in line with traditional rights management principles, and was recently recognised for this achievement on receiving a Mander Jones Award for his book, Mali' Buku-Rungamaram: Images of Milingimbi and Surrounds, 1926 1948 (2011).

The Instability of Truth: Aspects of Developing a Specific Indigenous Methodology on Experimental Practice-Led Research

Brenda L Croft, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales.

This title of this paper reflects the speaker's ongoing exploration of practice-led research-in-progress from an intensely personal, immersive, insider/outsider standpoint. My current ARC/PhD research is developing distinct methods of elaborating culturally appropriate and attenuated models for representing a specific Gurindji (Indigenous Australian nation) history, and the contemporary experience for those culturally affiliated with the Gurindji people – whether on customary lands or part of a broad diaspora within one's own country. My research outcomes will include the creation of experimental cross-disciplinary art through practice-led research and theoretical analysis.

In so doing, I propose to incisively intervene in the colonial construction of 'Aboriginality', which continues to have a significant bearing on the nature of self-identification for Indigenous people in Australia. The most appropriate form for intervention, I argue, is an experimental, community-based, aesthetic production. This paper points to a critical need for Indigenous-led, community-based, collaborative art production. It presents work in progress showing how a series of multi-site, multi-media art installations (melding photo-media, audio-visual, archival and digital technology and performance), can be developed to address complex concepts of cultural representation, identity, and time-space mapping, from a specific Gurindji perspective. I will discuss the dynamic and fluid nature of the methodology being undertaken to involve family and community members and specifically, how planned outcomes for the research may be 'owned' and maintained by the community.

This paper will have a specific focus on moving image/video/film/sound and body/performance aspects I am proposing as part of my project, while referencing collaborative work being undertaken with Indigenous peers from within Australia and overseas.

2014

Symposium

University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life



From Managing Cultural Difference to Ordering Ethnicity: A Relation Between Two Museums

Nélia Dias, ISCTE-IUL, Lisbon

The creation in 1937 of the Institut Indochinois pour l'Étude de l'Homme (IIEH) followed a year later by the Musée de l'Homme (Hanoi) were part of a general strategy envisioned by Paul Rivet to establish the Musée de l'Homme (Paris) as the coordinating centre of an institutional network of museums and research institutes operating in different French colonies. Yet and in spite of their common designation, the metropolitan museum differed radically from its colonial counterpart.

One of the main discourses disseminated by the Musée de l'Homme (Paris) was that of "all races being equal but different"; in contrast the Musée de l'Homme (Hanoi) was focused on the diverse ethnic groups under French-ruled Indochina. While the Musée de l'Homme (Paris) by means of its educational and public programs aimed to revise current domestic opinions regarding colonial populations as parts of Greater France, the Musée de l'Homme (Hanoi) was primarily addressed to administrators, tourists, and colonial personnel. Thus, the very term l'homme conveyed distinct meanings: the peoples of the empire (for metropolitan public) and the Extreme-Orient Man (for colonial audiences).

By focusing on these two institutions, my concern is to explore the anthropological projects at home and overseas, how they overlapped and/or differed and which theoretical models were adopted. That physical anthropology was given priority over ethnology at the IIEH whereas the opposite took place in France illustrates the ways in which disciplinary projects can grow distinctively at home and away.

[Title TBA]

Stephen Gilchrist, Power Institute for Fine Arts, Sydney University

Increasingly Australian Indigenous scholars and curators are working in American and European museums and galleries and becoming more involved in decisions regarding the collections management and the development of exhibitions of significant collections acquired through both fieldwork and private collecting throughout the 19th and 20th century. In this panel discussion Gilchrist will present a summary of the collections of Australian Aboriginal art from the Owen and Wagner collection that he curated at the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College. Gilchrist will also discuss his present work as a guest curator of a 2015 Harvard Art Museums exhibition that will be a major survey of traditional bark paintings by Aboriginal artists and on contemporary Australian Aboriginal. This presentation will also include a brief overview Stephens current work is a involving new research undertaken by Narayan Khanekar of Harvard University's Straus Center's analytical laboratory into the methods and uses of traditional binders and pigments in bark paintings from Arnhem Land.

2014

Symposium



University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life

Postcolonial Legacies? On the Emergence of 'Indigenous' Objects and Subjects from Ethnographic Museum Collections

Rodney Harrison, University College London

This paper considers the legacies of late nineteenth and early twentieth century ethnographic museum collections and the shifting governmental rationalities which they helped produce in relation to the administration of colonised peoples. In particular, I explore the emergence of the category of 'indigenous' objects in regimes of museum collection management, and the ways in which this construction of 'indigenous objects' articulated with and facilitated new conceptions of indigenous subject populations in the post war period. While this category emerged largely as a result of increased engagements between museums and source communities and their concerns regarding differentiating storage conditions and access to certain types of objects and information, it is also a category which has had important implications for the administration of Australian Aboriginal populations, a point I explore in relation to the emergence of Australian liberal multiculturalism in the second half of the twentieth century.

Worlds Apart: Transformative Partnerships between Museums, Collections & Source Communities

Michelle Horwood, Victoria University of Wellington

Recent online access to indigenous collections in UK museums has implications for originating communities coming to terms with their newly discovered but geographically remote ancestral heritage. Failure to establish, in tandem, procedures that enable adequate institutional responsiveness to approaches by descendant groups has been the impetus for doctoral research. New Zealand museums have been at the forefront of changes in heritage management that have empowered indigenous communities to control the care of and access to their heritage. In 2001 constitutional changes at Whanganui Regional Museum where a bi-cultural governance structure was adopted, was a reformative process enabling real sharing of authority to accommodate cultural difference. Innovative approaches employed by the Whanganui Regional Museum to ensure Māori engagement in museum policy and programme development over the subsequent decade illustrate this. This paper describes my current doctoral research which uses these experiences to identify new ways whereby geographically remote indigenous communities can enhance and perpetuate relationships with museums holding collections of their ancestral heritage. Affective qualities of objects in the past and present are considered through a case study involving a collection of taonga tūpuna (ancestral heritage) held at the Pitt Rivers Museum in the UK, and their originating community from Whanganui, Ngā Paerangi iwi. Indigenous agency in the collecting transactions and contemporary reconnection with tūpuna (ancestors) are investigated. The practices that create barriers for access to ancestors are articulated through consideration of ontological differences, and overcome through the development of a pragmatic approach to relationship building between indigenous communities and the contemporary guardians of their ancestors.

2014

Symposium



University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life

Native Anthropologists in British Columbia, ca. 1900–50

Ira Jacknis, UC Berkeley

As early as the 1840s, when the Iroquois Ely Parker began his collaboration with Lewis Henry Morgan, Native Americans have played much more active roles in the ethnographic enterprise than the labels of 'informant' or 'consultant' imply. During the late 19th–early 20th centuries, when anthropology was centered in museums, the roles of Natives fell into several types, with varying degrees of agency: informant, field assistant, ethnographer, as well as artist working on commission; and at times, a combination of all of these modes. More critically, the work of Native anthropologists was embedded in complex and highly mediated internal social networks: spatially, according to intra-ethnic relations of kinship, gender, and rank; as well as temporally, through the creation of familial traditions of anthropological enterprise extending over successive generations.

To explore these general issues, I present a case study from the Northwest Coast: three early Native ethnographers active during the first critical period of regional ethnography. While the work of George Hunt (Kwakwaka'wakw, 1854–1933) with Franz Boas may be the best known such collaboration, William Beynon (Tsimshian, 1888–1958) had a similar, although less extensive, relationship with Marius Barbeau. Most interesting of all perhaps was Louis Shotridge (Tlingit, ca. 1882–1937), who alone of this trio was employed as a professional anthropologist and curator (at the University of Pennsylvania Museum). While clearly the non-Native anthropologists played critical roles in these relationships, each of these aboriginal "ethnographers" created a corpus of cultural documentation accordingly to their own personal and cultural motivations.

The examples presented in this talk will call into question simplistic notions of both ethnic purity and colonial exploitation.

'A Work in Progress'

Garry Jones, Australian National University

Following on from recent international research projects such as 'The future of ethnographic Museums' at Pitt Rivers Museum, Australian Aboriginal artists are increasingly becoming aware of and critically engaged with collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tangible cultural heritage. In this presentation Garry Jones will present an overview of his recent participation in the exhibition Vernissage Rams: a history of Aboriginal art held at the Musée d'Aquitaine Bordeaux as well as recent visits to view collections held in museums in Cambridge Massachusetts, Cambridge UK, Oxford UK, Paris and Bordeaux. Jones current research titled "A work in progress" that asks "What does it mean for Aboriginal people today, disconnected from such cultural practice, to 'authenticate' their own lives and their cultural identities through making such objects – once functional objects of material culture, subsequently objects of ethnographic inquiry, and now increasingly contemporary art? Jones most recently exhibited in San Francisco and in Paris is currently completing a PhD in Visual Arts at the Australian National University School of Art. 'A Work in Progress' will be developed towards a final exhibition in 2014/2015.

2014

Symposium

University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life



'The right, right one...': Ethnographic Authority, Agency and the Post-Colonial Museum

Sean Mallon, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

At the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, indigenous peoples are more involved in the interpretation of their cultures than ever before. Pacific Islanders, once considered exotic foreigners, have become part of the nation the museum represents and part of the curatorial staff developing collections and exhibitions. Over the last twenty years, our curatorial work with communities has shed light on how the museum is an important social and cultural resource utilized in different ways by groups and individuals. In this presentation, I survey the kinds of agency that staff and the Pacific communities we work with have exercised in their interactions with and within the national museum. I analyse the successes, challenges and limitations of our agency across a range of activities, reflecting on how the practices of ethnology, anthropology and history influence and are in turn shaped by the cultural politics of the postcolonial museum.

Curatorial Activism, Indigenous Agency and Contemporary Collecting at the Smithsonian c. 1960s/1970s

Kylie Message, Australian National University

This presentation explores the legacy of the history of anthropology and the turn toward practices of contemporary cause-based collecting that occurred in relation to the American Indian rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. I focus specifically on the phenomenon of contemporary cause-based collecting that arose as a result of the engagement between Smithsonian Institution curators and American Indian rights activism. This process was driven both by curators who sought to engage with and document the civil rights movement, and by American Indian groups and individuals who recognised the value of having their causes represented at the Smithsonian. The processes of relationship-building and collecting conspired with a changing socio-political context to lead to new attention to American Indian programming and support for the tribal museums that were also beginning to proliferate through the period as manifestations of agency and activism.

The forms of engagement which I address in this presentation occurred in context of the development of the National Museum of American History (which opened in 1964 as the Smithsonian Museum of History and Technology) and the later development of trans-Smithsonian tribal museum development programs, which were set at a conspicuous (conceptual and political) remove from the National Museum of Natural History. Whilst it was ultimately the latter that led to development of the National Museum of the American Indian, it is clear that the practices of contemporary collecting and engagement with contemporary forms of political activism explored through the work of curators in the Division of Political History and staff at other Smithsonian agencies influenced the National Museum of American Indian's approaches to collection, exhibition development, and outreach with tribal museums.

2014

Symposium



University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life

Taonga and Māori, museums and collecting 1900-1940

Conal McCarthy, Museum & Heritage Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

Recent research on historic ethnographic museums have overturned the idea that native peoples took no part in collecting. However even this revised notion of indigenous agency pales in comparison to the active involvement of Māori people with museums in New Zealand. Employing a theoretical framework that sees museum collections as assemblages of material and social agency, this paper explores how these ideas can be extended by drawing on Andrew Pickering's notion of the 'dance of agency'. It presents three moments in an extraordinary history of Māori engagement with collecting which circle around the Dominion Museum in Wellington. First, in the 1900s director Augustus Hamilton's project to form a national collection of Māori art with the input of Māori politician James Carroll, and the people of Pāpāwai marae; second in the 1920s the collecting of manuscripts, performing arts etc. by Peter Buck (Te Rangihiroa) and others through the Board of Māori Ethnological Research; and third in the 1930s Āpirana Ngata's role in the collection and display of Māori carving in the new Dominion Museum building alongside the work of the School of Māori Arts and Crafts. In doing so, I trace the agency of things as well as people, such as the movements of the war canoe *Teremoe*. With reference to Amiria Salmond's work on taonga, or Māori treasures, I consider how these object-beings acted in the interactions described above and how they continue to do so today, echoed in contemporary developments in Māori museum practices.

Kia Tipu Anō Te Whaihangā: Rebuilding Legacy through Cultural Collaboration

Wayne Ngata, Te Aitanga a Hauiti

Māori individuals and groups have, since the arrival of Cook to Aotearoa-New Zealand in 1769, engaged in varying forms of cultural collaboration to varying degrees through facilitating the collection of artefacts. These artifacts have served a national and international market of ethnographic and anthropological research, interest and economic gain usually to the benefit of non source communities. This paper explores the efforts of one small tribal group, Te Aitanga a Hauiti, of Ūawa-Tolaga Bay on the East Coast of the North Island, to revisit and reclaim the cultural legacy of their people through collaborative digital relationships with institutions within the country and further abroad holding their objects. The projects aim to rebuild the cultural capital of the descendants of those objects, a necessary component for building stable, connected indigenous communities. They seek to bring back to life the indigenous values associated with those objects within their source contexts and as part of the whakapapa (genealogy) of their communities, and thereby re-establish the tenets of their ancient house of learning Te R wheoro as the fundamental platform for community development.