

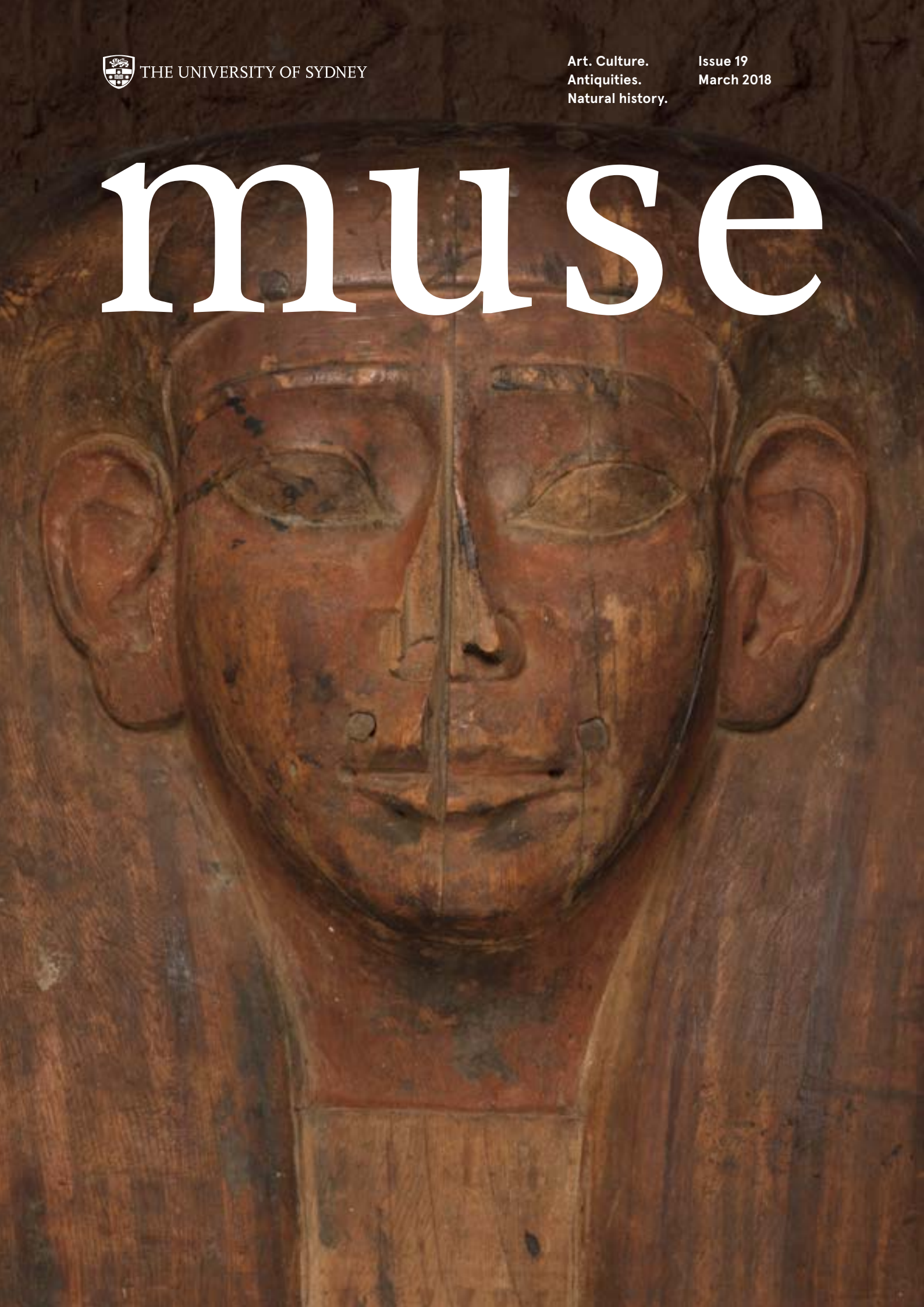


THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Art. Culture.
Antiquities.
Natural history.

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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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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.

Become a fan on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. sydney.edu.au/museums

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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.

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