

Australian

Anthropological

Society

NEWSLETTER



No. 50 (June 1992)

THE SOCIETY

The Australian Anthropological Society was formed in 1973 to 'promote the advancement of anthropology as a professional discipline'. In 1987 the Society was re-structured to establish a two-tiered membership, providing a basis for the professionalisation of the discipline in Australia. The membership of the Society includes most practising anthropologists in this country, with some members overseas in, for example, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Fiji. It also includes a broad representation of persons working in related fields. The Society is incorporated under New South Wales legislation.

Subscriptions fall due on July 1, 1992, and from that date membership fees are as follows

Unsalaries \$10.00

Ordinary members \$40.00

Fellows \$60.00

Applications must be made on the prescribed form, accompanied by a \$5 membership admission fee. Subscriptions to the *Newsletter* only are also available, at \$20 for Institutions, and \$10.00 for Individuals.

Under the new Rules, there are two grades of membership. Anyone who has completed an Honours degree in anthropology or who has equivalent qualifications is eligible to be admitted as an Ordinary Member. Those who have successfully completed a postgraduate research degree in anthropology at a recognized institution, or who have engaged in research, teaching, writing or other professional activities which the Society accepts as being of equivalence to a postgraduate research degree in anthropology, are eligible to be admitted as Fellows of the Society. Further information about membership is available from the Secretary.

The Society's principal academic activity each year is the Annual Conference. Attendance at the Annual Conference is open to all interested persons, whether or not they are members of the AAS, on payment of the conference fee. This year's Annual Conference will be held at Canberra.

Editorial

This is the first issue of the AAS *Newsletter* to be produced and distributed from Perth since 1989. During that time, the format of the *Newsletter* has changed dramatically, and for the better. The new Committee arrangements have made it possible for Society tasks to be split among the different state groupings, reducing the burden on any single department.

The Annual Conference remains the most important element of the Society's operations, requiring the greatest effort and best organisation. This issue contains a call for papers for the eleven sessions proposed so far. The deadline for submission of titles and abstracts to convenors is July 15, and for copies to be submitted by convenors to the programme organizer by July 24. These will be contained in the next issue of the *Newsletter*, to be published at the beginning of September. Registration and accommodation arrangements are also included in this issue.

Deane Fergie reports on the actions of the Executive Committee in objecting to the registration of the proposed Australasian Association of Professional Consulting Anthropologists and Archaeologists.

This issue also contains a draft entry to the Society's proposed *Directory of Members*, to be published in conjunction with the next *Newsletter*. Members are asked to check the details of their entry and insert any additional information. This must be returned to the Hon. Secretary; uncorrected entries will be published as they stand in the *Directory of Members*.

I would like to retain existing Newsletter sections established by the previous Publications Officer, particularly *Keeping in touch: anthropology around Australia*, *New and current research projects*, *Professional appointments*, *Grants and scholarships*, etc. If you have any contributions, please let me have them by fax (09) 380 1062 or on disk (ASCII IBM text files only!)

John E. Stanton

Deadline for the next Newsletter: August 10, 1992

EXECUTIVE ACTION

AAS objects to the incorporation of the Australasian Association of Professional and Consulting Anthropologists and Archaeologists

An advertisement was published in *The Australian* newspaper on February 5 of this year giving notice of an application by Rory O'Connor of Nedlands W.A. on behalf of the Australasian Association of Professional and Consulting Anthropologists and Archaeologists (AACPAA) to incorporate under Western Australian legislation.

On February 28, John Gray (as A.A.S. President) wrote to the W.A. Commissioner for Corporate Affairs noting that 'We are concerned that the proposed association's membership criteria maintain appropriate standards of training and experience for professional anthropological practice'. We requested copies of relevant documents tended in the application for incorporation.

The Office of State Corporate Affairs forwarded us details of the Objects and Qualifications for Membership of the Association on March 19. That letter also advised us that under the Act we were able to request the Commissioner to decline the Incorporation, provided that we submitted such a request, and the reasons for it, within 14 days. In that letter we were provided with the following details of the AAPCAA's rules:

THE OBJECTS OF THE ASSOCIATION

(1) the objects of the Association are:

- (a) to foster and encourage communication and cooperation between professional and consulting anthropologists and archaeologists within those areas where the Association conducts its affairs, viz. the geographical region commonly referred to as Australasia;
- (b) to promote the practical application of the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology in the said areas;
- (c) to promulgate rules aimed at fostering ethical and socially responsible conduct by professional and consulting anthropologists and archaeologists operating in the said areas;
- (d) to offer a forum for its members to express their views regarding the proper conduct of the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology in the said areas;
- (e) subject to rule 5, to promote membership of the Association, with a view to achieving objects (a) to (d).

(2) The property and income of the Association shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects of the Association and no part of that property or income may be paid or otherwise distributed, directly or indirectly, to members, except in good faith in the promotion of these objects.

QUALIFICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSOCIATION

5 (1) Membership of the Association shall be full or associate, as follows:-

(a) full membership:

(i) persons who hold a Honours or Postgraduate Degree in anthropology or archaeology and who have worked for at least twelve months in a professional capacity, other than in a teaching institution;

(ii) persons who hold a degree in anthropology or archaeology and who have worked for at least two years in a professional capacity, other than in a teaching institution;

(iii) persons who have at least five years documented experience in the fields of professional anthropology or archaeology, whilst working under the supervision of a person or persons as defined in 5(a)(i) or 5(a)(ii).

(b) associate membership:

(i) subject to 5(a)(i)—(iii), persons with at least two years documented experience in the fields of professional or consulting anthropology or archaeology;

(ii) persons who have demonstrated a strong commitment to the aims of the Association and who are endorsed by at least two full members.

The Executive Committee of the Australian Anthropological Society held a teleconference meeting on March 30, 1992, to discuss whether the Society should lodge a request that the incorporation be denied. Present as members of the Executive Committee were John Gray (President), Chris Anderson (Vice-President), Deane Fergie (Secretary), Mike Nihill (Treasurer), Nick Peterson (Executive Committee member). The other Executive Committee member, Jim Fox, was away and unable to participate in the link up. He conveyed his sentiments on the issue through Nick Peterson. Also on the line was John Stanton (Publications Officer).

The Executive Committee decided unanimously that it was vital that the A.A.S. respond and request denial of the application. It was also decided that the Executive Committee (through the President and Secretary) would instruct a legal firm to represent us in this matter. It was agreed that the Secretary and President would pursue discussions with office holders of the Anthropological Society of Western Australia Inc. (ASWA) and the Australian Association of Consulting Archaeologists Inc. (AACAA) about engaging the same lawyer to represent us all, and thus sharing the cost of the process.

These discussions were successful and the three associations engaged Marks Healy Sands, Barristers and Solicitors of Perth, to act on our behalf.

In brief, the following objections to the proposed incorporation were presented:-

* The issue of *representation*. The lawyer's submission noted the representativeness of the three associations and questioned whether the AAPCAA has 'authorization from the professions'. It suggested that 'The creation of a new and alternative professional body for archaeologists and anthropologists ... is unnecessary and inappropriate and potentially undermines and trivializes those bodies which have already been established'.

* Objection to *the Objects* of the proposed association revolved generally around the argument that, whilst the objects of the AAPCAA were apparently designed to serve the professions of

anthropology and archaeology 'the formation of the new association would seem to entail the deprofessionalization of anthropological and archaeological practice, as members will not necessarily hold formal qualifications'.

* Objections concerning *criteria for membership* of the proposed association. Here the membership qualifications required by each of the associations was outlined and it was argued that 'The incorporation of an association purporting to represent the interests of professional or consulting anthropologists and archaeologists which *does not* require the *formal training in the discipline* will threaten the maintenance of professional standards and jeopardize the provision of proper professional advice'. This, it was argued, was *against the public interest* (a ground of denial specified in the Act).

* Objection to the *Name of the proposed association*. It was argued that it was against the interests of the professions and the public 'for *unqualified* people to belong to an incorporated association using the term "professional and consulting anthropologists and archaeologists" in its name'. It was also argued that the names of the AAPCAA, the AACAA and the AAS could be confused.

* A number of possible non-compliances with the formal requirements of the Act were also raised.

On April 14, we were advised that our request that the incorporation be declined was denied by the W.A. Commissioner for Corporate Affairs. The Commissioner noted:

The major ground on which you base your request to refuse to incorporate the Association is that to do so would be contrary to the public interest (see section 9(2)(b) of the Act).

With respect, I believe your arguments are flawed in that:

- (a) you equate the interests of your clients with the public interest; and
- (b) you regard incorporation under the Act as in some way granting professional status of the association concerned.

In my opinion neither of these views is correct. The Act cannot be used to create or reinforce professional qualification criteria which have not otherwise been recognized at law.

This advice was not received by us until after the Easter Holiday on Tuesday April 28 1992. Members of the Executive Committee were contacted by fax for advice on whether an appeal to the W.A. Attorney General (allowed for under the Act) should be made by the deadline of April 30. It was not possible to contact two members in the time available; however, the remaining four members of the Executive Committee were in agreement that we should pursue an appeal. That appeal, again with Marks Healy Sands representing AAS, ASWA and AACAA, was made on April 29 1992.

The three substantive grounds for appeal were:

- (1) The name by which the organisation intends to be known is undesirable; Section 8(1)(a)
- (2) The name of the association is likely to mislead the public as to the object or purpose of the association; Section 8(1)(b)
- (3) The incorporation of the association is against the public interest; Section 9(2)(b)

The lawyer argued a number of points in response to the Commissioner's determination, including the fact that "it has been held that the words "Public Interest" and "interests of the Public", can refer to portions of the public and this requirement does not necessitate the matter affecting every part of the public", and cited relevant cases where this has been established at law.

However, we have just been advised by our solicitor that our appeal to the W.A. Attorney General has not been successful. The Attorney General did not elaborate on the reasons for his decision.

On April 28 1992, Marks Healy Sands presented the account for their services in this matter, amounting to \$1,243.50. The Australian Anthropological Society's share of that amount is \$413.50.

Deane Fergie

Secretary

June 11 1992

AAS CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 30 — OCTOBER 2
A.D.HOPE BUILDING,
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

CALL FOR PAPERS

The following sessions have been proposed and offers of papers are invited. Please send titles and abstracts to the convenors listed below.

The deadline for submission of titles and abstracts to convenors is July 15 and for copies to be submitted to the programme organizer, July 24.

Convenors are responsible for collating all the details of their sessions and suggesting an order for the papers. They should also indicate to the programme organizer if they have a preference for a date (September 30, October 1st or October 2), morning, afternoon or both. The final programme with abstracts of papers will appear in the August newsletter.

As indicated in the last *Newsletter*, the Annual General Meeting of the Society is scheduled for Thursday 3.30-6.30 (and so no sessions will be held during that period). The conference dinner is at 7.30 that evening. A meeting of all heads of Departments of Anthropology in Australia is being convened by Nic Peterson for Tuesday, September 29.

Please direct any queries about the programme to Margaret Jolly, Gender Relations Project, ANU GPO Box 4, Canberra ACT 2601, Tel: 06-249-3150; Fax: 06-257-1893

1. Economies as Cultural Systems

Convenors: Jennifer and Paul Alexander

In the general area of economic anthropology, cultural interpretations are often treated as alternatives to economic interpretations. This session will explore the possibility of dissolving this opposition by analysing aspects of economies in 'their own (cultural) terms'. The topic is meant to be read very broadly: papers might range from cultural constructions of 'work', through creations of 'spheres of exchange', to commonsense understandings of 'prices' and 'credit'.

AUSTRALIAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY INC.
NOMINATION FORM

For the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Executive Members (two positions to be filled) and Publications Officer for 1992-93.

Positions on the Executive Committee (all of the above bar the Publications Officer) must be filled by Fellows of the Society.

Nominations must be received by close of business (5.00pm Adelaide time) on Monday July 20 1992 and should be addressed to: The Secretary, Australian Anthropological Society, C/- Department of Anthropology, University of Adelaide, G.P.O. Box 498, Adelaide SA 5001. Fax No. (08) 224 0464.

PROPOSER

I, , hereby nominate
(name) (name)

for election as of the Society.
(specify position)

..... /...../92
(signed) (date)

SECONDER

I, , hereby second the nomination of
(name) (name)

for election as of the Society.
(specify position)

..... /...../92
(signed) (date)

ACCEPTANCE

I, , hereby accept the nomination for election
(name)

as of the Society.
(specify position)

..... /...../...
(signed) (date)

AAS CONFERENCE, CANBERRA

SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 2

A.D.HOPE BUILDING

Preliminary Registration Form

I am coming to the AAS Conference in Canberra Yes No

I enclose a registration fee of \$30 staff..... \$20 students

(Cheques should be made out to the Australian Anthropological Society)

I will need child care for.....children, aged.....

on the days of

Wednesday September 30

Thursday October 1

Friday October 2

I will need accommodation at Burgmann College, at the rate of \$48 a night, or \$38 for all graduate and undergraduate students, including all meals for the nights of:

Tuesday September 29

Wednesday September 30

Thursday October 1

Friday October 2

(Note all accommodation is single room only).

I enclose a deposit of \$50 to secure this. I understand that the remainder is payable on arrival.

I am likely to attend the conference dinner on Thursday October 1 (Cost approximately \$25)

Yes No

I need a vegetarian or other special menu—please specify

Name:

Address::

Tel:

Fax:

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM BY JULY 30 TO ASSIST OUR ORGANISING.

Send titles and abstracts to Jennifer and Paul Alexander, Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Tel: 02-692-2360; Telex 26-169; Fax: 02-692-4203.

2. Art and the Politics of Identity

Convenor: Nicholas Thomas

This session will deal with constructions of identity that are asserted, redefined, and debated in art works of various kinds—paintings, novels, films, theatre. Contributions may address cultural and ethnic identities, or other constructions relating to nations and histories, or gender, sexuality and age. It is expected that most papers will focus on the interpretations of particular works, but more comparative or theoretical contributions are also welcome. In addition to exploring particular texts or performances in their contexts, the session will also explore the questions of 1) whether there can be or should be a distinctively anthropological approach to contemporary art, theatre, cinema, and literature; 2) how mass circulation texts and works might be approached ethnographically; 3) and how anthropological perspectives differ from or engage with approaches in art history and cultural studies.

Please contact or send titles and abstracts to Nicholas Thomas, Department of Prehistory and Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, Australian National University, GPO Box 4, Canberra, ACT 2601. Tel: 06-249-3123; Fax: 06-249-2711

3. Social Theory and the Anthropology of Emotion,

Convenor: Margot Lyon

There is growing intellectual interest in emotion in all the social sciences including anthropology. Yet a significant role for emotion in social life is generally denied or ignored. Anthropology has been quick to take up the study of emotion, but most of the anthropological studies of emotion are cultural constructionist in orientation and thus in the service of cultural description rather than in the development of theory.

The aim of this session is to present papers which use anthropological data to attempt to address the place of emotion in social theory. This might take the form of a purely theoretical paper, or the integration of emotion within a range of current perspectives in cultural anthropology, for example, in psychological anthropology, medical anthropology, biological anthropology, feminist anthropology, or an attempt to integrate current theoretical work on emotion with earlier anthropological accounts of religion, ritual, the arts, music, social structure, kinship, etc. There would seem to be considerable scope for the consideration of the role of the affective dimension in these areas and the implications of such a consideration for anthropological and social theory more generally. Theoretical papers on diverse perspectives in the study of emotions are invited.

Please send title and abstracts (or a copy of the paper) to Margot L. Lyon Department of Prehistory and Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, Australian National University, GPO Box 4, Canberra, ACT 2601. Tel: 06-249-3691; Fax: 06-249-2711

4. The Poetic Power of Place

Convenor: James J. Fox

The purpose of this session is to explore metaphors of place: their critical importance in tracing origins, marking journeys, establishing identities and creating complex evocative landscapes. This session would like to draw together papers from different cultural perspectives to examine a variety of ways in which the naming of place is invoked in social discourse.

Those interested in offering papers in this session should contact and/or send a title and abstract to James J. Fox, Department of Anthropology, RSPacS, ANU, GPO Box 4 Canberra ACT. Tel: 06-249-2162; Fax: 06-257-1893.

5. Space, The Final Frontier: Articulating People, Place and Being

Convenors: Melissa Pearl Helms and Roberta James

Spatial metaphors/representations are pervasive and operate on many different levels and/or many different texts. Sacred place, frontier, threshold, nation, boundary, wilderness, body, out-back, homeland, urban jungle—these and many other space-place designations articulate an imaged geography of a social world. In this session we would like to explore some of the many and varied ways in which people use space and representations of space, to construct and/or articulate their notions of people, place and being.

If you are interested in being part of this session please contact Melissa Pearl Helms 06-248-7029 or Roberta James 06-249-3711 or write to Roberta James, Department of Prehistory and Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, Australian National University, GPO Box 4, Canberra, ACT 2601, Fax: 06-249-2711.

* The following session and the above will most likely be paired in sequence.

6. Gender, Colonialism and Post-Coloniality

Convenor: Margaret Jolly

This session will explore the connections between gender and colonialism and the consequences of this for the present debates about post-coloniality. Themes to be considered might include the ways in which different colonial agents—missionaries, traders, colonial officials, travellers, had an impact on women, on men and/or tried to change the relations between them. Integral to this might be a consideration of the variety of colonial discourses—missionaries' accounts, official reports, travel writing, novels, films and photographs. The gender of the colonizers could also be explored—the masculinist character of empire, the sexual and reproductive relations of colonial regimes, the contested position of white women in the colonies, the class and ethnic character of the models for 'improving' colonized women. We might also examine the centrality of gender contests in anti-colonial and nationalist movements. Finally, we could broach the gender of post-coloniality, as either a claim about the present or as a future hope. Papers are invited which address these or related theoretical problems, ideally through an examination of particular eth-

nographic, textual or visual materials. The regions to be explored are open—but might include the Pacific, South and South East Asia, Africa and the Americas.

Those interested in contributing to this session should contact and/or send a title and abstract to Margaret Jolly, Convenor, Gender Relations Project, RSPacS, ANU, GPO Box 4 Canberra ACT. Tel: 06-249-3150 or 06-249-3146; Fax: 06-257-1893.

7. Australia and New Guinea—Connections and Differences

Convenor: Ian Keen

Readings and conversations with Melanesianist colleagues reveal many similarities as well as telling differences between Australian Aboriginal modes of life and those of PNG. These regions, after all, formed a continuous region for millennia, and direct connections continued after the rise in the sea levels across the Torres Strait. Papers are invited which explore similarities and differences in any aspect of pre-colonial and post-colonial modes of life, or which propose broad regional schemes and syntheses.

Please send titles and abstracts to Ian Keen Department of Prehistory and Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, Australian National University, GPO Box 4, Canberra, ACT 2601. Tel:

06-249-3662; Fax: 06-249-2711.

8. John Anderson and Social Anthropology

Convenors: Kenneth Maddock and Steven Thiele

A. R. Radcliffe-Brown arrived in Sydney in 1926 to take up the country's first chair of anthropology. A year later John Anderson took up his chair of philosophy. The two men shared a keen interest in the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, greatly influenced those around them through personality and force of ideas, and are able to command attention and stir controversy more than fifty years later.

Many of Anderson's ideas would seem capable of development in anthropology and sociology. It is known that many of the anthropologists attracted to Sydney by Radcliffe-Brown spoke to Anderson-dominated societies at Sydney University or had some knowledge of his thinking. Yet the two men appear to have never referred to each other, in print at least. Among other things the session is intended as an opportunity to explore relations between Anderson and his followers and the anthropologists at Sydney University and elsewhere, to consider the bearing of Anderson-type criticism on anthropological theory, and possibly to open up critical perspectives on present-day questions such as Aboriginal Studies and multiculturalism.

Persons interested in taking part in the session are invited to discuss their proposals with one or other of the session convenors.

Kenneth Maddock, Anthropology, School of Behavioural Sciences, Macquarie University, NSW 2109. Tel: 02-805-8095; Fax: 02-805-8062, and Steven Thiele, Sociology, University of New England, Armidale, NSW 2351. Tel: 067-73-2992; Fax: 067-73-3317

9. Ethnoecology, Environment and Social Change

Convenor: Jim Taylor

This is envisaged as a discussion of peasant responses and strategies as local knowledge systems to hegemonic macro-processes of social and political change involving frontier-dwelling communities or ethnic minorities. There may be participants interested in responses to planned change in patterns of local leadership and domestic organisation, or in politico-environmental issues such as community forests, state and capital in the countryside, indigenous resource management and control.

Please contact or send titles and abstracts to Jim Taylor Department of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Perth, WA 6009, Tel: 09-380-3997; Fax: 09-380-1062.

10. The Museum's Mirror: Race, Gender and Nature in Australia

Convenor: Julie Marcus

Debates about the role, function and nature of the museum are now widespread. This session invites an exploration of the central issues of representation, difference and history in the context of Australian nationalism and the growth of museums in Australia. Papers concerned with material culture, exhibitions and collecting that explore relations of gender, sexuality, nature and evolution are particularly welcome.

Those interested in contributing to this session should contact and/or send titles and abstracts to Julie Marcus, PO Box 434, Civic Square, Canberra ACT, 2608, Tel: 06-241-1063; Fax: 06-242-2123.

11. The Politics of Representation and the Representation of Politics—with particular reference to Aboriginal Australia.

Convenor: Gillian Cowlshaw

This session grew out of the resistance to attempts by myself and others to replace the social pathology model of contemporary Aboriginal culture with a more theoretically and politically productive one, and one that can reflect diversity and dynamism. In some cases it appears that the critics want to continue the search for cultural continuities; in others, they appear worried about the political implications of concepts like 'cultural resistance' or 'oppositional culture'. An assessment of the way notions of resistance, opposition and accommodation, and the politics of culture among colonised peoples in general are being theorized in Australia in the 90s seems timely. Questions about the political nature of the debate around scholarly research into matters concerning Aborigines and others are also relevant. Broadly, papers on two intertwined issues are invited: first, papers that explore the complexity of responses to colonisation and the racist dimension of colonial culture; and second, papers that address the political meaning of the work of anthropologists, especially in relation to particular analyses and specific contemporary issues.

Those interested in contributing to this session should contact Gillian Cowlshaw, PO Box 213, Camperdown NSW, 2050 Tel: 02-519-2936; Fax: 02-519-5463

ACCOMMODATION AT AAS

PLEASE BOOK NOW!

Please note that accommodation during this period in Canberra is very tight.

We have booked fifty-five single rooms at Burgmann College on the ANU campus, at the very low rates of \$48 a night full board (including all meals) and \$38 for graduate and undergraduate students. Please fill in the form attached at the centre of this issue of the *Newsletter* and book early.

If there are any questions about bookings or facilities, please phone 06-249-3076. All other accommodation on campus—University House, Liversidge Court Apartments and other colleges—are booked out because of a range of other conferences being held in that week. In case you need double or triple accommodation or want something more luxurious we include names, telephone numbers and tariffs of several other hotels, but ask that you contact them directly. We are handling block bookings for Burgmann College only.

**Any further enquiries about accommodation to Nicholas Peterson 06-249-4727;
Fax: 06-249-2711.**

OTHER ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE

Key:

S= single, D= double, T= twin

Rates: per room, unless stated otherwise

Prices: per group (gr) or individual (indiv) booking

Note: this information was correct at the time of going to press.

The Hyatt Hotel Canberra

Commonwealth Ave, Barton, Telephone 270 1234.

Waiting list for 29 + 30/9

S/D/T \$170 gr; \$190 indiv (super-saver package)

Canberra Rex Hotel

Nourthbourne Ave, Braddon, Telephone 248 5311

avail 29,30/9 + 1/10

S/D/T \$75

Capital Parkroyal Hotel

1 Binara St, Canberra City, Telephone 247 8999

avail 29 + 30/9

\$225; \$148 gr (conf gr of min 5)

Oakford Executive apartments

Kingston Gardens

10 Howitt St, Kingston, Telephone 239 0500

exec apts w. 1 or 2 BR

avail 29/9-1/10 incl.

1BR (1 QS bed = 2 pers) \$106

2BR (1 QS + 2 sing. beds) \$140

Lakeside Hotel

London Circuit, Canberra City, Telephone 247 6244,

Fax 292 6309

avail 29 + 30/9

\$99 (gvmt rate for conf. participants)

City Motor Inn (belongs to the Capital Hotel)

74 Northbourne Ave, Canberra City, Telephone 249 6911

D \$89; for D + 1 extra pers. + \$10

Kythera Motel

100 Northbourne Ave, Canberra City, Telephone 248 8611

avail 29,30/9 + 1/10

S/D/T \$73

University of Virginia Commonwealth Centre
for Literary and Cultural Exchange
Spring 1992 Seminar:

**Educational Forces Outside the Academy:
Museums, Galleries and Historic Preservations**

Seminar Leaders: Richard Handler (Anthropology) and Roger Stein (Art History), University of Virginia.

During the past decade, critical interest in museums has grown among scholars in several fields, including American studies, anthropology, archaeology, art history, cultural studies, history, literature, and museology itself. This growing interest is a logical accompaniment to the ongoing analysis and critique of 'postmodern' social phenomena—in particular, of the pervasive objectification and commodification of all aspects of human culture which seems to be a hallmark of the present state of social life.

The museum is a central institutional locus of cultural objectification and commodification. Museums often define themselves as conservers of cultural treasures, objects and spaces. However, critical analysts (both within and outside museums) point out that when museums collect and display particular objects, they not only 'conserve' value, they create it—that is, they engage in social practices which help to establish what the public comes to see as being valuable. They thereby teach their audiences, first, to value (culturally and pecuniarily) certain objects while overlooking others and, second, to imagine value itself as being quintessentially 'conserved' in material things. Moreover, museums deploy objects in allegorical displays intended to depict historical progressions, ethnic and national identities, or cultural periods and styles. Thus museums teach audiences to imagine social life in objectified terms so that, for example, it comes to seem normal to understand ethnic identity or cultural process in terms of particular constellations of objects.

Given the role that museums play in the construction of social values, it is not surprising that they are deeply implicated in the class structures of modern societies. Museums are 'high-cultural' institutions which have traditionally been established, funded, patronized and managed by financial and intellectual elites. As such, museums have exercised significant—perhaps 'hegemonic'—influence in the formation of public tastes and values. Moreover, museums legitimate status hierarchies both within particular societies and with reference to 'the world system'. Thus art museums tend to distinguish our own 'high culture' from more 'popular' forms deemed less worthy; natural history museums, and science museums as well, rank all of humankind, separating 'primitive' from 'civilized' peoples according to their 'possession' of certain kinds of technical knowledge; and history museums often present what are imagined to be more primitive forms of the present social order. In all these cases, particular societies or social classes are depicted and then evaluated in terms of their apparent possession of culture, imagined as collections of objects.

However, museums can also be used to context established patterns of value. What might be called oppositional museums have become more prominent in the past two decades. In these cases, museums have been established to present the viewpoints of people and groups who feel themselves to be excluded from the mainstream of society and, consequently, unrepresented in mainstream museums. These latter are themselves more attuned to the political presence and cultural needs of diverse audiences. Thus mainstream museums are revising established programmes and mounting new exhibits in an attempt to represent the multicultural diversity of the larger society.

The legitimation, and sometimes challenging, of status hierarchies by museums is not unrelated to their more explicitly recognised educative functions in mass societies. Museums have typically experienced tensions between, on the one hand, their patronage of elite values and social activities and, on the other hand, their perceived duties to educate the mass public. Moreover, museums are also torn between educating the public and entertaining it. The relationship between education and entertainment in the museum has changed during the 20th century as the influence of philanthropic elites has waned while corporate sponsorship and bureaucratic organisation have grown. Today museums find themselves squarely in the mass-entertainment and tourism market. As they compete in these markets to survive, they sometimes find their traditional educational agendas compromised or inadequate.

As a genre, whether educational or recreational, the museum works with objects and spaces. though there is a growing body of research on 'visual learning', museums continue to evaluate their educational work with reference to print-based media. The tension between print-based and object-based learning often surfaces in discussions of museum labelling practices; museum professionals resist overly elaborate labelling which might turn exhibitions into 'books on walls', but they also know that inadequate labelling can lead to audience bewilderment. Questions about labelling practices are part of a larger discussion about the very nature of the exhibition as a medium, and about the relationship between exhibitions, permanent collections and the access that diverse audiences have to both.

Courtesy of Michael Roberts