



AMRA Newsletter

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN ROCK ART RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (AURA) INC.

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Dampier rock art exhibition in Melbourne 4 to 12 October 2005

The travelling exhibition *Visions of the past: the world's most endangered rock art* is shortly to be shown in Melbourne for the first time. It will be staged in the

**Pastoral Centre,
Saint Francis,
corner Elizabeth and Lonsdale Streets
(opposite Myers) Melbourne City**

from Tuesday, 4 October, to Wednesday, 12 October 2005.

The opening will be at 5 p.m. on 4 October, and will be addressed by Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith, a founding member of AURA.

This is a free exhibition, it will be open for the public every weekday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on the Sunday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. It will be closed on Saturday.

The Dampier rock art exhibition provides an overview of one of the world's most impressive rock art concentrations, and its largest. It details the plight of this huge cultural monument, which includes also Australia's largest collection of stone arrangements. The Dampier cultural precinct is under severe threat from continuing expansion of a petrochemical industrial complex that could easily be relocated to one of hundreds of alternative sites. The purpose of the exhibition is to introduce the great value of this unparalleled monument, and to raise public awareness of its gradual destruction by badly planned development and by acidic emissions of the growing petrochemical industry. The exhibition is the work of AURA Editor and Secretary Robert G. Bednarik, and has been assembled in consultation with the principal traditional owners of the monument, the Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo people. It will be attended by AURA Treasurer and exhibition curator Elfriede Bednarik.

The exhibition was premiered a few months ago near the actual sites of the rock art, at the Walkington Theatre in Karratha, Western Australia, and has since been shown in Port Hedland as well. In Karratha it has prompted the es-

tablishment of a local Rock Art Support Group, enthusiastically led by the Chairman of the Karratha and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Gary Slee.

Readers able to come to Melbourne CBD in early October are cordially invited to view the exhibition, which is highly informative and worthwhile.



Cairns AURA Inter-Congress Symposium

The 2005 AURA Inter-Congress Symposium was very successfully held at the Cairns Colonial Club Resort from 31 August to 1 September. Like the recent symposium in Hamilton, Victoria, it was a relatively small but particularly pleasant affair, in this case made all the more enjoyable by a superb venue. The Colonial Club is an extensive establishment set in a lush tropical environment of 4.5 hectares of greenery, with lagoon swimming pools, restaurants, bars and every possible convenience. This unique green setting and the traditional architecture provide the conference centre with a distinctive aura of tranquillity. Lunches and teas were provided to us, and the event unfolded like clockwork.

Lectures were not capped by rigid times and constructive debate was keenly encouraged. This also contributed to a congenial atmosphere and leisurely learning experience for all.

The event was opened by local Indigenous Custodian George Skeene who gave the customary *Welcome to Country*. One other presentation was also given by a TO, Nugulwarra Elder Wilfred Gordon (Cooktown region), who invited delegates to his land and led them to rock art sites after the conference.

The lectures presented a kaleidoscope of the most recent developments in the field. Ben Gunn addressed Eastern Arrernte (central Australia) rock art and land tenure, Robert Bednarik summarised the trend of standardisation of the discipline over the past two decades. A polished and

very thought-provoking presentation by Yann-Pierre Montelle examined the fundamental issues of the nexus between rock art, naturalised epistemology and human models of reality. This was followed by Caryll Sefton's paper of red ochre drawings in the region she has so long focused on, the Woronora Plateau of New South Wales.

Two interesting papers addressing aspects of the shamanistic interpretation of rock art were given by John Clegg and Margaret Bullen respectively. John very effectively tested this model by reference to 'culture hero' petroglyphs on Sydney sandstone, and Margaret expertly dismantled several of the academic edifices about trance, trance positions and trance effects. It is most reassuring to see that Australian rock art research still remains entirely free of the shaman meme, and these papers showed once again how useful a little scepticism can be.

In contrast to all previous Inter-Congress Symposia, which were attended almost entirely by Australians, this time there were delegates of several other countries present, including four from the U.S.A., and others from Switzerland, United Kingdom and New Zealand. The only presentation specifically about overseas rock art, however, was given by an Australian, Fred Hardtke, who reported his fascinating work with the petroglyphs of Dakhla Oasis in the Western Desert of Egypt.

Julie Drew presented her studies of the relationships of women in central Australia with the rock art sites on their tribal lands, showing also some film clips. Graeme Ward



and Mark Crocombe reported their work with the rock art of the Wadey-Fitzmarice region of Northern Territory, which is located south of Darwin. Graeme gave a second paper, addressing the cultural significances of heritage places and cultural tourism in the very same region. Of particular value to the participants was a practical demonstration of digital colour management by Robert Mark, one of the pioneers of the rock art applications of this much-

needed technology.

The Symposium was followed by several days of field trips, which besides the guided Cooktown tour included a magnificent field trip to the Chillagoe limestone region led by Symposium Co-Chair John Campbell, as well as trips to Cape York Peninsula sites.

Robert G. Bednarik

Cave art hoax at British Museum

Fake pre-Historic rock art of a caveman with a shopping trolley has been hung on the walls of the British Museum. The rock was put there by art prankster Banksy, who has previously put works in galleries in London and New York. A British Museum spokeswoman said they were “seeing the lighter side of it”. She said it went unnoticed for one or two days but Banksy said three days. Banksy also hung a sign saying the cave art showed “early man venturing towards the out-of-town hunting grounds”. It read:

This finely preserved example of primitive art dates from the Post-Catatanic era. The artist responsible is known to have created a substantial body of work across South East of England under the moniker Banksymus Maximus but little else is known about him. Most art of this type has unfortunately not survived. The majority is destroyed by zealous municipal officials who fail to recognise the artistic merit and historical value of daubing on walls.

Banksy is best known as a graffiti artist who has attracted a cult following for stencilled designs that satirise authority and modern society. He hung his own art in the Tate Britain in London in October 2003, which was not noticed until it fell to the ground, and has done the same in four New York galleries.

The British Museum praised the way his rock was hung and the style of the sign, which was “very similar” to their own design. A spokesperson for Banksy said he sneaked the work into the museum on Monday and it was found on Wednesday. He ran a competition on his website for fans to have their photographs taken with the rock, offering a shopping trolley as a prize.

A British Museum spokeswoman said: “We’re reasonably confident that it hadn’t been up for that long, maybe a couple of days. It looked very much in keeping with the other exhibits, the explanatory text was quite similar.” It is now being exhibited at Banksy’s new show, *Outside Institute*. It will have a sign saying it is “on loan from the British Museum”.

The British Museum spokesperson said they were expecting it back when *Outside Institute* ends in June. “He has said to us that we can keep it,” she said. “We have loaned the rock to Banksy but we are still in the process of deciding what to do with it.”



Banksy's handiwork.

International conference report

Painted and carved animals: from shape to sign

Animals in the post-Palaeolithic graphic expressions in the western Mediterranean area
Nice, Carcès, Tourves, Le Val (France), 16 to 18 July 2005

The Anthropological Laboratory of the Nice Sophia Antipolis University, under the aegis of Philippe Hameau and with the IFRAO auspices have assembled almost thirty rock art scholars to debate the theme of the post-glacial animal figures in rock art. They were Iddir Amara, Algeria; Françoise Ballet, France; Julian Bécares Pérez, Spain; Alain Bénard, France; André Blain, Switzerland; Giuseppe Brunod, Italy; Pierre Campmajo, France; Georges

Dimitriadis, Greece; Philippe Hameau, France; Nathalie Magnardi, France; Christian Montemat, France; Albert Painaud, Spain; Henri Pellegrini, France; Laurance Remacle, Belgium; Alain Rodrigue, Morocco; Jose Royo Lasarte, Spain; Dario Seglie, Italy; François Soleilhavoup, France. The Conference Scientific Committee comprised: Philippe Hameau and Joël Candau, Nice Sophia Antipolis University, France; Jean Courtin, CNRS, France; Albert

Painaud, Museum of Huesca, Spain; and Dario Seglie, Museum of Pinerolo, Polytechnic of Turin, IFRAO, Italy.

The main aims of the conference were to analyse the real or symbolic relationship between human and non-human beings present in man's environment or in his mind: foxes and birds in the early Neolithic of the Near East; emblematic giraffes and wild beasts in northern Africa; ibexes and deer in the Alps and in the Paris Basin, or in the big rockshelters in the Iberian Peninsula; riding horses in the Pyrenean linear art; harnessed cattle of the Bronze Age; cocks on church walls, rams and goats carved by the shepherds on the Mount Bego slabs, etc.

Many sites of this cultural heritage are endangered.

During the last session, a motion was unanimously adopted by the delegates with the aim of soliciting the authorities to establish protection for the Eissartène rockshelter, and for rock art in general.

Two field trips were undertaken to Neolithic schematic painting sites in southern France: the central caves in the high Carami Valley (Tourves), with an iconography located in a crack formed by the collapse of the rock substratum, and the A shelter of Eissartènes (Le Val), with at least three pictorial periods represented on a central panel 16 m long.

Philippe Hameau and Dario Seglie

Please visit the Save the Dampier Rock Art site at
<http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/dampier/web/index.html>
 and sign the Dampier Petition. Thank you!

AURA Treasurer's financial statement 2004/2005

ELFRIEDE BEDNARIK

Balance in hand on 30 June 2004: \$12,188.91

INCOME:		EXPENDITURES:	
Sales of books	618.14	Postage	189.20
Bank interest	441.63	Business Affairs Registration	86.20
Cairns registrations	1690.00	Subscriptions	45.00
		Telephone and Faxes	83.50
		Stationery	55.48
		Bank and merchant account fees	120.15
		Repairs (digital camera)	190.00
		Deposit, Cairns conference venue	1002.50
		Donation to RASI	300.00
TOTAL	2749.77	TOTAL	2072.03

Balance in hand on 30 June 2005: \$12,866.65

AURA Newsletter

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