



## GHOSTLY AESTHETICS - LOCALISING SUNLIT NOIR

Monday 14 October 2019 | 9.30 am – 3.45 pm  
RD Watt, Seminar Room 203  
RD Watt Building, Science Rd, University of Sydney



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

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Sydney  
Environment  
Institute

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*Some internal compass will just unconsciously follow that trail of breadcrumbs and before you know it you'll be snug up in your bed and dreaming once again ...Dreaming of other homes you once made. Other spots, other places, other nests. Remember the feeling? The Light. The smell. The unnameable thing that turns a simple set of coordinates into some psychic shelter rooted deep inside of you.  
How will you find your way home?  
How will you know it once you're there?*

- **Geoff Soebelle (Creator/Performer) - 'Home'**

The workshop aims to unpack, reshape and reimagine our 'home' by looking beyond the literal – beyond the rooflines, the bricks, the fences and lawns. Using concepts of sunlit noir as a scaffolding this group of academics, artists and practitioners will explore home, as place and landscape in order to arrive at our own local aesthetic expression and of what sunlit noir means in an Australian context.

The outcomes of this workshop will contribute to the staging and lighting design concepts in the theatrical production of 'the foul of the air'.

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9.30 – 10.00	Welcome, Michelle St Anne, Sydney Environment Institute Introduction of the 'Sites of Violence' project
10.00 – 11.30	<u>Session 1 KEYNOTE: Presence and Absence in Film Noir: Space, Light, Environment</u>  Bruce Isaacs, Department of Art History <i>Includes film screening and discussion time</i> Discussant: Brian Joyce, University of Newcastle
11.30 – 12.00	Morning Tea

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12.00 – 1.30	<u>Session 2: Sounding Landscape</u> Heather Shannon, Sydney Conservatorium of Music Genevieve Campbell, Sydney Environment Institute Discussant: Damien Ricketson, Sydney Conservatorium of Music
1.30 – 2.15	Lunch

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2.15 – 3.45	<u>Session 3: Hurting Spaces</u> Chris L Smith, Sydney School of Architecture Carolyn McKay, Sydney Law School Discussant: Megan MacKenzie, Government and International Relations
3.45 – 5.00	<u>Session 4: Capturing Sunlit Noir</u> Facilitated Michelle St Anne, Sydney Environment Institute Event Close   Vino at the Forest Lodge Hotel

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### Abstracts (in order of appearance)

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#### Presence and Absence in Film Noir: Space, Light, Environment

Bruce Isaacs, Department of Art History

One of Hollywood's great genres – *film noir* – emerged in the early 1940s and bookends the second world war. As Paul Schrader has argued, *noir* remains an unwieldy cinematic signifier. The classical *noir* cinema lives somewhere between genre and mode, form and style. This paper attempts to use the aesthetic modality of the *noir* film to consider what I call spatial 'presence' and 'absence' within cinematic environments. I begin with the famous conclusion to Orson Welles's *noir* masterpiece, *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947) to locate the *noir* spatial and temporal environment, with a particular focus on light and shade. I then attempt to use this framework to discuss presence and absence within the landscape image of Australian cinema: *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Peter Weir, 1975), *Wake in Fright* (Kotcheff, 1971), and Warwick Thornton's *Samson and Delilah* (2010).

**Dr Bruce Isaacs** is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of Sydney. His work examines the evolution of film technologies and their relationship to the development of film style. He has published widely within the field, and is the author of *The Orientation of Future Cinema: Technology, Aesthetics, Spectacle* (Bloomsbury, 2013) and *The Art of Pure Cinema: Hitchcock and His Imitators* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming February 2020).

DISCUSSANT: Brian Joyce

**Brian Joyce** is a Lecturer/Tutor at the University of Newcastle, in Creative and Performing Arts, specializing in contemporary performance, site specific performance, and acting. With Dr. Gillian Arrighi, he initiated interdisciplinary research into Simulation Role-Play with the disciplines of Pharmacy, Medicine and Occupational Therapy exploring actor training and role play design. He is an award-winning Artistic Director, writer, actor, and community cultural development worker with particular interests in Applied Theatre, Site and Indigenous performance. He is currently Writer/Co-Producer for Ngarrama Productions, an Aboriginal performance group based in Newcastle.

#### Sounds of the Australian Gothic

Heather Shannon, Sydney Conservatorium of Music

Australia had, and still has unique variations on the gothic form. Themes of the Australian gothic such as melancholy and the uncanny, are employed to examine particularly difficult issues of Australia's violent colonial past and challenge the predominant imperial perspective. Using the Australian landscape as a backdrop, the gothic imbues Australian creative output with unique aesthetic sensibilities.

**Heather Shannon** is best known for her work as one quarter of internationally renowned independent rock band, The Jezabels. Their music has been described as Bronte-esque gothic and melodramatic. They have sold over 300,000 albums worldwide and have performed in venues such as The Sydney Opera House, The O2 Arena (London), Webster Hall (New York) and at festivals such as Lollapalooza (Chicago), and Glastonbury (UK).

Over the last few years Heather has moved into other areas of composition. She scored her second Feature Film in 2018 and has had orchestral works performed in Australia by the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, the Australian Chamber Orchestra and The Metropolitan Orchestra. Heather is currently researching the Australian gothic as part of her Masters degree in Composition at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

### What happens when the land doesn't sing anymore?

Genevieve Campbell, Sydney Conservatorium of Music & Sydney Environment Institute

Try to imagine that you live within a hundred paces from where you were born; where your mother and grandmother were born. Now imagine you've never moved away, nor have the immediate peers you had as a child and they are still the people you spend all of each day with. All of your grandparents as far back as beyond remembering were born and lived there too. Now imagine that everyone – the not yet born, the living and the now passed – all exist now, just in different layers of time and place. The voices of ancestors reply from the trees when you call out, and a father sings to his unborn to invite them to the world. This is how Tiwi people see their world. All of this has always been and always is – here, now, with a timeless certainty. Songs thread all of this together and are the conduit between the people and the land, the home and the ancestors. I will explain some of this as best I can, and also ask what do they do when the land – the home where one's past, present and future are now - is violated and is no longer a timeless certainty?

**Dr Genevieve Campbell** is a 2019 University Fellow at the Sydney Environment Institute and Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Since 1988 she has played horn in many of the major Music Theatre shows in town plus everything from Musica Viva to Australian Idol, Opera Australia to the Wangarratta Jazz Festival and toured with Anthony Warlow, Barbra Streisand, Michael Crawford and (her favourite!) Shirley Bassey. Ngarukuruwala and her close involvement in the discovery and repatriation to the Tiwi islands of archived song recordings led her to complete a PhD, working with elders to document and preserve Tiwi song language and melody.

Her current focus is on documenting endangered song sets and the creation of new work centred around archival recordings of passed Tiwi composers and the words, knowledge and voices of current Tiwi Elders and young people.

2019 Sydney University Fellow. Research Project title: The interconnection between Tiwi song culture and death in the context of artistic creativity, cultural maintenance and community health.

DISCUSSANT: Damien Ricketson

The music of Sydney-based composer **Dr Damien Ricketson** is characterised by exotic sound-worlds, novel forms and is multisensory in nature. Major works have featured in the Melbourne and Sydney Festivals and been awarded 'Instrumental Work of the Year' in the Art Music Awards (2015). Ricketson studied with Dutch composer Louis Andriessen and has a PhD from the University of Sydney. Ricketson co-founded, and

for 20 years was Co-Artistic Director of the arts organisation Ensemble Offspring. He is currently the Program Leader of Composition and Music Technology at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. His opera *The Howling Girls* (2018), composed in collaboration with director Adena Jacobs, was recently premiered by Sydney Chamber Opera and Carriageworks.

### The Architecture of Psychopathia Sexualis

Chris L. Smith, Sydney School of Architecture

The libido which had swarmed and swooned through art and literature since Ovid would become a very different beast when made the subject of late 19<sup>th</sup> century psychiatry. The fixation would shift from explorations of sexual expression toward the interrogation of sexual deviance and violence. The Austro-German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing would publish the first thorough attempt to categorise sexual deviance. The title of his major work, with its sub and then sub-sub-headings, says it all: *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study* (1886). Krafft-Ebing is clear on the intent of the book: 'The object of this treatise is merely to record the various psycho-pathological manifestations of sexual life in man and to reduce them to their lawful conditions.'<sup>[i]</sup> The anomalies identified by Krafft-Ebing tend to fall into gender categories and then into either congenital or acquired categories. Congenital anomalies relate to the 'taint' of the family and hereditary factors and were regarded as 'incurable'. Acquired versions of the anomaly relate to the context in which one finds oneself. For Krafft-Ebing '[e]thical surroundings are necessary in order to elevate love to its true and pure form, but, notwithstanding, sensuality will ever remain its principal basis.'<sup>[ii]</sup> Sensuality is framed as the fluid matter of sexuality and it is the context that gives rise to perversions of it. Nations, states, geographies, the urban, architectural (homes and houses) and architectural elements (windows and doors) are implicated. They might 'elevate love' or likewise have it descend toward violent excesses. This paper will explore the role of architecture, homes and houses in the construction of *Psychopathia Sexualis*.

**Dr Chris L. Smith** is the Associate Professor in Architectural Design and Technê in the Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning at the University of Sydney and has lectured internationally. His research, over the last 17 years, has focused on the nexus of architecture and the body. He locates this nexus between architectural theory, philosophy, and the biosciences and has published on architectural theory and its dynamic relation with body theory, poststructural philosophy (particularly the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari) and technologies of the body.

He has also published on the complex intersections of architecture, the biosciences, medical humanities, and translational and biomedicine. Chris is the co-editor of *Architecture in the Space of Flows* (Routledge, 2012), *Laboratory Lifestyles: The Construction of Scientific Fictions* (MIT Press, 2019); and the author of *Bare Architecture: a schizoanalysis* (Bloomsbury, 2017) and co-author of *LabOratory: Speaking of the Architecture of Science* (MIT Press, [Oct 2019]). Chris is currently working on two books: *Architecture After Deleuze*, and *Libidinal Architecture*.

### Who's been sleeping in my bed? Cheap motel rooms and transgression.

Carolyn McKay, University of Sydney Law School

Book chapter for *Ghost Criminology*, edited by Michael Fiddler, Theo Kindynis and Travis Linnemann, forthcoming 2020 New York University Press.

The motel room is well known as a site for overt romance and covert erotic encounters, but there is a much darker side. This paper investigates the motel room as a space of intimacy, privacy and anonymity yet simultaneously a site previously shared by strangers and criminal transgressions.

Research of criminal case law revealed judicial commentary of banal and unremarkable motel rooms implicated in a series of supernatural-inspired aggravated sexual assaults:

Photographs of rooms at each place were before the jury (Exhibits M and N). It is clear that the rooms were modest in both size and furnishings in relatively inexpensive establishments. They were hardly suites in a five star hotel. (*FP v R* [2012] NSWCCA 182, R A Hulme J at [67])

Intrigued by such descriptions, I have been lured into a project of dark tourism and hauntology (Hutchings 1999; Lennon and Foley 2000; Derrida 2006; Linnemann 2015; Fiddler 2018; Kindynis 2017, 2019), sleeping in a selection of crime scene motels to textually and visually document the sensorial attributes. Through a theoretical, embodied and visual arts informed process, this research examines the generic motel room as a highly sexualized space with the bed as central motif. In relation to specific crime scene motels, these are spaces filled with accretions of human experience that remain charged with the ghosts of sexual violence.

**Dr Carolyn McKay** is a Lecturer in Law at the University of Sydney Law School where she teaches Criminal Law and Civil & Criminal Procedure. She is recognised for her research into technologies in justice, specifically her empirical research of prisoners' experiences of accessing justice from a custodial situation by audio visual links. Her qualitative study based on one-to-one interviews with prisoners was the basis for her recently published research monograph, *The Pixelated Prisoner: Prison video links, court 'appearance' and the justice matrix* (2018) Routledge. Carolyn also has a visual arts practice through which she responds to her criminal justice research: <http://www.carolynmckay.com/>

DISCUSSANT: Megan MacKenzie

Professor **Megan MacKenzie's** research bridges feminist international relations, critical security studies and development studies. Her book, *Female Soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, Security, and Post-Conflict Development* examines women's participation in the 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone and the challenges and insecurities they faced during the post-conflict reintegration process. MacKenzie is also working on a collaborative project focused on the impacts of transitional justice mechanisms. In particular, the project looks at the long-term effects of the truth and reconciliation commission in Sierra Leone and the extent to which it achieved its lofty objectives.

CONVENOR

**Michelle St Anne** is the Deputy Director the Sydney Environment Institute. She oversees the operation of the Institute as well as curates a strategic and dynamic outreach programme.

Outside of SEI, Michelle is the Artistic Director and founder of the award winning Sydney based theatre company [The Living Room Theatre](#). She has produced and written over 22 ambitious new works which has had seasons in Sydney and Melbourne. In 2018 she became an Honorary Associate with the School of Theatre and Performance Studies, School of Literature, Art and Media, The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, at the University of Sydney. Her current work in development '[the foul of the air](#)' forms part of the [Sites of Violence](#) research project

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<sup>[1]</sup> Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, xxi-xxii.

<sup>[2]</sup> Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 8.