

Notre Dame

Nulungu Talking Heads Seminar Series



A New Partnership, William Roe, 1994

A Changing Landscape of Art: applying GIS to understand spatio-temporal variability in the rock art of Australia's East Kimberley.

Wednesday 30 August 2017

12:30 – 1:30pm

Stafford Smith

By its nature rock art is fixed in a unique topographic location from the time of its creation until it fades away. I am interested in why rock art is positioned where it is and what this means about the role of art production in society. Given the long duration since the time of production of some Kimberley rock art, the spatial distribution as we see it today has likely been heavily influenced by preservation factors, but by allowing for this we can understand its positioning as resulting from a combination of human and natural agency in terms of conscious site selection as well as being constrained by an especially dynamic environment.

The spatial distribution of a body of rock art is interesting in itself: it is a marker of past use of the landscape. But the main strength of an archaeological approach lies in what we can learn from how the spatial distribution changes over time. How does spatial change act as a proxy for understanding larger socio-environmental change over time? To this end I hope to compare the placement of motifs from two art phases: Gwion art, and Wandjina. Whilst dating is still uncertain, most Gwion art appears to have been produced during the Pleistocene (prior to about twelve thousand years ago). Wandjina art production appears to begin during the mid-Holocene (about five thousand years ago), and is a continuing tradition.

I am a new doctoral candidate at UWA and my research is being carried out as part of the Kimberley Visions ARC Linkage Project (150100490). I will participate in 3 seasons of fieldwork recording the locations and attributes of rock art sites in conjunction with Balangarra Traditional Owners and other project partners. Other project partners will also contribute location information of rock art sites. To organise, visualise, and analyse this large dataset, I will be using a Geographical Information Systems approach. I am presenting this research early in my candidature, and would like to invite comment from a Kimberley perspective before finalising my research proposal.



Nulungu
Research Institute
The University of Notre Dame Australia

Venue: The University of Notre Dame Australia

Kailis Room in the Library, 88 Guy Street, Broome

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