



4. Place and Airspace

How have aerial perspectives transformed life on the ground? This session brings together views from urban planning, law and art to explore how communities have mobilized concepts of air space and Country to impact cultural, social and legal outcomes.

Session Convenor: Tracy Ireland

1. Big Sky Canberra

Shane Breyard- School of History, Australian National University

This presentation will explore Canberra's development as a uniquely twentieth century city through a fresh focus on the contribution of aerial photography and the moving image.

Concepts of the aerial view and 'a big sky' are invoked in the earliest descriptions of Canberra remain central to how the city is perceived in the national imagination, and to its representation across the globe.

The exciting advances in aeroplane technology of the early twentieth century transformed the way Australians came to experience distance, landscape and urban life by the century's end.

The use of aerial photography in town planning, in military applications, and in promotional imagery, was particularly influential in Canberra's development, marking it out as a uniquely twentieth century city.

However this image of Canberra, so carefully woven into the uplifting spirit of modernity, is only one of the ways that air technology and the moving image have left their mark. At times a failure to consider the 'Canberra project' from-the-ground meant that the technology of the air and the magic of the moving image came together in unexpected, unscripted and sometimes tragic ways.

This paper examines these unanticipated histories and the learnings they hold for a more grounded imagination of Canberra's future.

2. The city from the air: skylines, skyscrapers, and sights of urban heritage

James Lesh- The University of Sydney

The advent of technology to view and record cities from above changed how people perceived, valued, designed, promoted and conserved cities. Before the nineteenth-century cities had been imagined from above, but the advent of flight and particularly aerial photography changed the course of urban history. For heritage, these technologies altered perceptions of historic environments and approaches to conservation. The interrelationship between sky and ground fascinated conservationists as much as it did city promoters. This paper draws on twentieth- and twenty-first century aerial photography of Melbourne, focussing on the presentation of the city skyline, particularly in the vicinity of the Yarra River and southern CBD. It argues that this iconic Melbourne vantage, manufactured by flight, not only reflected but also engendered the changing heritage priorities of the city in the twentieth-century. These photographs show that the Melbourne CBD grew bigger and taller, particularly with the construction of skyscrapers. Ultimately, this pattern of development proved to be difficult for conservationists due to the impacts of high-rise towers on low-rise historic environments. As city skylines such as Melbourne become increasingly crowded and postwar skyscrapers enter heritage lists, this paper will explore tensions related to the conservation of the urban heritage of the sky, as pictured from above, while integrating the key conference themes of the modernism, technology and memory.

3. Let Air Space be a Teacher

Ivana Troselj- UNSW-Canberra

13th century property law helped to define the earliest notions of airspace into which the first hot air balloons flew. "Cuius est solum, eius est usque ad coelum et ad inferos" ("whoever's is the soil, it is theirs all the way to Heaven and all the way to Hell). But the history of airspace is also one of evolving concepts. It continues to evolve to accommodate new space missions and cyber activity, well beyond what was historically only tethered to earth, and its sovereign soils. And airspaces are sometimes as contested as they are congested. An understanding of the history of the evolution of airspace, will help to explain these developments. Moreover, the way in which that evolution has been shaped and helped to shape the development of the international treaties and norms to which Australia subscribes, along with evolving concepts of sovereignty and territorialisation, digital communications, and thresholds of operational engagement, will help Australia to imagine

what comes next in its operations, and its thresholds for engagement in its other operating spaces, as airspaces continue to evolve and converge with emerging capabilities.

4. Heritage from the Air - Contemporary Indigenous Australian Painting: An Aerial View of Landscape Informed by Traditional Knowledge

Dr Marie Geissler- Honorary Associate Fellow, School of the Arts, English and Media, University of Wollongong

The history of the ways in which Indigenous Australians from remote Australia (the desert and northern Australia - Arnhem Land) have used paintings of their country (which can be said to symbolically represent aerial views of their lands) to advance the self-determination of their culture offers many insights in relation to the self-determination of their cultural heritage.

The capacity of the people to create such works reflects on the nomadism of the traditional people, and a culture which is based developing a memory that allows them to learning intricate details related to survival in the landscape such as places, events and objects. Within the culture this learning is reinforced by ceremonial song, dance, storytelling, drawing and painting.

Such paintings encode traditional knowledge and entitlements in ways that such knowledges by this means were protected for posterity, they also provided vehicles for cross-cultural engagements that would allow Indigenous Australians to prosecute land and sea rights claims to the Australian Government.

The early small acrylic Papunya works of the 1970s and 80s graphically represented aerial views of landscape and cultural content. The works from this time were accompanied by sketched interpretative maps of the work setting out the details of landscape and events (many small works are on view at the National Gallery of Australia).

A highlight of that decade and movement in terms of scale, is a work of Clifford Possum and Tim Leura's Napperby Death Spirit Dreaming 1980, 207.7 x 670.8 cm (National Gallery of Australia). It is a monumental and exceptional work of cartographic inspiration which relates to vast distances of the artists' country as seem from aerial perspective.