NARRYNA NEWS
For Members and Supporters of Narryna Heritage Museum

WINTER 2017

DEATH MASK AT NARRYNA, DARK MOFO 2017

John Watt Beattie (1859-1930), Beattie Studios, Beattie of his Port Arthur Museum, Elizabeth Street, Hobart (site of the Cat and Fiddle Arcade)
Original gelatin print c. 1922 Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

RIGITA OZOLINS has engaged with the collections of Narryna, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, to present Death Mask at Narryna for Dark MOFO 2017. Narryna encourages dialogue between past and present through inviting artists to rediscover museum collections. Art interventions work well in historic houses through the opposition of 19th century and contemporary aesthetics. Our audiences enjoy that frisson.

Ozolins is a Hobart-based artist and academic. She is best known for her large-scale installations that explore the links between language, history and identity such as Kryptos (2011) at MONA. She has also developed site-specific work for the State Library of Tasmania, the Allport Library & Museum of Fine Arts, Salamanca Arts Centre, Ten Days on the Island and the State Library of Latvia. Ozo- lins exhibits in solo and group exhibitions and is represented by the Bett Gallery.

In Australia the creation of death masks for phrenological analysis was an aspect of the race and class-based ideology that accompanied colonisation. A judge could direct that the body of a criminal sentenced to death be dissected and anatomicized after execution. In an era that looked to a physical resurrection at the Last Judgment, being denied burial in consecrated ground was a punishment and violence beyond execution.

Ozolins was inspired to develop her installation by photographs from the Beattie of his Port Arthur Museum. Tradition in the 19th century they were consulted like palm readers or astrologers. From the 1860s Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution led to reliance on phrenology in determining an individual’s criminal proclivities.

Beattie’s photograph of his museum includes a phrenological bust and Taylor’s collection contained standard phrenology types that were circulated to institutions and collectors. Phreno-logy involved contrasting the crania of genuses with crimi-nals. Taylor’s collection included busts of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia (1712–1786) and Lord Brougham (1778–1868) a celebrated British statesman and scientist. Taylor’s updated his ‘great men’ with the death mask of Marcus Clarke (1846-1881), author of For the Term of His Natural Life (1870-74).

Taylor’s death masks of executed criminals included murderers: John Knatchbull, executed at Darlinghurst Gaol, Sydney in 1844; Richard Copping who murdered his lover and first cousin, Susannah Stacey, at Bream Creek, Tasmania in 1876; Henry Morgan executed at Ararat Gaol, 1894 and the poisoner, Martha Needles (1863-1894). Melbourne Gaol appears to have created multiple death masks from its executed criminals.

The ‘read’ heads by feeling the contours of the skull. In the 19th century death masks have hair or eyebrow fragments embedded in the plaster. These evidently had a ready market. A cast of Mrs Frances Knorr, the Brunswick Baby Murderess, hanged on 15 January 1894, was noted in Tay- lor’s private museum in June 1894. After World War II a horror of eugenics that had led to the Holocaust led to the destruction of death masks. Only a few from the Taylor / Beattie collection have survived. The belief that physical appearance and inherit- ed character traits could explain and predict criminal behaviour lost ground in the 20th century. The new social science of crimi-nology and further develop-ments in psychiatry led to crimin- al behaviour being assessed in terms of upbringing, social back- ground and the mental health of the individual.

GEORGIAN GLASS ROADSHOW

Andy McConnell, well known to viewers of the Antiques Roadshow, came to Narryna in February to take on Friends, Narryna and ADEAS members on a journey through the history of glass. Andy is a great raconteur. One participant reverently brought along a fam- ily heirloom piece for appraisal. Andy swiftly filled the glass with factual insights. His appraisal was ‘wine tastes much better from hand-blown Geor- gian glass’. Thank you to the Friends of TMMG for donating the proceeds of this highly en- tertaining event to Narryna.

The China Trade is important to the history of Tasmania. The British East India Com- pany was established in 1600 to obtain rich cargoes of porcelain, silks, tea, lacquer, zinc and spic- es from China and South-East Asia. It licenced ‘free mariners’ such as Narryna’s builder, Capt- ain Andrew Haig, to carry out the trade. Tasmania is named for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) captain, Abel Tasman, who named the island in honour of Anthony van Diemen, Gover- nor of Batavia (Jakarta).

This aspect of Tasmania’s relationship with China is less well known than the ‘For Dragon’ story of mining by Chinese emigrants in Tasmania’s north-east. Narryna is sharing these stories with Tasmania’s Chinese residents and visitors through Chinese language guides in sim- plified Chinese characters (for visitors from China and Singapore) and traditional Chinese characters (for visitors from Taiwan and Hong Kong). Go to www.tmg tas.gov.au/narryna

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M: 0419 622 638

NARRYNA COUNCIL
NARRYNA’s governing Council comprises

SCRAMSHAW EXHIBITION

IN ASSOCIATION with Scrimshaw – the art of the Mariner, Colin gave lectures and talks to groups as varied as the Australian Society Tasmanian chapter, Tasmanian antique dealers, Maritime Museum of Tasmania, Battery Point Community Association, Macquarie Probus and the Athenaeum Club. During the exhibition Probus and the Athenaeum Tasmania, Battery Point Com-

an chapter, Tasmanian antique Australiana Society Tasmanian talks to groups as varied as the

Colin Thomas gave lectures and

pieces to known makers.

Watch this space for a

follow-up talk by Colin on his

USA tour.

Above: The exhibition was launched with a talk by Colin Thomas for Narryna members

Below: For the exhibition, a whaling cauldron owned by Charles Seal was hoisted into

Narryna’s forecourt. Charles Seal (1801-1852) was a merchant, pastoralist, shipowner

and whaler. His twelve ships included the

Aladdin and the

Narryna’s violin for example

was made by Thomas Wiggins (1803-1884) who was born at sea aboard HMS Calcutt

or Samuel and Susannah Wiggins. Samuel

was a Royal Marine in the party of Lieutenant Governor David Collins who established the first

European settlement at Risdon Cove, Thomas’ was the first

birth recorded in Van Diemen’s

front garden.

Like Narryna’s builder Captain

William Langdon’s property, Montacute

northern Tasmania, his family

has retained a connection with

Sorell ever since. Narryna has

hosted a Wiggins reunion and

Jackson exalts his ancestor’s

violin each time he visits.

Above: Jackson Wiggins, a descendant of

Thomas Wiggins, holding a violin inscribed

‘Tasmania’ c. 1835 made by Thomas

Wiggins.

Left: Eve Langdon with a trunk taken on

Captain Langdon’s ship, the Norfolk c. 1835.

NARRYNA AS CUSTODIAN OF COMMUNITY HERITAGE

NARRYNA hosts education tours for around 2,000 students a year who come to learn about life in an early 19th century merchant’s house. Narryna’s collection was sourced from across Tasmania and many Tasmanians are connected with Narryna as the custodian of their family history. We enjoy learning from the students. Students whose heirlooms form part of the collection have a lot to teach about a sense of place and how Tasmania’s cultural heritage informs their identity.

Narryna’s violin for example was made by Thomas Wiggins (1803-1884) who was born at sea aboard HMS Calcutt to Samuel and Susannah Wiggins. Samuel was a Royal Marine in the party of Lieutenant Governor David Collins who established the first European settlement at Risdon Cove, Thomas’s was the first birth recorded in Van Diemen’s

NARRYNA was established as the Van Diemen’s Land Memorial Folk Museum in 1955 and opened to the public on 30 November 1957. It thus celebrates 60 years as a museum in 2017/18.

Narryna’s Council aims to secure a financially sustainable future for the museum. We need your support to refurbish Narryna’s outbuildings for education, community and revenue-generating uses:

• A large shed has been reconditioned as a flexible events space

• Courtyard outbuildings are being refitted as a kitchen for events (funding for the building ‘envelope’ received)

• A WC block will be redeveloped with the addition of gardening and events equipment stores

• A kitchen garden will be re-instated as the basis for schools programs and to generate recognition of the importance of Narryna as part of Rev. Robert Knopwood’s garden.

Other important building, interior and collections projects under way are:

• Recreation of the original decorative treatments of the dining room, front doorcase and portico, funded by a Copland Foundation grant.

• Rehousing part of our nationally-significant costume collection through a National Library of Australia Community Heritage Grant.

• A new website will host exhibitions and events highlights

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Narryna is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission as a custodian of community heritage and provider of education services. When renewing your membership please consider making a tax-deductible donation of $2 or more to support these projects.

We will gladly acknowledge your support.

UPCOMING NARRYNA EVENTS

Dark MOFO
July–August

Narryna closed for annual cleaning and maintenance

Narryna celebrates 60 years as a museum
30 November 2017

Christmas Craft Spirit Market
Saturday 9 December

Graphic design: Julie Hawkins, In Graphic Detail

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Above: Jackson Wiggins, a descendant of

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