

## The Legacies of Bernard Smith: A symposium at the Universities of Melbourne and Sydney

Bernard Smith could rightly be called the founder of Australian Art History, and his presence and influence in Australian cultural life was immense from the publication of *Place, Taste and Tradition* in 1945 until his death in September 2011. To explore and celebrate his work and its legacy, the Universities of Melbourne and Sydney, together with the Art Gallery of New South Wales, are convening an international symposium and are calling for abstract paper proposals due April 15 2012. Further information on how to submit is detailed at the end of this post.

This collaborative symposium will take place over four days in two locations, during which Australian and International Scholars, Curators and Artists will discuss all aspects of Bernard Smith's wide-ranging work. The Melbourne leg will take place on September 20 and 21, 2012 and the Sydney Leg on November 9 and 10, 2012. We hope that a substantial number of contributors will be able to be present at both parts of the event.

The Symposium is to be convened by Jaynie Anderson, Herald Professor of Fine Arts, University of Melbourne, Mark Ledbury, Power Professor of Art History and Visual Culture at the University of Sydney and Christopher Marshall, Senior Lecturer in Art History and Museum Studies, University of Melbourne.

Our aim is not only to consider the key questions of Bernard's scholarship, but to examine what legacy his vision of the world, (shaped as it was by pressing twentieth century concerns from the Cold War to post-colonialism), might have for 21st century scholars whose fields - history, anthropology, art history, art criticism - were affected by his pioneering work.

During the symposium we will explore several major themes of Bernard's work and papers related to these topics would be especially welcome. The major themes are:

### **Encountering Australia**

Bernard's seminal *European Vision and the South Pacific* (1960) remains perhaps his best-known work internationally, and pioneered a set of questions about power, vision and encounter that shaped studies not only in Australia but worldwide.

### **Imagining Australia, Defining Australian Art**

Smith's fundamental *Australian Painting, 1788-2000*, much reprinted and discussed since, was the first convincing narrative of Australian art, and in other work he pondered what being Australian meant in a cultural sense.

### **Thinking the Modern and Contemporary**

As Bernard was a profound historian of visual encounters with early Australia, so he was an impassioned critic and historian of contemporary art in Australia. From his polemics of the 1950s to his 1962 *Australian Painting Today* lecture to his work at the Power Institute, to his later speculations on 'the formalesque', thinking the modern and contemporary as a concept was a central part of Bernard's Smith's work.

**Being with Art**

Bernard's work as a cataloguer of collections (particularly at the Art Gallery of New South Wales) and his exploration of contemporary art in a journalistic and critical mode, was a substantial area of his activity as an intellectual.

**Bernard Smith the activist**

Under this rubric might come His concern for his community and his involvement in politics from local to global.

**Bernard Smith the writer**

Bernard was a prose writer of great gifts, not just in criticism and art history. His memoirs, particularly *The Boy Adeodatus* are important examples of the genre.

How to submit abstract paper proposals

Please send a 100 word abstract of your proposed paper and a CV to [Powerinstitute.events@sydney.edu.au](mailto:Powerinstitute.events@sydney.edu.au) by April 15 2012. A decision on the selection will be made by May 15 2012. We would like as many participants as possible to attend both parts of the symposium, however, if you can only attend one part, please let us know when you submit your proposed paper. For more information, please email [Powerinstitute@sydney.edu.au](mailto:Powerinstitute@sydney.edu.au).

Our aim will be to publish an edited volume reflecting the symposium proceedings and we have received interest from several publishers.