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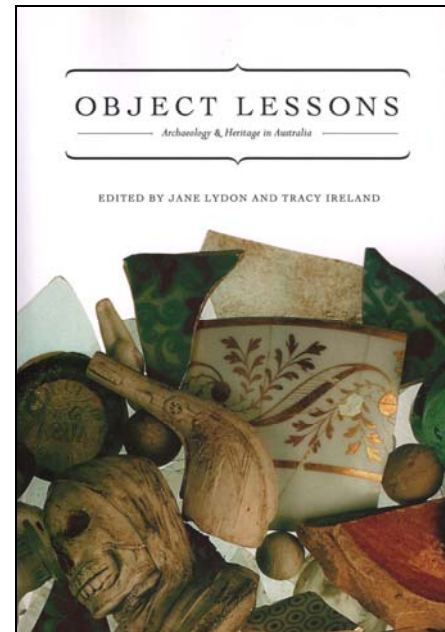
OBJECT LESSONS

Archaeology and Heritage in Australia

Edited by Jane Lydon and Tracy Ireland

Australian society increasingly tries to learn from its past, as it comes to recognise how rich and complex that past has been, and the ways that it continues to shape the present. Where many Australians once considered their society to lack a history or culture of its own, today the nation takes pride in its unique identity. In representing ourselves we draw upon diverse aspects of the past, including the distinctiveness of Aboriginal cultures, and the meaning and importance conferred upon colonial places. We create a sense of emplacement and belonging within these negotiated social spaces.

This book examines how we define ourselves through our concern with the past: a series of case studies explores controversial places and themes including Sydney's Conservatorium of Music site, Mawson's Huts in Antarctica, the search for the Endeavour, and the origins of the 'stolen generations.'. Conflict and negotiation over these sites and artefacts defines an Australian personality. Perhaps the greatest strength of this collection is its emphasis on how Australians have created a sense of identity through the idiosyncratic ways we engage with the material world. The power of objects, places and landscape to focus emotion and define world views are an explicit object of reflection and tell us about ourselves: what we disagree over, what we care about, and who we are.



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