



BATAVIA

GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS

LAWRENCE WILSON ART GALLERY

7 October – 16 December 2017



Robert Cleworth, *Cornelisz' foot, on the day 2 October 1629*, 2017, oil on wood panel, 28.2 x 36cm.
Photography Dean Beletich

LIST OF WORKS

PAUL UHLMANN

Batavia 4th June 1629 (night of my sickness), 2017, oil on canvas, three panels each 180 x 120cm

Batavia 4th June 1629 (night of my sickness) II, 2017, oil on canvas, two panels each 180 x 120cm

Batavia (1629) notebook to the void, 2017, artist's book in seven sections; digital cover; silkscreens and dry-points on copper on Kozo paper, 49 x 70cm

Batavia skull (camera obscura I), 2015, photo-print on aluminium, 15 x 12cm

Batavia skull (camera obscura II), 2015, photo-print on aluminium, 15 x 12cm

Batavia skull (camera obscura III), 2015, photo-print on aluminium, 15 x 12cm

PAUL UHLMANN, ALISTAIR PATERSON & DANIEL FRANKLIN

The archaeology of birds, 2017
7 black-glass teeth moulded from selected Batavia victims using lost wax process and 7 pieces of coral from Beacon Island, approx. 4 x 2.5cm (variable with each piece)

ROB CLEWORTH

Cornelisz in Torrentius' studio, 2017
oil on wood panel, 27cm diameter

Storyboard, scenes for a movie - 'Captain-General, Jeronimo Cornelij', 2017, oil on wood panel, 29.5 x 21cm

Hayes Island, 2017, oil on wood panel, 28.2 x 21cm

Vanitas, 2017, oil on wood panel, 24 x 26.5cm

Cornelisz' foot, on the day 2 October 1629, 2017, oil on wood panel, 28.2 x 36cm

Profile of Cornelisz, 2017, oil on canvas, 21 x 17cm

Jan Pelgrom's hand - he begged 'that he should be allowed to kill someone, because he should rather do that than eat or drink', 2017, oil on canvas, 37 x 29.5cm

Storyboard, scenes for a movie - "Andries Jonas, Jan Hendricxsz and Wouter Loos, 9 July", 2017, oil on wood panel, 29 x 38cm

Storyboard, scenes for a movie - Jan Hendricxsz and his concubine, 2017, oil on wood panel, 37.5 x 29.8cm

Storyboard, scenes for a movie - Jan Hendricxsz, Mattys Beer and Jan Pelgrom, 2017, oil on wood panel, 37.2 x 28.2cm

Wallabi skull - vanitas, 2017, oil on wood panel, 18 x 18cm

Arm and Seascape, 2017, oil on linen, 60 x 50cm

PAUL BOURKE

Beacon Island flyover of the digital model pre building demolition, 2017
2 minutes (looping) video, full HD resolution, ambient audio track. Suitable for projector or large scale digital panel.

Photographic 3D reconstruction of two Batavia victims in a shared grave, 2017
30 seconds (looping track) video, full HD resolution, no audio track. Projection installation onto sand.

JEREMY GREEN

Panorama of the excavation site on Beacon Island, 2016
digital panorama take on iPhone

Drone video, excavation on Beacon Island, 2016, digital video

CORIOLI SOUTER

Fragments of Batavia's daughters, 2017
artefact installation and digital narrative app.

JAN ANDRIESSE & MAARTEN DE KROON

TORRENTIUS, 2013, DVD
10'30 minutes loop.
Produced: Get Organized Film & Docs
Music: variation on Yves Klein, Symphonie Monotone Silence (1949/1960), produced and performed by the Qcumber Orchestra.
© Stichting Art Doc, Amsterdam 2013

One version will be displayed on 24SEVEN, a second version will be shown in the PRO/ject Space.



Paul Uhlmann, *Batavia (1629) notebook to the void* (detail), 2017, artist's book in seven sections; digital cover; silkscreens and dry-points on copper on kozo paper, 49 x 70cm

BATAVIA: GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS

The exhibition

This project was developed within the catalytic environment of a university, where ideas find willing partners and scholars are fired by the passion of their colleagues. When artist Paul Uhlmann spoke to me enthusiastically about the new discoveries on Beacon Island, I was able to introduce him to Professor Alistair Paterson and this exhibition materialised from their conversations.

The major premise of that initial interaction was our musing on how we reconstruct history. The horrendous story of the murder of 125 men, women and children, following the wreck of the Dutch VOC ship the *Batavia* in 1629, is reinterpreted in this exhibition through the work of the archaeologists at UWA and the creative vision of Paul Uhlmann and Robert Cleworth. Following the archaeological discovery of new burial sites with skeletal fragments, Paul, Robert and Alistair, in collaboration with Corioli Souter, Paul Bourke, Jeremy Green, Jan Andriess and Maarten de Kroon have all contributed to a re-examination how our understanding of history is framed within different disciplines of investigation and how these nuanced interpretations impact on our reading of past events.

The exhibition presents installations of new forms of contemporary *memento mori* created by Paul Uhlmann and Robert Cleworth, in response to an obscure painting by the Dutch painter Torrentius (1589-1644), who had close connections to the *Batavia* mutineers. Their re-imagination of these heinous events, together with the re-interpretation

provided by Corioli Souter and the documentation of the archaeological dig on Beacon Island, generate a nexus between science and art. Together, their work presents a collective understanding of the *Batavia* wreck through photogrammetry, scanning (X-Ray, MRI), digital prints, virtual tours, the mechanics of the *camera obscura*, artists' books and paintings.

All inspiring projects grow from shared passions and within the environment of a university these ideas are given full reign. The University Art Museum is an intellectual hothouse where these ideas find new and marvellously diverse forms of discursive dissemination. In this environment research breeds across disciplines and in the process new knowledge and new understanding is made possible.

Professor Ted Snell, AM CitWA



Discovery of SK16 on Beacon Island (detail), 2015, Photographer: Jeremy Green

The history of the *Batavia*

The Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC, for United Dutch East India Company) vessel *Batavia* was wrecked on the Morning Reef in the Houtman Abrolhos Islands off the coast of Western Australia on 4 June 1629. It was the first VOC ship to be lost off the coast of the Southland (as Australia was then known), although the hazards were already known from Dirk Hartog's voyage in 1616. The wreck of the *Batavia* was immediately calamitous, leading to accidental deaths, mutiny and the mass murder of over 100 souls. Only 115 of the 341 people who left the Netherlands would ultimately arrive in the East Indies. The story became popularly known in the 17th century with the 1645 publication of *Ongeluckige Voyagie van't Schip Batavia* which was taken from the journals of the Commander, Francisco Pelsaert.

On the morning of 4 June 1629 the *Batavia* survivors found themselves in breaking surf on the edge of a large reef in the Indian Ocean - the Australian continent lay eastwards over the horizon. Of the 282 people who survived the wreck, most ended up at a nearby small coral island that later became known as "Batavia's Graveyard" (now Beacon Island). The *Batavia*'s captain Ariaen Jacobsz was under the authority of Commander Francisco Pelsaert, responsible to the VOC's interests and profit. Pelsaert, Jacobsz and 46 others set sail in the ship's longboat with the intention to locate water on the Australian coast. However, they decided to sail the remaining 900 miles to Batavia in the East Indies, arriving one month later, when Pelsaert was directed to mount a salvage and rescue voyage.

Meanwhile, in the Abrolhos the number of survivors was more than halved as a result of a bloody mutiny led by Jeronimus Cornelisz. He began to direct survivors on hazardous missions to other islands in search of water. He had their weapons removed before they left. On 5 July he appointed his own council, whose members accelerated illicit murders through drowning and assault. Over the following six weeks the open killing spree continued - at least 115 people were killed.

The main resistance to these events was from the group of soldiers who had been sent to High Island (West Wallabi). Survivors joined this community of resistance. The mutineers attempted to coerce the soldiers; instead Cornelisz was captured and four mutineers killed. As the remaining mutineers attacked the soldiers on 17 September Pelsaert's rescue vessel *Sardam* arrived, and the mutineers were duly captured.

The *Sardam* was equipped to salvage the wreck site, using specialist divers from Gujarat. Meanwhile Pelsaert oversaw the trial of the mutineers. Seven, including Cornelisz, were taken to Seal Island and punished with death. Of the original 316 listed travellers only 115 survived. Pelsaert died the following year, never to know how the fame of the story grew over the centuries.

Professor Alistair Paterson, ARC Future Fellow



Batavia Dig Beacon Island (detail), 2015, Photographer: Jeremy Green

Archaeological discoveries

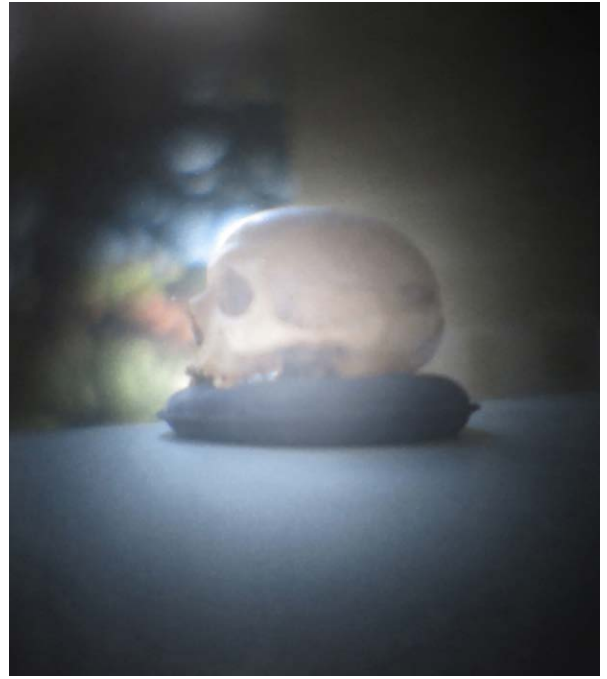
The loss of the *Batavia* in 1629 and subsequent mutiny is one of the most dramatic events in Dutch and Australian history. The National Heritage Listed remains are the earliest European sites in the nation. Historical research by Drake Brockman led to excavations on Beacon Island in 1963, where burials and 17th century Dutch artefacts were found, and the wreck site was located.

In 1972 the WA Museum instigated archaeological investigation on the wreck and parts of the hull and cargo were retrieved, conserved and eventually displayed in Fremantle in the Shipwrecks Gallery. Early archaeology was focused on the marine sites and in particular the removal and conservation of the surviving structure of the wreck itself. More recently the focus shifted to the land-based archaeological sites related to the *Batavia* and led to National Heritage Listing.

The work has revealed the remains of at least 14 victims of the wreck of the 200 individuals who died on Beacon Island. On West Lewis Island there is evidence of the resistance campaign mounted by the small group of soldiers, and on Long Island it has revealed the site where seven mutineers were executed. The Australian Research Council (ARC) project *Shipwrecks of the Roaring Forties: A Maritime Archaeological Reassessment of some of Australia's Earliest Shipwrecks* has excavated several new burials of the victims using a range of scientific ground sensing technologies. New technologies such as isotopic

analyses on bones are providing insight into the lives of these people, revealing where they were from on Europe, and aspects of their life history before the “unlucky voyage”.

Professor Alistair Paterson, ARC Future Fellow



Paul Uhlmann, l-r
Batavia skull (camera obscura I), Batavia skull (camera obscura III), 2015
 photo-print on aluminum, 15 x 12cm

Torrentius - enigmatic painter of darkness

Throughout the *Batavia Journals* Francisco Pelsaert struggles to come terms with the debased transformation of his former under merchant, Jeronimus Cornelisz. For Cornelisz, the charismatic mutineer and primary cause of the flow of “so much innocent blood” - who was an apothecary by profession well known to the stewardship of command - had “denuded himself of all humanity” and become “a tiger animal” (Pelsaert p 24). Even through torture Cornelisz continued to astonish his captors, who discovered that he believed in neither heaven nor hell and that he possessed tremendous powers of persuasion to “seduce” the minds of his fellow mutineers.

It is this gap in comprehension that provokes Pelsaert to search for root ideological cause to these cold-blooded murders and to name him an “Epicurean or Torrentian”. At the time, to be an Epicurian was to lead a life where lust and pleasure were considered to be the highest good, while to be a Torrentian was to follow a darker, more opaque path of heresy and debauchery (van Huystee footnotes). Attempting to peer into the soul of this scoundrel, Pelsaert writes that the delusional mind of Cornelisz reasoned “that all he had done was sent into his heart by God”. He therefore considered himself free of conscience or blame (p69). Meanwhile, another world away Johannes van der Beeck, also known as Torrentius, a painter of marvellous, exacting images, was rotting in a Haarlem dudgeon. The libertine painter was considered a heretic, blasphemer, a Satanist and worse. His enigmatic paintings, suspected to have been made using a camera obscura by his

contemporary Constantijn Huygens, father of the astronomer and mathematician Christiaan, were primarily works of vanitas - moral images of impermanence. His sole surviving work, most likely made with the aid of a lens, may be considered a symbol of the nexus of art and science leaping into the unknown in the early stages of the 17th century.

Dr Paul Uhlmann, Edith Cowan University

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Robert Cleworth, *Arm and Seascape*, 2016, oil on canvas, 95 x 84cm.
Photography Dean Beletich

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Exhibitions take an enormous amount of skill, time and energy and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the Cultural Precinct for their outstanding effort in solving the numerous issues that required their consideration.

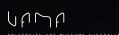
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