

Monash University Museum of Art presents

# SIGMUND FREUD'S COLLECTION AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE MIND

GUEST CURATOR: DR. JANINE BURKE



Dr. Janine Burke  
Photo: Jacqueline Mitelman

Edmund Engelman, *The writing arrangement in Freud's study; desk with antiquities* 1938  
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**5 September – 17 November 2007**

Monash University Museum of Art, Monash University, Clayton Campus

**2 January – 30 March 2008**

Travelling to: The Nicholson Museum, University of Sydney

**Exhibition Opening: Wednesday 5 September at 5.30pm, Monash University Museum of Art**

**4.30pm, Wednesday 5 September: Curator Janine Burke and Freud Museum London Director, Michael Molnar in conversation with Associate Professor Robert Nelson**

In the late 1890s while writing *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud became an art collector, developing an obsession with antiquity, beauty, myth and archaeology that led him to amass a brilliant private museum of over two thousand statues, vases, reliefs, busts, fragments of papyrus, rings, precious stones and prints. Bringing both his passions together, Freud stated: 'The psychoanalyst, like the archaeologist, must uncover layer after layer of the patient's psyche, before coming to the deepest, most valuable treasures.'

For the first time, Freud's antiquities will be seen in Australia at Monash University Museum of Art (September-November 2007) and University of Sydney's Nicholson Museum (2 January- 30 March 2008).

*Sigmund Freud's Collection: an Archaeology of the Mind* brings together objects from Sigmund Freud's personal collection of antiquities held in the Freud Museum, London. The works – which will be presented alongside related film and photographic material, including Freud's home movies and Edmund Engelman's legendary photographs of Freud's consulting rooms at Bergasse 19 – offer a unique insight into Freud as collector, thinker and art connoisseur, and reveal how Freud's study of art and antiquities influenced his theories of psychoanalysis.

Curated by Dr. Janine Burke, the exhibition follows publication of *The Gods of Freud: Sigmund Freud's Art Collection*, the author's book-length study of the Freud Collection and its role in Freud's life and work.

Dr Burke has selected eighteen major works that not only provide an overview of Freud's collection but also offer insights into his revolutionary theories about sexuality and civilisation.

Dr Burke says:

Freud's collection attracts multiple readings: as the embodiment of his theories, as an investigation and a celebration of past cultures, as an exercise in aesthetic pleasure, as a quest for excellence, as a memento of real and imaginary journeys, as a catalogue of desires, and as a self-portrait.

The popular image of Freud as austere, remote and forbidding is contradicted by the collection, which reveals a very different personality: an impulsive, hedonistic spender, an informed and finicky aesthete, a tomb raider complicit in the often illegal trade in antiquities, a tourist who revelled in sensual, Mediterranean journeys, a generous fellow who lavished exquisite gifts on his family and friends, and a tough negotiator for a bargain. Though Freud prescribed the intense, inner journey of psychoanalysis for Vienna's bourgeoisie, his own therapy was shopping. Arranging choice items on his desk, Freud confessed to Carl Gustav Jung, 'I must always have an object to love.'

The exhibition will be accompanied by a full colour illustrated catalogue featuring essays by exhibition curator, Dr. Janine Burke; psychoanalysts María-Inés Rotmiller de Zentner and Oscar Zentner; and Michael Turner, senior curator at the Nicholson Museum.

**Dr. Janine Burke** is the author of *The Gods of Freud: Sigmund Freud's Art Collection*. She is Honorary Professor, School of English, Communications and Performance Studies, Monash University.

Developed by the Monash University Museum of Art, in association with the Nicholson Museum, University of Sydney.



The University of Sydney

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#### **KEY ANTIQUITIES IN THE EXHIBITION INCLUDE:**

- *Isis suckling the infant Horus*, a bronze from Egypt's 26th Dynasty (664-525 BC). Egypt's all powerful mother goddess. Freud gave this statue a central position on his desk. The story of how Freud acquired *Isis* offers a good example of how undervalued antiquities were in his lifetime and how he managed to amass such a large collection on a limited budget. In 1935, Robert Lustig, Freud's favourite Viennese antiquities dealer, spotted the statue in a junk shop in the countryside. When he asked the price, the shop owner put the statue on the scale to weigh it, and Lustig bought it for the price of the metal. Today Freud's collection is worth several million dollars.

- *Sphinx*, a terracotta from the late 5th-early 4th century BC. Freud made the myth of Oedipus and the Sphinx central to psychoanalysis. He wrote, 'A single idea of general value dawned on me. I have found, in my own case too (the phenomenon of) being in love with my mother and jealous of my father, and I now consider it a universal event in early childhood.' Freud believed this powerful instinctual urge explained the development of sexual identity in both men and women.

- *Eros*, Greek, Hellenistic Period, c.300-250 BC. Statues of Eros, the god of love and desire, are well represented in Freud's collection. Freud relished dichotomies and proposed dualistic theories about human behaviour and culture where Eros (the libido) struggled against the death drive. Freud wrote 'the "Eros" of the Greek philosophers coincides exactly with the love force, the libido of psychoanalysis.' Freud believed in life-changing flashes of intuition, momentous, spontaneous decisions and love at first sight. 'In vital matters...such as the choice of a mate or a profession the decision should come from the unconscious, from...the deep inner needs of our nature.'

- *Athena*, bronze, Roman, 1st or 2nd century AD. Freud's favourite work. When it seemed he would lose his entire collection when the Nazis occupied Vienna in 1938, he selected two works to be smuggled out, to represent all that his collection meant to him. One of those was *Athena*, the other a tiny *Jade Screen* (Qing Dynasty, 19th century). He showed *Athena* to the American poet Hilda Doolittle, who was one of his patients, telling her, 'This is my favourite. Only she has lost her spear.'