

Travellers from Australia

Craig Barker and Diana Wood Conroy

Acknowledgements

Australian archaeologists from the University of Sydney have been working in Pafos since 1995, excavating the site of the ancient theatre and its surrounding precinct. The Paphos Theatre Archaeological Project has had a long tradition of encouraging visual and performing artists (and art students) to seek creative inspiration from the site, from the natural beauty of Cyprus and from the very process of archaeology.

The University of Sydney's Paphos Theatre Archaeological Project works under the auspices of the Department of Antiquities of the Republic of Cyprus. We wish to thank the Directors and the staff of the Department of Antiquities, especially Director Dr Marina Solomidou-Ieronymidou and the staff of Pafos District Archaeological Museum. Likewise, we acknowledge the support of the Pafos Municipality, the Australian High Commission in Nicosia, the Cypriot High Commission in Canberra, the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute (CAARI), the Moufflon Bookshop in Nicosia, and our many friends in Pafos and colleagues from the other archaeological missions working in Pafos.

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Travellers from Australia, exhibited at the Pailia Ilektriki in Ktima Pafos between 2-15 October, is part of the official program of the Pafos2017 European Capital of Culture. The exhibition was written and curated by Emeritus Professor Diana Wood Conroy of the University of Wollongong and Dr Craig Barker of the University of Sydney.

We thank everyone who has worked on the site, especially the artists, who have been inspired by the beauty and wonder of Cyprus and its rich history and whose works are displayed in the exhibition *Travellers from Australia*.

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All images are courtesy of the artists unless otherwise noted.

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SYDNEY

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WOLLONGONG**



Rowan Conroy



I first attended the Pafos theatre excavations in 1996 at the age of fourteen. I went on to attend the dig in 1997, 2001, 2002 & 2006. Being exposed to archaeology and Cyprus at an impressionable age has had a lasting and profound impact artistically and academically. In 1997 I worked with the site photographer, Bob Miller. I recall the guerrilla darkroom, constructed in a dilapidated farm building, leaky and mouldy. This was combined with the magical results of analogue photography - a fantastic memory to have and a formative experience. In later seasons of the dig I worked as an archaeological illustrator. Drawing gave me an intimate and meditative exposure to the material culture of the site.

One season when drawing an exquisite sherd of *terra sigillata* Roman ware I discovered a perfectly preserved fingerprint of an ancient potter on the base of the fragment. This formed a memory that I have returned to many times. It was moving to see the only remnant of a human presence physically etched in an object, and a sense of continuity with the ancient artists associated with the site.



I went on to study visual art at the University of Sydney. By my honours year my interest in the intersection of art and archaeology had been cemented in my practice. In 2011 I was conferred a PhD from the University of Sydney for my thesis *Archaeologies of the Present: Rephotographing the William John Woodhouse Photographic Archive*. This involved four years of research into the intersections of visual art and archaeology with a focus on photography. This was complemented by a reconstruction of the partly broken and fragmented Woodhouse photographic archive held at the Nicholson Museum, the University of Sydney. A year of field work in Greece in 2009-2010 followed and allowed a process of rephotography in the field, a process that uncovered as much about the original archive as it did about the present condition of the sites. Digital technologies are my research focus, particularly inkjet printing as well as artisanal practices such as printmaking and bookmaking, which interface with new software and hardware.

Looking back over two decades of my involvement in the Pafos theatre excavation, I can see that it has had an indelible influence on my artistic practice. I continue to be interested in landscape history and the intersection of material culture and the built environment as a means of reading deeper patterns of use and occupation.

Photography has always had an uncanny ability to render the deep past and present in one image. I am interested in how the photography of sites is used as a memory aid, as a historical resource, as well as a reflective form of art. The theatre in moonlight is taken from the artist's viewpoint, in lighting and composition – an archaeological photo would never be taken under moonlight at an oblique angle, a viewpoint influenced by the archaeological sublime rather than a technical approach.

Above: Rowan Conroy, *Pottery sorting table, Apollo Hotel, Pafos theatre excavations April 2006*, pigment inkjet print on cotton rag (from digitised 4x5 positive), 90 x 114 cm.

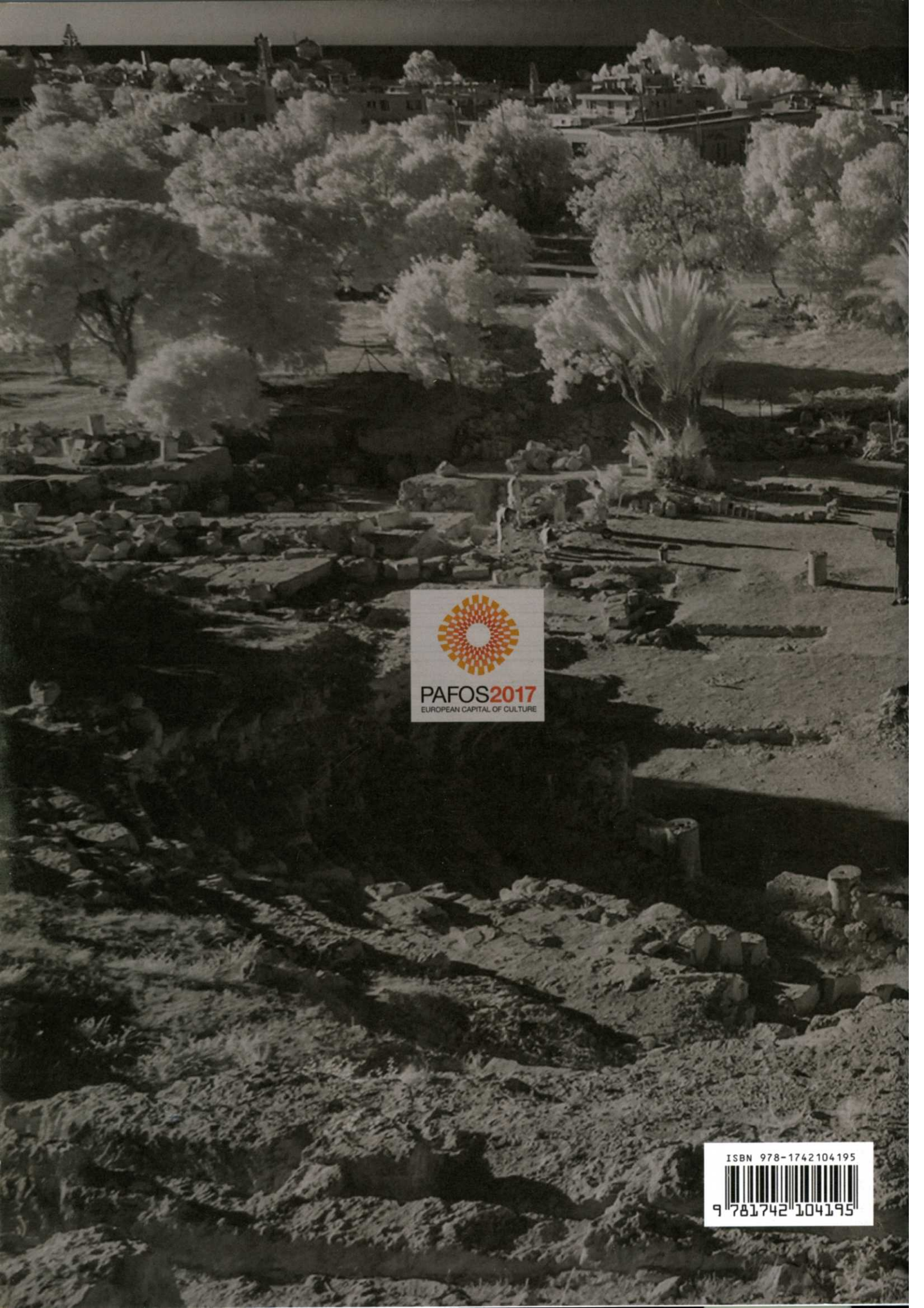
Below: Rowan Conroy, *Pafos theatre Cavea, full moon, April 2006*, pigment inkjet print on cotton rag (from digitised 4x5 film positive), 90 x 114 cm.

Animation is for me, the physical, material perception of time.



Rowan Conroy was awarded a PhD from the University of Sydney (2012) for his research into photography, rephotography and archaeology. He is a visual artist and lecturer in Photomedia at the Australian National University School of Art. Conroy first joined the Paphos Theatre Archaeological Project in 1996. He has exhibited widely in Australia, China and Cyprus. His work is held in national and private collections in Australia. As a freelance artist he has worked as an archaeological illustrator and photographer, which complemented his interest in urban and industrial sites of contemporary landscapes.

Above: Rowan Conroy, *Pafos theatre, full moon, April 2006*, pigment inkjet print on cotton rag (from digitised 4x5 film positive) 90 x 114 cm.



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