

AMSN 5: Cultures of Modernity



The Fiji Times, 4 July 1908, printed on masi/tapa. Image courtesy of Auckland Museum AP7.7.F5 FIJ

Call for Papers: AMSN5, 'Cultures of Modernity' The Australasian Modernist Studies Network Conference *Extended Deadline*

Modernity is a cracked looking-glass, a double-edged sword. Michel Foucault describes modernity as a period acutely aware of itself as modern, determinedly engaged in reflecting on what it means to be of the moment, and self-consciously focused on presenting itself as new. But as Kirby Brown (Cherokee Nation) reminds us, formulations of the modern are equally formulations of the non-modern, since there is 'no civilization without the savage, no modernity without the primitive, no modernism without tradition (or convention), no modern subject without its cultural, racial, temporal, geographic, and historical Other. Indigenous literary and cultural production [...] forces us to contend with the messy complexities of these relationships as well as our own implications in them'. If modernity has produced binary oppositions used to justify literal and epistemological violence against whole peoples and cultures, then modernist works, crafts and lives have also undercut these oppositions to reveal the sterility and conservatism in the seemingly modern—and the innovation, vibrancy and radicalism in the supposedly non-modern.

At the December 2022 conference of the Australasian Modernist Studies Network, held for the first time in Aotearoa New Zealand, we invite attendees to reflect on the ways we can reread modernisms as narratives labouring to find forms adequate to modernity's transformations, affordances, and destructiveness. What political, social and technological shifts must we examine and re-examine to understand the varied cultures, transformations, and violence of modernity as experienced by different populations? What unforeseen adaptations and hybridities do we find when we look beyond hegemonic accounts of the modern? In what ways and through what material objects, political movements, technological resources and artistic endeavours have nations and communities reflected on the ongoing formation of their own modern cultures during the long twentieth century?

We welcome panels and presentations by anthropologists, architects, creative artists, historians, Indigenous studies scholars, linguists, literary scholars, media scholars and practitioners, and all those doing work that focuses on the many, varied, clashing and complementary cultures of modernity. We recognise the traditional temporal focus of modernist studies on the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, but papers that examine expressions of modernity outside this period are also welcome. Possible topics might include:

- Material and popular cultures
- Modern technologies – their adoption, their undercutting, their displacement
- Indigenous, settler, migrant or refugee modernities
- Cultural hybridity
- Literary collectives, artistic movements, design schools
- Cultures of the anti-modern
- Scenes of resistance and revolt
- The Indigenisation/localisation of the modern
- Microcosms of the modern – objects, groups, scenes
- Networks of relationships across different cultures and different modernities
- Modern(ist) cultures within the interstices
- Transmedial responses to the modern, interdisciplinary engagements with modernity
- Modernity and tradition/convention

Major events will include

- Talks by Kirby Brown (Cherokee Nation), Director of Native American Studies at the University of Oregon; by Peter Brunt, Associate Professor of Art History at Te Herenga Waka/Victoria University of Wellington; and by Matariki Williams (Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Hauiti, Taranaki), Pou Matua Mātauranga Māori/Senior Historian, Mātauranga Māori, Manatū Taonga/Ministry for Culture & Heritage
- A visit to the Auckland Art Gallery to discuss the art of Dame Robin White (Ngāti Awa)
- A special viewing for conference delegates showcasing Māori and Pacific holdings in the Auckland Museum
- Tours of modernist architectural sites in Auckland
- A closing round table highlighting Indigenous and feminist responses to the conference's themes.

Papers may be presented in English, French, te reo Māori, or other Indigenous languages. Please send an abstract of no more than 300 words and a bio of no more than 150 words to culturesofmodernity@gmail.com as an attachment **by 2 May**. The conference is being planned in a hybrid format to allow for both in-person and remote participation. If you are able to, and with the ready acknowledgement that plans change, please specify whether you anticipate attending the conference live or virtually.

Conference committee: Erin G. Carlston, University of Auckland; Jacob Edmond, University of Otago; Maebh Long, University of Waikato