



THE LIFE OF THINGS

The 2014 Work in Progress Conference

ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
HISTORY OF
EMOTIONS

CENTRE FOR
CRITICAL &
CULTURAL
STUDIES



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

date

29-30 SEP 2014

location

**THE UNIVERSITY OF
QUEENSLAND**

Hosted by the School of English, Media Studies
and Art History.

2014 WIP Conference

The Life of Things

Call For Papers

The investigation of *things* has comprised an important subject across many disciplines in the humanities and social sciences over the last thirty years. In 1988's *The Social Life of Things*, Arjun Appadurai provided an innovative exploration of how things, as commodities, shaped their human agents, rather than the other way round—an idea that would have important repercussions for a new scholarly interest in material cultures. More recently, in attempting to illuminate the problematic notion of a “Thing Theory,” Bill Brown has pointed to the complex relationship between objects and things, arguing that *things* in fact lie outside a simple subject-object framework, leading a shadowy and multifaceted “life” which humans only glimpse rather than truly see.

What then can we now say about “things” in relation to shifting cultural contexts, to works of art or literature, or in relation to their own “lives?” Where are the lines that divide the sentient from the non-sentient, the human from the non-human, and what are their consequences?

The 18th annual **Work In Progress (WIP)** is a postgraduate conference addressing the theme of “The Life of Things” from disciplines within the humanities including literary and cultural studies, film, media and communication studies, drama, art history, and writing. Confirmed speakers include **Richard Read**, Winthrop Professor in the School of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts at the University of Western Australia; **Gillian Whitlock**, ARC Professorial Fellow in the School of English, Media Studies and Art History at the University of Queensland; and **Gay Hawkins**, Director of the Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland.

The organising committee of **WIP 2014** invite proposals for 20-minute papers on any aspect of this theme. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Thing Theory
- The Art of Things: Objects and Aesthetic Regimes
- The Contemplation of Things: the Reflective Mind and the Outside World
- Immaterial Things: Virtual Worlds, Inner Worlds
- Things and Gender/Gendering Things
- Natural and Unnatural Things: Eco-criticism and its Discontents
- The Heritage of Things: Life Stories of the Non-Living
- The Ineffableness of Things: the Struggle between Words and Worlds
- Anthropomorphising Things
- Merging and Mutable Things: Hybridity and Metamorphosis
- The Resurgent Banal?: The Everyday and Things
- It-Narratives: Things as Textual Agents
- The Structure of Things: Assemblages and Networks
- The Ascendancy of Things: Hierarchies, Obsolescence
- Worldly Things: Transnationalism, Diaspora and Identity
- Things Fall Apart: The Meanings of Destruction
- The Non-Sense of Things: Forgery, Fraud and Hoaxes
- *À la recherche du temps perdu*: Things and Memory

Please email abstracts (of 250 words) accompanied by a short biographical note (50 words) to: UQWiP2014@gmail.com by **31 JULY 2014**



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