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Making Sense of Place

**Exploring concepts and expressions of
place through different senses and lenses**

Edited by Frank Vanday, Matthew Higgins and Adam Blackshaw

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

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First published 2008 by
National Museum of Australia Press
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Canberra ACT 2601
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Fax +61 2 6208 5148
www.nma.gov.au

National Library of Australia cataloguing-in-publication data

Making sense of place: exploring the concepts and expressions of place through different senses and lenses
editors, Frank Vanclay; Matthew Higgins; Adam Blackshaw
Canberra: National Museum of Australia Press, 2008
ISBN: 9781876944513

Subjects:
Human beings – Effect of environment on
Environmental psychology
Human geography
Environmental health
Environmental economics
Forest landscape management
Urban landscape architecture
Land use – Planning.

304.2

Publisher's editors: Julie Simpkin, Raylee Singh, Thérèse Weber
Design and typesetting: Po Sung
Copyright and image delivery: Denis French
Print: Pirion

Cover image: courtesy Ursula de Jong

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Director's foreword

The National Museum of Australia was delighted to be a partner in the Sense of Place conference held in Hobart during April 2006. The several days of discussion provoked a great interest in how and what Australians and others mean by 'sense of place' and how it relates to the places that are important to us. The broad range of backgrounds of both speakers and participants illustrated how important 'place' is to humankind, and how many people are there are on place.

So it is with great pleasure that the National Museum of Australia Press has produced this book, stemming as it does from the conference and representing a further development of a number of the presentations made in Hobart. The volume has been an excellent way of bringing upon a number of key lines of argument and dissertation.

The accompanying DVD captures, with extraordinary sensitivity, a number of the relationships with place, recorded in interviews with conference participants of the Hobart gathering. The interviewees' spoken words complement the tone of the written words of this volume.

The National Museum, in exploring its three themes of land, nation and people, is aware of how individuals, societies and cultures are shaped by their environment and how place is in turn shaped by them. This relationship between people and place and the relationship that exists at a range of levels, from the theoretical and remote to the practical and daily lived — is a rich and worthwhile area of study and research. I am sure that this book and DVD will make a major contribution to the way we think about and relate to place.

Craddock Morton

Director

National Museum of Australia

Editors' preface

This book and its accompanying DVD are outputs of the Senses of Place conference held in Hobart in April 2006. The conference, with its by-line of 'exploring concepts and expressions of place through different senses and lenses', sought to expand understandings of place by broadening the basis by which it is usually considered. A sense of place can be in the form of a cognitive consciousness (or intellectual abstraction), but full appreciation of the meaning of place can only be experienced through the senses — the smell, taste, feel, sound, sight and spiritual dimensions of place that we experience, whether we are aware of them or not.

The reference to different 'senses' and 'lenses' was deliberately intended to encompass the multiplicity of possible ways of experiencing, embodying and manifesting place, as well as the different ways of looking at and representing place — at different scales, from different disciplinary perspectives, using different media, and from the perspectives of different 'actors'. In the spirit of the conference, this book seeks to convey some idea of the significance that place has in people's lives and the breadth of possible approaches to exploring and examining place.

The Senses of Place conference was a collaboration between four parties: the National Museum of Australia; the Place Research Network; the Community, Place and Change Theme Area of the University of Tasmania; and the Mountain Festival. Held during the Mountain Festival in Hobart, the conference was able to extend to delegates a wide array of place-inspired experiences, including musical performances, an art exhibition, multimedia installations, an interpreted tour of a sculpture trail, a facilitated discussion forum, as well as place-based food and wine.

Unfortunately, the medium of a book (even with an accompanying DVD) puts constraints on the dimensions of place that can be presented. Of course, all topics can be discussed in written form, but reading about the food of a particular place, for example, and enjoying eating it are slightly different experiences! Nevertheless, the abundance of colour illustrations as well as the rich and colourful descriptions of the authors has assisted in imparting something of the experiences and sensations associated with the places that are featured in this collection.

The book format also limited the number of contributions that could be included. While more than 100 presentations were given at the conference, it was only possible to include a much smaller number in this volume. The chapters were selected on the basis of a wide range of criteria, including that of maintaining a broad coverage of approaches to the topic, readability, and of enhancing understanding of place. We thank all those who offered their papers to us and we apologise to those who we had to decline.

A work such as this inevitably incurs debts of gratitude to many people. With them all, there are some that deserve special recognition. First and foremost, we wish to thank Julie Simpkin for her work in copyediting the book. We also thank Po Sung for design of the book. Denis French was instrumental in collecting permissions to use the many illustrations. The other members of the Senses of Place Conference Planning Committee have also been supportive in the editing process. We thank Jeff Malpas, Jonathan Holmes, Elaine Mackenzie, Ian Coates and Chris Cooper. Ana Maria Esteves assisted in proofreading the final manuscript, providing valued advice.

Finally, this book and the conference could not have occurred without the support of the National Museum of Australia. It is only fitting that Australia's national museum should play a leading role in interpreting 'place', promoting an understanding of place, and encouraging debate around the issues associated with place and our sense of place.

Frank Vanclay, Matthew Higgins and Adam Blackshaw