



left: Francis Reiss (b.1927), *Bernard Smith* c.1990. Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an10938995-2  
right: Unknown photographer, *Portrait of Rex Nan Kivell Seated in Front of a Painting* 1959? Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn4837130

## Men Who Make Their Own History: The Legacies of Bernard Smith and Rex Nan Kivell

Dr Sheridan Palmer  
Tuesday 27 July, 5.30 pm  
Conference Room, free

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.

(Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852)

In his interrogation of Australia's past, Bernard Smith (b.1916) produced a revisionist history that established him as a pre-eminent cultural historian. Rex Nan Kivell (1898–1977) transformed himself into an urbane cosmopolitan in London, where he became a collector and caretaker of cultural material relating to the South Pacific. Both Smith and Nan Kivell referred to the past to create their present, their identities forever linked with European colonisation and the peripheral cultures of the South Pacific. This paper considers the interconnections between the two men.

Dr Sheridan Palmer is writing the authorised biography of Bernard Smith. She is an independent art historian, curator and an Honorary Fellow of The Australian Centre, The University of Melbourne.