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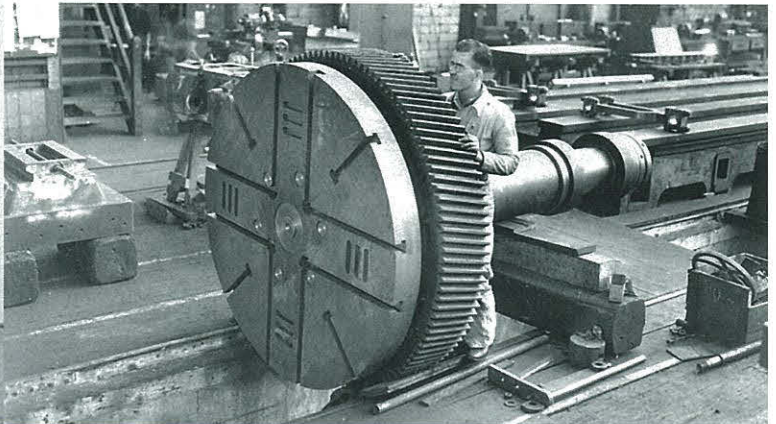
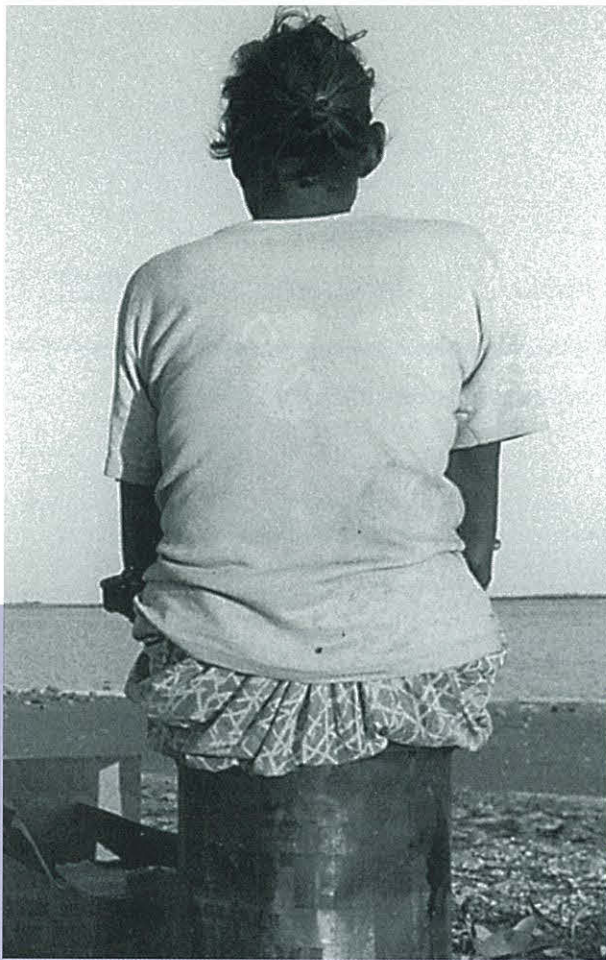


COVER IMAGE:

Danie Mellor
Wachter dein kultur (Guardian of culture), 2002
Earthenware
Courtesy of Queensland Art Gallery

Danie Mellor's ceramic *Wachter dein kultur* (Guardian of culture) is one of a set of three earthenware German Shepherd dogs. The dogs flanking *Wachter dein kultur* are (left) *Sea hund* and (right) *The ranger*. During Mellor's student days in Germany he saw Cape York Indigenous material in German museums. This experience inspired the creation of these German Shepherd dogs bearing coloured relief maps of Cape York.

Story Place: Indigenous Art of Cape York and the Rainforest, at Queensland Art Gallery until 9 November.



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MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA — RESOLUTIONS FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MAY 30, 2003

1 FROM THE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS SIG

Noting that the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee (AVCC) recognises the value of university museums and collections through the Cinderella Collections Reports and,

Noting the changing funding models in the tertiary education sector:

Museums Australia resolves to assist the AVCC to advise the Cultural Ministers Council of the significant part of the Distributed National Collection held in the university sector with the intent of reviewing funding models to support access and care of these national assets.

Moved: Suzanne Davies, **Seconded:** Andrew Simpson. **Carried**

2 FROM THE MEMBERS (FRIENDS AND VOLUNTEERS) SIG

That in view of the insurance crisis in our museums and cognate organisations we ask Museums Australia to:

- a Commission an empirically-based report that describes and defines the nature and extent of the problem, and develops strategies for dealing with the crisis not limited to a 'general insurance' scheme for the whole sector.
- b Move to implement the strategies that arise from the report as a matter of urgency, depending on sourcing appropriate funding.

Moved: Richard Gates, **Seconded:** Susan Bridie. **Carried**

3 FROM THE VISUAL ARTS, CRAFTS AND DESIGN SIG

That Museums Australia congratulates the Federal Government for, and endorses its support of, the visual arts through its response to the needs identified in the Myer Report.

Moved: Suzanne Davies, **Seconded:** Merry Gates. **Carried**

4 FROM THE COMMUNITY MUSEUMS SIG**Preamble**

That the Community Museums SIG records appreciation of the excellence of the 2003 Conference Remote and Regional stream and the outcomes, and that the R & R stream be an ongoing component of any future conferences.

- That: (a) National conference committees include a sub-committee to develop and promote R & R components of the Museums Australia Conference Programs, and
- (b) National Conference Committees draw on the Community Museums SIG for representation on the R&R stream program committee.

Moved: Gary Deakin, **Seconded:** Robert Mitchell. **Carried**

5 FROM THE MUSEUM STUDIES SIG

Noting that action is outstanding on two of the three resolutions passed at the 2002 Museums Australia AGM (see below) we request that action on these resolutions be expedited.

Moved: Moira Simpson, **Seconded:** Jennifer Barrett. **Carried**

Resolutions passed at the 2002 AGM:

- 1 Noting the assumed value of on-the-job learning opportunities for entry-level practitioners in the museums sector, this meeting resolves that the Museums Australia Council investigate the capacity of Australian museums to support the hosting of work placements and internships for students in the post-secondary education sector, and report back to the AGM in 2003.
- 2 As a way of encouraging research activity and participation in professional discourse, this meeting resolves that the Museums Australia Council considers establishing a prize in at least two categories (open and student) for the best paper delivered at the Museums Australia annual conference and report back to the AGM in 2003.

6 FROM THE ARMY MUSEUM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

That, further to the motion of the AGM in 2000, this Museums Australia AGM expresses its great concern about the ongoing threat to the viability of the Army Museum of WA and therefore urges the Federal government to provide for the Museum's sustainable future by paying commercial rates for the Artillery/Barracks and other Fremantle buildings.

Moved: Paul Bridges, **Seconded:** Stephen Antsey. **Carried**

7 FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA AND ICOM (ANC)

Noting the urgent need to address ongoing collection management, curatorial practice and operation in Pacific Island museums; and The preparedness of the National Museum of Australia to broker support between Australian and Pacific Island museums for a three-year period, with an evaluation at the end of the triennium

Museums Australia and the International Council of Museums Australian National Committee resolve that they will make representations to the ministers for Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Arts and Sport, and the Cultural Ministers Council, to develop and implement training and other support programs for museum staff both in Australian and Pacific Island museums.

Moved: Darryl McIntyre, **Seconded:** Sue-Anne Wallace. **Carried**

8 FROM TWO MEMBERS

That Museums Australia, in consultation with the ICOM(ANC), PIMA and with the agreement of the Solomon Islands National Museum (SINM) explores the coordination of a volunteers program to support the SINM.

In particular, Museums Australia should identify:

- a Projects that support SINM
- b Experience/skills, tools, equipment needed for projects
- c Notes on living conditions and projects for volunteer teams
- d Administration for entry/exit to Solomon Islands
- e Travel and accommodation arrangements (volunteers to pay their own way)

And support a move to the Australian Volunteers Organisation to assist in this work, advising AVO of the particular area of expertise in Museums Australia and what members might be able to offer and noting possible opportunities for coordination with AVO and other relevant organisations.

Moved: Bill Storer, **Seconded:** Margaret Birtley. **Carried**

9 FROM INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

That this meeting congratulates Museums Australia on its contribution to the recovery and future protection of Iraq heritage through its advice to the Australian Heritage Commission's cultural Heritage Reference Group of Iraq and encourages continued consultation and involvement.

Moved: Darryl McIntyre, **Seconded:** Bill Storer. **Carried**

10 FROM THE INDIGENOUS SIG

As a matter of urgency, this meeting resolves that Museums Australia issues a media release highlighting the gains that Australian museums have made through the policies and practices of repatriation of human remains to Indigenous communities. Repatriation has achieved:

- Stronger relations between Indigenous communities and museums
- Further joint research projects (in some cases)
- A greater awareness in wider communities of past atrocities

Moved: Fabri Blacklock, **Seconded:** Amanda Reynolds. **Carried**

IMAGES OF INDIGENOUS POLITICAL STRUGGLE — *PROOF*

AT THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY AT COMMONWEALTH PLACE

Linda Burney, Member for Canterbury in the NSW Legislative Assembly and the first Indigenous person to become a member of parliament in that state, gave an emotional speech to open *Proof: Portraits from The Movement*, at the National Portrait Gallery's lakeside venue at Commonwealth Place in Canberra on 12 July. Ironically, just five days later police made a dawn raid on the Aboriginal Tent Embassy and removed the fire-damaged container that until recently housed the information centre for the Embassy.

While there are concerns among many Indigenous people as to some of the aspects of the

Tent Embassy site, there is broad support within the Indigenous community for a continued presence there. The whole sorry episode of the arson attack on the information centre container and the subsequent pressure by federal authorities for its removal refocuses the theme of Juno Gemes' photographic exhibition of leaders and incidents in the struggle for Indigenous political rights in Australia in the period from 1978 to the present.

Photographs of major players in the struggle for Indigenous rights are on display, as well as poignant images of Indigenous people's connection to the land, such as the photograph of a family

on the beach at Mornington Island shown here.

Linda Burney said that since the time of the celebration of the Centenary of Federation we had lost our way as a national community. The expectation of good things in the future created around that occasion had not eventuated. All Australians, she said, need to move forward as a community from the wrongs and divisions of the past. Incidents such as the forcible removal of the Tent Embassy information centre demonstrate that the hopes expressed by Linda, and by those depicted with such skill and sensitivity by Juno Gemes, may be some time in coming to fruition.

ALL AUSTRALIANS
NEED TO MOVE
FORWARD AS A
COMMUNITY FROM
THE WRONGS
AND DIVISIONS
OF THE PAST.

Juno Gemes, *One with the Land*,
Mornington Island Queensland
1978

Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery



SEA STORIES

EXHIBITIONS & MUSEUM DISPLAYS RELATING TO THE SEA ARE ON SHOW AROUND AUSTRALIA

WHYALLA MARITIME MUSEUM REOPENS

Whyalla Maritime Museum's building was officially reopened on Saturday 5 July 2003 after extensive renovations of its interior and the installation of a new permanent exhibition. As the Whyalla Maritime Museum specialises in the naval history, BHP shipbuilding and early maritime heritage and natural history of the Upper Spencer Gulf, the new design reflects the themes in three separate galleries with different colours and different soundtracks to emphasise the subjects. Designed and curated by museum's manager and curator Paul Mazourek, most of the work was carried out by contractors from Whyalla, with only a few specialised services provided from outside the region.

THE DESIGN REFLECTS THEMES IN THREE SEPARATE GALLERIES WITH DIFFERENT COLOURS AND DIFFERENT SOUNDTRACKS TO EMPHASISE THE SUBJECTS

Whyalla's BHP shipyards produced sixty-six ships between 1940 and 1978. The four World War Two corvettes built in Whyalla in 1941 and 1942 — one of them, ex HMAS *Whyalla* on permanent display outside the museum — distinguished themselves in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea during the hostilities. The World War Two Gallery now illustrates the story of four corvettes, and also explains the role of Japan during World War Two.

The BHP shipyards in Whyalla constructed a number of cargo ships and tankers including the largest cargo carrier in the Southern Hemisphere and an oil-drilling platform for a US company. BHP Shipbuilding Gallery deals with the construction processes and history of the shipyards and individual ships.

Spencer Gulf is recognised as one of the most diverse marine habitats in Australia. The Northern Spencer Gulf Gallery documents Port Jackson, bronze whaler and thresher shark species along with stingrays, whales, crayfish, seadragons and octopuses and variety of fish. The geology and hydrology plays an important role in the new exhibition's education programs as well.

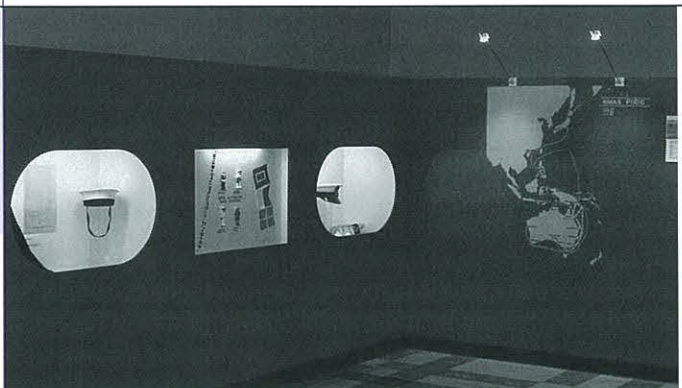
The museum also owns the first edition of Matthew Flinders' journals, and exhibits the remnants of Spencer Gulf shipwrecks and the story of the Point Lowly lighthouse. The social history and development of the City of Whyalla is documented elsewhere at the National Trust's Mount Laura Homestead Museum.

PAUL MAZOUREK IS MANAGER AND CURATOR OF WHYALLA MARITIME MUSEUM

FISHERMEN'S SIGNS

A unique system of signs used by generations of fishermen from one village in Portugal is the subject of *Siglas de Pescadores — Signs of Fishermen*, at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney until 30 November 2003.

This 'sign language', developed by illiterate villagers as an alternative system to written language, was used to identify possessions, and to indicate family relationships. The geometric designs demonstrated ownership of such items as boats, furniture and other household items, clothing, and fishing tackle and equipment. It was even used on fish to show who had caught them.



New display in reopened Whyalla Maritime Museum
Courtesy of Paul Mazourek, Whyalla Maritime Museum

SQUID SPANS FOUR FLOORS

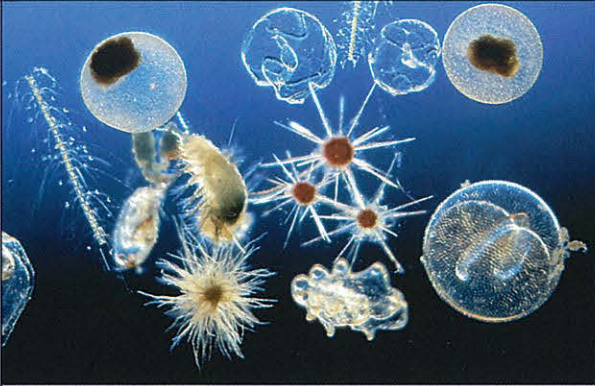
An old lift shaft makes an innovative display space to show this model of a giant squid (right).

As part of the South Australian Museum's new Biodiversity Gallery, 'Life in the Deep', the museum's supervisor of 3D design, Jo Bain, has organised the modelling of a recreation of the largest Giant Squid (*Architeuthis dux*) ever recorded. It is eleven metres in length.

As well as the striking Giant Squid display, which can be viewed through glass windows and interactive screens, 'Life in the Deep' also displays representative deep sea biota — corals, sea spiders, Coffin fish, Southern sea devil, Orange roughy and Pinocchio shark.

'Life in the Deep' is the first phase of the South Australian Museum's Biodiversity Gallery opening on the museum's second floor over the next two years.

SEEING THE OCEAN



Above: Mixed marine plankton. In this sample from the Great Barrier Reef there are larval worms, fish eggs, acanthometra, foraminiferans, larval sea cucumbers, chain diatoms, and a crab larva, ©Peter Parks/imagequest3d.com
Centre: Mantis Shrimp larva, Stomatopoda, ©Peter Parks/imagequest3d.com
Right: Octopus larva, ©Peter Parks/imagequest3d.com

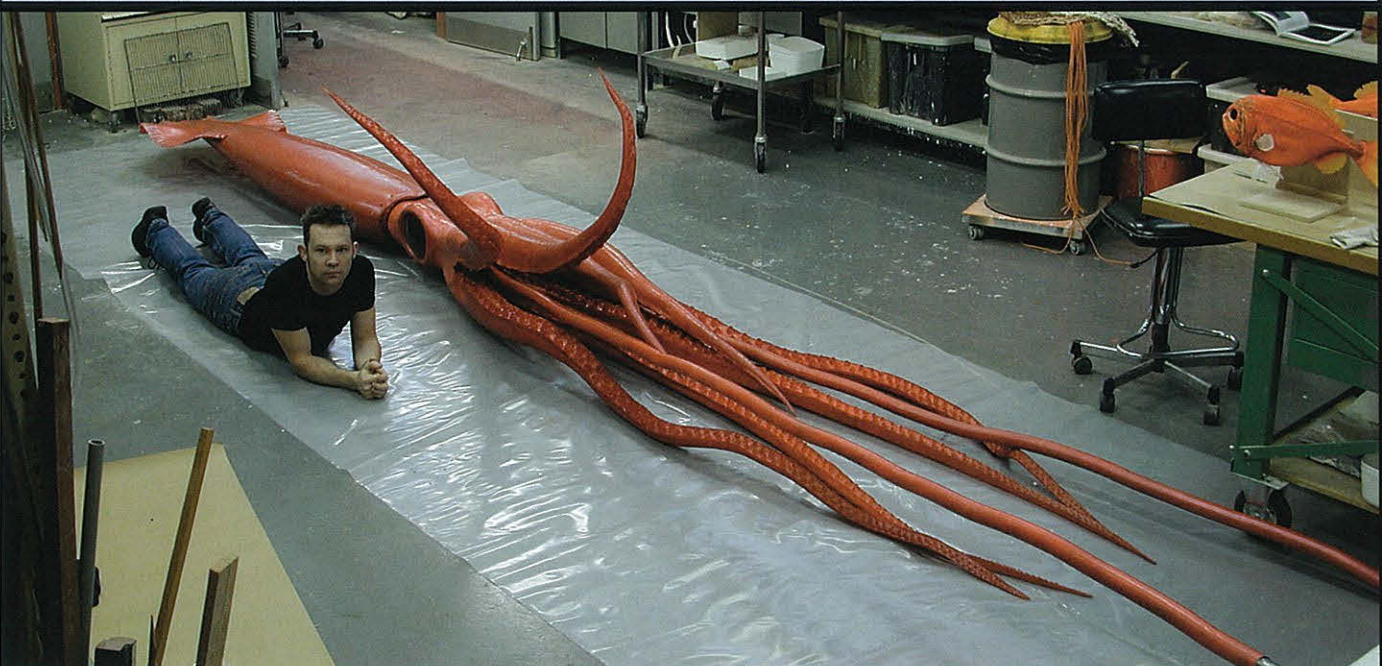


The unassuming microscopic plankton of the sea has surfaced in splendour in the Australian Museum's travelling exhibition, *Beyond the Reef*. Using an extraordinary 3D camera, world-renowned natural history photographer Peter Parks has produced a show that brings invisible sea creatures to life. Without

plankton, there would be few living organisms on earth, and certainly no Great Barrier Reef. It is also the filter food of the great baleen whales. Images in the show are exquisitely delicate and beautiful, mostly filmed on the reef near the Australian Museum's Lizard Island Research Station where Peter and his team were based for

two years. The exhibition is due to launch its national tour in Townsville's Museum of Tropical Queensland in August. *Beyond the Reef* was sponsored by the British Council.

GLENN FERGUSON IS MANAGER, TOURING AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS, AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM



Model of a giant squid, soon to go on display in the South Australian Museum. Courtesy of the South Australian Museum

FIONA CAMERON

REDEFINING MUSEUM ROLES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY — CONTEST AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Museums now exist in an academic, cultural and social context of contest and controversy. A long-established practice of exhibiting 'the facts', 'truth', 'national history' or unproblematic conceptions of 'other' places and peoples is no longer wholly sustainable in an environment where the self-evidence of all these things is under question by sectors of the community. Furthermore, topics and new knowledge that challenge, upset, intrigue and attract are now all legitimate areas for museological investigation and in many instances foreground community concerns and interests. Ongoing cultural, social and political tensions in Australia and in other countries also heighten the need for civic spaces where diverse communities might learn about and debate issues of contemporary relevance and importance. Having said this, if institutions are to make themselves more relevant in contemporary society, a re-evaluation of the purposes of museums, exhibitions and programming is required, focusing on their roles as civic spaces. Therefore what potential roles can museums in the twenty-first century play in this new climate of contestation?

Over the last thirty years museum thinkers such as Duncan Cameron, Stephen Weil and Elaine Gurian have attempted to answer this question, proposing speculative models for museums as sites for the engagement of 'difficult' subjects. Yet despite these

arguments, and the continuous reassessment since the emergence of the new museology of what the museum does and for whom institutions speak, there is lacking a theoretical, analytical and practical framework based on sustained research to understand the contemporary and future roles of museums in relation to these subjects. Providing tangible answers to these questions has been one of the central themes for the international research project 'Exhibitions as Contested Sites — the roles of museums in contemporary society' (funded by the Australian Research Council and the Canadian Museums Association with partners the University of Sydney History Department, the Australian Museum and the Australian War Memorial). From this starting point, our research sought to examine a number of positioning statements drawn from theoretical literature and current museological arguments, through a program of qualitative and quantitative research with communities, museum audiences, media, museum staff and stakeholders in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States and United Kingdom. By sampling this range of locations, communities and institutions the project team sought to highlight the challenges, limitations and opportunities that institutions face in different geo-political, social and cultural contexts.

Questions explored by the research include the following.

What is the role of museums as information resources on contentious topics as opposed to other sources such as books, the media and schools? Should museums act as provocateurs, leaders of public opinion, or transformative spaces, to challenge and change views? Or are museums to be safe civic places for the exploration of a range of views? Can museums take on a role of social activism, to assist in the resolution of issues on a personal or political level, or should they be places for non-challenging social experiences? Alternatively can museums be all of these things at once?

Consider for example, whether museums are transformative spaces to challenge and change people's views. Significantly, fifty-nine per cent of people surveyed as part of our omnibus survey in Sydney (which included museum and non-museum goers) said that museums should challenge generally accepted views, with a further sixty-three per cent stating that museums should not be afraid to change the views of their audiences on important topics. Generally older people and lower socio-economic segments represented in the survey (many of whom were non-museum goers) were more conservative in their perception of museums. Younger people and those of higher socio-economic groups by comparison (many identified as museum goers), see a need for museums to have a more active role, particularly as places that challenge generally accepted

views on important topics and for the fearless examination of contentious subjects. The latter observations are supported by exit surveys conducted during the *Body Art* exhibition at the Australian Museum where seventy-eight per cent of visitors suggested museums should challenge views, and eighty-three per cent state that museums should not be afraid to change views.

Qualitative research suggests that transformative experiences and attitudinal shifts can be achieved by 'expanding audiences' knowledge, for example by opening them up to a range of perspectives on topics via diverse viewpoints, the provision of alternative historical accounts and sources, new information on contentious subjects, and allowing the censorship of confronting material to be an individual decision.

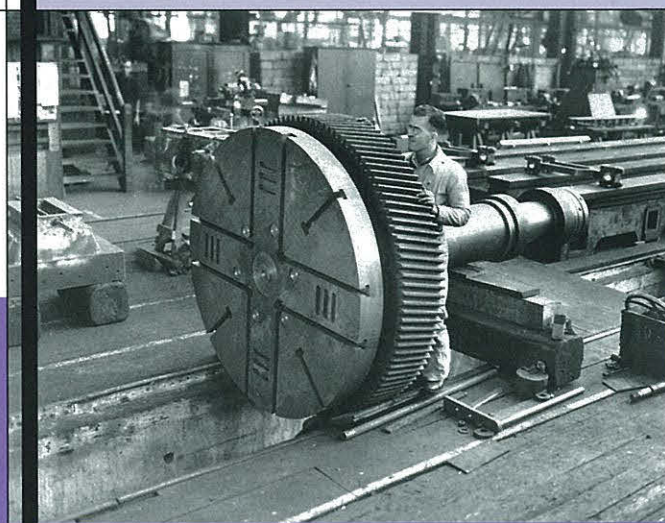
Museum staff also support the transformative possibilities of museums. Survey results from five countries found that seventy-nine per cent of staff respondents believe museums should challenge generally accepted views, with ninety-one per cent suggesting that museums should not be afraid to change visitors' views. However only around fifty-five per cent of those sampled actually felt their institutions took this stance through the engagement of more challenging subject matter. To account for the differences between perceptions and actualities, many staff suggested that their institutions

SURVEY RESULTS FROM FIVE COUNTRIES FOUND THAT
79% OF STAFF RESPONDENTS BELIEVE MUSEUMS SHOULD
CHALLENGE GENERALLY ACCEPTED VIEWS

were under political pressure to show 'the good side of things'. Clearly our findings indicate that in many instances a gulf exists between staff and audience expectations and those of management and stakeholders. Further analysis of the data will reveal how these results vary between countries, audiences, museums and geographical locations. The findings of this exciting and internationally significant research project will be presented at a symposium to be held at the University of Sydney

on 28 November 2003. Renowned museum thinker and consultant Elaine Gurian, along with a panel of speakers including a museum director, historian, and scientific, political and media commentators, will respond to the findings followed by an industry forum. For more details visit our website <http://www.amonline.net.au/amarc/contested/>

DR FIONA CAMERON
RESEARCH FELLOW, HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY



IMAGES OF INDUSTRY

The shapes of industry and the architecture that housed it are the subjects of a photographic exhibition by Peter Liddy and Richard Stringer, *Industrial Cycle: Photographs of the North Ipswich Railway Workshops*, on display at the Workshops Rail Museum, Ipswich, from 16 August to 19 October.

Photograph courtesy of Queensland University Art Museum

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'THE OTHER SIDE'

MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, PERTH, 25-30 MAY 2003

Over 400 members of Museums Australia gathered in Perth in May, in glorious sunny weather, to investigate 'The Other Side'. Delegates made the most of their time in Western Australia, attending the lively and informative conference sessions, exploring Perth and its surrounds, and venturing as far afield as New Norcia and Rottnest Island on

excursions halfway through the week.

Several articles on conference activities are included here, including coverage of the revived MA Publication Design Awards. Congratulations to Ian Watts and Katherine Wilkinson for their energetic guidance of this process. Keynote addresses will be published

in full in a future issue of *Open Museum Journal*, and other papers are on the Museums Australia website, www.museumsaustralia.org.au. A number of delegates have contributed photographs for this issue — thank you for your contributions. Above all, congratulations to MA Western Australia for a wonderful week on 'the other side'.

NATIONAL COLLECTIONS ADVISORY FORUM

UPDATE

Since the update in the May 2003 edition of *Museum National*, the National Collections Advisory Forum has embarked on an ambitious program of work, identifying the challenges ahead and devising strategies to meet the needs and priorities of the cultural collections sector. Forum Chair, Dr Margaret Seares AO, and Forum member, Margaret Birtley, presented 'update' sessions at the recent conference Museums Australia in Perth. This report aims to provide a consolidation of the information shared in those two sessions.

Readers need to be aware that the Forum is focused on the cultural collections sector as a whole and is, therefore, looking for strategies that will be effective in all four 'domains' where such collections are located — galleries, libraries, archives and museums.

Issues and challenges

There are many challenges and issues that impact upon the health, development and long-term sustainability of the collections sector. Three of the key challenges are:

Commonality

While it is recognised that there are distinct differences among museums, galleries, libraries and archives, there is now a much greater level of commonality in the activities of these institutions.

Areas of common concern and practice have traditionally centred on the documentation, management and conservation of collections. However, the expectations of the sector's client base are becoming more sophisticated. This has created new areas of commonality including research, interpretation and digitisation of collections data and records, albeit that the methods utilised may be different in different domains of the sector. There is also an added interest by all parts of the sector in the promotion of the value of collections to the wider community. The sector as a whole is demonstrating a high level of responsiveness to change and seeking to enhance the levels of flexibility in its approach to meet these demands. This growing commonality of purpose means that there are tremendous opportunities for dissemination of examples of best practice across the sector so that all can benefit from the very positive developments that are taking place in all domains.

Collaboration vs competition

The Forum sees an interesting tension between sector collaboration and competition.

Historically, collaboration within the Australian collections environment has not been vigorously pursued, at least not across the different domains of the sector. However, working cooperatively may have the benefit of maximising available resources and attracting greater government and private support for all.

Conversely, competition is necessary and inevitable when carving out a niche in the market place. Competition can further stimulate excellence and lead to improvement in the collections environment.

This tension between competition and collaboration is bound to remain and forms part of the operational environment across the cultural sector. Therefore, a balance needs to be found to maximise the positive aspects of each and use them to the advantage of the sector.

Volunteers

Market demand for competent, committed unpaid workers is overwhelming, as is competition for their services.

The Forum recognises that the success of many collections institutions depends on the dedicated effort of volunteers and, for this success to continue, the sector needs to attract and retain high quality personnel. This will require effective volunteer management practices that ensure that the views, experiences and requirements of volunteers are not overlooked when considering the future of the sector. There are some excellent examples already at work, and these need to be singled out and celebrated as models for the rest of the sector to consider.

Strategies

Each of the issues described above falls within the ambit of one or more of the Forum's four Terms of Reference, and a number of strategies are being developed to address these.

National Industry Body

The Key Needs Study identified the lack of a united voice to advocate for the collections sector and the Forum considers that achieving this voice is paramount for addressing the key needs of the sector and achieving outcomes that foster a vibrant, sustainable collections environment.

As reported in the May 2003 edition, a study is being conducted into the feasibility of establishing a National Industry Body, which caters to the needs of all domains. Important questions that are being addressed are: How necessary or feasible is a national body? If necessary, what shape will it take? How might it benefit the sector? Can leadership in developing cross-domain collaboration be achieved in any other way?

Key Needs

The Forum has been tasked to prioritise the key needs identified by the Study.

In an effort to obtain direction on how to effectively rank these needs, the Forum has consulted widely with the sector.

One of the ways the Forum hopes to promote and support collections in regional Australia is through the concept of regional networks or 'hubs'. These networks seek to draw on existing resources and apply the collective knowledge, experience and ideas of the collections caretakers through a centre of expertise within a geographically defined boundary. Regional networks will drive collaboration and change by developing close relationships with local professionals and volunteers. The Forum is currently piloting two such projects to assess their viability.

Benchmarks

It is the Forum's view that clearly defined, nationally consistent, quality benchmarks should be developed and implemented to assist the sector in achieving best practice in the management and care of collections. This initiative is also in line with the *National Conservation and Preservation Policy and Strategy's* recommendation. However, the success of a benchmarking system will depend upon a long-term commitment and an integrated, strategic approach from the sector.

IT IS THE FORUM'S VIEW THAT CLEARLY DEFINED, NATIONALLY CONSISTENT, QUALITY BENCHMARKS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED TO ASSIST THE SECTOR IN ACHIEVING BEST PRACTICE

The consultations indicated that several of the key needs are closely interlinked and considered to be equally important. While it may not be feasible to create a prioritised list, a number of key needs did surface as requiring immediate action.

Professional Development, Significance and Motivational Learning

Commitment to the professional development of cultural collections personnel, whether paid or unpaid, is crucial.

The Forum realises that the energy and enthusiasm of the sector's volunteers should be nurtured and is currently investigating an approach to training that makes the best use of limited financial resources, is sensitive to diversity and regional needs, caters to the needs of volunteers and is relevant and ongoing. An approach that encompasses these aspects may encourage the capacity of local communities to manage and care for their own collections in a sustainable way.

One particular area being explored is the dissemination of best practice in the identification of 'significance' of objects within collections.

Understanding the concept of 'significance' is essential for the story of an object or collection to be effectively relayed to the audience. This has led to the exploration of the possibility of establishing a framework for motivational learning, which involves voluntary, self-organising adult education groups that learn about a subject using high quality discussion materials developed specifically for the purpose.

National Regional Networks

Regional Australia faces the same challenges as their urban counterparts, but much more acutely due to geographic dispersion. The Forum is keen to identify a practical model or models that will bring isolated practitioners together to develop networks that support and encourage cooperation.

The practicability of national benchmarks will be assessed through a formal feasibility study and stakeholder consultation, which is about to get underway.

Areas that could be covered by benchmarks are accessioning and de-accessioning policies, buildings, storage, handling and use of collections, environmental monitoring and control, conservation and emergency recovery. This is not an exhaustive list and it is more than likely that it will be revised during the feasibility and consultative stages of the project.

Community Values

Another important issue is the community's understanding and valuing of its cultural collections. The collections sector recognises that low public awareness of cultural collections impacts on its ability to remain relevant and attracts resources. Currently, there is insufficient data to assess with confidence the factors influencing the level of community support for the collections sector. The Forum is eager to investigate how information can be effectively obtained and analysed to give an insight into community attitudes and the implications in terms of the procurement, interpretation and display of significant material within collections.

Further information:

Background on the Forum can be found on the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) website, www.dcita.gov.au.

Contact

Further inquiries relating to the Forum can be directed to:
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REMOTE & REGIONAL STREAM REPORT

CLARE-FRANCES CRAIG



Carol Littlefair, Curator at York Residency Museum, addressed the Remote & Regional Stream delegates as part of their tour to New Norcia and York on 28 May
Photograph by Rostyn Russell

The 2003 MA Conference in Perth will be remembered for many highlights but perhaps the most successful outcome of the new format was the level of enrolments for the Remote & Regional (R&R) Stream.

Of around 400 enrolments in the conference, more than half registered for the R&R Stream. Previously the R&R Conference was held separately — the last in Kalgoorlie in 2001.

The new format proved to be very successful. There were nine different training workshops on offer designed to suit workers from remote and regional museums. The delegates were able to choose according to their interests. Unexpectedly, there was also strong enrolment in these workshops from people working in larger institutions. The topics ranged from standard collection management issues to visitor evaluation and designing a website. There was an innovative 'meet the curator' session involving Jo Darbyshire who recently curated the Gay Museum exhibition at the WA Museum.

Sunday morning's plenary session included a video link to NSW where an audience in Hay shared the session and participated in question time. The session from Renmark in South Australia was not so fortunate. The link failed but each audience was able to watch part of the presentation pre-recorded on videotape.

While the technicians attempted to fix the problem, Elizabeth Hof (Museums Australia WA Branch Coordinator) provided an exemplary demonstration of chairing a session through difficulties when she delivered an impressive overview of the collaborative projects between community museums and local Indigenous groups — the focus of the session.

The failure of the link meant that the Nukunu Peoples Council from South Australia missed a chance to present live to the assembled audience. However, this also meant there was more time for the presentation by the Kodja Place Interpretative Centre, Kojonup, Western Australia.

The other presenters in this plenary session included keynote speaker Harry Needham from Canada who gave a stimulating paper on live interpretation with examples from across the world. It is interesting to note that Harry Needham also delivered two workshops in the R&R stream and these were among the most popular offered.

Sue Harlow from the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory gave an interesting paper on museum visitor behaviour, which was very well received. It gave a practical analysis with useful examples of signage and visitor management drawing on Sue's experience of working in the Northern Territory.

THE 2003 MA CONFERENCE IN PERTH WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR MANY HIGHLIGHTS BUT PERHAPS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF THE NEW FORMAT WAS THE LEVEL OF ENROLMENTS FOR THE R&R STREAM. OF AROUND 400 ENROLMENTS IN THE CONFERENCE, MORE THAN HALF REGISTERED FOR THE R&R STREAM.

As a direct result of the success of the R&R Stream at this year's MA Conference the Community Museums Special Interest Group passed a motion that:

- 'The Community Museums SIG records appreciation of the excellence of this year's R&R stream and its outcomes, and that the R&R Stream be an ongoing component of any future conferences.
- National conference committees include a sub-committee to develop and promote R&R components of the Museums Australia Conference programs, and
- National conference committees draw on the Community Museums SIG for representation on the R&R Stream program sub-committee.'

This motion was adopted by the MA AGM, making the R&R Stream a focus for future conference organisers.

CLARE-FRANCES CRAIG IS EXTENSION OFFICER (CASUAL) WITH THE WA MUSEUM'S MUSEUM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



A fine example of 'live interpretation', Dom Christopher Power, of the Benedictine Monastery at New Norcia, gave an entertaining and informative account of this remarkable heritage site to the Remote & Regional Stream delegates

Photograph by Roslyn Russell

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MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA PUBLICATION DESIGN AWARDS

The Museums Australia Publication Design Awards are back after a five-year absence. Winners of the Awards were announced at the Museums Australia annual conference, 'The Other Side', in Perth on 27 May 2003. Museums Australia President, Carol Scott, introduced the Awards.

The Museums Australia Publication Design Awards 2003 celebrate excellence and innovation in the design communication of museum publications. Publications are defined as *printed or electronically designed graphic materials intended for distribution*, and considered an important communication tool for the museum industry. Design is recognised as a fundamental part of the communication mix.

A record 647 publications were received from 147 different museum organisations and judged against the criteria of

- Original creative idea, innovative concept
- Design skills in the expression and extension of the idea through high quality typography, photography, illustration, layout structure and material use
- Relevance of purpose, ability to effectively and meaningfully communicate, usability
- Production and technical values, the reproduction process, presentation.

The Awards recognise achievement in the following categories:

- **Exhibition and Collection Catalogue** sponsored by Australia Post
- **Poster and Calendar** sponsored by Australia Post
- **Book**
- **Magazine & Newsletter**
- **Corporate**
- **Education** sponsored by the MA Education Group
- **Promotion**
- **Website** sponsored by Interactive Controls Pty Ltd
- **Multimedia** sponsored by Audience Motivation Pty Ltd

From across this spectrum of publications is chosen the *Best in Show*, an overall Award for Excellence sponsored by Australia Post. The winner of Best in Show was from the Exhibition and Collection Catalogue area, and was awarded to Wesfarmers for *Sublime. 25 years of the Wesfarmers Collection*, by Helen Carroll, Wesfarmers.

A selection of other winners in the Museums Australia Publication Design Awards for 2003 is displayed on the right.

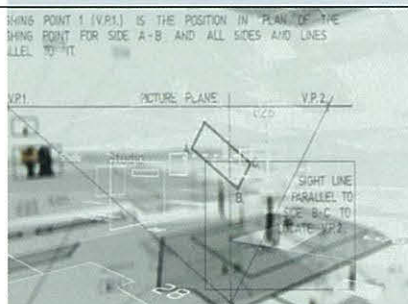
For a full listing of winners and runners-up in the 2003 Museums Australia Publication Design Awards, go to: www.museumsaustralia.org.au/programs.htm



Multimedia Level A winner,
West Space Inc, for Harmonia,
by Stephen Rutled



Multimedia Level B winner,
Biennale of Sydney,
for 2002 Biennale of Sydney,
by COFA, University of NSW



Multimedia Level C winner,
Australian Centre for the Moving
Image, for Moving Image Identity
by Daniel Crooks

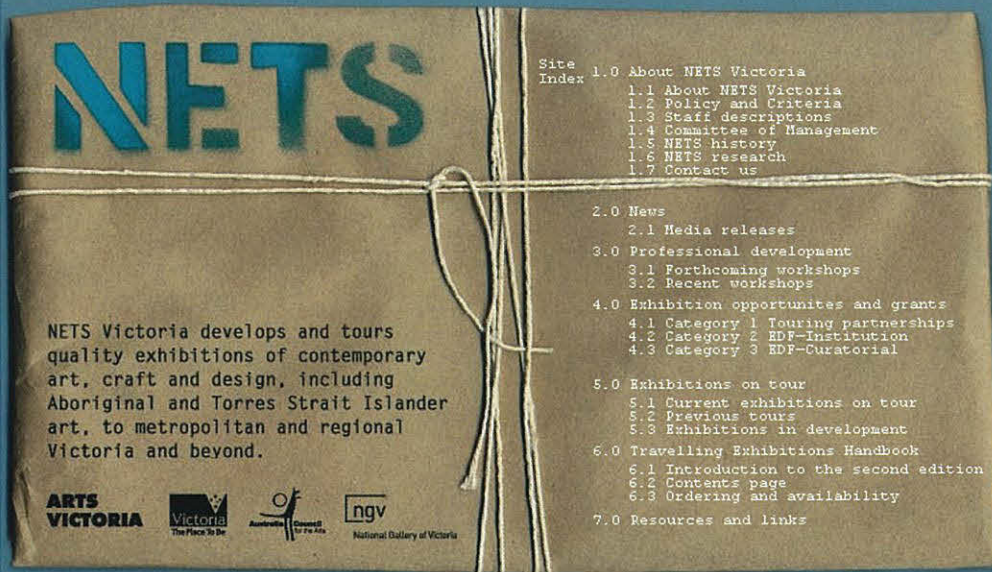


Museums Australia
Education Group

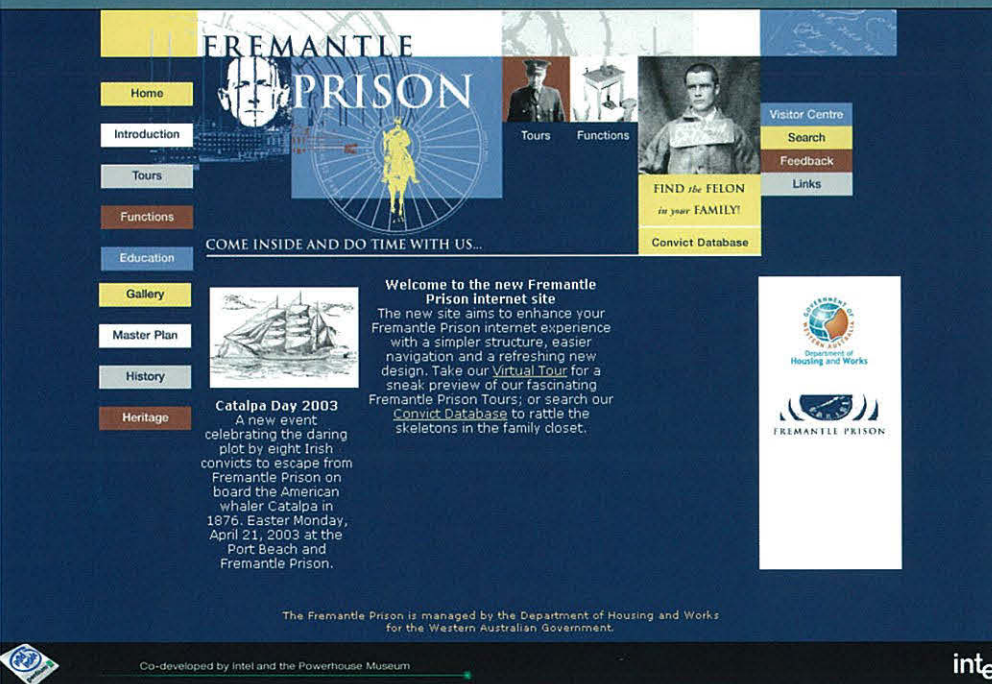
sweetdesign



Website Level A winner, National Exhibitions Touring Support (Victoria), for netsvictoria.org.au, by Studio GBK & Studio Anybody



Website Level B winner, Fremantle Prison, for fremantleprison.com.au, by John Davies



Website Level C winner, Powerhouse Museum for 1000 Years of the Olympic Games, by Powerhouse Museum and Massive Interaction



PRE-RAPHAELITES ON THE 'OTHER SIDE'

The Art Gallery of Western Australia is the only Australian institution to host *The Pre-Raphaelite Dream: Paintings and Drawings from the Tate Collections*, from 12 July to 28 September 2003.

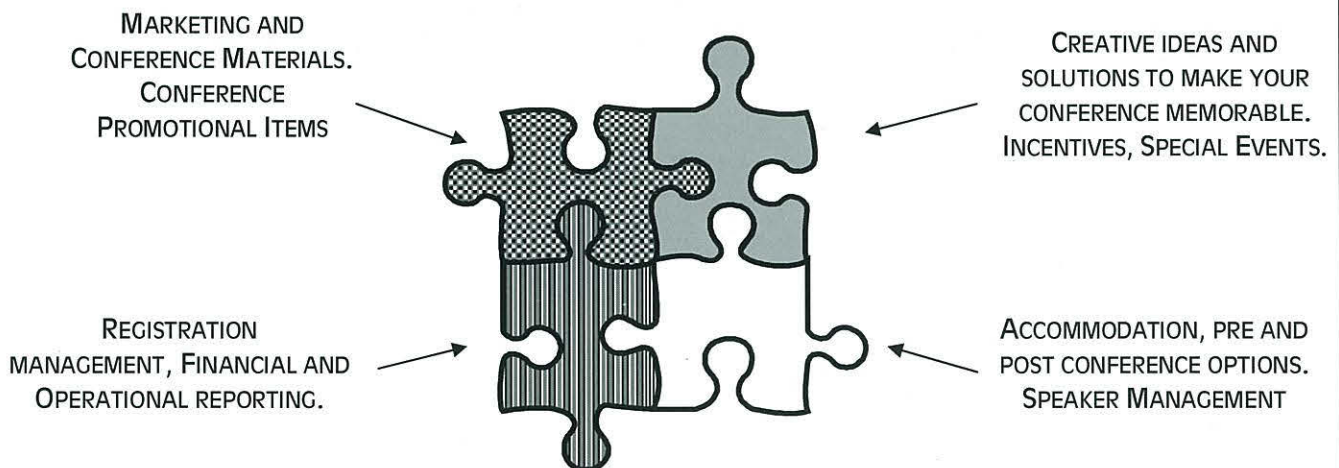
The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, gathered around Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, was dissatisfied with the state of British art in the mid-nineteenth century. They turned for inspiration to the early painters of the Italian Renaissance.

Over its five-year life, the Brotherhood aimed to uplift the viewers of art by producing noble, serious paintings. Instead they alienated them, but the works they created are now among the most popular works of nineteenth-century British art.



Ford Madox Brown
Jesus washing Peter's feet, 1852-56
© Tate, London, 2003
oil on canvas
Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Western Australia

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TERMINAL REFLECTIONS ON

THE OTHER SIDE'

IAN REID

The following address was presented in the final plenary session of the 2003 Museums Australia conference.

When my four-year-old grand-daughter comes to Perth she likes me to take her to the WA Museum, and particularly to the Big Room that has the Big Stuffed Animals. I went there with her again this week, but it was a different experience from before. For one thing it was in the dead of night — because it was in a dream. On this phantasmagoric occasion the stuffed animals were all chatting to one another. 'What are you talking about?' my grand-daughter asked them. An elephant said, 'About our conference'. So I asked them, 'Are you from *The Other Side*?' 'No, no,' said a Thylacine scornfully, 'We're from *The Far Side*'.

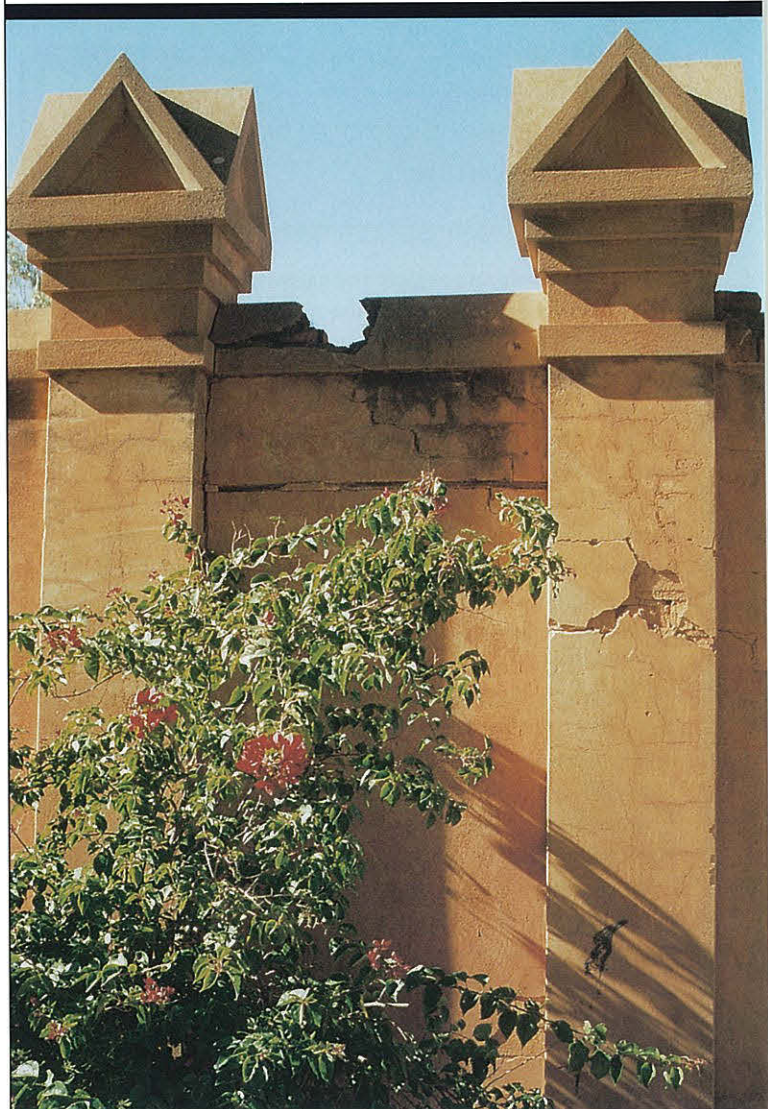
It's hardly surprising that the anxiety-ridden task of improvising a summary of the week's complex set of events should have given me a bad dream resembling a Gary Larson cartoon. We are at the dead spot on Friday afternoon, a dwindled, exhausted remnant of the lively multitude that gathered here on the first day. I suspect that half of those present are in a deep coma and the other half are dangerously vigilant as they wait to see whether I praise the papers they gave, suspecting that I failed to appreciate the subtlety and cogency of their arguments, or even failed to attend their presentations at all.

Now it's my clear and bounden duty to provide a searching critique or at least a synoptic re-run of each of the papers (more than 100) presented during the last few days. But I've wrestled my conscience into submission and decided not to take the high road of comprehensive recapitulation. I know this will be bitterly disappointing to you all but it's my resolute decision.

Instead I take the low road of offering just a brief meditation (probably a bit idiosyncratic) on a few of the themes and questions recurring in several of the sessions that have comprised 'my' conference. Each of you has experienced, no doubt, a somewhat different conference from mine or anyone else's, and so I'm not suggesting that there's anything normative about the pattern I'll trace here. But perhaps the following remarks about 'my' conference will have some value if they prompt you to make reflective comparisons with the pattern of 'your' conference.

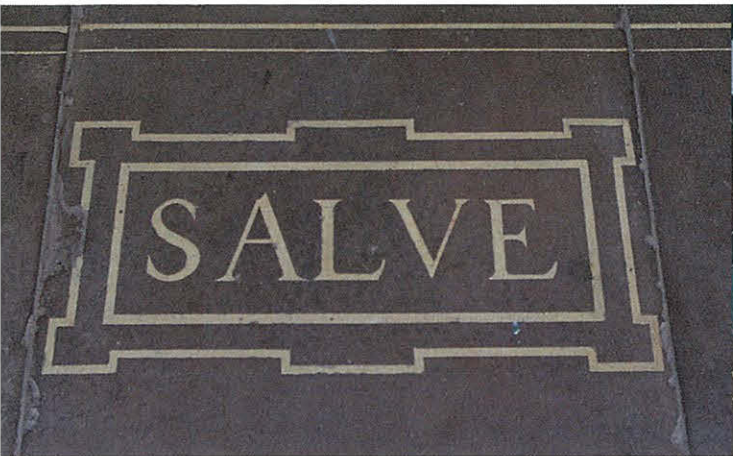
In many of the sessions I've attended, certain binary relationships have shaped the discussion, implicitly or explicitly. In particular, I'll comment on the recurrence of four pairs of apparently opposite terms through which people have tried to interpret the functions of museums, galleries, heritage sites and similar cultural institutions:

- object and story
- art and science
- we and they
- gain and loss



Weathered gateposts and bougainvillea at the Benedictine monastery at New Norcia, visited by the Remote and Regional Stream delegates to the Museums Australia annual conference in Perth, 25–30 May 2003

Photograph by Roslyn Russell



Words of contemplation and devotion in mosaic tile are to be seen in the New Norcia Benedictine monastery (detail right)
 Photograph by Kathleen Hackett



Merryn Gates at the Kerry Stokes Collection, a popular venue for the Visual Arts tour on 28 May
 Photograph by Anne Kirker

EVERY MUSEUM AND GALLERY NEEDS TO GENERATE ITS OWN PARTICULAR CONVERSATION BETWEEN OBJECTS AND STORIES

First, then, displaying objects and narrating events: these have always been the twin pillars on which museums (in the broad sense) construct their meanings. Sometimes one of those elements gets more emphasis than the other; the cabinet of curiosities may seem to take precedence over the repertoire of stories, or vice versa. The Museum of Sydney, for instance, places objects insistently in the foreground, and does so in such a way that any impulse the visitor feels to link them together in a sustained and unifying narrative sequence tends to be disrupted. But even then, it is still the tension between object and story that creates significance. This was clear in one of today's sessions: we heard that, for some people, the Leisure Gallery of Fremantle's Maritime Museum tends to lapse into a miscellany of separate exhibits, lacking any clear narrative interlinkage; and while others may disagree with that critique, we all accept that the argument needs exploring.

My copy of the latest issue of *Museum National* (May 2003) arrived this week, and the same productive tension is evident there. On one page a critique of the National Museum's Environmental History exhibition suggests that personal stories could have been used with greater impact — but also remarks that text panels sometimes unduly subordinate objects to storylines. On the facing page there's a review of a book about object-centred learning in museums, and the reviewer, illustrating the point with reference to the Australian War Memorial's Anzac Hall, states that 'it is generally still the objects themselves that capture people's attention and elicit the 'wow' factor'.

Every museum and gallery needs to generate its own particular conversation between objects and stories, but what has emerged strongly for me from this week's conference is a reminder that deciding how best to select and present objects and stories — how to *frame* them for the visitor — is no simple matter. It is difficult and delicate, because it is charged with value judgments, with political and social choices.

Chris Till indicated this problem directly in discussing the establishment of the Apartheid Museum: 'Who should tell this terrible story?' he asked. The Apartheid Museum has engaged artists and creative writers to ensure that objects and stories are presented with maximum impact. No doubt that licence has dangers as well as benefits. Who should determine the scope of what is related through the displays? Who chooses the point of view? Who presumes to speak on whose behalf?

Gary Morgan's response amplified the issues: He argued that museums have an obligation to present diverse voices, to tell the sorry tales as well as the tales of celebration, and to avoid the grand narratives of harmony and progress.

Michael Kritchman, too, in his account of the work done by InSite in San Diego and Tijuana, spoke of trying to 'give a voice to groups that don't normally have a voice', and showed us (among other telling examples) a spectacular video based on stories by twelve women about their unhappy working conditions, personal lives, and experience of boundaries.

But is the other side of the story necessarily the sombre and bitter side? How do cultural institutions achieve a proper balance?

A positive example came in Janelle Hatherly's paper about partnerships being developed by Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens with communities, including the local Indigenous community. She described the process through which a 'First Encounters' garden area came to be established collaboratively with representatives of Aboriginal people, and how this area (*Cadi Jam Ora*) established a long 'storyline' display path winding through the planted spaces, with a continuous sequence of grounded narrative panels. This project avoided token acknowledgement by carefully pursuing a joint approach to active participation.

But these things are seldom easy. Consultative and inclusive processes may sometimes produce a community view that seems to want, with good intentions, to gloss over another side of the story. Who has authoritative custody of a people's history? In what circumstances, if any, should objects be excluded and stories silenced? Suppose (and this is not an imaginary example) that Indigenous elders in a particular place say they don't want the local museum to say much about racial conflict and cultural dispossession in earlier times because they think this would not help the cause of reconciliation. Does that local museum have a



Members of CAUMAC Special Interest Group at their AGM during the conference

Photograph by Jenny Horder

responsibility nevertheless to acknowledge and reveal past injustices? Regardless of stakeholder views, is it professionally obliged to take up a principled position that was described centuries ago by the allegorical writer John Bunyan as 'Valiant-for-Truth'? In short, where does authority reside to license a particular way of telling a story? It's not just a theoretical conundrum; it can be a vexatious question with very practical consequences.

Determining the authentic condition of museum objects is often just as problematic as determining the authentic condition of stories, and this is often because objects cannot and should not be separated from stories. Elizabeth Edwards brought this out well in her contribution to a panel on digitisation. Photographs, she insisted, unlike digitised images of photographs, are not two-dimensional things. Their material forms (which may include inscriptions, frames and so forth) and their contexts of use (such as being grouped together for certain purposes) carry accretions of social meaning. Photo albums, for instance, may enact and trigger the narration of family events. The way museums utilise their collections of photographs should reflect this relational embedding.

The second binary relationship that we have kept engaging with this week is between art and science (where 'art' can stand for a variety of cultural practices and 'science' can extend to industrial technology).

When Andrea Witcomb raised the curtain on our conference she anticipated this topic, referring to the fact that culture and the arts too often see themselves as having an adversarial relationship with science and technology. Andrea (whose provocative book *Re-imagining the Museum* should be a mandatory reference point for the profession from now on) observed that this is a false opposition: museums have almost always engaged productively with scientific, technological and industrial developments, even when pretending not to do so.

Several conference sessions have demonstrated this point in one way or another. Louis Warren and Teddy Allen combined to show us that the kind of knowledge in which BHP specialises and the kind that a group of elderly Aboriginal men want to preserve need not be antithetical. Mike Lefroy gave us an account of the



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Conference tour group waiting at 'Freo' to board a ferry to 'Rotto' on the Museums Australia conference excursion day on 28 May
Photograph by Jenny Horder



Nurin Veis (left) and Anna Fairclough on conference visit to Rottnest Island
Photograph by Sue Scheiffers



Wetlands on Rottnest Island
Photograph by Jenny Horder

means by which, in the Leisure gallery, the science and technology of sailing — from boat construction methods to navigation systems — has informed the aesthetics of exhibition design. The session on interactives in museums and science centres showed that mechanical or computerised devices can stimulate affective as well as cognitive responses. Some other presentations showed that digitisation is neither the satanic enemy of gallery and museum collections nor their saviour, but rather a distinctive cultural medium through which art and science can converge and converse.

A third binary relationship that structures many discussions in the museum world is between *us* and *them*.

There is occasionally a self-congratulatory element in this, a certain preciousness: on the one hand those of us blessed with cultural insight and social sensitivity; on the other, the barbarians of business and the minions of government. Sometimes this oppositional thinking can attach itself to other dubious antitheses, such as regional versus national. But this conference has generally avoided such crudeness. Instead of taking a dichotomised 'we'-and-'they' attitude, several speakers have shown how 'our' side can widen to include the other side.

Chris Till explained that the Gold of Africa Museum brings together heritage, trade and marketing, engaging with consumer culture in a principled way rather than shunning it. Gary Morgan mentioned that private sponsorship, as in the Burrup region, can ensure that the relationship between an industrial organization and a local community is not only made transparent but also enhanced. Janelle Hatherly showed how the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney works closely with the Department of Housing and with industry on a 'community greening' project that fosters the conservation and appreciation of plants. The fact that the Mining Hall of Fame speaks for a particular industry does not preclude, as David Dolan remarked, representation of other voices. Louis Warren and Teddy Allen told us that a big private sector company like BHP Billiton manages to work well with a small group of tribal elders to construct a durable keeping place for otherwise vulnerable cultural objects. That exemplifies the kind of alignment nicely summed up in the title of a reconciliation planning document produced by the WA branch of Museums Australia and discussed in Janey Dolan's paper: 'Side by Side'.

THERE IS OCCASIONALLY A SELF-CONGRATULATORY ELEMENT IN THIS: ON THE ONE HAND THOSE OF US BLESSED WITH CULTURAL INSIGHT AND SOCIAL SENSITIVITY; ON THE OTHER, THE BARBARIANS OF BUSINESS AND THE MINIONS OF GOVERNMENT.

The fourth binary relationship that surfaced recurrently this week is between loss and gain.

Most cultural practices, not least those associated with museums, are acts of retrieval. They try to rescue things from obliteration, to alleviate a sense of loss, especially the ultimate loss that comes with personal and social extinction. And yet the attempt to gain something of compensatory value even from the dark side of history is often accompanied by a sense of bereavement.

There was an elegiac note in Peter Yu's address on Monday. Declaring that native title has less to do with land rights than with preserving the customs and traditions of his people, he added: 'Government can't give us back our culture — only help us identify what has been lost.'

A similar concern pervaded the next day's ICOM session when, as PIMA President, Lawrence Foanaoto evoked the fragility of his own museum's operations in the Solomon Islands and urged us to recognise the challenge of securing the diverse cultural heritage of the Pacific region for its peoples before it is lost forever.

But remedies may not be simple, even when cultural objects are displaced rather than utterly lost. Repatriation of certain items, as that same ICOM session demonstrated, can be a complex problem that sentiment alone will not solve. Sometimes, as with valuable materials from Papua New Guinea currently held in Australian institutions, it may be appropriate to keep them in trust until the 'home' culture indicates it is ready to care for them properly. The relationship between temporary custodian and original owner need not be an exploitative one in which the latter is a loser. It can be an ongoing relationship of cultural exchange.



The quokkas of Rottnest Island, tame and camera-friendly, are a highlight for visitors

Photograph by Peter Stanbury



Special Interest and other Museums Australia groups took the opportunity to have dinner together during the Perth conference. Here are the members of the Health and Medicine Museums SIG

Photograph by Jenny Horder

Sometimes, too, it is possible to reframe loss as a way of regaining cultural significance. This can even happen at the individual level through a spontaneous effort to create personal meaning from material objects. Those of us who attended one of the panel sessions on Monday will remember a moving story told by Nick Coffill about how a lonely down-and-out Singapore man used an ingenious kind of photomontage, purely for his own purposes, as a device to cope with the loss of family, the loss of social face and place.

What these examples suggest to me is that loss and gain are not just opposite columns on a balance sheet. They are inseparable.

And that point can be generalised as a theme of our conference. I have referred to object and story, art and science, we and they, loss and gain. And I have suggested that these four sets of apparently contrasting concepts, when situated within actual complex museum practices, turn out not to be simple antonyms after all. Each paired term is the other's necessary counterpart, its uncomfortable but constant companion, its *other side* — as obverse is to reverse, heads to tails, Arthur to Martha, or wool to mutton.

In an apparently abrupt disjunction, let me end with an image or story-fragment far from the here-and-now, by invoking the conclusion of that seventeenth-century narrative classic to which I alluded earlier. John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a simple Puritan allegory of trial and triumph, describes in its final passage how Mr Valiant-for-Truth confronts the loss of his physical life:

'When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the river-side, into which as he went, he said, 'Death, where is thy sting?' And as he went down deeper, he said, 'Grave, where is thy victory?' So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on *the other side*.'

In an act of flagrantly incongruous appropriation, I'd like to take this triumphal episode as resonating not with the Christian symbols that Bunyan intended but with our own experiences this week of collective border-crossing and *rite de passage*. Because our profession has a modest and scrupulous side, we don't often celebrate enough when we achieve a successful transit. But thanks to the heroic efforts of the Conference Organising Committee and the R&R Stream Planning Committee, to the many generous sponsors, and also to those of you who presented papers and contributed in other ways, we do have cause now for considerable satisfaction. So in tribute to Museums Australia, and in praise of the many adventurous acts of cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural passage that we have witnessed and heard about and participated in this week, let the trumpets sound on the other side!

ADJUNCT PROFESSOR IAN REID

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OTHER FEATURES

GILLIAN SAVAGE

OLDER AUSTRALIANS

Audience sector set to boom



TODAY'S MATURE AUSTRALIANS ARE HEALTHIER, WEALTHIER, BETTER EDUCATED AND LIVE LONGER THAN ANY PREVIOUS GENERATION. THEY MAY BE THE KEY MUSEUM AUDIENCE OF THE FUTURE.

Older Australians have leisure to visit museums and galleries and find plenty to interest them

Courtesy of Gillian Savage

In 1998 there were 2.3 million Australians over sixty-five years of age. By mid-century when the baby boomers swell their ranks, there will be six million of them — comprising a quarter of the total population. Today's mature Australians are healthier, wealthier, better educated and live longer than any previous generation. They may be THE key museum audience of the future.

Large in number and diverse in composition, we have identified the following sub-groups amongst older audiences.

Older audiences

- Grey Nomads. These are the 'young-old' who have the energy and interest to explore the world — both Australia and overseas. When they travel, many of them seek out museums and heritage sites as a key way of understanding the country they are exploring. The series of interpretative attractions sited across Queensland in the Heritage Trail Network is well placed to meet the needs of this audience group.
- Car trippers. These include the 'young-old' who take day trips or make longer trips often shaped around visits to family and friends. A museum can be a key destination for these travellers, or may be discovered along the way.
- Bus trippers. These include the 'young-old' and the 'old-old' and most trips are day trips. Trips are organised as relaxed social outings to places of interest, often museums or heritage sites in nearby districts. Small local museums are well placed to meet the needs of bus trippers, especially if there are complementary interest points in the district.
- Local enthusiasts. Enthusiasts are those who form meaningful connections with a local museum, perhaps as a volunteer, regular visitor or one who encourages others to participate. They may contribute their life skills (teacher, carpenter, accountant, etc.) to a museum or use the contact to expand their knowledge by developing new interests and skills.
- Assisted visitors. These are the 'old-old' who benefit from making a general visit assisted by family members or who take part in special programs. The St George Regional Museum in Hurstville, Sydney, runs the *Nursing Home Program* where small groups of nursing home residents visit the Museum and participate in reminiscence sessions using objects from the

collection. As part of its loans service, the Queensland Museum offers *Living Treasures* resource kits for reminiscence therapy.

Key facts about older visitors

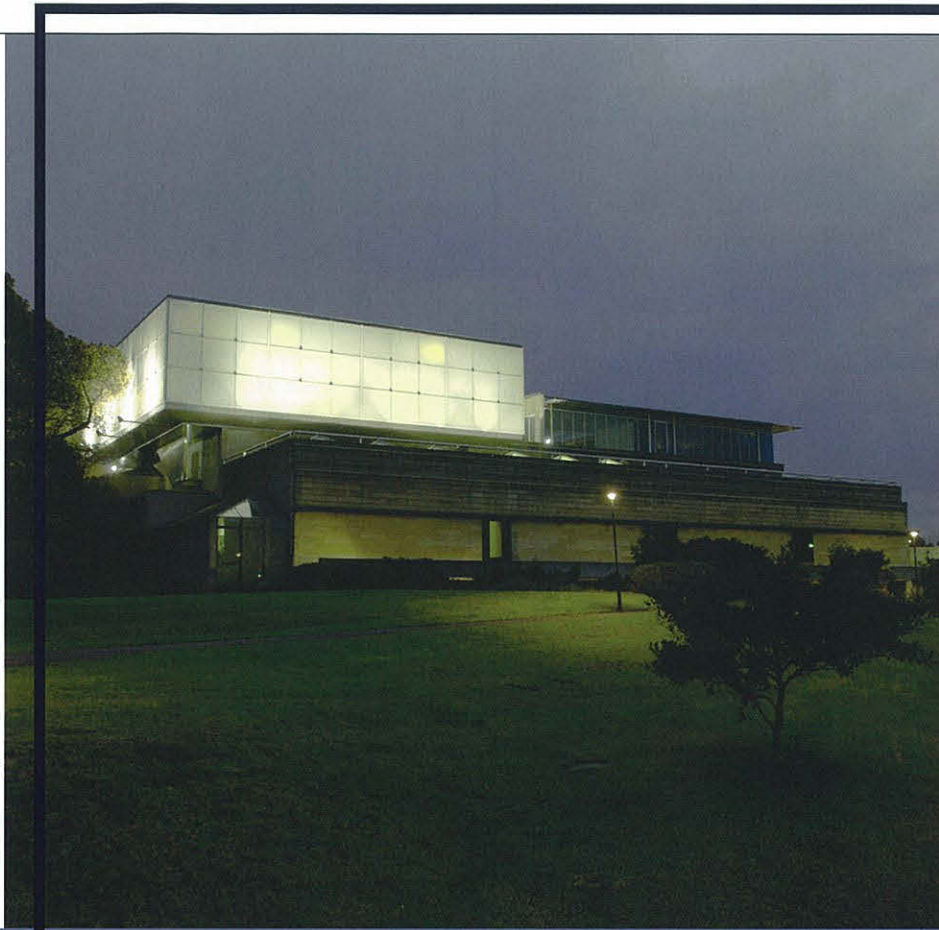
- Overall, older people are more interested in history and heritage than younger people.
- Many older people have multiple minor impairments that interfere with their capacity to enjoy museums. The most common are: reduced vision and hearing, and a reduced capacity to stay on their feet.
- Healthy ageing is dependent on maintaining community connections.
- Older people have a lifetime of knowledge based on both experience and education. They bring this perspective with them when they visit museums.
- Older people take more time to absorb and interpret new information (perhaps because they have so much more material to integrate it with?).
- Retirees take on regular commitments that reduce their available free time.
- There are more women than men amongst over sixty-fives and the proportion increases with age so that seventy per cent of people over eighty-five are women.

Australian museums are beginning to focus on the particular needs of older Australians. The National Museum and the Australian Museum publication, *Energised, Engaged and Everywhere: Older Australians and Museums*, paves the way for the industry to establish standards for senior-friendly practice in facility design, exhibition design and programming.

Without improved practice, museums will miss opportunities to serve the needs of Australia's fastest growing demographic. Australian communities will be poorer for it.

GILLIAN SAVAGE IS DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMETRICS, AND CO-AUTHOR OF *ENERGISED, ENGAGED AND EVERYWHERE: OLDER AUSTRALIANS AND MUSEUMS* (2002)

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NEW ASIAN GALLERIES TO OPEN AT ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

A magnificent new facility to house Asian Art will open to the public on the weekend of 25 and 26 October at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

The building has been financed by a \$16 million grant from the New South Wales government, and also houses a new restaurant, café, conservation studio and Rudy Komon gallery (all operating already).

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REGIONAL ROUNDUP

This new feature has been designed with regional museums and galleries in mind. Over coming issues it will include news and views, helpful ideas and case studies. See what other regional and specialist museums are doing to overcome problems, and to raise their profile in their communities. Send your own good news stories and case studies outlining successful projects — or the problems that regional museums face from time to time. The Editor will be pleased to hear from you — email editor@museumsaustralia.org.au

EVENTS

Valuation day at 'Meroogal'

On Sunday 22 June, 'Meroogal', a Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales property at Nowra, held its inaugural 'Old Wares Fair'. A major feature of the fair, which attracted 325 people to 'Meroogal', was the opportunity to have 'treasures' appraised by a team of three antiques experts, Patrick De Gabriele, Margot Claringbold and Robert Wallis.

Historic Houses Trust guide Martin Parkinson reported that attendance at the event, advertised by letterboxing leaflets and press notices, exceeded expectations. Those attending could also watch demonstrations of techniques for stripping furniture using non-toxic stripper, and metal cleaning, browse at old wares stalls and sample the refreshments. An original 1820s Lady Phaeton carriage drawn by two Clydesdale horses took visitors for rides. Volunteers also led tours of the historic house and garden.

Custodians of a living heritage

Sue Scheiffers describes International Museums Day in Strathalbyn, South Australia.

For the Strathalbyn Branch of the National Trust of South Australia, International Museums Day, 18 May 2003, was an excellent opportunity to showcase their small museum. The target audience was

primarily the local community and Sunday visitors. Town Crier Mac O'Donnell helped them to include the museum in their wanderings through the antique shops of the town.

The museum is located in the former police station and courthouse. The National Trust branch took this over in the 1970s, and set up displays of items from a large and diverse collection begun in the 1930s by the Town Clerk, Harold Stowe. The display is typical of many local museums, with period rooms reflecting the Scottish heritage of the area, the courthouse with a miscellaneous mixture of display cases containing various themes, and every wall hung with dozens of photos showing the development of the town and portraits of the town fathers. The outside areas house a relatively small array of farm machinery, a blacksmith shop and a display centred on two Country Fire service vehicles.

On Museums Day several community volunteer groups worked together to provide the activities. The Scouts made billy tea and damper over an open fire, the Lions Club sold drinks and National Trust members served sausages from the barbecue. Ladies from St Andrew's church did a brisk trade in fresh home-made cakes and served scones and tea. The town band provided a background of

music, and there were displays of hand shearing, spinning, old 'pop-pop' standing engines, vintage cars and butter making.

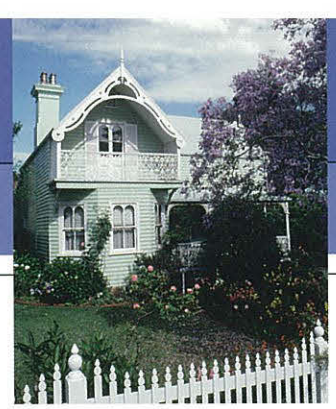
Local member and Speaker of South Australia's House of Assembly, the Honourable Peter Lewis, presented a cheque for \$1665 for a grant the branch had received from the History Trust of South Australia. This is to be used to set up a display of an interesting collection of articles donated by a former pharmacist, Owen Johnson. Mr Lewis and his wife, Kerry, took the time to look in the museum and to examine in detail the objects to be put into the new display.

The event at Strathalbyn was an excellent example of bringing the community into local and regional museums, to demonstrate that local museums are not dusty old places full of dusty old artefacts but can be vibrant living custodians of the history and heritage of a place. And of course this sort of activity is highly recommended as a demonstration that museums can be places for fun.

SUE SCHEIFFERS IS PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BRANCH OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA



Peter Lewis MP presents the National Trust's Strathalbyn representative, Sue Scheiffers, with a cheque for a SA History Trust grant to the Strathalbyn Branch, at the event on International Museums Day
Courtesy of Sue Scheiffers



'Meroogal', Nowra, designed by Kenneth McKenzie for his sister Jessie Thorburn, and occupied by four generations of the family, mostly women, from 1886 to 1995
Courtesy of Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales

NEWS

Latrobe Regional Gallery re-opens

Latrobe Regional Gallery re-opened in March after extensive redevelopment that included expansion of gallery spaces and upgrade of environment control. The exhibition galleries now provide a new display area for the permanent collection, travelling exhibitions and community access gallery. These, together with the sculpture courtyard, book shop, coffee shop, library and studio/workshop space provide eastern Victoria with a major state-of-the-art regional gallery. The gallery holds a number of post-1971 contemporary Australian artworks, as well as historical Gippsland works. The collection includes paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures, ceramics and glass. The gallery also

holds significant works by Jessie Truill, Noel Counihan, Jan Senbergs, Mandy Martin, Rosalie Gascoigne, Colin Suggett, and Kevin Mortensen.

Navigate to Goolwa

Arts practitioners of South Australia will gather to discuss the place and value of their work in regional communities in the Third State Regional Arts Conference, *Navigating Community through the Arts: the value of sustainable partnerships*, to be held in Goolwa from 24–25 October this year. Topics for debate include the value of partnerships with local government, the challenges and rewards of the youth arts sector and relationships between the arts and the environment. Registration details and further information are available at www.countryarts.org.au

THAT'S A GOOD IDEA!

The H-Museum web list has yielded this useful advice on moving a museum collection, from US curator Jeff Tenuth. Museum National picked up Jeff's reply to a request for advice on this subject, and contacted him to ask his permission to use it. Jeff polished up his web list piece for us, and we thank him for his contribution.

Moving your museum

The keys to moving a museum collection, whether large or small, are planning and organisation. It's not enough just to plan the move, you must also organise your plan to use your resources (money, time, personnel) most effectively. One way to do this is to look at the process as 'before, during, and after', a step-by-step plan

designed to get the job done in the most efficient manner.

We recently moved the collection at the Indiana State Museum from its old home in the Indianapolis City Hall to a new two-building complex a half a mile (just over a kilometre) away. The collection comprises approximately 300,000 artefacts, split evenly between cultural and natural history. The move took two months and utilised over 120 trucks (including moving objects out of rented space in three outside warehouses).

The time involved just the move itself, not the packing or unpacking. We spent about a year packing the collection and ended up with about three thousand boxes of items — both natural and cultural history — and hundreds of bubble-wrapped objects. Large objects, such as furniture, vehicles and machinery were blanket wrapped by the movers. It's now been a year and we're still unpacking.

We hired a local moving company to move the bulk of the collection, but some items, such as the 3000-piece Fine Art collection, we moved ourselves in museum vehicles. When possible we used our own staff to move items. But since we all had other duties to perform, the number of staff helpers varied considerably. On any given day we used five to ten movers and usually packed two trucks at a time, and made two to three trips a day, three to five days a week. We were moving only about one half mile, which made transit time much less than moving a greater distance. Since most of the staff was involved in getting the new buildings open, we didn't move the collection until after the new museum opened in May of 2002.

As for how we organised the move. We began with several meetings between staff and movers before the actual move. We didn't rely on books or other people telling us how to do it. We relied on our decades of experience with the collection, and considered only what would safeguard the collection and still keep us within budget and time frames. We learned a number of valuable lessons in the process. The first was that we were in charge, not the movers. What they wanted to do was irrelevant. We decided what to do and how to do it.

The second thing we learned was that we had to be practical. One might wish for a million dollars to pack every single item archivally. But it's not going to happen. We knew we would not be able to pack everything archivally, so we made the best of the situation. Because the move was over a relatively short distance, we used regular boxes for most of the natural history collection and saved our archival supplies for those items that would be most affected by packing materials, such as paper, textiles and clothing. Over the course of time the items were removed and there was no damage based on materials moved.

Another point to keep in mind is that, no matter how hard you try, things will go wrong and artefacts will get broken. When that many items have to be moved, something will go wrong. My guess is that we broke no more than ten objects during the packing and moving stages. A final point is that if you don't think the movers should move a particular collection, then move it yourself with museum or rented vehicles. Gather your staff and volunteers and use

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AND ORGANISING
BEFORE WE MOVED, AND
BY BEING PRACTICAL
AND FLEXIBLE DURING
THE MOVE.

them as your muscle. The Fine Art move is one example. Another is how we moved our bird collection. We recruited a number of volunteers, borrowed a church bus, and made several trips with each volunteer holding one bird at a time.

Although this was a task that has now taken about two years to complete, it has been a learning experience and a fun one at that. If I were to sum up, I would say that the best way to approach a large move is to view it as a problem to be solved. Don't get lost in the process of endless meetings. Stay focused on the goal and how to get there. We did it by planning and organising before we moved, and by being practical and flexible during the move.

JEFF TENUTH
CHIEF ARTIFACT CATALOGER
INDIANA STATE MUSEUM
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA, USA

CAROL SCOTT

PRESIDENT'S REPORT AUGUST 2003

The 2003 Conference in Perth will certainly be remembered as a turning point for Museums Australia. An excellent programme of keynote speakers, faultless organisation and engaging social events all contributed to its outstanding success. But it was the inclusion of the Remote and Regional stream that brought the entire museum sector together in a way not experienced before. New friendships, new alliances and new partnerships were formed and we will be experiencing the positive outcomes of this initiative far into the future.

A tremendous vote of thanks is due to Andrea Witcomb, Anne Brake and Greg Wallace for their imagination, goodwill and effort and to Ian Watts and Katherine Wilkinson for the re-introduction of the very popular Museums Australia Publication Design Awards.

At present, the National Office is developing a Museums Australia Conference Planning manual based on our recent conference successes 2001-2003. The manual will assist conference planning for 2004 (Melbourne) and 2005 (Sydney).

NATIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE FORUM (NCHF)

The National Cultural Heritage Forum (NCHF) was convened in Canberra on 2 June with a pre-meeting of delegates on 1 June. The NCHF is a cross-portfolio forum co-convened by the Ministers of Environment and the Arts.

Following the MA AGM Resolution regarding the crisis in liability insurance for small museums, the President of Museums Australia, Carol Scott, took the opportunity to raise this issue at the NCHF pre-meeting on 1 June and during the Forum on 2 June chaired by the Minister for the Environment, David Kemp. Follow-up letters have been sent to both the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for the Arts and Sport highlighting our concerns about this problem.

NATIONAL COLLECTIONS ADVISORY FORUM (NCAF)

The National Collections Advisory Forum (NCAF) met in Canberra on 5 June. Present were invited delegates from the professional associations including Museums Australia, industry representatives, members of the NCAF, Chair Professor Margaret Seares and DCITA representatives. The meeting was facilitated by Sagacity consultants.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss industry feedback from the first meeting on 9 April in Melbourne and further scope the model for a

national body to oversee the collections sector. Museums Australia submitted a further response following the 5 June meeting.

PROFESSIONAL COLLECTIONS ASSOCIATIONS MEETING

The four professional associations (Museums Australia, the Australian Libraries and Information Association, the Australian Society of Archivists and the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials) met in Sydney on 23 June to plan a workshop in collaboration with the Humanities Research Centre at ANU and the National Museum of Australia. The workshop will be held in mid-November 2003 and will address the value of collections to the community, the role of professional associations and the pressing need to sustain the collections sector through appropriate and adequately resourced education and training.

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MOVING ON

Ron Brent formerly Director of ScreenSound Australia (the National Film and Sound Archive) is now Deputy Commonwealth Ombudsman.

Meg Labrum, of ScreenSound, has been appointed secretary-general to the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) for the next two years. She will be responsible for the administration of the federation's operations in its Brussels secretariat.

Mark Whitmore, MA Treasurer, is leaving the Australian War Memorial at the end of August to join the Imperial War Museum, London, as Director of Collections.

Ms Rene Sutherland, one of Australia's leading regional art managers, has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Bundanon Trust, the body that manages Arthur Boyd's properties and artworks.

Jude McBean is the new Director of Grafton Regional Gallery.

Trevor Smith has left his position as Curator of Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Western Australia to take up a post at New York's New Museum of Contemporary Art.

Catrina Vignando is the new General Manager of Craft Australia.

Ricardo Peach formerly of Liverpool Regional Gallery is now Arts Officer, Marrickville Council.

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Judith Wassell, previously Senior Curator of Cross Cultural Studies at the Queensland Museum, has been appointed Queensland's first Government Curator, a position created last year as part of the state's whole-of-government arts policy, 'Creative Queensland'.

Warwick Reeder has left his position as director of Heide Museum of Modern Art to work in touring exhibitions at the National Gallery of Victoria.

David Ellis is the new director of University Museums for the University of Sydney.

Melanie Eastburn, formerly Curator at the Powerhouse Museum is now Curator at the National Museum of Cambodia.

Vanessa McRae has moved from the Sale Regional Gallery, Victoria to become Exhibitions Coordinator at the Institute for Modern Art (IMA), Brisbane.

Louise Tegart is responsible for the Australian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

Sarah Kenderdine has moved from the Powerhouse Museum to take up a post as Project Manager/Creative Producer, Special Projects, Melbourne Museum.

NAME CHANGE FOR MUSEUM NATIONAL

From the November 2003 issue onwards, *Museum National* will become *Museums Australia magazine*, with the sub-title 'museums and galleries — issues, news, views'.

The name change was agreed at a meeting of the Museums Australia Council in Perth, and was in response to difficulties in registering the magazine's existing name.

Museums Australia magazine will continue to bring news and views from the sector to our membership — only the name has changed.

JANETTE GRIFFIN

***Learning Conversations in Museums.* Edited by Gaea Leinhardt, Kevin Crowley and Karen Knutson. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; 2002. ISBN 0-8058-4052-4**

Sitting in the coffee shop at the Australian Museum recently, I was intrigued to overhear snippets of conversation at two nearby tables. At one table a family was talking about their visit to the skeleton gallery: the boy (about seven) was describing the different backbones and rib shapes that he had seen. At the other table a couple was discussing emotions and feelings that were apparently evoked from their visit to the *Death* exhibition; their discussion went well beyond the content of the exhibition to their own and friends' experiences. Learning conversations are an integral part of museum visiting, and can take place in front of exhibits, walking between exhibits, in non-exhibit areas and of course beyond the museum. The nature of these conversations can give us new insights into visitors' reactions and understandings that are developed from the experience.

Increasingly there is an emphasis on research into visitor experiences which gives voice to the visitors themselves. *Learning Conversations in Museums* presents a wide range of new research into learning in museums through recording and analysing visitor conversations. Most of the studies have been conducted under the auspices of the

Museum Learning Collaborative, based at University of Pittsburg. The work has a sociocultural perspective and investigates the meaning-making that is revealed through visitor conversations generally in social groupings, and variously within part or whole exhibitions and in visitors' everyday lives.

The book provides a wealth of useful ideas for designers, curators, educators, evaluators and management. It includes discussion of learning conversations in art, history, natural history, science, living history museums and other outdoor venues. While each of the thirteen chapters is presented as a research report, this does not preclude the book's value for practitioners or non-researchers. All the chapters read well and include excellent introductions and concise and informative conclusions.

While all the studies involve listening to visitors, there are many ways in which their voices are uncovered. Kirsten Ellenbogen talked to families in their homes and in museums to discover how they used museums as learning resources along with many others. Leinhardt, Tittle and Knutson asked visitors to write diaries following their visits. Through these narratives visitors interpret and enfold their museum experiences into their lives. 'Visitors shape and reshape their own personal activity of museum going and each museum visit ... adds to the identity of who the visitor is.' (131)

The issue of identity is paramount in many of the

studies. Visitors view exhibits through the eyes of their age, ethnic background, gender etc, but also through the perspective of their knowledge and patterns of experience. Abu-Shumays and Leinhardt listened to the conversation of two docents as they visited their own museum and two others. The depth and analytical content of their conversations varied according to their entering narrative for each museum, ie how comfortable they felt with the content. At the same time people's identities can be influenced by a visit, as shown in Leinhardt and Gregg's study of student teachers in a Civil Rights museum. At a history museum, Fienberg and Leinhardt interviewed visitors to determine their background characteristics and then taped their conversations to uncover the depth of engagement with the materials they were experiencing. They found that visitors' attitudes and predispositions influence their likelihood to be knowledge seekers. Stainton, using a similar methodology in an art museum, found visitors to be 'in conversation literally and figuratively with the artwork on display and with the curatorial intent.' (214)

In contrast to earlier indications that families are primarily interested in social interaction, all of these projects reveal that family conversations are centred on learning. One criticism with the method of analysis used in many of the studies is that only 'learning related' segments of conversations are analysed in any depth. Stainton found that there was consistently an

amount of management talk regarding orientation and other physical museum issues. Allen, at the Exploratorium, is the only author who gives us a measure of the proportion of 'learning talk' recorded. Interestingly her estimate of 83% 'learning talk' is remarkably similar to estimates that I have found in research into school children's and family members' conversations in Australian museums.

Also a little disconcerting was the apparent ease with which most authors were able to conduct their research. Only Allen addresses the logistical and financial challenges inherent in taping visitors' conversations. This issue perhaps makes the book all the more valuable in the information it provides. The consistency of the results across different types of museums, methodologies and visitor groups gives museum practitioners and researchers a valuable reference to the depth and breadth of learning in museums from the visitors' perspective. The recurrent themes of visitor identity, entering narratives, and 'museum fit'; the depth of learning; and the perceived roles of museums provide insight into the perspectives of regular and not so regular museum goers.

Most important is the finding that a museum is a place for social learning rather than a social event.

DR JANETTE GRIFFIN IS A SENIOR LECTURER IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY, WHERE SHE RESEARCHES INTO LEARNING IN MUSEUMS.

PHILIP JONES

***Academic Anthropology and the Museum. Back to the Future.* Edited by Mary Bouquet. Bergahn Books, New York; 2001. ISBN 1-57181-321-7**

A century ago, the emerging craft of anthropology routinely entangled itself with museum ethnography. New cultural constructions of the 'other' depended as much upon the evidence provided by taxonomically arranged artefacts and accompanying cultural traits as upon classifications of kinship structure and religion. During

the early and mid 20th century this interdependence between museums and academic anthropology weakened. Social anthropologists became tuned to dynamic cultural processes which floated free of archaic material culture. Museum exhibitions remained static until the present wave of reinvigorated displays re-engaged anthropologists as researchers, designers and commentators. Today anthropologists are expressing fresh interest in museums — not only as receptacles for remaking cultural expressions of other cultures, but as cultural phenomena in their own right. Mary Bouquet's

selection of essays addresses this renewed engagement.

Much analysis of museology and its academic cousin, anthropology, has emerged from Britain and from North America in recent years, so it is refreshing to read a series of essays centred in Europe. The idea for the anthology arose from ideas generated through Bouquet's course in cultural anthropology at the University of Utrecht.

The book's first part concerns the recent engagement of anthropologists with the collections and exhibitions of 'post-colonial museums' (a category apparently extending over all

ethnographic museums surviving since colonial times as well as quite new 'fourth-world' museums with indigenous agendas). Barbara Saunders compares the high-colonial Royal Museum for Central Africa (founded in Brussels with Congo wealth in 1910) with the U'mistà Centre at Alert Bay near Vancouver, dedicated to housing repatriated Northwest potlatch regalia. She concludes that despite an apparent gulf in perspective and intention both are 'majority museums': fabricating those exotic images of Otherness which the white audience desires. Saunders is uncompromising in her critique of the U'mistà Centre as a

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- are underpinned by the department's leading edge research and the work of RCMG (Research Centre for Museums and Galleries)
- reflect the department's commitment to student-centred learning and to meeting the needs of students from diverse backgrounds
- maintain an international perspective and reflect the department's collaborative approach to working within the sector

The Department has been awarded the highest possible score [24/24] for the quality of its teaching and student support by The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and was graded 5 in the most recent Research Assessment Exercise.



University of
Leicester



Travelling home and workshop belonging to Harold Wright, on show in the *Rare Trades* exhibition. Photo: George Serras, National Museum of Australia.

sham, and with it, that high priest of post-colonial museology, James Clifford, who lent it considerable support. In her view the Centre allows 'the Canadian image of fallenness and spiritual reduction to be redeemed and expiated through the religion of advocacy'. An adventurous start.

Eric Venbrux's chapter, also in this section, is central for its suggestion of how contemporary anthropological practice (in his case, founded upon fieldwork with Australian Tiwi people) might intersect with the past agendas of museums and their collectors. His understanding that museum relics of their past cultural practice hold contemporary relevance for the Tiwi provoked him to trace these collections, and to re-imagine frontier encounters which provoked them. That analysis, founded in anthropological awareness of Tiwi cultural practice, underpins Venbrux's important proposition that these museum artefacts were not simply torn from their original context by collectors such as Baldwin Spencer. Rather, they reveal 'the calculative dimension of indigenous agency', a notion which might help recast our ideas about frontiers of contact.

Anthropologists are not only turning renewed attention towards museum collections, but towards museums

themselves, and this is the substance of Parts 2 and 3 of this collection. Martine Segalen's and Nelia Dias's chapters range over the contemporary state of academic anthropology and its connection with museum practice in France and Portugal. Levi Strauss's rising star also marked the decline of French museum anthropology. Now, with the near completion of the Musée Quai Branly, in central Paris and the probable reconstitution of the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires, the French are entering a new era of museum ethnography in which academic anthropology has yet to make its definitive mark.

Bouquet's interest lies in turning the anthropological gaze upon museums themselves. As she discerns, a superficial division of museums according to collection type not only masks some fundamental differences, but also obscures generic museological practice, such as the creation of exhibitions. These aspects, she argues, comprise a particular form of 'making culture materialise', which should make all museums compelling sites of study for contemporary anthropologists. Bouquet herself (who examined temporary exhibition practice in the Institute and Museum of Anthropology at the University of Oslo) and several other

contributors, have written fascinating anthropological accounts of museum practice. Together, they make a strong case for anthropologists to recognise that their capacities for 'cultural translation' could match those required to translate objects, text and graphics into exhibitions. Australia's recent exhibition redevelopments suggest to me that they shouldn't give up their day jobs too readily. I particularly enjoyed Sharon MacDonald's incisive exposé of London's Science Museum's 're-visioning', undertaken in the early '90s. She ably depicts the agency and dilemmas of museum staff, buffeted by the incompatibilities of an essentially unrealisable project and confounded by public programs' 'spin', now defining museums increasingly as 'visitor-responsive' destinations.

The book's central argument is well made; exhorting anthropologists to re-enter and recolonise the space of the museum not only on behalf of their constituents whose traditional artefacts require fresh interrogation, but in order to illuminate museums themselves as 'new sites for creative exploration'.

DR PHILIP JONES IS SENIOR CURATOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY AT THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM.

MARGARET BIRTLEY

Rare Trades: Making Things by Hand in the Digital Age
National Museum of Australia until 12 October;
South Australian Maritime Museum: 11 December–24 April 2004; The Workshops Rail Museum, Ipswich Qld: 11 June–10 October 2004.

As UNESCO debates methods for safeguarding the world's intangible heritage, and as ICOM prepares for its 2004 conference on 'Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage', it's good to see an Australian exhibition placing premium value on the maintenance and revival of trades that are preserved through the handing on of traditional, often intangible, skills.

Rare Trades features the makers of things, their tools, the processes they follow, and the products that are the result of their labour. It showcases the techniques used in 24 different trades, including wigmaking, stonemasonry, tinsmithing and haystack building. This is an exhibition with strong social messages, presenting the job satisfaction that comes from working raw materials into objects of beauty and utility, and drawing attention to the loss of creative problem-solving that accompanied many new

technologies in the 20th century.

Rare Trades is a touring exhibition of the National Museum of Australia (NMA). In February it premiered at Scienceworks in Melbourne, and is now at its point of origin in Canberra. The two installations have occupied differently shaped galleries, with interesting consequences. At Scienceworks, display cases and panels were arranged in concentric circles, resembling an inner hub and an outer wheel rim. I found it hard to remember where I had started my journey round the different circular layers, and thus was constantly anxious that I had missed important elements. A lack of obvious 'spokes' for the 'wheel' seemed to discourage movement between the inner and outer components, and the visit felt controlled, over-regulated. Evaluation of Melbourne audiences contributed to a new approach for the layout in Canberra, where the temporary exhibition gallery is longer and narrower. A casual serpentine pathway now winds through the exhibits, encouraging a sense of discovery while reassuring the visitor that nothing will be missed.

Another significant variation between the two installations is in the treatment of the Harold Wright 'Tinker's Wagon'. At Scienceworks, I felt it was unfortunately marginalised, being placed against a long wall, and thus viewable only from three sides. At the NMA, the vehicle is given a central position, proudly accessible from all angles. Its prominence is well justified, as the wagon represents the itinerant life of many tradespeople, and reminds us that some trades need support services such as sharpening and other repairs. Sadly, the wagon will not continue on tour with the other exhibits —

so rush to Canberra to see it soon!

The NMA installation includes a children's activity corner where a colourful shadow-board backdrop conveys the sense of a workshop full of tools. This corner is attractive even when not populated by little weavers, bookbinders, stone tool makers, or whatever rare trade the clever public programs staff have been able to present through hands-on activities. The exhibition lends itself to collaborative ancillary programs: NMA visitors are offered special tours to the Lanyon homestead to inspect building and fencing techniques, and both Scienceworks and the NMA have hosted practical demonstrations by the people represented in the exhibition.

The human stories are particularly well told in a film shown as part of the installation. Nine makers speak about how they learned their skills (often, although not always, at the elbow of another practitioner), and fret about the challenge of passing on their techniques when there are no willing apprentices on hand. They demonstrate the processes involved in their own work, and give names to some of the tools they use. The link between mind, eye and hand is frequently drawn, and problem-solving is a strong sub-theme. This film could help to interpret the exhibits of traditional tools in many Australian museums.

Rare Trades attracts admirers among artisans, enthusiasts, converts, and wanna-bes. Many will engage sentimentally with the exhibition, because it recalls a more spacious age when improvisation and handicrafts were essential to the economical household. Some audiences may be fascinated by the chance to glimpse an endangered species, wondering who might be the

Last Surviving Practitioner of a certain trade. Others are simply fans of the Australasian Institute of Backyard Studies (www.ibys.org) and its Research Director, Mark Thomson, whose work has helped to revalue the culture of blokes, sheds and tools.

The exhibition is actually a 3D variant of Thomson's latest book, *Rare Trades* (Harper Collins, Sydney, 2002). He and co-curator Sophie Jensen at the NMA are to be congratulated for bringing together the tangible objects that complement Thomson's empathetic photography and deft wordsmithing. They have dextrously created a thoughtful and important exhibition. It acknowledges the nostalgia that clings to museum displays of older technologies, but concentrates more forcefully on the skill of living artisans, the nature and value of manual work, and the enjoyment we can all share in a well made object.

MARGARET BIRTLEY IS THE MUSEUM STUDIES COORDINATOR AT DEAKIN UNIVERSITY, VICTORIA.

SIMON LANGSFORD

Lessons without Limit: How free-choice learning is transforming education.

By John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking. Walnut Creek CA, AltaMira Press; 2002. ISBN 0-7591-0160-4

John Falk and Lyn Dierking have a vision and they want to share it. They see a world where everyone has the right to access high quality, individualised learning, not only at work and school, but for their entire lives, and for an unimaginable variety of purposes.

The term *lifelong learning* is frequently used in educational circles, and many museums of all persuasions say they are

committed to it. There are numerous, well thought-out activities in most of our institutions that address the needs of a wide variety of ages, from exhibitions that target preschoolers, to programs relevant to retirees. However, many of these endeavours are created in isolation. Few of our institutions have an integrated, articulated overview of what lifelong learning looks like and feels like. With limited resources it is often difficult to see the forest for the trees.

Falk and Dierking argue strongly that a coordinated, holistic understanding of lifelong learning is not only desirable, but is a necessity — indeed a right — in a modern society. They subdivide education into school-based, work-based and free-choice learning. *Lessons without limit* focuses on free-choice learning, and suggests that, despite its importance, free-choice learning is currently under-recognised and under-resourced when compared to the other two. They propose that free-choice learning is important, self-motivated, self-directed learning using a wide variety of community assets such as other people, museums, galleries, libraries, public television, radio, the Internet, and innumerable other resources. They argue that it is vital for both personal and societal health.

Lessons without limit has two main themes. First it explains what lifelong, free-choice learning looks like, then gives some guidance about how it might best be achieved. As part of this, the authors argue that public resources are at the forefront of the inevitable expansion that is occurring in the way an information-based society understands and delivers education.

To set the scene, the authors give an accessible picture of cradle-to-grave learning, using both educational theory and

real-life examples. They briefly summarise what is known about learning, and then use a fascinating collection of anecdotes to illustrate what free-choice learning means for infants, children, adolescents, young adults, mature adults and senior citizens. For those trained in education there are no surprises in these summaries. The theory is solid and the examples are well chosen. I found it refreshing to read such a broad, accessible overview with a feast of examples that I can use when discussing issues with colleagues who do not have an education background. The anecdotes make the theory live, although at times I became impatient and wanted to skip a story to get to the next major point. But be warned, Falk and Dierking live their own philosophy, and some of their own parenting anecdotes made me feel quite inadequate!

Having summarised the similarities and differences between the needs of learners of different ages and their need for self-directed, free choice learning, Falk and Dierking go on to present a compelling argument for carefully considered variety in all educational offerings.

They espouse a 'free-choice learner's bill of rights' in which they suggest what it would mean for everyone to have equal access to all the learning resources of our community. They discuss broad-based educational opportunity, supportive educational environments, supportive physical learning environments and access to age-appropriate learning opportunities at every stage of life. In expanding upon these principles, they explore everything from the importance of family and socio-cultural learning experiences in learning, to the importance of a variety of physical settings for effective learning. The relegation of education to 'just'

schooling, and school aged children, is, they suggest, both illogical and irresponsible. Falk and Dierking see self-motivated, individualised, cradle-to-grave learning as the way of the future, and challenge us to respond.

This book will be useful for managers charged with the responsibility of setting long-term goals for museums, galleries, zoos, gardens and other educational institutions and would arm them with a number of powerful reasons in arguing for increased resourcing for free-choice educational institutions. It will also be valuable to educators who wish to step back and review the big educational picture as they map out future plans. It is a great source of anecdotes for those who wish to illuminate academic educational points with real life examples.

SIMON LANGSFORD IS AN EDUCATION OFFICER AT THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, ADELAIDE.

JANE LENNON

The Reality of A Dark History, From Contact and Conflict to Cultural Recognition.

By Val Donovan. Brisbane, Arts Queensland; 2002. ISBN: 0-7242-8092-8

This book was commissioned as an integral part of the Queensland Heritage Trails Network project. It aims to provide background information for non-Indigenous history and museum groups on Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in order to help them involve local Indigenous communities in their projects. As the Minister for Arts, Matt Foley, writes in the foreword: 'This impressive book reveals Queensland's buried heritage —

the history of the relationships between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous inhabitants ... its primary purpose for the Queensland government is to promote reconciliation ... through a better understanding of Indigenous history.'

In an innovative approach to research the author was advised on the content and protocols by an Indigenous Working Group. It comprised mostly Brisbane-based public servants who volunteered their time to advise on tone and proper language so that the book, a government document, would have credibility with Indigenous communities.

The book is a collation from historic books, letters and reports written by white people and by black people writing about their experiences in the last century. It is arranged in seven chapters: European documentation of the prehistory of Queensland; Explorers' observations of Aboriginal Peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' culture; Settlers' first encounters with Traditional Owners; Early consequences of European occupation; The administration of the 1897 Act (and subsequent acts to 1975); The reality of 'living under the Act'; The continuing culture of Indigenous Australians. Each chapter concludes with a very general summary and a note for readers interested in further information to consult works listed in the bibliography.

However, as the book is also seen as a learning tool and guide for community museums, I would have been interested to see a summary containing the main points arising from each chapter. For example, chapter 1 could cover the following points made in the text about Dreaming tracks, stories and rock art: 'Dreaming stories travel over vast distances or tracks, and parts of the story belong to various regions or groups, while some relate to a specific

place' (p.10); '... only that part or version belonging to the storyteller may be told' (p.11); 'Evidence of occupation to a certain date does not necessarily preclude earlier occupation, a belief held by Indigenous peoples. The data is simply confined within the parameters of the scientific methodology' (p.12); 'Each symbol may encapsulate a variety of meanings, and the level of interpretation will depend on the ritual knowledge of the artist and the viewer, and on an understanding of the ancestral landscape.' (p. 16) Most of us whitefellers have so much to learn that we need all the help we can get from well-arranged data.

The summary for chapter 2 commences with the observation that 'The first encounters of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders with European settlement were different from area to area throughout the colony; largely dependent, it seems, on the time of contact and the economic circumstances driving the process.' (p.89) A table showing the time of first contact for each district would be very useful for local community museums, as would a map showing the tribal groupings across Queensland. Much regional material is available in university collections, heritage studies commissioned by the Cultural Heritage Branch of the Environmental Protection Authority, and in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and a guide to this would be invaluable to community museum groups. The bibliography, while comprehensive in terms of general history, does not help with this regional or district breakdown. It does have a page of useful addresses for websites concerned with Native Title reports and procedures.

The chronological history shows contact, conflict and massacres on the pastoral and mining frontiers, control on reserves, desolation and the division of families. These stories have been told before but *The Reality of A Dark History* brings them together in a concise fashion. Thus it builds on the work of Ros Kidd on the administration of the draconian Queensland laws (36 between 1865–1999), on histories of individual reserves such as Thom Blake's story of Cherbourg, and on the personal recollections of black people living under the Act.

The final chapter on continuing culture shows the ongoing battle within the framework of Queensland legislation for Traditional Owners to show connections to the land over which they want their native title recognised. *The Cultural Record (Landscapes Queensland and Queensland Estate) Act 1987* is totally dysfunctional with regard to protecting designated cultural heritage sites, despite its carefully integrated name. The chapter concludes with useful sections on Indigenous Land Corporation properties, urban Aboriginal leadership and Aboriginal art.

After years of oppression Indigenous peoples are taking initiatives. Oodgeroo's vision of integration, 'So black and white may go forward together...' is slowly occurring. This general history will assist communities in that task.

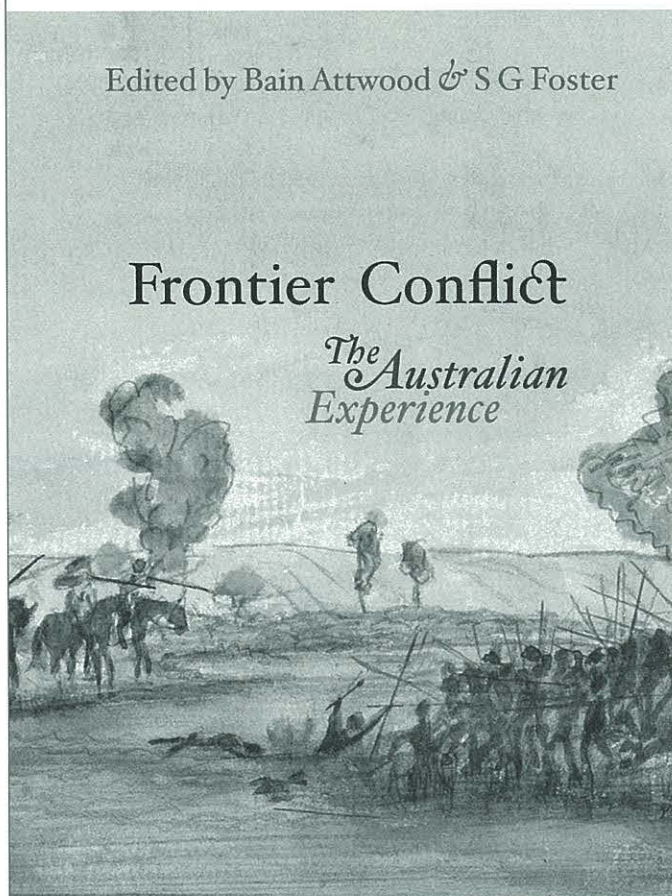
JANE L LENNON AM WROTE A STRATEGY FOR QUEENSLAND MUSEUMS ENTITLED 'HIDDEN HERITAGE', THE ORIGINAL SUBMISSION FOR THE QUEENSLAND HERITAGE TRAILS NETWORK AND CONTINUES WORKING TOWARDS A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENT IN SHAPING AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY.

IAN McSHANE

Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience.
Edited by Bain Attwood and S.G. Foster. Canberra, National Museum of Australia; 2003. ISBN: 1-876944-11-0

When the National Museum of Australia opened its doors in 2001 Keith Windschuttle was well into his project to re-examine primary sources used by historians of Aboriginal Australia and critique what he regarded as a consensus view that widespread mass killings occurred on the pastoral frontier. A series of articles in *Quadrant* foreshadowed the release in late 2001 of a monograph on the Vandemonian frontier, the first volume of a projected three-part series titled *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*. The book had almost sold out within two months of its release, and Windschuttle had, in some eyes, given those whom Prime Minister Howard calls the nation's self-appointed cultural dietitians indigestion.

The National Museum itself provided ample opportunity for Windschuttle to rail further against what he regarded as a serious and deliberate misrepresentation of the treatment of Indigenous people by colonists. Windschuttle argued that the Museum building's replication of design elements in Liebeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin gave support to the view advanced by some frontier historians that the treatment of Indigenous Australians was a form of genocide. His criticism was sharpened by one particular display — 'Contested Frontiers' — in the NMA's Gallery of First Australians. Windschuttle accused the Museum curators of fabricating place names and events to suggest the prevalence of massacres, and of giving prominence to an account



of one massacre — at Bell's Creek in western NSW — for which there was no documentary evidence.

The Museum's response was to organise a two-day forum that attempted to place this criticism into a broader historiographical context. *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience* is an edited collection of papers from the forum. It makes an important and timely contribution to our understanding of violence on the Australian colonial frontier.

Introduced usefully by editors Bain Attwood and Stephen Foster, the book contains contributions by many of the senior scholars active in the field of frontier history. The contributions are organised under headings that neatly reflect issues at the heart of the controversy: What happened? How do we know? How do we remember? How do we tell? The strength of the book is its expansive approach to its subject. This is not simply an in-house conversation amongst

historians. The book raises important questions about epistemology, ethics and politics in its endeavour to locate Windschuttle's crusade within a broader quest to reclaim a less bloodied national story.

Windschuttle suggests in his contribution that the forum ranged against him a host of speakers with opposite views to his. This comment is supported by historian Bev Kingston's account of the conference's hostile atmosphere published in a subsequent weekend magazine profile of Windschuttle. The complaint, at least as it relates to the book, has some justification. The inclusion of contributions by writers sympathetic to Windschuttle's perspective such as Rod Moran (the Western Australian journalist who published *Massacre Myths* in 2001) may have given the book more of an even-handed appearance. The difficulty here for Windschuttle is that, as the book makes plain, most

scholars who are familiar enough with the primary sources to make an informed contribution to the debate disagree with him.

On the face of it, the one-sided nature of the book rather suits Windschuttle's argument that historians of Aboriginal Australia have 'colluded in protecting one another from rigorous investigation.' However, several of the book's contributors point to a debate stretching over several decades about the interpretation of frontier history in Australia that presents as anything but monolithic. Windschuttle's allegation that later historians have written in the shadow of Henry Reynolds is rebutted by several contributors who expose what they consider to be Windschuttle's own superficiality and lack of awareness of the historiography. The impatience of scholars forced to defend themselves against what Tom Griffiths refers to as Windschuttle's campaign for a simpler empiricism is palpable. It's time to move on, writes Bain Attwood; we have work to do.

If there is a weakness in the book, it is in the failure to address more directly the museological dimensions of the Windschuttle debate. The book does not extend to the relevant NMA curators the right and responsibility to argue for the approach adopted in the *Contested Frontiers* display. Their 'silence' in the face of news (conveyed in the book) that the Bells Falls display text was changed in response to the criticism confirms their subordinate position. This hardly advances the authority of the Museum. Wheeling in frontier history heavyweights turned the forum into a broader debate about (largely textual) history-making. Save for Davison's insightful views on the representation of history in

the museum environment and Rose's reflections on oral history, the book contributes less than it might to an understanding of how a complex subject such as frontier conflict can be adequately approached in a museum context.

IAN McSHANE IS A MUSEUM CONSULTANT IN MELBOURNE.

ANNETTE WELKAMP

Pentimento: The Master of Frankfurt's 'Virgin and Child'.
Queensland Art Gallery;
December 2002–June 2003.

Tucked away downstairs in a corner of the QAG in Brisbane is a small, yet remarkable, focus exhibition. It highlights the value of scholarship not only in the appreciation and understanding of objects in museum collections, but of the moral issues involved in acquiring and displaying them. *Pentimento: The Master of Frankfurt's 'Virgin and Child'*, focuses on a single work, a painted panel dating to c.1496.

The exhibition is in a box of a room, some nine by six metres in size, a scale that enhances the intimate and contained nature of the story. Across the centre of the longer axis is a freestanding wall in which the painting is centrally presented. It is obviously the focus around which the display rotates. Clever design allows the work to be viewed through glass from both sides of this wall — a technique that is both interesting and crucial to the tale.

The work's attribution to the anonymous Dutch 'Master of Frankfurt' is explained and the identity of key figures and elements clarified. The painting depicts the Virgin and Child attended by various saints, in the company of an unknown

patron, kneeling and fingering his prayer book. An eccentrically-clipped poodle(?) sits unfazed in front of them all.

Turning left in the gallery are two small display boxes, each with a beautiful book echoing the one held by the patron. The backdrops are blown-up details of the painted foliage, whose symbolic meaning would have been understood by a viewer in its own time but now requires explanation: the Virgin's purity in the white of the strawberry flower, her humility with violets, cinquefoil for its healing quality. At the far end are shelves displaying the materials used in mediaeval and Renaissance paintings, including gorgeous lapis lazuli and gold leaf, highlighting the cost of commissioning art in these times.

The term *pentimento* in the exhibition title derives from the Italian 'to repent', and is used to describe the changes and overpainting that artists sometimes make to their work. It is highlighted by scientific techniques such as infra-red reflectography, showing that the artist changed the figures and explaining inconsistencies such as the donor's male head atop a more feminine-shaped body. The Saints' altered identities are equally fascinating, and closer inspection with the naked eye after seeing the photographs reveals shadows of the changes described, missed at first sight.

The gallery's back wall explores the work's provenance, focusing on intriguing clues on its reverse, clearly visible at this point. The stories told on the verso through labels, sketches and scribbles provide invaluable clues to the life of the work. The uncertainty of its ownership during and just after WW2 led the QAG to include it in its Provenance Research Project.

A small round label denotes that it was part of the Oscar Bundy collection in Vienna, and

a blue handwritten number on a cross-brace constitutes its Nazi identification number; they must have rung loud alarm bells when the Provenance Study began. Research proved that the painting had indeed been confiscated by the Nazis from its Jewish owner in 1939, but recovered by the Allied Forces and returned to the owner's widow in 1947. She subsequently sold it to an American collector. The work was therefore declared free from restitution claims and the Gallery has full legal title to it.

This section of the exhibition presents the simple lesson that not all works with what may appear to be sketchy provenance are bound to have been acquired under suspicious circumstances. The piece of correspondence from the Commission for Provenance Research in Austria, displayed with other documents, must have elicited a collective sigh of relief when it arrived in Brisbane. It enables the Gallery to confidently share its research with the public.

An unobtrusive monitor in this section plays dramatic news footage of WW2 soldiers moving artworks from their hiding places onto rickety old trucks (warning: registrars should not watch). Further correspondence on display indicates that the work had been selected for inclusion in nothing less than the Führer's own museum which he had planned for Linz.

A quirky component of the exhibition is the music. Not only is one surrounded by predictable, although lovely, 16thC devotional pieces, but at an unexpected moment they are replaced by Josephine Baker, and then Marlene Dietrich. What a clever exhibition.

ANNETTE WELKAMP IS DIRECTOR OF CULTURAL CONNOTATIONS IN MELBOURNE.

NOTICEBOARD

Outside In: Activating Audiences and Community Support

The Museums and Galleries Foundation of NSW and the Blue Mountains City Council, Wentworth Falls, Blue Mountains, Friday 12 to Saturday 13 September 2003.

The two-day regional museum symposium will focus on increasing access and extending the borders of the museum. The program presented by colleagues across the sector, covers effective strategies that draw community support for the museum and the issue of catering for a variety of visitor, user and community needs. This is the largest forum for the regional museum sector in NSW for 2003.

Aletha Mays
Programs Officer, Museums and Galleries Foundation
Email: programs2@mgfnsw.org.au
Tel: 02 9358 1760
Freecall (regional NSW): 1800 114 311

Museum and Society

The University of Leicester Department of Museum Studies has launched a new online journal, museum and society. The journal, *Museum and Society*, is an independent peer reviewed journal that brings together new writing by academics and museum professionals. It is the successor to the series *New Research in Museum Studies* published by Athlone Press from 1990-97. Vol. 1 is available now at www.le.ac.uk/ms/m7s/index.html.

Managing Diversity Conference

1-3 October 2003, Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre, Melbourne.

Hosted by the City of Darebin and supported by the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Latrobe University and Common Ground Conferences, this event encourages organisations to embrace practices that enhance diversity in the workplace. It showcases the equitable outcomes of good diversity management for the external and internal communities an organisation serves and the hidden productive benefits of meeting the needs of diverse groups.

For more information, program details and registration forms visit www.ManagingDiversityConference.com
Email: registrations@ManagingDiversityConference.com
Tel: 03 9230 4602
Fax: 03 9230 2259

Interpretation in the Conservation and Design Process

Friday 21 to Saturday 22 November, International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the NSW Heritage Office, Sydney.

This conference will explore interpretation issues and discuss and develop a draft Guidelines to the Burra Charter on interpretation. It will also assist in the development of input from Australian members to the evolution of the international ICOMOS Ename Charter on heritage interpretation. Following the conference the NSW Heritage Office has proposed an invited experts workshop to develop more detailed Interpretation Guidelines.

Alan Croker
Organising Committee
Email: alancroker@design5.com.au

EIANZ Outback Summit

Broken Hill,
23-25 October 2003.

EARTH, FIRE, WATER & SPIRIT

The Regional Cultural Alliance (RCA) has been invited by the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand to help develop the program for this exciting Outback Summit.

The Summit will consider the most environmentally sustainable means of managing Australia's physical environment — with an emphasis on remote, regional and rural Australia. The Outback Summit themes include the human spirit and the RCA has been invited so together we can review how environment and culture are intertwined, and examine how to enhance this vital relationship.

The RCA will be officially launched at the Summit. Members of RCA — Museums Australia, the Australian Council of National Trusts, the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, Regional Arts Australia and the Australian Library and Information Association — have developed a concurrent stream and invited keynote speakers to address the Summit.

Jon Hawkes will examine the links between culture and environment. *What we become is deeply influenced by [our] heritage, both physical and spiritual. The meaning we make of our lives — what we call our culture, grows from this soil.*

Cultural institutions representing each of the RCA members will give case studies of how they have created sustainable communities through their activities.

Officers from the Departments of Transport and Regional Services and Communications, Information Technology and the Arts will present reports on research undertaken into the impact of cultural grants in regional areas.

For further information check Museums Australia's website, www.museumsaustralia.org.au

Monitoring for Preventive Conservation

13-15 October 2003, Sydney.

This three-day workshop will bring together information relevant to personnel managing collections or responsible for preventive conservation. Topics will include environmental standards, theories and rationale for monitoring, monitoring of various conditions and analysis of information, risk analysis and case studies. The emphasis will be on developing and managing an effective and rational monitoring program that can assist the long-term preservation of collections.

The registration fee is AU\$600 + GST and the closing date is 12 September 2003. Limited to 25 participants.
Vinod Daniel
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Mob: 0411 021 600

COMING IN MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2003

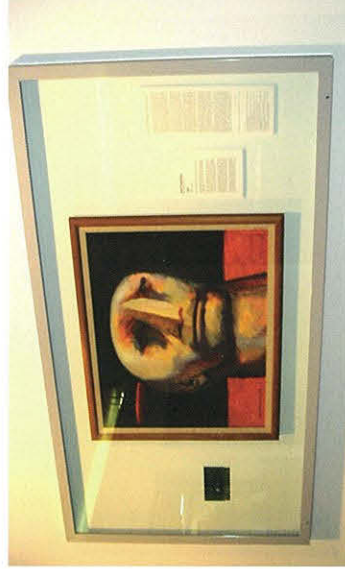
The Wired Museum — new technologies in the electronic environment

FEBRUARY 2004

Living Dangerously — disasters, trauma, controversies ... and freelancing

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