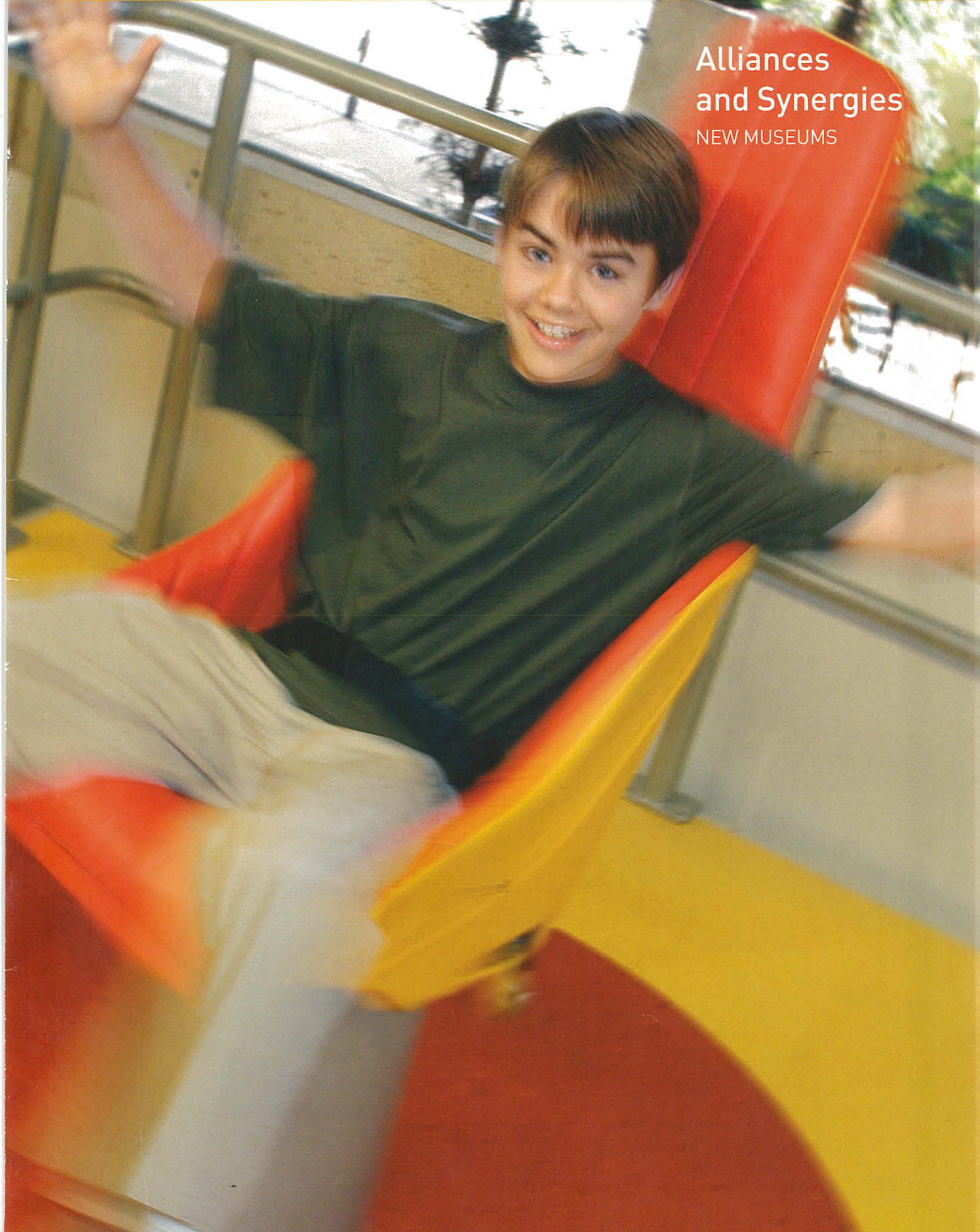


museumsaustralia

MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2004 → AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES → ISSUES»NEWS»VIEWS

Alliances
and Synergies
NEW MUSEUMS



MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

politics and
POSITIONING
2005
May 1-4, 2005



Politics and positioning will explore the opportunities and challenges facing museums as they seek to re-invent and re-vitalise the sector in a time of contradiction and change. The issues facing collections from digital technology and concerns about on-going sustainability, the shifting focus to audience needs and accessibility, the 'claiming' of the museum by an increasing range of stakeholders and interest groups raise questions about the position of museums in the 21st century, about identity and power, about permanence and change.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Four guest speakers for the conference are now confirmed and we are anticipating the confirmation of a range of guest speakers from around Australia and the world. Among our confirmed guest speakers is Adrian Ellis, Director of AEA Consulting, a company that specialises in strategic, operational and facilities planning for cultural organisations and their funders. As Director of the Benaki Museum in Greece, distinguished Professor Angelo Delivorrias, will discuss issues of cultural repatriation with specific reference to the Parthenon Marbles. It is our pleasure to also have Jock McQueenie and Anthea Hancock joining the conference.

BURSARS

Bursars for the 2005 Conference are now available from the Community Museums SIG and the Historians SIG. Check the Conference website for more details.

VENUE

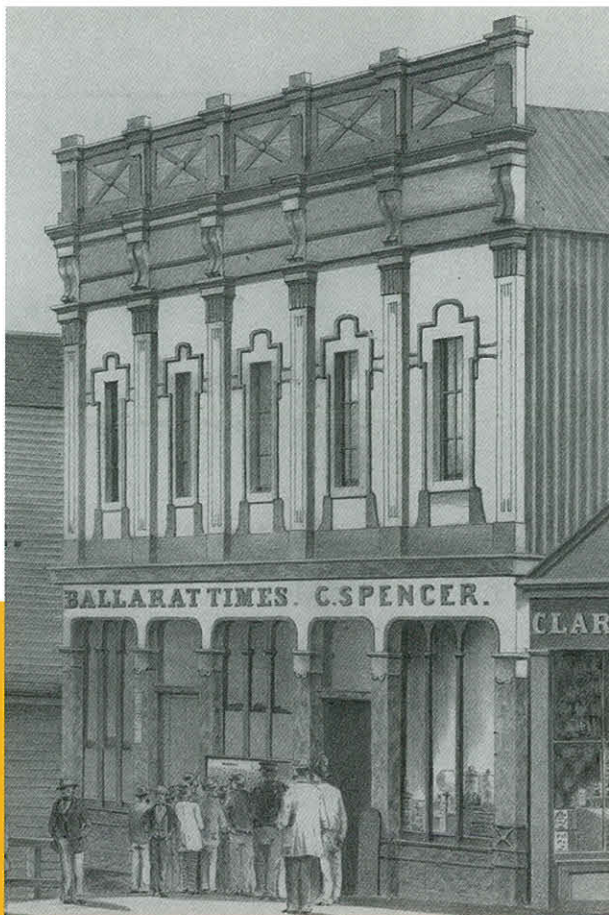
Powerhouse Museum and the Eugene Goossens Hall, Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)

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ROSLYN RUSSELL, EDITOR

IN THIS ISSUE...

ALLIANCES AND SYNERGIES

Our theme this issue, 'Alliances and Synergies', explores a number of ways in which museums are collaborating and cooperating with other organisations, institutions, governmental bodies and with each other to carry out their activities or to better integrate museums with the wider community.

From working with people in aged care facilities to collaborations in exhibition and museum projects to strategic management partnerships, these alliances and synergies are catalyzing change, improving effectiveness and enriching products and outreach. Read about them in our themed section on pages 12 to 23.

From time to time MAM has introduced special sections to deal with requests from our members for more coverage of specific areas. Our 'Regional Roundup' section is one of these. We are thinking of introducing another section, Q&A, and inviting members to send in their questions. You may want to hear about how some museums attract and keep volunteers. Or whether naming people in captions could violate privacy requirements — a question we were asked recently. We will try

WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU ABOUT MAM'S COVERAGE OF MUSEUM INDUSTRY ISSUES. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO HEAR FROM ABOUT HOW YOU USE THE MAGAZINE

to answer these and other questions, and would certainly like to hear from members who could offer advice based on their experience of these issues.

Feedback is important to us. So are contributions. We would like to hear from you about these aspects of MAM's coverage of museum industry issues. We would also like to hear from about how you use the magazine — do you check advertising for possible products when considering purchases? Do you read reviews and purchase the books and visit the exhibitions under review? We can be contacted at editor@museumsaustralia.org.au

ARTS AMBASSADORS: PLUGGING IN TO NEW AUDIENCES

On a recent whirlwind seminar tour of Australian capitals supported by the Australia Council, British audience development specialist Mel Jennings provided some useful advice regarding 'Arts Ambassadors' and how their services can be used to open up venues, institutions and arts organisations to broader audiences.

The UK Arts Council's definition of an ambassador is 'a community networker with the objective of spreading the word about arts and cultural events and/or representing the views and aspirations of a target community'. In the student context someone in this position may be called a 'rep', and people in similar roles in other contexts are often referred to as 'community advocates' or 'connectors'.

In the seminar Jennings detailed two models of ambassador programs — the 'promotional' and 'audience development', and then elaborated on the application of both through reference to particular case studies. There has been scant application of the ambassador model mooted by Jennings in Australia to date, although notable exceptions include the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's (SSO) ongoing outreach work with

the Sydney Chinese community and, in Melbourne, Lee Christofis' Multicultural Arts Marketing Ambassadors (MAMAs) program.

These programs aside, the slow uptake could perhaps be the result of unclear definitions and a lack of awareness of the benefits ambassadors can bring to Australian arts organisations. The unique contribution that ambassadors can make often comes from their position as a representative/member of a target community. Jennings said 'They are often employed to stimulate positive word of mouth and to listen to audience feedback in order to generate greater audiences. Increasing attendances is not always the core objective: ambassadors are also valued for their ability to broaden audience type...[t]hese days, word of mouth also includes 'word of mouse' (email) and text messaging.'

Many have been confused as to precisely what an ambassador is and does, so Jennings' seminars have been a welcome relief. The other question that often arises is: when is it appropriate to work with ambassadors? There are many instances where their help can be beneficial, such as to kick start or boost core campaigns, when other

AMBASSADORS ARE NOT MULTI-LEVEL MARKETERS AND ALTHOUGH THEY MAY BE PAID, THEY SHOULD NOT PROFIT DIRECTLY FROM SALES.

methods have not worked; or when wanting to build long-term relationships with particular audience segments, especially to overcome 'competition, audience inertia and misconceptions'.

Ambassadors may seem like a cure-all for some arts organisations' attendance woes, but Jennings offers some cautions: 'the ambassador remit is more flexible than that of 'Friends' or sales reps and brings different expectations, opportunities and challenges; ambassadors rely on trust to get the job done. Relationships with their contacts must be respected and not over-stretched either politically or financially'. And perhaps the most important distinction of all, 'ambassadors are not multi-level marketers and although they may be paid, they should not profit directly from sales.'

Overall the half-day seminars offered an opportunity to sample the benefits of an arts-promotion and audience development tool that has proved highly successful across Britain. To find out more: download Mel Jennings' *Practical Guide to Working with Arts Ambassadors* at: www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/publications/885.pdf

THE PETROV AFFAIR AT OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE

The defection of Soviet agents Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov in 1954 was Australia's biggest spy scandal. It led to a Royal Commission on Espionage, and foiled all chances of the Labor Party taking power for nearly two decades.

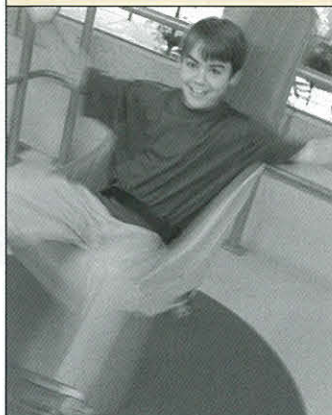
On the fiftieth anniversary of the dramatic defection, Old Parliament House has mounted an exhibition, *The Petrov Affair*, which examines the intricacies of this momentous event in Australia's political history. The exhibition runs till April 2005.

Mrs Petrov at Mascot Airport escorted to a plane bound for Russia by two Soviet officials, 19 April 1954
Photograph by William Carty.
Courtesy of ScreenSound Australia.



OUR COVER THIS MONTH is an image from the Queensland Museum's new Sciencentre on South Bank, Brisbane. Sciencentre and the Museum's new front entrance were opened in September by Premier Peter Beattie and Anna Bligh, Minister for Education and the Arts. The new Sciencentre, which boasts 96 interactive exhibits, was funded by the Queensland State government. The whole redevelopment, which cost \$9.5 million, gave the Museum its first facelift in twenty years.

Dare to try the Sciencentre's Spinning Chair
Photo by Dane Beesley
Courtesy of Queensland Museum



NEWS ABOUT PEOPLE

Ron Radford, Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, is to be the next Director of the National Gallery of Australia.

The *Art Newspaper's* October issue features an article by Sebastian Smee on the appointment, with the heading 'Good humoured, capable, conciliatory'. He asserts that 'Dr Radford has transformed the Art Gallery of South Australia into the jewel of Australian State galleries'.

Among the challenges faced by the incoming Director, writes Smee, is 'the perennial problem of how to lure interstate and international visitors to Canberra, a young and relatively small inland capital'.

Thomas Graham, formerly of the Museum of the Riverina, is now Senior Exhibitions Curator at Old Parliament House.

Alan Smith, formerly Director of Carrick Hill, SA, has been appointed Director of the State Library of South Australia.

Helen Rayment has joined RMIT Gallery. **Erica Sanders** is the new Executive Officer of the Victorian branch of Museums Australia.

BARKS AND BITES

LINDA YOUNG

Two pieces of 150-year old sooty bark faintly etched with figures entered the annals of international museum politics in June 2004, by triggering the fiercest standoff yet between the professional apparatus of museums and the descendants of Indigenous makers. Dja Dja Warrung people of northern Victoria invoked modern heritage legislation to prevent the return of loan material to Britain, where it has been in public collections since the 1850s.

The story: as part of its 150th celebrations, Museum Victoria borrowed the barks and a wooden emu figure from the British Museum and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, to join its own, slightly later, bark in a temporary display, 'Etched on bark 1854: Kulin barks from Northern Victoria'. The three barks are the unique survivors of a once-extensive art form, and the details of their provenance, newly investigated, reveal a particular moment in black-white relations in Australia. In short, the works are enormously significant.

The barks were made in 1854 by two Kulin men in the Boort district for squatter John Kerr, apparently in friendly exchange. He contributed them to the colonial Victorian court at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1855. At the end of the world's fair, the three pieces were acquired by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Two were later transferred to the British Museum.

Snap forward to today. After an exciting rediscovery of the

items in the British collections, the barks were lent in the usual kind of inter-museum loan, complete with permits under the federal *Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act*. The Act enables a license for foreign-owned works to enter and leave without hindrance.

The loans were to be returned at the end of June. At this point, a Dja Dja Warrung activist invoked a peculiar detail of the Commonwealth's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act* (1987), whereby specifically Victorian legislation which had been blocked by the state upper house was incorporated into the federal Act as 'Part 2(a)'. Part 2(a), applicable in Victoria only, enables state ministerial-appointed inspectors to place an emergency declaration on items of Aboriginal heritage deemed at risk, for thirty days. A further apparatus of temporary and open-ended declarations may then be issued by the Victorian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, in his capacity as a delegate of the Commonwealth Minister for Environment and Heritage.

Inspector Rodney Carter made such an emergency declaration on 18 June. Hooters and sirens went off in the Australian and international museum scene. Museum Victoria took a complicated track, asserting on the one hand that it is 'proud to work closely with Aboriginal communities', but that on the other, it has legal obligations to its lenders. Negotiations with Dja Dja Warrung Elders have

been unproductive, and there have been internal ructions between Indigenous staff and management.

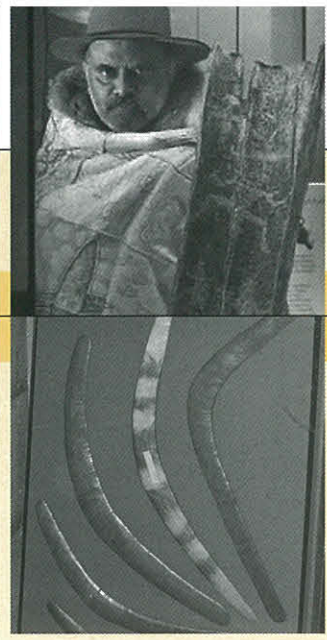
But no resolution appeared, as the Inspector made a second and then a third thirty-day emergency declaration, with parallel extensions to the loans by the increasingly anxious UK museums.

On 1 October, Museum Victoria filed an appeal in the Federal Court in Melbourne, under the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977* (known as the *ADJR Act*). This will test the processual legitimacy of the Inspector's declarations.

If the Inspector's declarations are upheld by the ADJR and achieve the further authority of ministerial temporary or open-ended declarations, the barks could be prevented from returning to the UK.

In this case, despite the fact that the Act applies only in Victoria, foreign museums will be extremely cautious about lending Australian material to Australia. It would be a savage blow to the entire global system of cultural loans. This was noted in a joint statement by the BM and Kew, pointing out that the action 'puts at risk the very legal framework that allows such exhibitions to take place'.

At the time of going to press the matter has disappeared into legal silence as the parties present their cases.



Gary Murray with one of the etchings
Photo by Craig Abraham, *The Age*,
22 September 2004

Boomerangs on display in the
Enlightenment exhibition in the
British Museum
Photo by Roslyn Russell

The central issue is, of course, ownership. Whitefella law is clear that the barks belong to the two British institutions.

Blackfellas have other perspectives. They revolve around the question: how can an unequal exchange be legitimate? In the cultural economy of colonial Victoria, Indigenous products were, to say the least, undervalued. The moral claim to restitution is strong, though the practical dimensions are very challenging.

The case spotlights the position of museums as an interface between the alienated heritage of Indigenous cultures and Western collecting practice as a tool of imperialism. Negotiating the consequences of this history in post-colonial times has generated a bundle of more or less effective outcomes which include dialogue, Indigenous control (to varying degrees) of collections and repatriation. But other efforts have been unsuccessful — so far.

The symbolic effect of the Dja Dja Warrung action is a magnificent assertion of Indigenous ownership. But if it is successful, the practical consequence will devastate museum operations by destroying local and international trust between Indigenous communities and collecting institutions.

Could the cure be worse than the disease?

LINDA YOUNG
CULTURAL HERITAGE
MANAGEMENT
UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

UK POSTCARD — AUSTRALIA ABROAD

ROSLYN RUSSELL

It's a bit of a hobby of mine. When I travel, particularly in the United Kingdom, I look around for things Australian. So when I visited the British Museum and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew earlier this year, I was pleased to find a number of things that evoked my homeland, and demonstrated yet again the ways in which material culture can express historic linkages.

The British Museum has a wonderful exhibition on the eighteenth century Enlightenment, in the King's Library just off the Great Court. The material culture of ancient societies and the spoils of Britain's colonialist enterprise are gathered here in a cabinet of curiosities-style display. Not surprisingly, considering the role the collections he amassed played in the evolution of the Museum, Sir Joseph Banks is represented by two portrait busts and, more importantly, by some of the natural history specimens collected on the *Endeavour* voyage. A specimen tray of Australian shells, with labels written at the time they were collected, evoked for me both the spirit of scientific enquiry that characterised the Enlightenment, and the role played by that voyage in the colonisation of Australia.

Outside in the Great Court there was a very different exhibition, on Troy, featuring costumes from the recent film, but also the story of the Trojan War, and more recent conflicts focused on the region. So the Gallipoli campaign was included in the display. While

this military adventure looms large in Australian national consciousness, in truth we were vastly out-represented by British, Indian and French troops. Nevertheless, the illustrations on the text panel for this section of the exhibition were sourced from the Australian War Memorial.

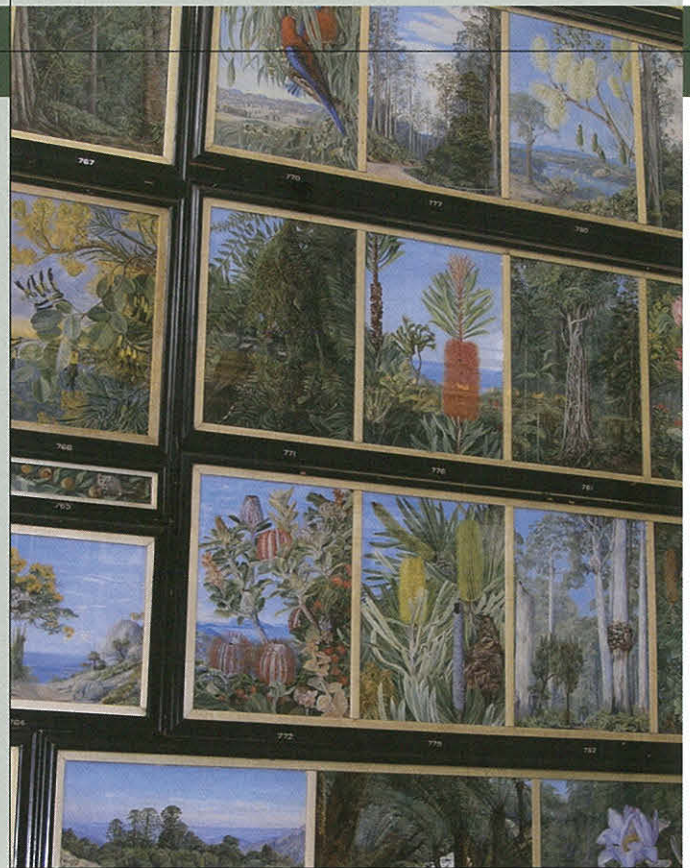
Another British Museum exhibition, *Life and Death*, also displayed an Australian connection, with Aboriginal bark coffins and photos of funerary customs in northern Australia.

The development of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, also owed a great debt to Sir Joseph Banks, and many of the Australian specimens planted there were collected by his agents in the early colonies. The huge Palm House has a whole section devoted to the plants of Australasia. Later in the nineteenth century a botanical artist, Marianne North, travelled the world painting plants in their natural environments. She came to Australia and painted here, and the fruits of her labour are displayed in a purpose-built gallery at Kew, along with paintings of the flora and fauna of other British colonial possessions.

Australia may be half a world away when you are in London. But if you step into some of its great museums, you will find many objects to remind you of home and its history.

ROSLYN RUSSELL
EDITOR,
MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE

Australian flora and fauna painted by Marianne North, on display in a specially built gallery in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Photo by Roslyn Russell

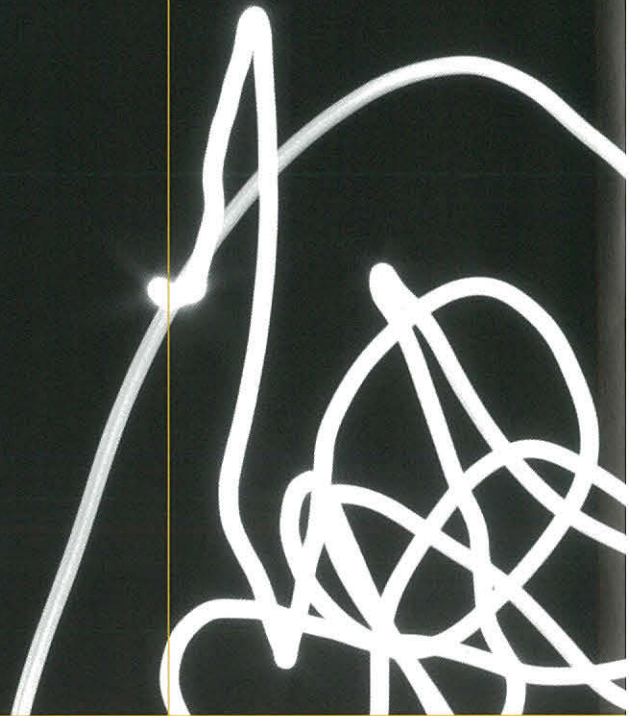


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A LUNAR OBSESSION

ANDREW SIMPSON



National Science Week has been and gone for another year. Science stories do seem to gain greater profile at this time each year and there is an abundance of events, talks and workshops to fascinate and engage science fans of different ages and interest levels. But what long-term impact does it have? It would be interesting to see some research on this question.

One of Macquarie University's events this year was a talk by Professor Paul Davies from the Australian Centre for Astrobiology entitled 'Footsteps to the Stars'. It was the usual polished presentation that those who have heard him speak before have come to expect.

An incidental bonus at this event was some lunar rock samples on display in the foyer where the talk was held. These were provided courtesy of Jeanette Rothapfel, Head Science Teacher and passionate space enthusiast.

Jeanette has visited the Johnson Space Centre on many occasions and is the first teacher to gain access to lunar specimens and take them outside of the United States.

A hardy band of astronomical fans of all ages clustered around the display case, paying due homage to the small unspectacular bits of stone set in perspex under the watchful eye of a security guard. Outside a white crescent high in the sky indicated the source of the rock specimens to patrons arriving for the talk. Jeanette answered a constant stream of questions from the gathering throng.

At a museums seminar some time ago a series of speakers recalled the museum object that had made the strongest personal impression on them. Most chose things like the Mona Lisa, ancient Egyptian burial masks and other culturally significant objects. One, however, described a small grey rock in the

Smithsonian. It had a profound effect because it was from the moon. It reminded the visitor of watching the lunar landing in a country school many years ago with the rest of Australia (and the world). It reminded him of stories by H.G. Wells and other formative science fiction explorations. It recalled childhood notions about the 'Man in the Moon', Mr Squiggle and more recently his own children's delight at Wallace & Grommit's 'Grand Day Out' where the 'cheesiness' of the lunar surface was sampled. It reminded him of tides, eclipses, werewolves and bushwalking at night using the moon's light for guidance. It even evoked memories of early romantic moonlit encounters. Most significantly, however, seeing that one specimen sparked a life-long interest in astronomy.

One way of valuing rock specimens in a museum is to consider the cost of

A HARDY BAND OF
ASTRONOMICAL FANS
OF ALL AGES PAID
HOMAGE TO
UNSPECTACULAR
BITS OF STONE.

replacement should it be lost. For these specimens Jeanette estimates it is about five million dollars per gram. But how do you estimate its value in making connections for those who encounter it? You can't put a dollar value on that.

Jeanette was there at the Davies lecture because she is keen for as many people to see the samples as possible during the short time they are in her possession. She chased some National Science Week funding to help her present the lunar samples as a resource, both motivational and educational, while conducting lessons, workshops, lectures, and

professional development for students, teachers, the public at museums and any other interested community organizations. Alas, the request was not successful. Perhaps, if more time was available funding could have been chased through a wider range of sources. But there is never enough time to find elusive and dwindling dollars for worthy causes. In the end she simply took long service leave from work and just did it herself.

It is fascinating to observe all the current excitement and debate in education circles about 'learning objects'. They are a great focus for resources with lots of money flowing towards their development. It seems difficult, however, to get any two experts to give a consistent definition of a 'learning object'. All I can deduce is a vague notion that they are a kind of ill-defined, web-based 'widget' that helps engage object users in some form of learning experience. I'd certainly welcome a more accurate definition!

Have we lost sight of the power of real objects to stimulate curiosity, engage young minds and drive people along their own journey of discovery? Sure, looking at a few scrappy rocks isn't going to turn everyone on! But you never know, maybe one of the many kids pressing their faces up against the display case during National Science Week will one day step onto another world.

Clever country? Doesn't look like one!

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POWERHOUSE MUSEUM CELEBRATES 125 YEARS

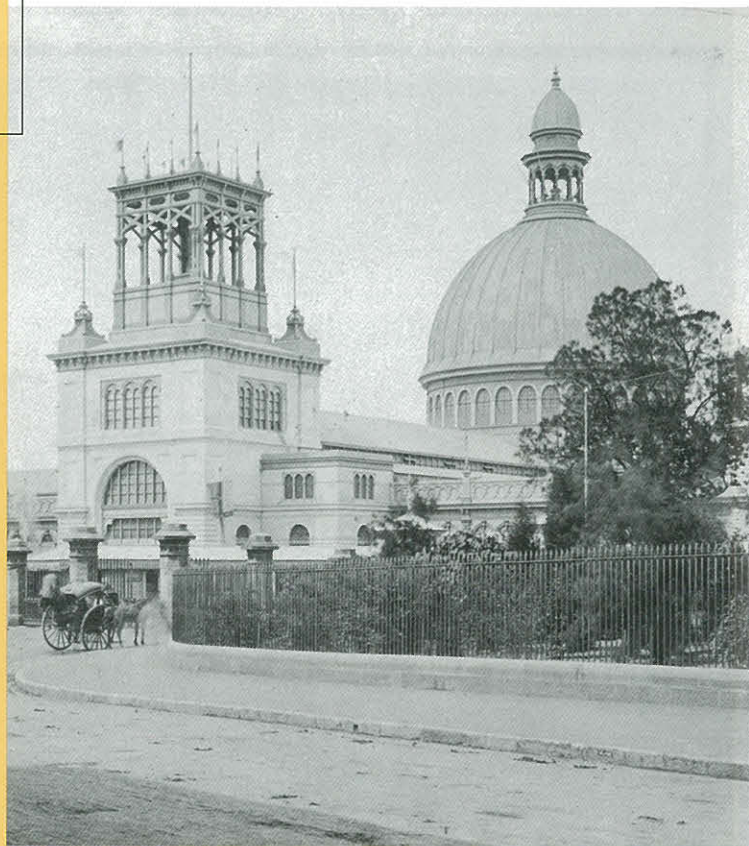
Sydney's Powerhouse Museum celebrated its 125-year history in September with special celebrations and ongoing activities, including a blockbuster exhibition from Te Papa Tongarewa on the *Lord of the Rings* movies. The exhibition opens on 16 December and runs until 31 March 2005.

The museum originated with Australia's first truly international exhibition in the Garden Palace, Sydney, in 1879. The latest examples of industrial design, craft and art were on display there, and formed the nucleus of the museum's collection. The Garden Palace burned down, but the museum opened in December 1883 in an old agricultural shed behind Sydney Hospital. It was called the Industrial, Technology and Sanitary Museum. Later, when it moved to a permanent building in Ultimo, it became the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

In its current location at Darling Harbour since 1988, the Powerhouse Museum has had over sixteen million visitors through its doors to see its celebrated objects and collections in three major areas: Decorative Arts and Design; Australian History and Society; and Science and Technology. Individual objects for which the Powerhouse is celebrated include the Boulton and Watt steam engine, a model of the Strasbourg Clock, and the 'plastic woman'.

Above right: View of the majestic 1879 Garden Palace from the Botanic Gardens

© Powerhouse Museum, Sydney



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REGIONAL ROUNDUP



FRESH STARTS IN THE REGIONS

First sod turned for Hawkesbury Regional Museum

Artist's impression of the new Hawkesbury Regional Museum
Courtesy of Hawkesbury City Council

On 7 August 2004 a ceremony was held in Windsor to turn the first sod to begin construction of a large modern extension to the existing Hawkesbury Regional Museum. President of the Hawkesbury Historical Society and Mayor of Hawkesbury City Council, Councillor Dr Rex Stubbs, and Jan Barkley Jack, Senior Vice-President of the Hawkesbury Historical Society, joined forces to wield spade and scissors for the ceremony of sod-turning and ribbon-cutting.

The ceremony was also attended by other members of the Hawkesbury City Council,

Hawkesbury Historical Society, and members of the local community. Hugh Williams, architect of the new extension, was able to attend the ceremony, but sadly passed away less than a fortnight later. A room in the new building will be named in his honour.

The ceremony was an important milestone for former Honorary Curator Jan Barkley Jack, who has been working for twenty-five years to achieve this new museum extension to house the Hawkesbury Historical Society's significant collection. This contains objects

provenanced to the district's early pioneer families and demonstrates other aspects of its life, such as the RAAF Base at Richmond. The Hawkesbury area was first settled in 1794, and for many years was the granary of the colony of New South Wales. The district is also significant for its colonial Georgian built heritage, of which the existing museum building, Howe's House, is an example.

Other key exhibits in the new museum building will include a flood boat, historic boat building material and building tools, and artefacts associated with the

Darug Aboriginal people. There is also a display on HMAS *Hawkesbury*, for which former crew members have contributed historic material. The museum extension will also contain a theatre in which visitor will be able to see a short documentary on the district's history, and the museum itself will feature audiovisual displays and interactive games.

The Hawkesbury Regional Museum extension is jointly funded by the NSW Ministry for the Arts and the Hawkesbury City Council. The building is due to be completed in 2005.



The Chorella Community Choir performed at the ceremony at Windsor to commence the new museum building
 Photos by Lea Constable
 Courtesy of Hawkesbury City Council

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REGIONAL ROUNDUP

MORE STARTS...

A new gallery at Lady Denman Heritage Complex, Huskisson

We know the Jervis Bay region as one of the most beautiful areas of coastline in New South Wales. Its white sand beaches and clear waters, backed by large areas of bushland in Booderee National Park, are beloved of holidaymakers and local residents alike.

But it could have been very different, if some of the 'grand visions' proposed for the area had come to fruition. These have included its use as a port for Canberra and a fleet base for the Royal Australian Navy; the development of a whole new city on the Bay, called Pacific City; and the location for a steelworks and a nuclear reactor.

A new gallery at the Lady Denman Heritage Complex, *Grand Visions for Jervis Bay*,

developed by volunteer curator Bridget Sant and opened on 30 October, takes visitors on a journey through these and other 'grand visions' that would have impacted on the area, using a series of colourful wall panels and an interactive model. The exhibition tells the story of how these 'grand visions' failed to materialise, often as a result of citizens' action groups concerned to protect the area's natural environment.

The *Grand Visions* gallery development was assisted by a grant from the NSW Ministry for the Arts, and the construction of the model was facilitated by the Powerhouse Museum.

The Lady Denman Heritage Complex, with over a hundred active volunteers, recently won the South Coast Tourism Award for cultural and Indigenous heritage tourism.

Tweed River Regional Museum,

a partnership between the Tweed Shire Council and Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Uki and South Arm Historical Societies, was launched on 20 September 2004. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed to celebrate the forging of the new partnership.

Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre

opened on 12 September 2004. The museum's opening was the culmination of many years of community effort, assisted by local and state government support.



Enfield and Districts Historical Society curator, Marjorie Thorndike and publicity officer, Denis Robinson in the museum
Photo by Susan Marsden

HERITAGE AWARDS AT SUNNYBRAE FARM, ADELAIDE

Enfield Heritage Museum, located in an unusual rural setting in industrial Adelaide, is run voluntarily by Enfield and Districts Historical Society members. Sunnybrae Farm was once the Islington Sewage Farm (1881-1966), and was part of the first water-borne sewerage system in Australia. The museum displays town and country life from the 1880s and hosts a popular 'Celebrate Sunnybrae' day with stalls and demonstrations. On 31 August the museum was alive with schoolchildren and teachers visiting from throughout South Australia, from small places such as Miltaburra and Curramulka as well as Adelaide suburbs. The students were all award winners in the 2004 Schools Heritage Competition, initiated by the State Heritage Authority in 2003. The awards were presented in the Cheese Room by the Minister for Environment and Conservation, John Hill. The topic was *Community Mapping* and the winning presentations can be seen at:

www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/schools_comp2004.html#yr_4-5.



Designer of the *Grand Visions* gallery, Kim Tatnell, and curator Bridget Sant, at Lady Denman Heritage Complex, Huskisson
Photograph by Roslyn Russell



Participants at an exhibition planning workshop conducted by the Lachlan Chapter of Museums Australia at Yass, NSW
 Photo by Roslyn Russell

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JUDY KEAN

On 2 July 2004 the Australian Securities and Investments Commission issued a Certificate of Registration for the new company Museum and Gallery Services Queensland Ltd. (M&GSQ), heralding a new era of support for museums and galleries in Queensland.

PERPETUAL PARTNERSHIP

Museum and Gallery Services Queensland is jointly owned by Museums Australia, through its Queensland branch (MAQ) and by the Regional Galleries Association of Queensland (RGAQ). M&GSQ brings together staffing and program resources of MAQ and RGAQ, establishing shared representation of, and delivery of programs and services to galleries and museums throughout Queensland.

As with any birth, merger or acquisition, this event has a complex history.

The Regional Galleries Association of Queensland began operations in 1987 and was supported by the Local Government Association of Queensland, administratively and financially, from 1986–1996. Museums Australia's Queensland Branch came into being when that organisation was formed in 1994.

Both organisations received significant injections of funding from the Queensland government following implementation of recommendations of *Hidden Heritage Report (A Development Plan for Museums in Queensland 1995–2001)* (1995). This included (from 1996) operational grants to each for the development and maintenance of a formal Partnership Program.

This Program has proved fruitful, particularly in the area of training and professional development where an extensive array of workshops, conferences, publications and lectures, together with pioneering work in the area of Vocational Education and Training (VET), are widely recognised as exemplary.

How close should a partnership get?

The notion that collecting and exhibiting institutions such as museums and galleries have a great deal more in common than not is hardly revolutionary. Similarly, the formation of Museums Australia itself brought together many pre-existing associations representing natural and applied science, social history, art galleries, keeping places and archives.

More recently *A Study into the Key Needs of Collecting Institutions in the Heritage Sector* (2002) specifically examined the shared needs of museums, galleries, libraries and archives. Consequent formation of the Collections Council of Australia, 'a new national peak body to represent the shared interests of archives, galleries, libraries and museums', demonstrates a clear commitment on the part of Commonwealth and State governments to 'strategically address issues across the (collections) sector'.

In recent years the principal funding body for MAQ and RGAQ (Arts Queensland) expressed the belief that the needs of Queensland museums and galleries might be better served by one rather than two peak bodies. This position was in part informed by a desire for greater efficiencies in the allocation of operational funding (a position echoed by other state arts agencies), and probably by the trends outlined above.



Left to right, back row, then front row: Mij Bricknell, Summer Bland, Judy Kean, Ann Baillie, Ashleigh Clark, Sophie Gow
Not pictured: Debra Beattie, Judith Brough and Fiona Marshall

IN RECENT YEARS ARTS QUEENSLAND
EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT THE NEEDS
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ONE RATHER THAN TWO PEAK BODIES.

BOTH PARTIES WERE ADAMANT THAT THE BEST INTERESTS OF MEMBERS AND OF THE SECTOR WAS A MODEL OF JOINT AND EQUAL OWNERSHIP OF A NEW ENTITY.

In response to this changing environment, RGAQ and MAQ thoroughly researched the options and consulted widely with members, constituents, colleagues and other stakeholders about the consequences of combining resources. What might be lost, and gained? Could high quality programs and services provided separately be preserved and enhanced in a combined model? What might the best model be?

Ultimately they agreed that a close partnership that had survived the seven-year itch could have a bright future. However agreement as to the shape of this future was intrinsic to it becoming a reality. In the end, both parties were adamant that the best interests of members and of the sector — and key to future success and sustainability — was a model of joint and equal ownership of a new entity, rather than amalgamation of the two existing organisations.

Following its registration in July and transfer of staff and other resources in early October 2004, Museum and Gallery Services Queensland Ltd. has begun to progressively deliver many of the programs previously offered by Museums Australia Queensland and the Regional Galleries Association of Queensland. These two organisations will continue to provide a voice for their membership, and are represented on the Board of M&GSQ.

The future

Local governments, particularly in regional Queensland, increasingly recognise that museums, galleries, historical societies, libraries, cultural centres and heritage buildings (and associated collections) are part of the same family. The sharing of resources and expertise between them is actively encouraged and promoted, and seen to enhance their capacity to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

A recent conference (*Rewards and Responsibilities*) initiated by the Rockhampton City Council exemplified this approach (http://www.venuesandevents.com.au/heritage/conf_papers.html). Speakers from across the sector discussed a range of issues including managing built and movable cultural heritage,

interpretation of regional cultural heritage, and collegial approaches to heritage management. A key outcome of the conference will be the establishment of a Heritage Services Association, to be formed under the umbrella of the Local Government Association of Queensland.

It is in this climate of willingness to address common needs and approaches that the future programming of Museum and Gallery Services Queensland Ltd. must thrive.

M&GSQ inherits a well-established and successful model for this approach — the Training and Professional Development Program of its parent organisations. In recent years this model has been broadened through joint conferences and publications, and most recently through development of the inaugural Gallery and Museum Achievement Awards (GAMAAs).

The Visual Arts and Craft Strategy (implementing the recommendations of the Myer Report) will inject significant new funds into the sector. As the recipient of some of these (2005–2007) M&GSQ has the opportunity to develop innovative programming that builds on the RGAQ's expertise in the areas of exhibition development and touring, and on the skills and expertise of the many regional galleries and museums around Queensland.

Benchmarks and standards for care and management of collections have long been a concern for the sector, and are identified within the terms of reference of the new Collections Council of Australia. In Queensland a minimum standards scheme has been identified by funding bodies, by the sector and by M&GSQ as ripe for consideration.

These are some areas that will form the foundations of M&GSQ's programs and services. The organisation is attuned to trends unfolding at a national level, and to the needs of constituents in regional Queensland. The challenge will be to stay that way.

JUDY KEAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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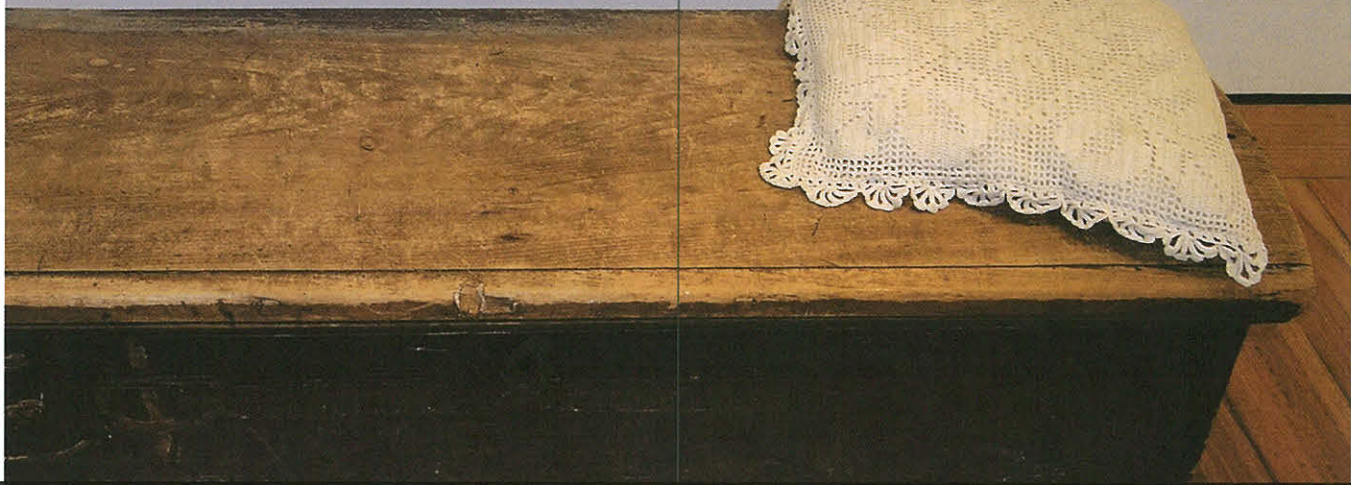
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WHETHER WE SHARE WITH
ANOTHER FAMILY MEMBER OR AN
UNKNOWN VISITOR, WE PLACE OUR
HEARTS IN OUR HANDS AND SO
MAKE OURSELVES VULNERABLE.



Photos by Roslyn Russell

Oneira is the Greek word for dreams. It was chosen as the title of this exhibition, on display at the Canberra Museum and Gallery from July to September 2004, because all too often we think of the immigrant dream as something which stops when the immigrant reaches Australia, buys a business and sends his/her children to school here. Old dreams evolve and change into new dreams as young Australians take the legacy of their heritage with them into their roles in contemporary Australian society.

As guest curator for *Oneira...the evolution of dreams*, I had the unique opportunity of witnessing those changing dreams and their consequences, and the privilege of being invited into people's homes and more importantly, their families and therefore their hearts. In assembling this exhibition, I felt much like a weaver given the honour of dressing the loom. All those who contributed to this exhibition through their creation, commissioning or collecting of the arts and inspired by the social history objects brought to Australia by their forebears, were connected to each other by invisible threads.

The treasures shared by members of Canberra's Greek-Australian community afforded insights into the way that dreams start out, how they change, how they are redefined and reinterpreted by successive generations, how they give way to related dreams and how they become totally transformed. Very often the dreams start out with the irrepressible hope of the young. What can be a more enticing dream than the promise of the new start in the new land? This dream is underpinned by the belief that the journey and arrival will change or transform a life but it also represents other dreams and belongings left behind. More often than not the dream exceeds the expectation of transformation in that it profoundly affects not only the life of one individual but, just

as powerfully perhaps, the lives of an entire family and the lives of successive generations.

The *Oneira* exhibition explored this last point. It charted how successive generations within some families have, through various forms of artistic creation and reinterpretation — tapestry, oil painting, embroidery, weaving and ceramics — been linked artistically. In this exhibition, the treasures were predominantly textile, fibre or paper based, brought to Australia by parents, grandparents and great-grandparents before being reinterpreted here.

The exhibition invited us consider what compels such creative passion. It offered the perspective that it is based on a desire to maintain, recreate, restore or reinvent a special relationship, even to imagine it there where it did not exist face to face.

If this exhibition was characterised by one thing, it was the generosity of the spirit of sharing. Sharing is not always an easy thing to do when objects are so precious and beloved and possibly in danger of fading and slipping away from the tangible realm into the realm of memory and fragmentation. Sharing is a gift in itself. Whether we share with another family member or an unknown visitor, we place our hearts in our hands and so make ourselves vulnerable.

I thank the members of Canberra's Greek-Australian community for that generosity of spirit and the strength of their passion so evident in this exhibition. Together they have created stories from the warp and weft of their lives and those of their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. They have cut a red thread from the loom and gifted it to those who travelled through this exhibition so that together they may share and create new dreams.

VASILIKI NIHAS, GUEST CURATOR, *ONEIRA ... THE EVOLUTION OF DREAMS*
VOYAGING, CANBERRA

**PHILLIPOU-McDONALD
FAMILIES**

The sycamore sea-chest with its curved lid is finely and lovingly carved with a great-grandfather's initials. This treasure trove of memories holds the stories of the sea and of the men who travelled and the women who waited. It is adorned with pillows reflecting the fine crocheted work of one of those women who waited.

**COSTARIDIS-BARBOPOULOS
FAMILIES**

Consider a young woman intrigued by the handworked linens, tablecloths, napkins, runners and cloths in the camphor dowry box she dips into during her growing up years. She becomes so attached to the brilliant coloured woven wool *tagari* or bread bag which was used to take ceremonial marriage bread from house to house, that she adopts it and now calls it the *cake bag*. She uses it reverently to hold her own baking when she visits friends and relatives, taking her own offerings to share.



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OUR PLACE: INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA NOW

STEVE MILLER

ATHENS, JULY – SEPTEMBER 2004

When the Koori curatorial team at the Powerhouse Museum and our colleagues at Museum Victoria began workshopping concepts in December 2001 for an exhibition for the Athens Cultural Olympiad, we knew the opportunity called for something unique.

With our respective and distinctive competencies as museums we felt we had the potential to reveal more of our history and cultures than some of the other highly-regarded international tours of Indigenous visual and performing arts over the past decade. We hoped to amplify the holistic philosophies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and demystify the stereotypical views of Indigenous Australians for a foreign culture. Ultimately we sought to create an expression of our shared humanity across the globe within our developments as distinct civilisations, consistent with the aspirations of the Cultural Olympiad and the Olympics themselves.

This exhibition, *Our place: Indigenous Australia now*, was also the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander exhibition to travel to Greece. We assumed knowledge about us would be limited among a general Greek audience but did not want to offend or bore them with a purely didactic approach; for example, there is no timeline, actual or conceptual, in the exhibition.

Certainly the enormous wealth of material we had to draw upon was daunting. But the temptation to limit the exhibition to material from south-eastern Australia, where the two museums were located, was resisted early on the basis that involvement in such a significant event had to represent as broad and diverse a sample of Indigenous Australia as possible — by geography, artform and the collections of the two institutions themselves (aided by the generous support of a number of other key institutions and private galleries, artists and lenders).

The other ingredient in terms of context and relevance was the similarities we could draw between the cultures, and not just limited to the common usages of spears, shields and baskets or histories of civil disobedience and disruption. Of these, the most compelling was the Seven Sisters, the creation story traversing much of Australia in various forms and based on the Pleiades constellation. This was illustrated with six beautiful pokerwork coolamons by Topsy Tjulyata of the Pitjantjatjara, on loan from the National Gallery of Australia. The mixed media work of Kelly Koumalatsis and the Museum Victoria collection of historic Alick Jackomos photographs provided other sources for drawing commonalities.

Broad thematic sections were developed around the concepts of spirituality, relationship to country, physical and political conflict, and family and community relationships, before unfolding into a larger display of our cultural renewal and revival.

We did not flinch from more difficult subjects where they were important to the thematic development, such as substance abuse,

rates of incarceration and deaths in custody, and the Stolen Generations, the latter represented by Lin Onus's emotional sculptural work, *They took the children away*. This approach was fully supported by the senior managements of both institutions.

More than 250 objects, including works on paper, sculptures, handcrafts, artefacts, photographs, textiles and posters were assembled, checked and crated along with audiovisuals and interactives of significant political protests, aspects of traditional teachings, and community and sporting events from football to surfing, intermingled with music by Yothu Yindi, Warumpi Band, Archie Roach and David Page.

Objects were selected and arranged within thematic sections, based on their visual ability to advance the narrative with the deliberate objective of mixing media and artforms and without

WE DID NOT FLINCH FROM MORE DIFFICULT SUBJECTS SUCH AS SUBSTANCE ABUSE, RATES OF INCARCERATION AND DEATHS IN CUSTODY, AND THE STOLEN GENERATIONS.

drawing contentious barriers between old and new, traditional and contemporary, particularly in cultures that have proved to be extremely adaptive. This meant, for example, in the spirit section carvings and bark paintings could sit alongside textiles, ceramics and works on paper, challenging the audience's expectations from the start. Art and artefacts also sat alongside one another. For example, at the start of the conflict section, a 'reveal' in the exhibition design means the visitor is surprised and confronted by Gordon Syron's immense work *Terra Nullius II* (on loan from the National Maritime Museum and known in other versions as *Red Coats Landing*) — to create an impact for them as disturbing as the incident it portrays would have been for the original inhabitants. Beside its historic shields from various east coast regions, some bearing the marks of battle, suggest defence of territory.

The key aspect that bound the exhibition was the conceptual design by Alison Page, a Tharawal woman from La Perouse who has worked with the Powerhouse on numerous projects, including the design of the permanent Indigenous gallery, *Bayagul*:

contemporary Indigenous communication. Alison's design created a contemporary travelling Aboriginal camp, complete with a central hanging wall in red and orange Perspex surrounded by a series of showcases resembling traditional Aboriginal gunyas or windbreaks, each with a self-contained hanging system, open display and variable display cases. The audience was invited into our camp for the day to see, hear and experience stories of everyday life in Indigenous Australia. That these were revealed around a campfire was an aspect of the shared humanity, as old as civilisation itself, which was core to our communication — a subtle and diplomatic reminder of our claim to being the world's oldest living continuous culture. The modular design was prefabricated in Australia, owing to the uncertainties of construction resources in Greece in the pre-Olympic period, and sea freighted with generous support from Schenker. The installation team, including conservators and technicians, was drawn from both institutions, supported by staff from the host venue.

Much of the groundwork for the exhibition and associated programs was laid by Powerhouse Museum Director Dr Kevin Fewster and the President of the Trust, Dr Nicholas Pappas. They negotiated with the Greek Hellenic Ministry for the exhibition's inclusion in the Cultural Olympiad program and its staging at the new venue being built by the renowned Benaki Museum. The Australia Council supported the exhibition with a program of artists, singers and dancers for the opening and post-opening period. Museum Victoria's involvement meant the exhibition had originated in Australia's two Olympic cities, as a gift from Australia on the occasion of the return of the Olympics to Athens. The torch with which Cathy Freeman lit the flame at the Opening Ceremony of the

Sydney 2000 Olympic Games provided a unifying symbol at the entrance to the exhibition, and a video message from her on a large outdoor screen at the official opening was a personal source of pride for the delegation of Indigenous Australians present, including Albert David and dancers, singer Emma Donovan and musicians, Kelly Koumalatsis, and Museum Victoria board member Terry Garwood.

The principles of Museums Australia's document, *Previous Possessions, New Obligations*, first drafted in 1993 (and currently being redrafted as *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities*), have become the standard by which museums operate in relation to Indigenous cultures. A direct relationship can be drawn between the development of these policies and this successful exhibition, including the fulltime employment of the three Indigenous PHM staff who developed the content for this exhibition and its associated publication, James-Wilson Miller, Fabri Blacklock and myself, Museum Victoria staff including Gary Foley and Cain Muir, the engagement of Indigenous exhibition designer Alison Page, professional development opportunities for myself as Curatorial Co-ordinator, and the employment of an assistant Indigenous curator at PHM for this project, Keith Munro, who has since been appointed Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. The exhibition opens in Beijing, host of the 2008 Olympics, in December this year.

STEVE MILLER
EDUCATION OFFICER FOR ABORIGINAL PROJECTS
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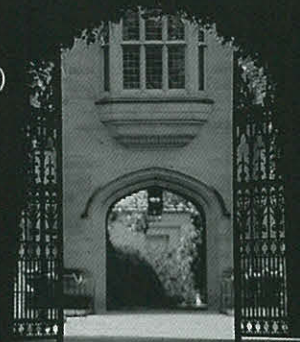
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AGED CULTURAL CARE

ANDREW SIMPSON, RHONDA DAVIS & KIRRI HILL

At the Melbourne Museums Australia conference this year, the Chairman of the European Museums Forum, Dr Wim van der Wieden, gently chastised museums for not doing enough to cater for the growing demographic bulge of over-60s in the western world. He was, of course, referring to the superannuated, mobile group of people seeking to be actively engaged and thirsty for new cultural experiences. He claimed museums have been slow to recognise this trend and the evolution of their public programs was lagging. Apart from his museum background, as a member of this demographic his message carries considerable weight.

But what of those elder citizens who have lost their mobility and are confined to residential complexes? While there are many good outreach programs delivered in aged care facilities, usually under the banner of 'reminiscence therapy', there is possibly much more that can be done and many unexpected benefits for those engaged in this kind of work.

Macquarie University's Art Gallery recognised the opportunity to develop this audience, and embarked on a program of documenting its various exhibitions and presenting them to residents in aged care facilities around the greater Sydney region. Apart from the obvious 'warm inner glow' that comes from doing this, some of the results, depending on the subject matter of the exhibitions, have been very surprising.

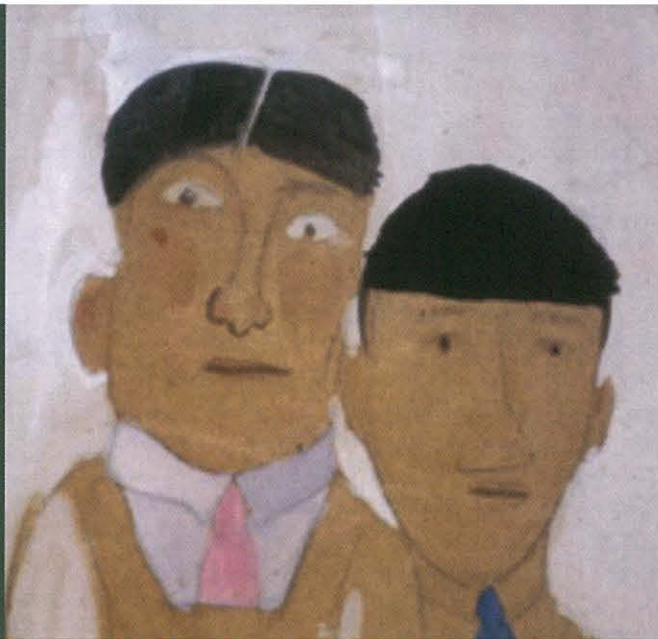
The Frances Derham collection of children's art from the National Gallery of Australia in partnership with Macquarie University was catalogued, researched and documented by scholars in the 1990s. This groundbreaking work was produced as an exhibition and catalogue — *The Childhoods Past: Children's Art of The Twentieth Century*. It toured the country under a Visions grant.

In the museum context visual material can be more widely accessible than written histories, and therefore more amenable to interpretation through memory and the personal experiences and histories of individuals. Within this framework, *Childhoods Past* was presented to local aged-care facilities encompassing a broad elderly audience. In each facility the level of engagement was high as the exhibition content related to the historical past. The images had become objects that could now be linked to numerous personal narratives.

OUR PRESENTERS DON'T TALK DOWN TO THE AUDIENCE, BUT REVERE THEM AS PARTNERS WITH THE ABILITY TO REFUTE, ASK QUESTIONS, MAKE OBSERVATIONS, ENJOY, ENGAGE AND LAUGH.

In one case our staff began talking about an image catalogued as 'Two Boys'. As the formal aspects and the origin of the image were described, the audience almost in unison said 'No, that is a father and his son — not two boys!' As a presenter who has preset the interpretation framework, to be confronted by a huge crowd of old people yelling back at you 'No, that's wrong' was slightly disconcerting. This, of course, is one of the challenges and thrills of working with visual material from a museum collection with a new audience. As we looked closer it was apparent that the aged care community represented an untapped resource of information — particularly in light of a historiography that captures the 'everyday history' of personal experiences. From their own memories of the dress code, hairstyles, and the composition of portraits as taken in the 1930s they were able to challenge institutional documentation and interpretation of this image. In this case, we now only see an image portraying the relationship of a father and his son — in effect they had transformed the image and moved from passive audience to active interpreters. This was deeply empowering because their contribution had altered the way in which future audiences will view and study this image. The experience provided profound insights into the dynamic levels of connection and engagement between object, interpretation and audience.

Our perceptions of the aged can also stereotype their needs. Remarkable individuals exist in aged care residences. One gentleman requested the possibility of seeing works by David Hockney and Lucian Freud. He'd spent his working life in the art



'Two Boys' is in reality a picture of a father and son
Courtesy of Andrew Simpson

publishing business in London. The diversional therapists from the various facilities are very enthusiastic and supportive about continuing our links and developing this program further as a much-needed service to the aged care community. One of the keys to its success is that our presenters don't talk down to the audience, but revere them as partners with the ability to refute, ask questions, make observations, enjoy, engage and laugh.

After the success of the art shows, other museums and collections on campus have been drawn into the program. Museum Studies student Sandra Sue produced an exhibition on domestic life in inner Sydney during the 1950s as part of her Honours year. Objects from this exhibition found a great connection with aged care residents and provoked many memories and much lively discussion. Incorporating objects that can be handled during the presentation introduces a tactile dimension that is very enthusiastically received.

A presentation on the exhibition, *Palaeographia* (focused on the fossil record in Australia), was accompanied by specimens from Macquarie University's Earth Sciences collection. Many aged care residents seem to understand and enjoy the irony of fossils being presented to them in their facility. More importantly, many have deep memories of early experiences in nature, and programs with a

natural history theme bring these to the surface. They can recall growing up in relatively unspoilt environments and exploring local woodlands and creeks as kids. This is an experience lost to many of the current generation of children due to urban sprawl and a more complex set of demands on leisure time.

The enthusiasm and requests for return visits indicate to us that the demand for these types of programs in aged care facilities is far from satisfied. It is interesting to speculate why there aren't more of these programs available from a broader range of cultural organisations. Perhaps there is a subconscious reluctance to provide scarce resources for this kind of work. This may be rationalised by concluding that because of their advanced age it doesn't develop a long-term audience relationship for the organisation. This, however, is a simplistic analysis.

Even though we, as presenters, can flippantly measure the success of our programs by calculating the percentage of residents that stay awake during the presentation, it's sobering to confront the impact it can have on some individuals. This point was brought home to us after one presentation through a wide-ranging discussion with a 90-year-old, near-blind woman who was enjoying the tactile sensation of fossilised leaves on a slab of rock from the Hunter Valley. It revealed a very agile mind inside a worn-out body. She told us how one of her grandsons was distraught at the closure of the materials conservation program at the University of Canberra and could not afford to seek equivalent training overseas. We seem to overlook the fact that many aged care residents have deep roots in the community and the positive results of our work will be disseminated down through the generations.

Many museums and other cultural facilities strive towards an ideal of social inclusion. Unpick the reality, however, and this is most often built around different ethnic groups and not different age groups. Most of our elder citizens have presumably paid taxes for most of their lives and, in a compassionate and truly inclusive society, can surely expect cultural engagement at least approaching that available to the younger, more mobile mainstream population. It is increasingly likely that many of you reading this will one day take up residence in an aged care facility. For some of the writers of this piece the possibility is approaching at an uncomfortably fast pace! What cultural aged care services will you (and we) expect when this happens?

ANDREW SIMPSON

RHONDA DAVIS

KIRRI HILL

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY, MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS GROUP



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KELLY GELLATLY

A SHARED VISION

OUR SHARED VISION AND AMBITION FOR WHAT WE WANTED *2004* TO BECOME CAN'T BE UNDERESTIMATED AND ON REFLECTION, WAS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND OUR COMBINED SUCCESS.

When *2004: Australian Culture Now* opened with a lively celebration just after the Sydney Biennale in early June, a number of staff at both the National Gallery of Victoria and Australian Centre for the Moving Image — collaborators on this ambitious project spanning both institutions — finally sighed in relief. We had got there. Like a majority of exhibitions, particularly those representing contemporary art, the staging of *2004* was a complex undertaking; further complicated in this instance by the fact that it was also a first-time collaboration between two large and very different host organisations, each still undergoing a relatively new phase of development and organisational change. Intended to reflect the diversity of Australian visual culture and provide alternatives beyond the parameters of the 'fine arts', *2004* brought the work of 130 artists, craftspeople, game-designers, networked media creators, architects and moving image-makers into dialogue with each other, and with the NGV and ACMI's audiences, at two sites on Federation Square. Online exhibiting possibilities were also provided through the extensive website which was designed to both reflect and extend upon the physical exhibition.

The demarcation of media to be shown at each institution was fairly straight-forward. Given their very specific brief, moving image and screen-based works were to be seen at ACMI, while the NGV would also display moving image as a vital part of contemporary practice, yet primarily focus on the representation of work in other media. From the outset, both partners agreed that *2004* would avoid an underpinning thematic, and that the selection process would operate largely on a basis of 'positive discrimination' by deliberately avoiding the inclusion of work by artists who had received substantial exposure in Australia, and Melbourne specifically, over the past few years. The exhibition aimed to be cross-generational, and all work selected was to have been made between 2002 and 2004.

The momentum of our collaboration started to increase from the first meeting at which curators from ACMI and the NGV discussed our respective initial lists of potential participants. As this process developed, the 'horse trading' also kicked in, as we had determined at an early stage that we would attempt to avoid an overlap of artists across the two institutions (thus opening up the possibility of participation to a broader field). As a result, a collective decision had to be made about where a number of artists who work across media were to be exhibited — the NGV or ACMI — and in what form they would be represented. It was at this time that we were able to gauge a sense of the overall shape of the exhibition across both spaces, and commence serious debate as to who and what should

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RECENT PROJECT: The Wooden Boat Centre is a working educational institution that opens a window onto the timeless craft of wooden boatbuilding. We provided exhibition signage for the new visitor centre, built around around the boatshed. The interpretation explains history and techniques, and an introduction to the beautiful Tasmanian timbers used in boat construction.

Client: Wooden Boat Centre, Franklin, Tasmania
Interpretation and writing: Bronwen Hayes
Graphic design: Julie Hawkins

and should not be included. Believe it or not, this was not a tortuous process, and it actually functioned (whether or not we were aware of it at the time) as a way for the curatorium to get to know each other better, helping to form a more united team.

Regular group discussions also highlighted something that we encountered (and had to negotiate) time and time again — the very real differences between the approaches of our institutions on both an organisational level, and the curatorial and administrative terms in which we undertake the development of exhibitions. While a Memorandum of Understanding outlining individual and shared responsibilities was drawn up at the start of the project, the occasional hiccups in our negotiations never resulted in us calling upon such a formal document and were more than often resolved by simply working through issues together. It was also important when determining our institutional responsibilities to consider our different levels of resourcing, budgets and areas of expertise (for example, the NGV produced the exhibition catalogue and ACMI developed the website). Early decisions about institutional roles ensured that fundamental tasks were undertaken by the organisation for which particular activities were regular and well-oiled aspects of operations, thus not placing the stress of acquiring new skills onto an already pressed staff. Our shared vision and ambition for what we wanted *2004* to become can't be underestimated (many collaborations between different bodies don't, on scrutiny, necessarily have this) and on reflection, was the driving force behind our combined success.

Issues simply had to be resolved (and often promptly) in order to achieve our common goal.

Despite the fact that *2004* was initially proposed as an opportunity for the NGV and ACMI's *curatorial* staff to work together, its very nature ensured the tentacles of the exhibition spread far beyond this specific group, eventually encompassing many areas of the operations of each institution, including Marketing and Sponsorship, Education and Public Programs and Graphic and Web design. Although these departments had not been a part of the project's development from the beginning, they were launched into a collaborative environment that had strengthened over time as the exhibition took form, and were therefore asked to work across institutions in a manner quite different to their normal procedures. As we are all aware, the competing demands of any museum professional mean that it is often easier and more efficient to work within existing systems, and projects such as *2004* necessarily demand more time. It is a credit to all concerned that they so ably and willingly rose to the spirit of collaboration that was central to the exhibition. While there are many areas of our partnerships that we hope to improve, we are delighted, given both the critical and popular success of *2004* to be already in discussions about our next possible venture in 2007.

KELLY GELLATLY
CURATOR, CONTEMPORARY ART
NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

Department of Museum Studies

The Department of Museum Studies works with museums, galleries and related cultural organisations internationally, to develop creative practice through leading edge research.

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- 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



University of
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ROSLYN RUSSELL

MILESTONES

A CREATIVE PARTNERSHIP AT
BASINGSTOKE, UK

THIS IS A LIVING HISTORY MUSEUM, CONTAINED
IN AN AREA LARGE ENOUGH TO FIT FIVE OLYMPIC
SWIMMING POOLS, AND INCLUDING SHOPS,
GARAGES, TRAIN STATIONS AND FACTORIES.

A wartime sweet shop proprietor weighs out a sweet ration at *Milestones*
Photo by Roslyn Russell

Imagine entering a modern building, somewhat resembling an aircraft hanger, on a hilltop just outside the Hampshire town of Basingstoke, and looking down on an entire townscape. And walking its streets to find yourself in, firstly, the late nineteenth century, and then the period around World War II.

When you enter this space, created through a partnership between Hampshire County Council and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, you encounter *Milestones*. This is Hampshire's living history museum, contained in an area large enough to fit five Olympic swimming pools, and including shops, garages, train stations and factories. Exhibits, both static and audiovisual, and interpreters acting out scenarios from the late nineteenth century and the 1930s, enliven the cobbled streets. *Milestones* is also home to over 20,000 items of Hampshire's industrial, transport, commercial and domestic heritage, including the AA collection (the British counterpart of organisations such as the RACV and the NRMA), and the Thornycroft and Tasker vehicle and agricultural machinery collections. The Tasker collection of industrial heritage is particularly skillfully interpreted by models and a range of audiovisual displays featuring stories about management and workers alike.

During my visit to *Milestones* in July this year, the Didcot, Newbury, and Southampton Junction Railway was opening, on 1 May 1885, with museum visitors enlisted to join in the event. My ticket gave me entry to the celebratory luncheon at Winchester's Guildhall after the opening, so I was a railway supporter. Not so some other visitors — they were protesters against the railway, and became enthusiastic hecklers of the titled lady opening the

line (*Milestones*' lead interpreter Jane Glennie). Both sides of the argument gave as good as they got, and put paid to any lingering notions about English reserve!

Visitors to *Milestones* move from one time period to another, with the linkage achieved by taxonomic displays of domestic goods from the Hampshire Museum Service's extensive collections — irons, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and radios — bringing you into a 1930s streetscape, with the sound of tunes played on old gramophones in the radio shop wafting out.

The World War II period is a key interpretive possibility which *Milestones* takes up with gusto. I collected my wartime sweet ration — six ounces of (delicious) peanut brittle to last three weeks — which was weighed out and put into a paper bag by a sweet-shop proprietor in 1930s garb. At other times *Milestones* interpreters demonstrate wartime cookery, and act as Victorian-era governesses and paupers. Albert and George Fidget, two brothers who worked for Taskers but achieved very different life outcomes, tell the stories of one day in their lives, Friday 7 April 1900.

No visit to *Milestones*, for adults anyway, is complete without spending some time in the Baverstock Arms pub. When he was told that there was an Australian in the pub, the resident pianist swung into a rendition of 'Waltzing Matilda', followed by 'Tie me kangaroo down, sport' — despite his lengthy sojourn in Britain, Rolf Harris and his music still mean 'Aussie' to the English.

During my visit *Milestones* was hosting a temporary exhibition on buttonhooks — a dazzling array of devices used to fasten buttons down the backs of dresses and on boots and gloves in the days before zip fasteners. Buttonhooks were often finely crafted out of precious materials such as ivory, gold and silver. The buttonhooks

on display came from the Buttonhook Society to mark this organisation's twenty-fifth anniversary. There was even a display of Australian-inspired buttonhooks, one with a boomerang-shaped handle, and others topped by an Australian coat-of-arms, a tiny kookaburra and kangaroo, and a map of Tasmania.

Milestones is off the international tourist beat — the closest big-ticket attractions are Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain, the town of Winchester and the Jane Austen House at Chawton. Basingstoke is a mostly modern town, the headquarters of an international information technology company. Judging by the other visitors on the day I visited *Milestones*, the museum appeals to local people, informing them of their past by means of a range of effective interpretive devices and evocative collections. To encourage multiple visits, *Milestones* offers an annual pass, and a program of events for each season. For the coming Christmas-tide there is seasonal music and drama, mulled wine and mince pies, carollers and hand-bell ringers, and a magic lantern show in the streets, to entice people into the museum on the cold, dark December evenings for a taste of nostalgia.

International visitors would also find a visit to *Milestones* engaging and informative, as it lays before them two distinct slices of English social history that are not always to be found in the large museums of London or at the historic sites associated with royalty or celebrity authors. The use of live interpretation at *Milestones* is particularly skilful, and the techniques used there would interest those involved with historic sites and social history museums. And where else can you have a pint of beer in a museum?

Visit the *Milestones* website for more information on collections and events — <http://www.milestones.museum.com>



Patrons enjoy a beer as a pianist plays favourite tunes in the Baverstock Arms pub
Photo by Roslyn Russell

POSTSCRIPT: A new collection with an Australian connection

The Hampshire Museums and Archive Service, assisted by the Heritage Lottery Fund, has recently acquired a large collection of material relating to the celebrated Tichborne Case. In the 1870s a Wagga Wagga butcher, Arthur Orton, claimed to be the lost heir of the titled Tichborne family. After a lengthy and expensive court case (pictured in a large oil painting in the Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga), Orton was exposed as a fraud and imprisoned for perjury. The collection relating to the case, assembled by the Tichborne family's solicitor, Frederick Bowker, will be catalogued and made available on line, and become the subject of a travelling exhibition in 2006.

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BREAKING THE 'SOUND BARRIER'

Evolution or Revolution?

JOHN EUSTACE

Modern museum practice has embraced an evolving progression of complementary presentation techniques. The support of physical exhibits by panel mounted graphics, text and photography has evolved to take advantage of advances in information delivery techniques — first slides, then video monitors and, more recently, sophisticated multimedia presentation.

Gallery environments have adapted to showcase mixed and multimedia presentations in response to visitor demand for an ever-increasing 'wow' factor.

Whilst visual presentation techniques have seen significant progress, the audio elements evolution has up until now failed to keep pace. In fact the adoption of all forms of audiovisual exhibit support technologies have been retarded by the limitations of traditional loudspeaker technology.

The main barrier is fundamental to broadcasting sound throughout a space and highlighted in the device's nomenclature 'loud' speaker. The attempts of exhibit designers, architects and acoustic engineers to control audio spillover have necessitated the erection of physical sound barriers. Purpose-built theatre and audio booths proliferate, whilst in galleries everywhere AV soundtracks spill over and pollute adjacent exhibition areas, often detracting from rather than enhancing the visitor experience.

Loud speakers were evolving even before sound was electrified; German Ernst Siemens patented the first in 1877. Almost fifty years later in 1924, two General Electric

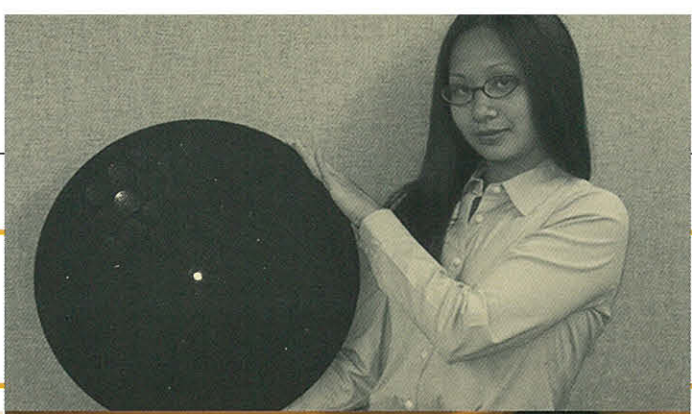
researchers, Chester Rice and Edward Washburn Kellogg, patented a hornless loudspeaker, the moving coil, direct radiator loudspeaker. Edward Wentz at Bell Labs independently discovered this same principle and filed his patent in 1925.

The direct radiator loudspeaker — basically a piston-like device to directly pump air molecules into motion to create audible sound waves — remains the prominent design for loudspeakers. Of the half-dozen types in use today all employ direct radiation.

Late in 1931, Alan Blumlein applied for his famous 'Binaural Sound' patent, the first multi-channel recording and loudspeaker reproduction technique that established EMI, and subsequently became known as stereo and the basis for today's popular home theatre systems.

Another twenty years passed before Henry Kloss and engineer Edgar Villchur effectively miniaturised the audio pump, inventing the acoustic suspension loudspeaker capable of enhanced low frequency sound reproduction. This in turn led to the first box-enclosed loudspeakers invented by the French company Cabesse in 1958.

The first real audio revolution in almost one hundred years was made possible by acoustics researchers in the 1960s, who successfully developed an innovative directional sonar device called a parametric array by pioneering the use of nonlinear interaction of high-frequency waves to generate low-frequency sound waves



Audio Spotlight represents the first radical departure from traditional loudspeaker technology. The sound is generated in the air itself, indirectly, as a conversion by-product of the interaction of silent ultrasonic waves.

in water. In 1975, the first publication appeared which demonstrated that these ultrasound effects could predictably occur in air, and proved that such an audio transducer device might be possible.

Over the next two decades, several large companies attempted to develop an audio transducer based on this principle. While they were capable of producing highly distorted sound by 1983, feasibility issues with cost and extreme distortion levels (>50% THD) induced an almost total abandonment of the technology by the end of the 1980s.

Audio isolation developments reverted to the direct radiator loudspeaker and continued to be evolution based. Sound isolation domes, not unlike Maxwell Smart's 'Cone of Silence', equipped with an

internal array of traditional speakers can reduce audio spillover. However their acrylic semi-hemisphere measuring almost two metres in circumference require critical location, and can dominate the exhibit and drastically limit the number of individuals able to hear the audio.

Work on flat, virtually invisible speaker technology began in the mid-1990s as a by-product of helicopter sound-cancelling technologies. Several years of research resulted in a more ambient and less directional sound emanating from a flat surface that actually increases sound bleed when compared with conventional speaker cones.

In the late 1990s Joseph Pompei, a graduate student developing '3D Audio' at university, revisited the idea of using ultrasound to overcome

THE AUDIO SPOTLIGHT'S ULTRASOUND WAVELENGTHS ARE INAUDIBLE AND TRAVEL THROUGH A NARROW BEAM.

the traditional loudspeaker barriers of sound spill. Discovering the large body of nonlinear acoustics knowledge, as well as the earlier attempts to utilise ultrasound as methods of sound reproduction, his insight led him to identify, and subsequently rectify, the barriers that had plagued the earlier researchers, enabling the construction of the very first — and still only — practical, high-performance audio beam system.

The audio spotlight's ultrasound wavelengths are not dissimilar to those used in doctors' antenatal foetal examination. Only a few millimetres long, they are completely inaudible and travel through the air in an extremely narrow beam. The air's inherent properties cause the ultrasound waves to distort in a predictable way. This distortion gives rise to frequencies within our audible spectrum. These airborne bandwidth distortions can now be accurately predicted, and precisely controlled, therefore any desired sound can be created within the air itself by generating the corresponding ultrasonic signal. The sound is generated in the air itself, indirectly, as a conversion by-product of the interaction of silent ultrasonic waves.

This revolutionary new sound source is not the flat disc Audio Spotlight Transducer. The sound exists only within the invisible narrow beam of ultrasound. The beam can be many metres long and, like a spotlight, is extremely directional. It can even be reflected off hard surfaces, and eliminates the need for barriers to overcome sound spill.

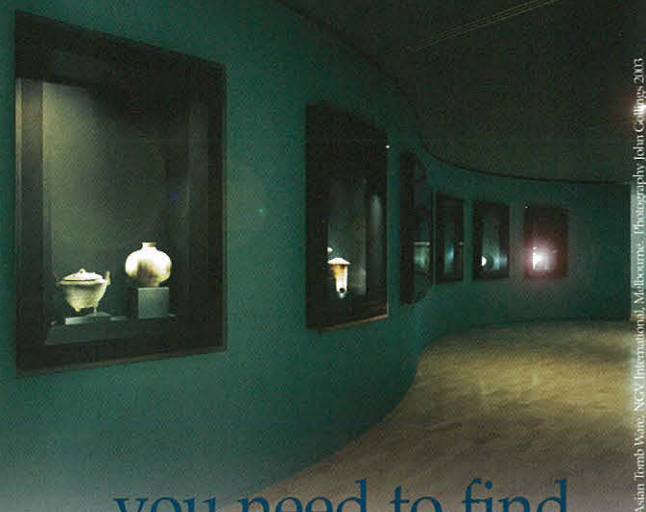
Whilst manifesting a revolution in audio technology the equipment physically conforms with traditional audio components. The one centimetre (1cm) thick 'Transducer' that replaces the loudspeakers is wall, overhead or flush mountable on existing speaker accessories. Transducers are easily camouflaged with printable Lycra covers that blend into your décor or merge with the exhibit. The 'Sound Beam Processor' supersedes the traditional amplifier and generates zero-lag, real-time ultrasonics from any digital playback device.

This revolutionary ultrasound beam system literally removes all barriers to creating discrete personal audio communication, and by effectively eliminating sound spill promotes peace and quiet in public spaces where gallery acoustics are no longer a consideration.

Audio Spotlight technology has been installed around the world since its commercialisation in 2000 and is now available in Australia. Information on the Audio Spotlight and a demonstration of its applications and revolutionary advantages can be arranged by contacting David O'Brian at EAV Technology Pty Ltd in Melbourne by phone (03) 9417 1835, by email; info@eavtech.com.au and from their Internet site at www.eavtech.com.au

JOHN EUSTACE
BELLS AND WHISTLES
MARKETING

When you have a world-class collection to showcase...



Asian Tomb Ware, NGV International, Melbourne. Photography John Collins, 2003

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CAROL SCOTT

PRESIDENT'S REPORT NOVEMBER 2004

THE WEBSITE IS AN
IMPORTANT TOOL TO
FOSTER A COMMUNITY
OF PRACTICE AND
TO PROMOTE THE
ASSOCIATION.

NEW STAFF

In August, we farewelled Meredith Hinchliffe, who left the Association after two dedicated years of work, and welcomed John Cross as our new Executive Officer. John is an experienced museum professional and educator with a focus on audiences and learning. He has worked in visitor programs at the National Gallery of Victoria, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, the Museum of Chinese Australian History, the National Museum of Australia at Old Parliament House, the ANU Drill Hall Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art, Heide. Most recently, he was the national co-ordinator for Adult Learner's Week with Adult Learning Australia.

ELECTION

Prior to the recent federal election, Museums Australia submitted the following three questions to the Liberal, Democrat, Labor and Greens parties:

- If elected, how do you see your party working with, and supporting, non-government professional associations, such as Museums Australia, which have a national membership and a national mandate to advocate on behalf of the sector?
- If elected, will your party commit to maintaining the Collections Council of Australia and to supporting it with the provision of adequate funding for programs and projects that it deems necessary to undertake on behalf of the combined collections sector?
- If elected, what will your party do to mitigate the impact on volunteer run museums, galleries and heritage sites, many of which are located in regional areas, of the increasing cost of public liability insurance premiums?

All parties responded to our questions. Members were notified of the responses through our regular bulletins and the answers were posted on the Museums Australia website www.museumsaustralia.org.au/hottopics.htm

NEW WEBSITE

The Council and the National Office have embarked on a major and important project — the redesign and redevelopment of the Association's website. The Council recognises that the website is an important tool to foster a community of practice and to promote the Association. It must provide resources to assist our members' work, make current information about the Association available and create a forum for discussion and deliberation around issues of emerging significance to our field. The brief for the project has been sent to selected tenderers and we hope to see a new site in the New Year!

2005 CONFERENCE

Planning is well advanced for the 2005 Museums Australia Conference to be held in Sydney from 30 April–4 May 2005 at the ABC Eugene Goossens Hall and the Powerhouse Museum.

The Regional and Remote stream of the conference will commence on Sunday 1 May, and, importantly for volunteers working in regional museums and galleries, the conference is again offering bursaries to assist people to travel to Sydney for this important national event.

An exciting program on the theme *Politics and Positioning* will examine the challenges facing our sector, explore current positions and address new possibilities. Pre-conference tours are being organised for Saturday 30 April and a series of gala social events will make this a conference to remember. Look for the registration brochure in early February and put these dates in your diaries now.

CAROL SCOTT
PRESIDENT
MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA

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JOHN CROSS, MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA NEW EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Some of you will already know me. You may have met me when I worked in some of Melbourne's galleries and museums, or when I was working with Adult Learning Australia, the peak body for adult education. Or else you may have come across me through the articles I have written or the presentations I have given about museums and adult learning. If I have not already met you, I hope to soon in my role as Executive Officer of Museums Australia.

In addition to my experiences working the field, I also bring to this role almost ten years' experience of working with membership organisations.

This is an interesting time for associations. We are operating in an environment in which government funding to support the core operations of national peak bodies is virtually non-existent. This situation is not likely to change any time soon.

While the organisation may not be 'rich' in one sense, it is certainly wealthy in another, possibly more significant way. In my few months with the organisation I have been impressed with the amount of skill, commitment and enthusiasm Museum Australia members have, and the generosity with which many members are happy to share these attributes with other members and offer them to the association itself. On that score, Museums Australia is one of the healthiest associations I have encountered. At its heart, this is exactly what an association exists to do, to serve as a forum through which the exchange of



Courtesy of Debbie Milsom

knowledge, skills and wisdom can be facilitated.

But as the world changes rapidly around us, Museums Australia cannot afford to stand still or rest on its laurels, and the task of taking the organisation forward is one to which all members can contribute.

I have many ideas about the direction I would like to see the organisation take. I have opinions on what I think might be changed so as to make this a better, stronger, more sustainable organisation. But Museums Australia is not 'mine', it is yours. I am a paid employee of the association whose job it is to help facilitate the collective aspirations of its members. The future of Museums Australia, its attractiveness to new members, the scope of its services and its long term sustainability, is, ultimately, in your hands, not mine. If you think that the Association needs to do more of this and less of that, needs to focus here and not focus there, then take steps to change things.

I HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED
WITH THE AMOUNT
OF SKILL, COMMITMENT
AND ENTHUSIASM
MUSEUM AUSTRALIA
MEMBERS HAVE.

Through your active participation in SIGs, branches, chapters and, especially, through your regular communication with your representatives on the National Council, you can help create the organisation you want and need. And I and the other members of the national office team are ready to help in whatever way we can.

ALERT! NOMINATION FORM FOR THE COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA IN THIS ISSUE OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE

A nomination form for election of members to the Museums Australia Council is included as an insert in this issue of *Museums Australia Magazine*.

Please take the time to check all the contents of the envelope in which you received this issue. You will also find information about the Museums Australia annual conference in May 2005.

COMING IN MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE



FEBRUARY 2005

Museums as reflections of community identity

MAY 2005

Museums bridging cultures

REVIEWS

TIM SULLIVAN

The Reconstructed Past: Reconstructions in the Public Interpretation of Archaeology and History. Edited by John H. Jameson Jr. Walnut Creek, CA, Altamira, 2003.
ISBN: 0-7591-0375-5

If you wanted to put a single volume in front of a beginning public historian or archaeologist about the perils of a singular aspect of their chosen professions, this collection of articles would be a good start.

The question of whether to reconstruct or not is answered early and often. There is a core of unanimity that reconstruction is an effective way of achieving the larger purpose of communicating the significance of an archaeological site – and its context – to the visiting public and communities with a vested interest.

The most contentious issue is how reconstruction projects should be conducted and managed to protect the archaeological content and its integrity, and what interpretive values will permeate it. Dwight Pitcaithley of the US National Parks Service outlines the problems scholars often have with reconstructions: 'all reconstructions look like they represent the past whether they are accurately produced or not. And therein lies the problem: while they claim to represent the past, reconstructions exist on a spectrum that ranges from strong documentary and archaeological evidence to pure fantasy.' (ix)

The examples cited relate to reconstructions on or adjacent to in-situ remains or archaeological material. When reconstructions of historic sites became something of a

Sovereign Hill now and then
Courtesy of Sovereign Hill Ballarat

movement in the early 20th century, the task was almost exclusively the domain of archaeologists, relying heavily on physical evidence to determine the extent and content of the reconstruction. This sometimes narrow purpose often saw archaeologists in conflict with reconstruction proponents seeking more contextualised exhibits for broader public appeal, and more prepared to deal with conjecture to achieve that outcome.

Reconstructions have been driven by needs to preserve artefacts in-situ, to conserve deteriorating fabric, to contextualise artefacts, and to promote heritage tourism. They provide visitors with three-dimensional encounters with the heritage of a site, and can offer a more intimate experience of the cultural practices and material of the people who built the original (and, for that matter, the 'reconstruct-ors'). Jameson notes that the strategy of interpreting the process of reconstruction itself at key points is emerging as a successful way to overcome potential confusion over the 'real' and the reconstructed on a site.

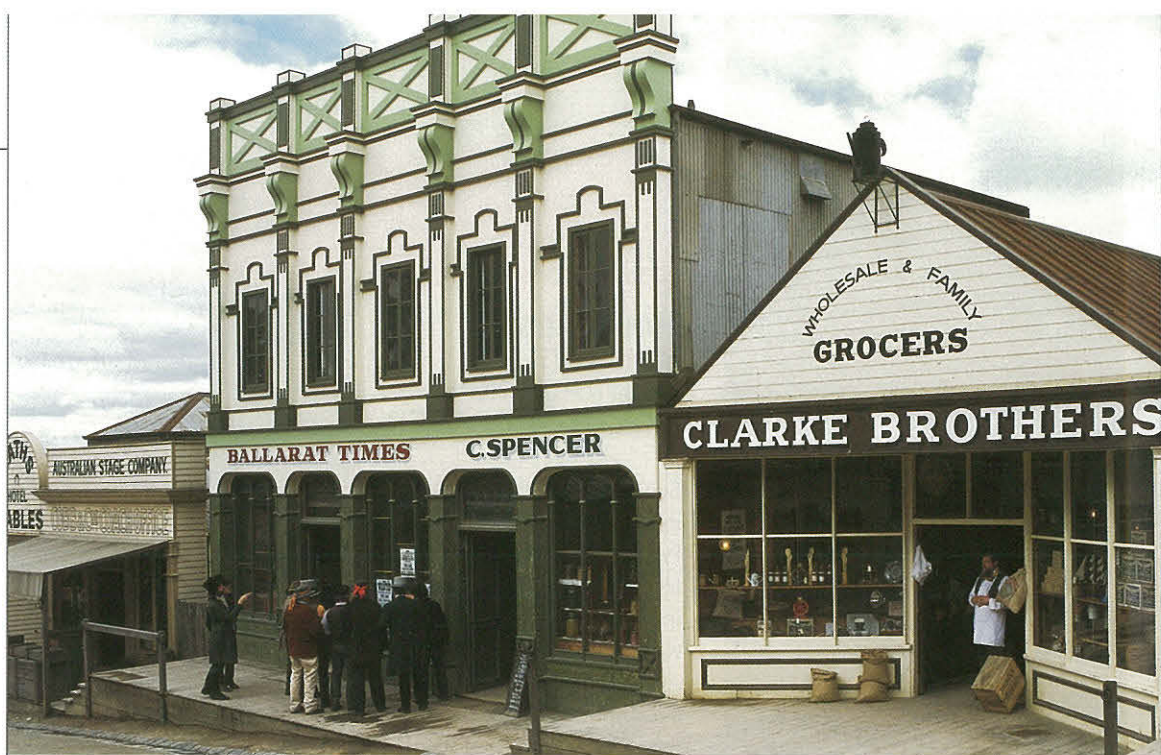
Each of the ten case studies profiles a different type of physical problem, interpretive context, and community and professional expectations to be managed. The time periods range from the Byzantine to the Industrial Revolution, and span such diverse museums and sites as Colonial Williamsburg and Wolstoneholme Towne in Virginia; George Washington's blacksmith shop at Mt Vernon; the Saugus ironworks in Boston; Iroquois longhouse sites in Ontario; Homolovi Ruins in Arizona; and the Qasrin synagogue and Village on the Golan Heights. Forts provide rich material – the mid-18th century Fort Loudoun in Tennessee, the Fortress of Louisbourg in the Canadian maritimes, and Bent's Fort in Colorado. Early medieval Britain is explored in Bede's World, and the heritage of the Industrial Revolution at Ironbridge Gorge.

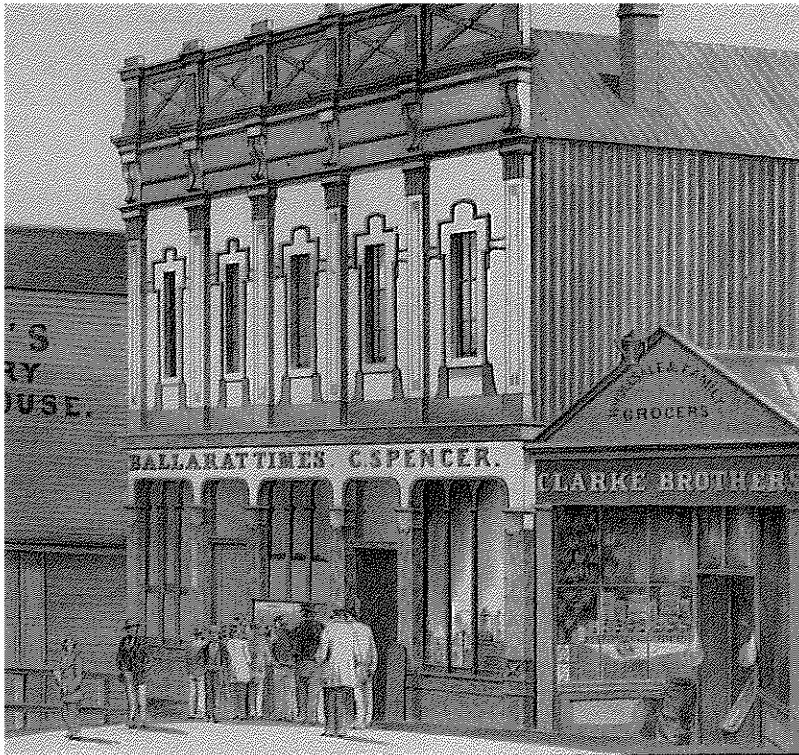
These case studies show that reconstruction is, of necessity, a multidisciplinary project, engaging physical as well as documentary evidence in determining the built form and interpretation of a reconstruction. What follows as strongly is ensuring that the objectives, the decision-

making process and the outcomes of a reconstruction project should be understood beforehand by those participating and by those with a vested interest in the project. Some case studies tell of unproductive conflict where expectations were murky.

The contributors indicate a shift from the methodological pursuit of physical evidence to the interpretive pursuit of exploring the significance of a site and connecting us today with those who created the original – to promote reflection on their lives, and our own. This approach has enabled indigenous people to engage in reconstruction projects project in more satisfying ways – contributing knowledge from a variety of sources, and producing a more meaningful contemporary community outcome.

Australia has a rich inventory of reconstructions, especially in interpreting 19th century colonial lifeways and work, and in the adaptive re-use of historic buildings. In interpreting the gold rushes that transformed Victoria, we at Sovereign Hill have adapted the Williamsburg model of contextualising in-situ artefacts, with re-creations





of buildings based on evidence from many sources, in a defined interpretive period (1851-61), with costumed interpreters. Our very high use of reconstruction as an interpretive technique has been adapted over time to include technology which increases the power of telling significant stories associated with the locality. Port Arthur has a similar mix of interpretive strategies to take advantage of a remarkably rich in-situ building and archaeological resource, and has had occasional contretemps about reconstruction.

In common with the cases reviewed in *The Reconstructed Past*, the focus has shifted at

Australian sites (at least those with viable professional resources) to stress the significance of the history they represent. Nonetheless, there have been moments of controversy which would sit well in this volume, such as the story of the Museum of Sydney and the First Government House foundations underneath and around it. Reconstruction is no easy path for history and archaeology.

TIM SULLIVAN IS DEPUTY CEO AND MUSEUMS DIRECTOR AT SOVEREIGN HILL, BALLARAT, AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST HISTORIC RECONSTRUCTION.

RICHARD GILLESPIE

Re-imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum.
By Andrea Witcomb. London, Routledge, 2003.
ISBN: 0-415-220998

Re-imagining the Museum is an ambitious book. In 170 pages Andrea Witcomb offers a critique of recent writings on museums by cultural theorists by testing them against case studies of contemporary museum practice. Her aim is at once theoretical and practical: she wishes to refine our understanding of the roles that museums play in contemporary societies, and also to allow this discussion to shape future approaches to interpretation and curatorial practice.

As members of Museums Australia will know, the author is well placed to bring together these different strands; Witcomb has worked as a curator at the Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM) and National Museum of Australia, as a consultant to small museums in Queensland, and more recently has taught cultural heritage studies at Curtin University of Technology. Many of the case studies in this book are drawn from her own experience and observations or from other Australian

examples. This book is therefore particularly welcome for offering a sustained discussion of several recent Australian developments, placing them within a broader museological framework.

The book is also timely. As Witcomb notes in her introduction, debates in the Australian media over the content and style of new museums such as the National Museum of Australia and Melbourne Museum are too often premised on simplistic dichotomies, even when they come from museum directors. While Tim Flannery criticized the Melbourne and Canberra museums as multimedia shows trying to compete with amusement parks, Dawn Casey responded by suggesting Flannery was defending a 19th century model that had long ceased to have relevance to modern audiences. Witcomb's book aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the forces shaping modern museums, and of the choices facing practitioners.

She argues that museums have long been places of tension between high and popular culture, between government's desire that they play a key role in civic education and the taste for more 'irrational' pleasures by visitors.

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Contemporary developments have only amplified these trends. Witcomb draws on Tony Bennett, who argues that the 19th century museum was intended as an institution that would educate the general public. In practice, it fostered new forms of visual consumption, drawing on international exhibitions and department stores. In this light, Witcomb turns to the development of the ANMM, showing that its chief government rationale was economic development and tourism. This market orientation shaped the way the Museum perceived its visitors as market niches rather than citizens, and in turn led to an emphasis on visitors' experiences.

While staff at the ANMM worked successfully within this market model, creating exhibitions and themes that explored the movement of ideas, people and cultures, many curators during the redevelopment of the Western Australian Maritime Museum (WAMM) resisted calls to expand the focus from maritime archaeology research to a broader conception of maritime history that would attract broader audiences. Witcomb undertook a study of the organisation at a time of great tension, and is sympathetic to the ideals of scholarship and audience engagement that fuelled each side of the debate, while arguing that in a healthier institutional context the two approaches could have been reconciled.

Drawing on her work at FHM and in Queensland community museums, Witcomb explores the role of curators in developing community exhibitions. She argues that curators are active cultural agents who help shape the very notion of community. She rejects Bennett's view that curators and museums should be seen as facilitators of government discourses that

enmesh communities into agendas of cultural diversity and civic reform. Following James Clifford, Witcomb sees museums as contact zones, where exchanges take place between communities, and where the museum is itself a community with specific discourses and interests.

Finally, Witcomb explores the place of interactivity in museums. She is critical of those who equate interactivity with mechanical interactives and digital technologies, instead rightly seeing interactivity as being about the diverse ways in which visitors can access information and make their own meanings, rather than just accept a single curatorial view. In a detailed discussion of the ANMM, she suggests that it avoided presenting a single narrative of national achievement by focusing instead on creating themes and sub-themes in which visitors could explore and create their own picture of Australian maritime history, a process she calls self-inscription.

Curiously, though, Witcomb is very critical of a consultant's report, based on visitors' experiences of the exhibitions, which suggested that visitors are confused by the lack of narrative and overall orientation. Here Witcomb defensively rejects the report as if it reflected the views only of the consultants, when it is apparently an account of visitors' responses to the exhibitions. This is the only audience evaluation study mentioned at length in the book, so it is ironic its findings are too readily dismissed. If the views are attributed to the visitors rather than the consultants, then a rather more complex set of questions arises as to how museums can engage the public.

A relatively short review cannot do justice to the arguments, ideas and examples that Witcomb packs into

Re-imagining the Museum. Indeed the book is not a sustained argument so much as a series of essays around a number of interlocking themes. Therein lies its delight, but also its limitation, for the focus tends to shift abruptly between chapters (many of them have appeared in earlier forms as separate articles). While most of the case studies intersect well with the book's arguments, sometimes they become overburdened with the weight of being made evidence for or against a particular theoretical approach (this I suspect partly comes from the book's origins as a PhD thesis). To this reader at least, the theory sometimes tends to get in the way of the discussion at hand.

A bit like a museum exhibition, Witcomb attempts to address the book to multiple audiences: cultural studies academics, museum professionals, and students of museum and heritage studies. All will benefit from reading it, although like visitors at exhibitions, they may choose to dip into it selectively.

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KIRSTY GRANT

***Fred Williams: An Australian Vision*, British Museum, 10 December 2003–25 April 2004**

In late 1951, at the age of twenty-four, Fred Williams left his hometown of Melbourne for London. Having studied at the National Gallery School and with the modernist George Bell, Williams wanted to broaden his artistic horizons. In his own words, he wanted to find a better art school and to see some of the world's great art. With the help of a network of

young expatriate Australian artists, Williams soon found a job at Savage's, a Kensington picture framing company, lodgings in a nearby boarding house and enrolled at the Chelsea School of Art. While his attendance at the Chelsea School was, by all accounts, irregular, Williams' five year stay in London provided him with a rich artistic education that would serve him throughout his career. One of the fundamental elements of this education was Williams' access to British and European art of the best quality, namely in the collections of the National Gallery, the Tate Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Print Room at the British Museum.

It is fitting then, that the first major exhibition of Fred Williams' prints to be mounted outside Australia should be at the British Museum, where he once studied the work of Rembrandt, Goya and other masters of the graphic arts. Prompted by a major gift of Williams' prints and drawings to the British Museum by Lyn Williams, the artist's widow, 'Fred Williams: An Australian Vision' was curated by Stephen Coppel, an Australian who has worked at the British Museum for over a decade. The exhibition comprised eighty prints and nine drawings spanning the artist's career and documenting his transformation from a primarily figurative artist to one of Australia's most significant twentieth-century landscape artists.

The earliest prints in the exhibition were made during the mid-1950s in London, where Williams learnt to etch using the facilities of the Central School of Arts and Crafts. These prints describe the now lost world of British music halls such as the Chelsea Palace and the Angel at Islington, which Williams frequented, and are peopled with lively performers who sing, dance and joke in the

great tradition of vaudeville. The rest of the exhibition was made up of the landscape images for which Williams is renowned. Struck by the lack of picturesque features found in the Australian landscape upon his return to Australia in late 1956, Williams surprised everyone, including himself, when he decided to focus on the landscape as the primary subject of his art.

For the London gallery-going audience, the exhibition was a revelation, prompting the reviewer in the *Spectator* to 'long for (another exhibition) of his paintings.' While Williams' painting has shown in London previously (eg, the groundbreaking 1961 'Recent Australian Painting' at the Whitechapel Gallery, and a solo at the Serpentine Gallery in 1988), this was the first occasion on which an exhibition has represented the range of his imagery, enabling an understanding of his development as an artist and of his unique visual language. This understanding was complemented by the accompanying exhibition catalogue (now widely available in Australia), with an excellent essay by Irena Zdanowicz, former Senior Curator of Prints & Drawings at the National Gallery of Victoria, which provides a thorough context for Williams' art, as well as important new research about his printmaking.

For Australians more familiar with Williams' oeuvre, the exhibition provided an opportunity to reflect on his art and to reassess his place in the art world. Viewing the exhibition on a cold December day, I was transported to the Australian bush, recalling its heat, distinctive sounds and smells – this experience reinforcing just how primary a place Williams' art has in my own imagination of Australia. On the venerable walls of the British Museum, indeed, with works by artists

including Dürer and Tiepolo hanging in the adjacent gallery, Williams more than held his own. While much of his imagery is distinctly Australian, his work rests on technical knowledge and skill of great measure and this is nowhere more evident than in his prints, which incorporate rich combinations of intaglio techniques and at times, breathtaking levels of experimentation. Above all, this exhibition revealed Fred Williams as an artist whose breadth of imagination and unique visual language has the ability to resonate with audiences beyond Australia.

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ALI GARNETT

***Personal Interpretation: connecting your audience to heritage resources.* By Lisa Brochu and Tim Merriman. Fort Collins CO, InterpPress (National Association for Interpretation), 2002. ISBN: 1-879931-06-0.**

This is definitely a text book — but it is not one of those expensive tomes that you plough through because you have to, and ditch as soon as you can. It is the sort of slim, stream-lined booklet that condenses the essence of a discipline into a few pertinent chapters so that you want to take it with you.

It is presented with the authority of Lisa Brochu and Tim Merriman. These two are steeped in the world of the go-between and instrumental in establishing interpretation as a discipline worthy of study. They have been introducing people and places to each other for decades.

Despite its unprepossessing

appearance (100 pages with a simple cover adorned with a sepia photograph), it is what I would consider a source book. It provides a foundation for interpreters in the same way as Sander's *Classroom Questions* (1965), provided a source for classroom teachers in the 1970s and led to such things as Bloom's taxonomy.

Chapters range from history to theory to practical guidance, right through to sub-topics such as voice modulation and how to load a slide projector. They write: 'it's especially important to end with a black slide rather than a white screen so that the audience's pupils aren't suddenly forced to constrict...' See what I mean? These people are talking from experience.

Interspersed through the text are anecdotal examples of interpretation with colour photos. They are highly personal and sometimes provocative — unapologetic expressions of opinion, such as 'Low key also strikes a chord', 'Some approaches are better than others'. They would be useful stimulation for discussion in tutorials and workshops. Perhaps that is what they are designed for.

As Sarah Blodgett, the president of the (US) National Association for Interpretation, says in her foreword: 'this book will be invaluable for anyone new to the field, from docents and educators in museums, zoos, and aquaria, to front-line interpreters in parks, nature centres, and living-history sites. It is also a great refresher for those of us who are seasoned interpreters looking to renew our dedication to providing the best interpretive programs for the visitors to our sites.'

There are two other groups who would find this little text valuable. First, those of us (and I suspect, in Australia, there are many) who have stumbled into the field of interpretation by chance or through the avenues of teaching or public relations.

We did not realise that 'interpretation' even had a name which defined it as a specialist discipline, let alone a tradition. I remember quite distinctly attending my first IAA conference in 1995 and thinking 'so that's what I am!'

Second, if you are responsible for the professional development of staff who use interpretation techniques, this book provides you with definitions, examples and even access to an on-line Interpretive Log Book to record and evaluate your interactions with visitors. If you are teaching interpretation, there is reference to the US National Park Service Module 102A of its Interpretive Development Program curriculum. (There are quite a few references to Module 102A and I suspect a lot of students buy this book!)

The list of the six most useful reference books, the National Park Service's Interpretive Development Program web site (www.nps.gov/idp/interp) and the index are most practical additions.

I found the chapter on the history of interpretation fascinating, focusing as it does on the efforts of individuals like John Muir and Freeman Tilden. *Personal Interpretation*, of course, acknowledges personal personalities. Useful summaries, such as of Cable and Beck's *Fifteen Principles of Interpretation* and Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* are often mentioned in museums, galleries and parks — here they are, neatly summarised and useable and still relevant more than fifty years on.

The authors point out that perhaps the role of the professional interpreter is more important than ever, with the opportunities for first hand learning rapidly disappearing in a digital age: 'Are the interpreters of those resources the 'elders' with the wisdom to teach the skills and tell the

stories that transfer their culture? To some extent the answer is yes. Interpreters do have tremendous power they may not realise.' (p.3)

The subsequent discussion about the responsibility of the interpreter 'to represent their organisations faithfully and to handle the facts, artefacts and stories of culture ethically' deserves a bookmark. This year, the Interpretation Australia Association (IAA) national workshop in Canberra (10–14 October), has the title *Telling the difficult stories. Stories of loss, tragedy and protest*. All participants would be well advised to read Chapter 1, p.1–4, before they come.

There is no special mention of how to interpret indigenous sites, perhaps because interpreters need to be attuned to all sorts of cultural sensitivities. There is an amusing example of how to deal tactfully with someone in impossibly high heels who has turned up for a five kilometre hike. The effect of this approach means there is a sort of refreshing equality in the human condition. The same light touch is applied to the swamp of semantics: 'we use some terms somewhat interchangeably', the authors declare in the preface.

Personal Interpretation is obviously not written by Australians (what on earth is a 'docent'? It sounds a bit like a sleepy marsupial.) However, we share some of the same history, many of the same skills and all the same responsibilities.

Perhaps one day someone may write a parallel story of personal interpretation in Australia using anecdotes and photos from Queensland, Tasmania, wherever. Perhaps we should gather our own statistics (in the US, in 1988 it was estimated that an estimated 15,000 interpreters were outnumbered 18 to one by volunteers) and make a case for some nationally funded training

centres of excellence. To paraphrase the authors: in the effective management of our cultural and heritage resources, interpretation is not the icing on the cake, it is the cake.

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JANDA GOODING

***Building the Collection*. Edited by Pauline Green. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2003. ISBN: 0-642-54196-5**

Although there have been other histories of the National Gallery of Australia, *Building the Collection* is packed with four hundred pages of institutional history, anecdotes and detailed appendices. Comprising a range of perspectives on the collection and recollections by over twenty contributors including current and ex staff members, directors and Council members, it is beautifully illustrated and reasonably priced, even at \$81. Great chunks of it are highly readable, enjoyable and even amusing. Editor Pauline Green is to be commended on blending personal reminiscences with a range of overview essays on administrative history, the collection, display policy and the architecture of the building.

Green's three introductory essays concisely chart the institutional origins of the NGA, with the beginnings of its

collection in 1912, the protracted process of choosing a site and the appointment of the first professional staff in the late 1960s. She provides a thorough and appropriate preamble for the chapters that follow.

Not surprisingly, the first Director, James Mollison, appointed in 1968, emerges as the key figure in the development of the collection. Under his leadership the Gallery gained a reputation for astute and ambitious acquisitions. His account of the way the national art collection developed is a fascinating story of what can be achieved with seemingly unlimited resources, as well as personal and institutional commitment. Finding himself with 'enough money to buy whatever we found that we wanted', Mollison set out to build a collection of Australian art based on 'works that either had been reproduced or would be used as reproductions once they were in the public domain'.

While this is an interesting collecting strategy in itself, what intrigues me more is the possible correlation between the rapid growth of the NGA collection compared with most state galleries, which from the late 1970s commenced increasingly demanding exhibition programs. It does seem that without the pressure of an intense exhibition program, Mollison and his staff could be more focussed on finding and purchasing key works from artists, their families and private collectors.

Further essays recount the development of the various specialist areas of the Gallery. Its holdings of African, Oceanic, Native American and Pre-Columbian art have been subsumed into the international collection and presently seem to have disappeared from view. The international collection with its focuses on European and American art is covered in two

articles: Lucina Ward's on the 'Art Current' program that operated between 1972 and 1984; and Sasha Grishin's account of the collection of 'masterpieces' that constitutes the holdings of international paintings and sculpture.

'Art Current' ran for twelve years and maintained a commitment to the purchase of experimental and challenging work from emerging artists. An ambitious program that had purpose and direction, it presents an instructive example of what can be achieved with limited funds and in a short time frame.

Grishin's article summarises the development of the international collection. By contrast, Andrew Sayers tangibly identifies the differences in collecting and display policies for the Australian and international collections. His focus on the Gallery's collection-displays highlights the lack of cohesion in the international area and the difficulties associated with the 'masterpieces' approach.

Sayers' statement that the nature of the international holdings challenges the Gallery 'to give clear articulation of its philosophy of collecting art from around the world' is tempting to pursue in more detail. It is one of the few articles to take a museological approach to collecting, and he provides an intelligent commentary on changes in the NGA's interpretation philosophies and practices.

There is much useful and important information captured in *Building the Collection* — it is a welcome addition to the literature on Australian public art museums. Absent, however, are the considered reflections of past and present curators and directors on the ways in which collections and institutions may adapt to address the needs and aspirations of the future. In particular, the philosophies that guide the development of the

collection and its presentation to audiences, and the relationship of national collecting institutions to their state and regional counterparts, are omitted. These pertinent and very real concerns face all collecting institutions; the national institutions are well placed to show leadership in engaging with them.

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GEOFF BARKER

***At First Sight: Photography and the Smithsonian.* By Merry A. Foresta. Smithsonian Books, Washington, 2003. ISBN: 1-58834-155-0**

At First Sight is an insightful look at the massive photographic collections held by the Smithsonian Institution. The title refers not only to the photographs which for the first time froze historical moments but also to the fact that the book is the Smithsonian's first attempt at creating an overview of its 13 million photographs, held in over 700 collections.

This daunting task is taken up by Merry A. Foresta, who courageously steers away from the standard narrative style found in many photography histories. The new direction is highlighted in the introduction where she states, 'the study of photography traditionally has been rooted in a canon of images considered landmarks

Courtesy of Geoff Barker



in their time, but this idea runs counter to the actual functioning of photographs in American life'.

The text provided by Foresta and specialists from some of the Smithsonian's collections is combined with hundreds of images to follow the theme from the early experiments in the 1840s up to the present day. Jeana Foley's extended captions are sprinkled throughout the book and offer informed commentary on individual images, as well as providing a foil for the broader themes found in the rest of the text.

At First Sight includes the landmark work of photographers such as William Henry Fox Talbot, Francis Frith, Samuel Bourne, Julia Margaret Cameron, Charles Weed, Edward Steichen, Ansel Adams, William Wegman and Raghubir Singh. Yet it also makes it clear that photographs, especially those published in books, are not solely the domain of the artist. To its credit, the book stresses that the collection is home to many lesser known photographers whose work, while not as well known, is often as important. Some significant inclusions are the stop-motion work of Harold E. Edgerton, Wilson A. Bently's snowflake studies, the Consolidated Coal Company albums of Kentucky mining towns, US Air Force training photographs, and the work of the Smithsonian's own photographer, Thomas Smillie.

As Foresta points out the day to day usage of photographs to record the world has not left us with a simple narrative. Photographs, while appearing to convey clear and precise information, often say as much about photographers and their cultural backgrounds as they do about the subjects being photographed.

To illustrate this, she at times presents us with arrangements of apparently incongruous subjects on the same page.

A good example is the

judicious juxtaposition of John William Draper's 1856 photomicrograph of algae alongside a World War 1 aerial reconnaissance photograph. The trailing lines left by the algae and the snaking roadways and bomb craters engage us with their visual similarities, yet the caption invites us to look below their surface to contemplate how technologies are used and developed to record the world that surrounds us.

In other instances I feel the arrangements of disparate images on the same page are more like singular art works than historical objects. While this can be a valid use of photographs, I am concerned at the way some of the book's reproductions are cropped and re-coloured to reinforce their visual similarities without any mention of alteration.

Many of the originals have been re-coloured to produce

uniform grey-scale images. This means that whether the originals were contemporary prints made from vintage glass plates, yellowed albumen prints, tintypes, or salt paper prints they appear on the page as if they were all the result of the same photographic process.

The book is well indexed but it would have been useful for the fifteen or so essays written by a range of specialists to have been included in the contents page, along with the four main chapters written by Foresta.

At First Sight takes on some big themes to introduce new histories of photography. Perhaps even more importantly it introduces one of the world's major collections of photographs, providing rare insights into the world of science and culture.

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Image: Ceremonial headdress from Lardil people of Mornington Island. Photograph by Brendan Bell, NMA.



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