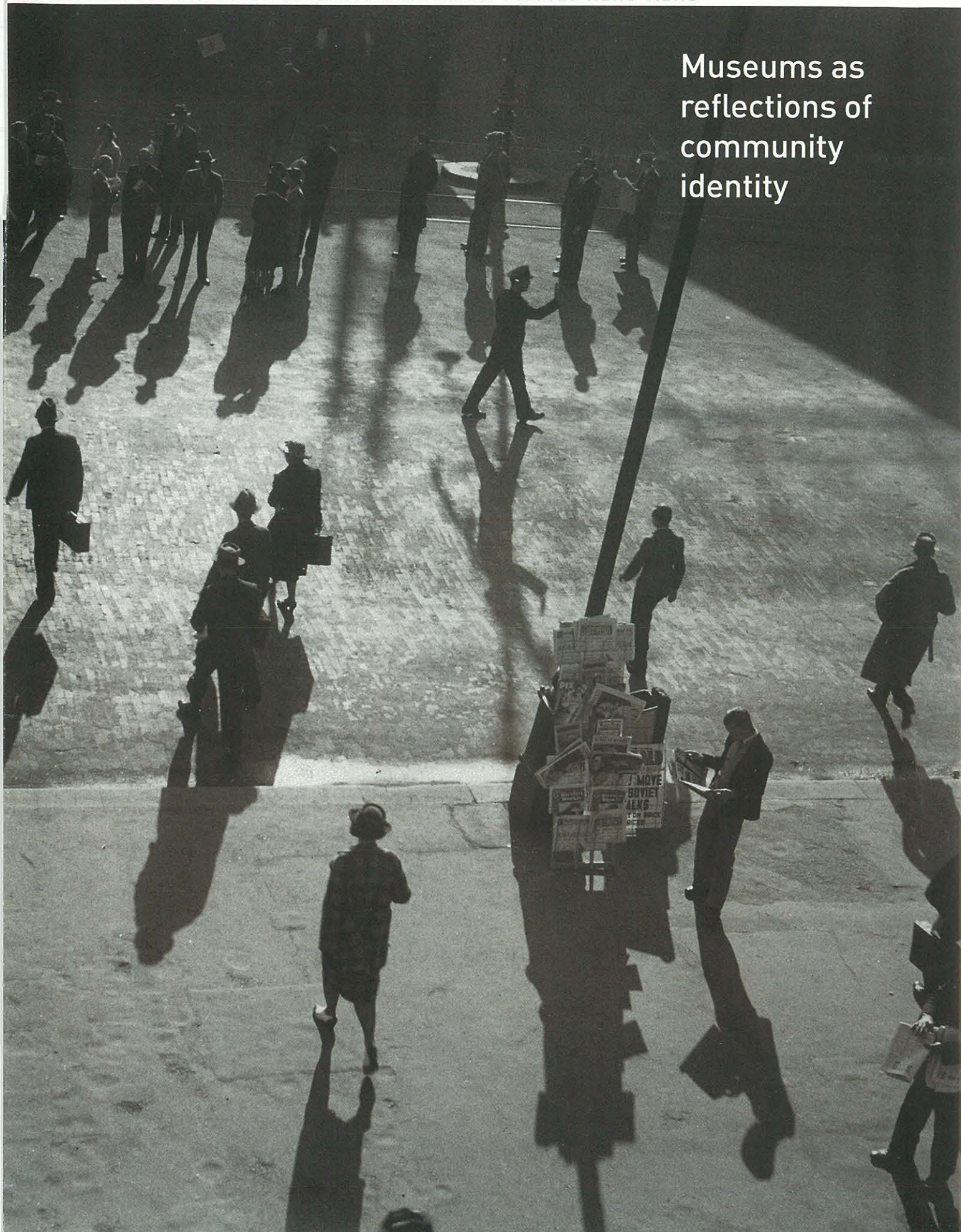


Museums as
reflections of
community
identity



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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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The Department offers a wide range of learning opportunities. Programmes are delivered both by distance learning (part-time) and through face-to-face, campus-based courses (full-time).

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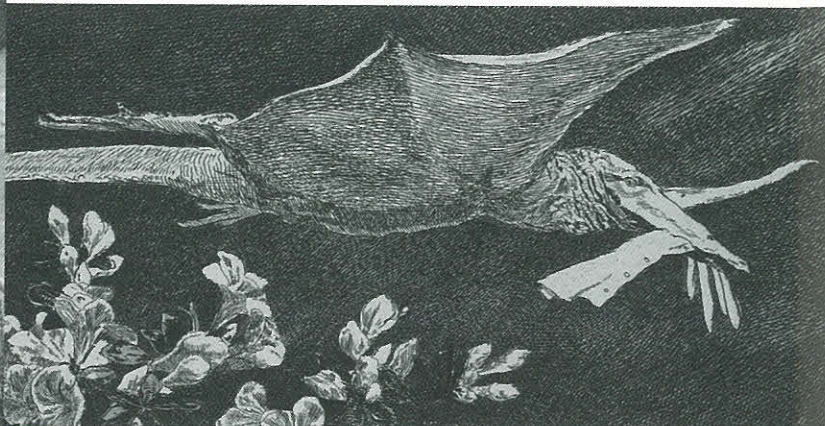
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- are underpinned by the department's leading edge research and the work of RCMG (Research Centre for Museums and Galleries)
- reflect the department's commitment to student-centred learning and to meeting the needs of students from diverse backgrounds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



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Formerly *Museum National*.

ROSLYN RUSSELL, EDITOR

IN THIS ISSUE...
FROM THE EDITOR

Our theme for this issue is 'Museums as reflections of community identity'. Our contributors have chosen to interpret this theme in a number of ways. These range from showcasing collections held by members of the community, and objects relating to the lives of rural women (both Museum Victoria initiatives), the community response to disaster, in the case of the interpretation at Canberra Museum and Gallery of the January 2003 Canberra bushfires; to urban regeneration through the *Community Greening* program of the Sydney Botanic Gardens Trust, and the ways in which the Whyalla community in South Australia is reflected in its museum.

The Australian community in general has responded most impressively to the Boxing Day tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean. Our President, Carol Scott, in her report on the MA Pages (26-7), outlines the museum community's response to this and other initiatives to assist museums in less fortunate places than Australia.

The Western Australian Museum, through its Maritime Archaeology section, has been associated with the Mutual Heritage Centre that founded the Maritime Archaeology Unit based at Galle in Sri Lanka. This has been destroyed by the tsunami, although mercifully

CAROL SCOTT
OUTLINES THE
MUSEUM COMMUNITY'S
RESPONSE TO THE
BOXING DAY TSUNAMI
DISASTER ON PAGE 26.

none of the staff was hurt, and the difficult task of rebuilding must now be faced.

In an MA Bulletin Carol Scott reported on a set of principles to guide an approach to cultural recovery and reconstruction, agreed to by a meeting of cultural and heritage organisations on 17 January:

1. Australian agencies should adopt a coordinated and integrated approach to their relief efforts;
2. Australian cultural relief should take its lead from information provided and requirements identified by the local communities in the affected areas of the region;
3. Reconstruction should reflect the culture, traditional building practices and environmental realities of the affected regions; and
4. Cultural relief and reconstruction is integral to the humanitarian relief effort now underway.

MARGARET BIRTLEY
TO HEAD COLLECTIONS COUNCIL



Margaret Birtley, who has been appointed inaugural Chief Executive Officer of the new Collections Council of Australia, has been an active member of Museums Australia.

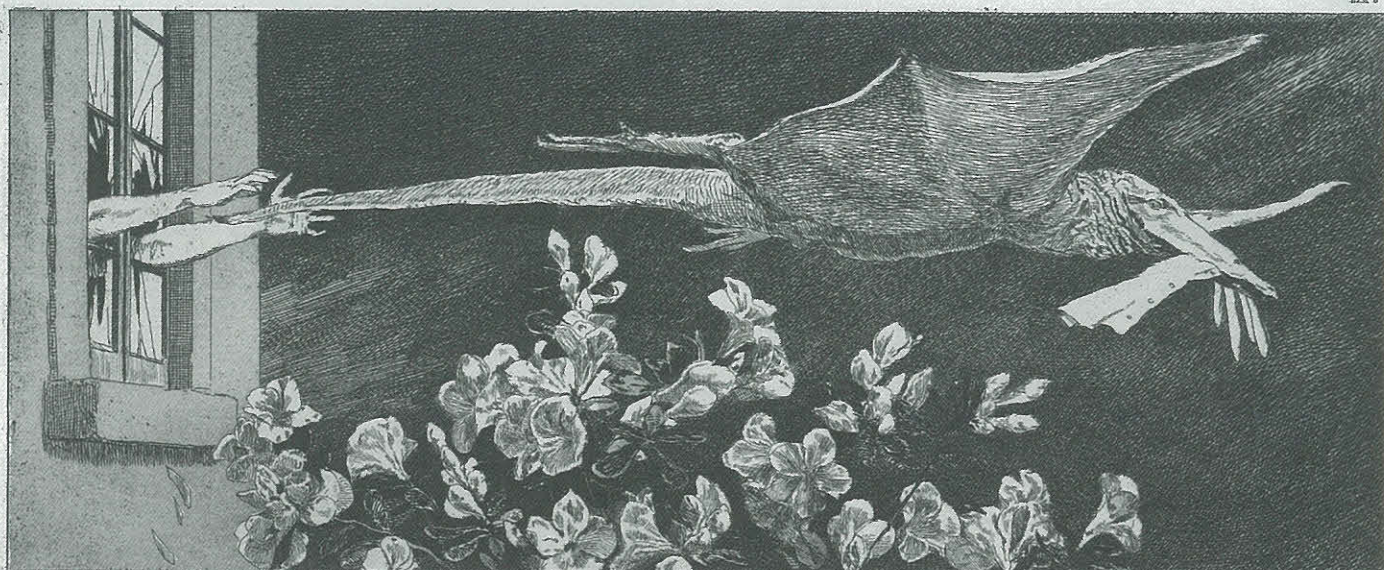
Margaret is equally familiar with issues facing the collections sector at state and national levels, having served on the Victorian State Branch Committee before being co-opted to the National Council in 1999. As a National Council member, she chaired the Editorial Standing Committee where, under her leadership, she and her excellent team forged a new *Museums Australia Magazine* to world class standards. Margaret initiated the Museum Studies Special Interest Group and was a dedicated member of the Policy Standing Committee during the period of developing the ground-breaking *Sustainability: guidelines for programs and practice in museums and galleries*. She represented the Council on the Return of Indigenous Cultural Property Program (RICP), was elected Vice President in 2001 and served tirelessly in that position for two terms.

Margaret joined Deakin University in 1994 as the Coordinator of the Museum Studies Course. She has worked indefatigably on behalf of her students and for the sustainability of the sector

through preparing new entrants for work in the museum field and by providing in-service to existing professionals. Through her work at Deakin's Cultural Heritage Centre, Margaret was a key member of the team that researched and reported the 2001 Key Needs Study of Collecting Institutions for the Cultural Ministers Council. The Key Needs Study examined the critical issues facing the management, conservation, communication, access to and exhibition of heritage collections held in Australia's museums, galleries, libraries, archives. It was a major research project that has had an enormous impact on forging new directions for a collaborative and coordinated approach across the whole collections sector.

The Collections Council of Australia will be working on the shared interests of libraries and archives as well as museums and galleries. Margaret has therefore resigned from her official roles within Museums Australia. She leaves with the respect, affection and good wishes of her museum and gallery colleagues across the country. We look forward to working with her in the future and wish her every success in her new endeavor.

CAROL SCOTT
PRESIDENT
MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA



MAX KLINGER

Grotesque: The Diabolical and Fantastic in Art, on show at the National Gallery of Victoria until 25 April 2005, explores how artists have given expression to beliefs in monsters, witches and demons and other fantastic creatures. The works on show are drawn from the NGV's prints and drawings collection, and date from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to the present day.

Max Klinger
 German 1857–1920
Abduction (Entführung)
 from *A glove (Ein Handschuh)*, 3rd/4th edition 1881, published 1893
 etching and aquatint
 8.9 x 21.8 cm (image), 11.9 x 26.8 cm (plate), 43.6 x 69.4 cm (sheet)
 Purchased, 1978

OUR COVER



Cover and table of contents images from *In a New Light: Australian Photography 1930s–2000*, on display at the National Library of Australia until 28 March 2005.

Cover:

Max Dupain (1911–1992)
 Street at Central Station, 1938
 gelatin silver photograph; 47.5 x 39.5cm
 National Library Pictures Collection

Table of contents (lhs):

Jim Fitzpatrick (b.1916)
 Private Wallace Traford Arrives Home
 on Leave, Drouin, Victoria [c.1944]
 gelatin silver photograph; 24 x 20cm
 National Library Pictures Collection

MOVING ON

Dawn Casey, former Director of the National Museum of Australia, is the new Director of the Western Australian Museum.

Jodie Cunningham has left the National Museum of Australia to become Manager of Public Programs at the National Gallery of Australia.

Ingrid Hoffman, formerly Director of Hervey Bay Regional Gallery, has been appointed Gallery and Museum Manager at Hawkesbury City Council, NSW.

Ben Divall, formerly Assistant Manager, Public Programs at the National Gallery of Australia, is now Senior Program Coordinator at the National Gallery of Victoria.

Gabrielle Hyslop has left the National Archives of Australia after 13 years, and is now Manager, Public Programs and Events, at the National Museum of Australia.

Ken Lee has left the National Museum of Australia to become Director of the Mundaring Arts Centre, WA.

Christopher Menz, former Senior Curator of Decorative Arts International at the National Gallery of Victoria, has replaced new NGA Director Ron Radford at the Art Gallery of South Australia.

Steven Tonkin has left the National Gallery of Australia to become Senior Curator at Cairns Regional Gallery.

Kathleen Von Witt, formerly Assistant Director of Tamworth Gallery, has been appointed Curator of Hawkesbury Regional Museum.

ARRIVAL

Late 2004: A baby southern white rhinoceros male was born at **Werribee Open Range Zoo**, the second rhino calf to be born since the Zoo began participating in an international breeding program for the species in 1981.

AWARD

Glass artist **Klaus Moje** has been given the internationally prestigious 2004 Lifetime Achievement Award by UrbanGlass, New York.

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE:

POSITIONING REGIONAL, LOCAL AND SPECIALIST MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

CAROL SCOTT & LYNDA KELLY

Australia's distributed national collection does not only exist in the large Commonwealth and State-funded institutions. Throughout the country, smaller museums and galleries in regional areas and specialist collections managed by dedicated volunteers and multi-skilled staff can inspire and thrill audiences as much as those in the larger institutions.

These regional, local and specialist museums face many of the challenges of their urban counterparts and require management strategies tailored to sustaining them. It is generally acknowledged that museums must be more audience-responsive in order to meet the needs of a range of stakeholders and in positioning museums strongly within the leisure sector. Although many of the larger institutions have been collecting audience information for several years, to date there has been little data gathered about audiences to regional, local and specialist museums. This is a significant gap, especially given the growth across this sector in Australia.

This article describes a collaborative project between the Powerhouse Museum and the Australian Museum, with input from Museums Australia NSW, the Regional Galleries Association of NSW and the Museums and Galleries Foundation NSW. The participating institutions represented a broad cross-section and included Campbelltown City Art Gallery, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, the Army Museum of NSW, Wollongong City

Gallery, Bradman Museum, National Motor Racing Museum (Bathurst), Railway Roundhouse Museum (Junee), Lady Denman Heritage Complex, Bundanon Trust, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, Mosman Art Gallery and Fairfield City Museum and Gallery.

The project involved training participants in conducting audience research, including developing and implementing a customised visitor survey. Across the twelve participating institutions, a total of 623 surveys were completed during a two-month period covering holidays and the school term.

Preceded by a needs analysis to determine what information was required, the final survey contained questions about demographics (age, gender, residence, education, employment), the form of the visit (alone, accompanied, with or without children), motivating factors for choosing leisure activity in general and museum visits in particular, satisfaction levels with a range of programs and services and, finally, what the visitors themselves identified as significant aspects of the visit.

This initial 'snapshot' of visitors to regional, local and specialist museums and galleries provides important information to assist programming, inform strategic planning, build audiences for organisational sustainability and position smaller institutions within the wider Australian museum sector.

Data from the surveys have been combined into one sample, analysed, and compared with

DATA FROM THE SURVEYS HAVE BEEN ANALYSED, AND AT THIS STAGE THERE ARE SOME INTERESTING TRENDS EMERGING THAT RAISE ISSUES FOR THE REGIONAL MUSEUMS SECTOR IN NSW.

two large urban institutions, the Australian Museum and the Powerhouse Museum where comparable information is available. Further detailed analysis is being undertaken, but at this stage there are some interesting trends emerging that raise issues for the regional museums sector in NSW.

First, in terms of visitor profiles, it is interesting to note the similarities. Like their urban counterparts, audiences to the institutions participating in this study were highly qualified, with 42 per cent having a university degree or higher. In terms of residence, however, there were considerable differences. Visitors to regional, local and specialist museums were predominantly from NSW (78 per cent), either from Sydney (39 per cent) or from elsewhere in the State (39 per cent). Smaller proportions of visitors were interstate tourists (16 per cent) and overseas visitors (5 per cent). This suggests that the strongest constituents for regional museums are residents across NSW, with

potential to grow the intrastate tourism market.

Secondly, the data show that the regional, local and specialist museums and galleries participating in this study are attracting an older audience, with 27 per cent of survey respondents aged over 60 years and 19 per cent of respondents between 50-59 years. This differs from two large urban NSW museums. The Australian Museum reports that 25 per cent of its visitors are aged 50+ and the Powerhouse Museum's visitor studies show that 16 per cent of its visitors are aged 55+. Only 12 per cent of visitors under 25 years completed surveys for this study and 10 per cent of respondents were aged 25-34 years. Compared with the Australian Museum where 15 per cent of visitors are under 25 and 22 per cent are aged between 25-34, and the Powerhouse Museum where 20 per cent of visitors are under 25 years and 25 per cent are between 25-34 years of age, it appears that regional local and specialist museums are definitely attracting an older audience.

The third finding relates to the family audience to regional, local and specialist museums and galleries. Twenty-seven per cent of respondents to the study visited with their family and 19 per cent of those had children in their groups. At the Australian Museum between 45-50 per cent visit in family groups and 70 per cent of visitors are with their family when they come to the Powerhouse Museum. While the findings at the larger

urban institutions are a factor of their size, and the diversity and range of their exhibitions, an important implication of the findings from this study is that regional, local and specialist museums and galleries may need to implement strategies to attract families and children to ensure sustainability. This is not only to replenish audiences that may be lost through natural attrition, but also to socialise the next generation into the habit of museum going. It has been found that the characteristic that most affects whether adults visit museums is whether they were taken as children and the types of experiences they had.

One of the other areas investigated was motivations for visiting. Personal recommendations from friends or relatives are an important reason for visits (29 per cent). Advertising (24 per cent) was also an important motivator. Fourteen per cent of respondents stated that they came because of a tourist publication or a recommendation from a tourist centre. Like their urban counterparts, many respondents (19 per cent) visited to see a particular exhibition.

Another way of determining motivations was through a question that asked visitors to rate the importance of a number of factors influencing people's general choice of leisure destination. The 11 statements in this survey were taken from a study undertaken with Australian Museum visitors, which was based on leisure literature.

Statement	Percentage of age group (in years) rating high/very high					
	under 25	25-34	35-49	50-59	60-69	70+
The advertising/promotion	41	53	44	47	42	29
Recommendations by others	64	69	73	75	68	66
Special events that I must see or do	57	67	61	64	61	44
The interests of my children/family	42	53	59	51	40	35
Doing something worthwhile in my leisure	53	67	67	68	64	58
How much it all costs	45	55	46	32	29	21
The weather	24	33	30	16	21	16
To learn	59	58	67	66	61	65
A good way to use some free time	57	50	58	44	44	44
Experiencing something new	79	69	82	80	71	58
For entertainment	75	72	68	58	51	40

REGIONAL, LOCAL AND SPECIALIST MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES MAY NEED TO IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES TO ATTRACT FAMILIES AND CHILDREN TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY.

Overall, 50 per cent of respondents stated that 'experiencing something new' and 'recommendations by others' were important factors. This was followed by 'special events that I must see or do' (41 per cent); 'doing something worthwhile in my leisure' (41 per cent) and 'to learn' (38 per cent). Interestingly, 'the weather' was the least significant factor at 9 per cent, and others such as 'how much it all costs' (20 per cent) and the

'advertising/promotion' (21 per cent) were also not as highly rated. The data suggest that these 'deciding factors' are also a function of age.

This initial study has been both confirming and challenging and has provided valuable information for future planning by this sector. Verifying the good work that is already being undertaken, 94 per cent of respondents stated that they would recommend the museum or gallery which they had visited to someone else. Eighty-five per cent of respondents gave high/very-high ratings to the exhibitions they saw, 66 per cent gave high ratings to the variety provided by the experience, 76 per cent rated the customer service highly and 77 per cent were very satisfied with the physical orientation. The challenge relates to building youth and family audiences. Finally, regional, local and specialist museums and galleries can capitalise

on the findings about leisure choice and motivation to further promote their important role as part of Australia's distributed national collection.

These findings will be strengthened as more institutions participate in the project. Expressions of interest can be made by contacting either Carol Scott (carols@pnm.gov.au) or Lynda Kelly (lyndak@austmus.gov.au). A paper about this study is being presented at the Museums Australia 2005 conference and expressions of interest will also be invited at that session.

A FULLY REFERENCED VERSION OF THIS PAPER IS AVAILABLE FROM THE EDITOR. EMAIL editor@museumsaustralia.org.au

CAROL SCOTT,
POWERHOUSE MUSEUM
AND
LYNDA KELLY,
AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM

BOTANIC GARDENS & COMMUNITY GREENING

JANELLE HATHERLY

'COMMUNITY GREENING IS ALSO ABOUT DEVELOPING THE SENSE OF OWNERSHIP AND PRIDE IN WHERE PEOPLE LIVE.

By educating people about the joys of gardening together, horticulturists from the Community Education Unit of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney are enhancing the lives of those living with disadvantage and are helping create positive community identities.

The *Community Greening* program, a partnership between the Botanic Gardens Trust, and the NSW Department of Housing, helps disadvantaged communities to develop communal gardens in public housing estates, on council land, in churches and in schools. It teaches gardening skills and spreads messages about sustainable horticulture, recycling and the benefits of greening and renewing the urban environment.

The program aims to increase community ownership of previously barren open space and common lands, improve community networks and social cohesion, educate the community — in particular children and young adults — to value the natural environment, and decrease the stigma felt by people who live in large public housing estates.

The *Community Greening* program began in August 2000. Now around seventy communities in NSW are involved in its projects. The communal gardens vary considerably in style and stages of development and can be found in:

- Thirty-nine communities living in public housing (including seven in regional NSW)
- Six communities living in community housing

- Fourteen disadvantaged communities based around local schools
- Five communities living with HIV/AIDS
- One Indigenous community
- One community of people with mental/physical disabilities
- One community of adults in crisis
- Four communities of youth in crisis.

'Some gardens, such as the one in Belmore Road, Riverwood, have drawn in people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds,' said Stephen Paul, Senior Educational Horticulturalist from the Botanic Gardens Trust. 'Though some of these gardeners can't share words they're all involved in a physical outlet that's good for their health and overall wellbeing.'

The program depends upon community consultation and brainstorming of ideas with many stakeholders, and therefore requires ongoing support and assistance from Department of Housing Corporate and Divisional Community Renewal staff, other government agencies and local businesses.

Raquel Carvajal, Senior Project Officer with NSW Department of Housing's Community Renewal Unit, said all residents on estates with community gardens had benefitted from the program. 'People out in public spaces have a strong effect on crime and safety — obviously with more people out-and-about more can see more, can be seen and this can have a deterrent effect on crime,' she said. '*Community Greening* is also about developing the sense

of ownership and pride in where people live. We source or provide suitable land, the Botanic Gardens Trust provides training and expert advice and sponsors donate plants, seedlings and other materials, but the project needs work which can only come from and be driven by residents.'

JANELLE HATHERLY
COMMUNITY EDUCATION
MANAGER
BOTANIC GARDENS TRUST
ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS
SYDNEY
& CHAIR, BOTANIC GARDENS SIG

NSW Governor Marie Bashir planting a European Olive tree at the celebration of International Day of People with a Disability 2004, at the Luncheon Club's EDEN Garden
Courtesy of Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney



KEY ANNIVERSARIES TO BE COMMEMORATED AT THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

LAURA RYAN

THIS YEAR SEES TWO KEY ANNIVERSARIES IN AUSTRALIA'S HISTORY: THE NINETIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN; AND THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WORLD WAR II.

The Australian War Memorial is mounting a special exhibition on the Gallipoli campaign, *The Dawn of the Legend: 25 April 1915*. The exhibition will include a key relic from the Memorial's collection, the *Devanha* boat, which is currently undergoing restoration so that it can be placed on display. The *Devanha* was one of the very first boats to land on the shores of Gallipoli at dawn on 25 April 1915. This precious part of our history has been off public display and undergoing conservation for many years. The boat will be displayed along with many other relics, including letters, uniforms and photographs.

The Memorial is also holding special curator tours of the exhibition, talks by historians and film screenings, including a brilliant new film by a Turkish film maker, *Gallipoli*, narrated by Jeremy Irons.

The Australian War Memorial website hosts an interactive experience of the Gallipoli campaign, KidsHQ, designed for schoolchildren by Link Web Services, at <http://www.awm.gov.au/kidshq/>

The Royal Australian Mint will also launch a special \$1 coin to mark the anniversary, with visitors to the Memorial able to mint their own coin in the week before Anzac Day.

The sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II we will be also commemorated by a national ceremony. Details will be announced closer to the August date.

At an Open Day on 7 May many of the War Memorial's rare vehicles will be taken out of storage and placed on display, the Roulettes will stage an air show, along with flyovers by a C130 Hercules, Mustang and Harvard, the Red Berets will do a parachute drop, the Royal Military Band will perform, there will be a display by the Royal Australian Navy Clearance Diving Team, and helicopters (a Seahawk, Squirrel, two Iroquois, and two Kiowas) will fly in and out of the grounds all day.

LAURA RYAN
PUBLIC AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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COLLECTING COLLECTORS



Niki and her collection
Courtesy of Museum Victoria

Thanks for your work and patience in dealing with such strange people. For some people it may have helped legitimise their obsession and given them some respite at home.

(Comment from one of our collectors)

As part of Museum Victoria's 150th birthday celebrations in 2004, the Visitor Programs team at Melbourne Museum decided to provide community collectors with the opportunity to display their treasures in a gallery dedicated to the program.

Calls for expressions of interest unearthed a plethora of collections, enough (and more) to fill the gallery with three collections per week for twenty-one weeks. Criteria for selection were:

- Unusual objects/generating broad interest
- Transportable
- No pest management issues
- Objects with stories
- Collectors who enjoy communicating
- Collectors and collections showing variety in age, cultural background, place of residence.

As we met and worked with a large number of collectors over the months, we became more intrigued with the reasons why people collect. In November 2003 in *Museums Australia Magazine* there was a review by Karin Vesik of a 1999 publication by Paul Martin, *Popular Collecting and the Everyday Self: the Reinvention of Museums?* Martin's interpretation of the reason for contemporary popular collecting is an academic one based on the social theory of Guy Debord. He suggests that many people feel alienated from society by socio-economic uncertainty: by joining a collecting community, they seek a 'point of re-entry' into society.

Collectors themselves give more wide-ranging rationales for their passion. These can be broadly summarised as: fun and humour, nostalgia, family connections, responsibility for culture, aesthetics and a sense of belonging. Inspired by the words of the collectors quoted below, Melbourne Museum has decided to broaden and continue the program throughout 2005.

Fun and humour

'My collection started when I saved them for a friend, who was on holiday and stuck them on a card. My family think it a great joke and say they are going to stick them on my coffin when I die!'

June: Odd Spots from The Age

'Domestic items are a fun subject to collect as there is such a wide range of items available to collect and they are relatively cheap to add to a collection.'

Max and Boyd: Domestic items

Nostalgia

'I love the album still — it smells of chocolate and reminds me of the excitement of receiving Easter Eggs, of meticulously smoothing out wrappers and of many happy Easters at home with my family.'

Adrienne: Easter egg wrappers

Family connections

'Many of the cars in our collection belonged to our two uncles. That is the reason for many of them being from the '70s and '80s.'

Daniel and Adrian, age nine and six: Matchbox cars

'The cards were passed on by my Aunt Henrietta who was active in the Suffragette Movement in the UK.'

Geoffrey: Suffragette Postcards 1906-1911

Responsibility for culture

'I see myself as a custodian of these artefacts and would like to think that long after I have departed, someone else will appreciate their worth and accept the responsibility to protect and share them with others.'

Terry: Historic children's literature

'I have been given many items by people who have no interest in the topic but dearly want their family treasure to go to someone who will value it and look after it.'

Anthony: Militaria

'My main fascination with newspapers is who was reading this 50/100/150-year-old paper when it was brand new and what were their circumstances. Newspapers are such a mirror of their times, what was happening in your town, around the nation, and as communication improved, around the world.'

Peter: Newspapers

'As a collection these things are mine, but as for the objects themselves they have their own life which began long before they resided with me and will continue long after I'm gone.'

Crispin: Oceanic art

Aesthetics

'Generally the first thing that appeals to me when I look at a phonecard is the design printed on it. Just like stamps, an immense variety of phonecards are released with popular themes such as special events, famous people, Indigenous culture or local wildlife and flora.'

Brian: Telephone cards

'AS YOU HAVE PROBABLY GUESSED I THINK ABOUT SNEAKERS QUITE A BIT. MOST OF US SNEAKER DUDES KEEP QUIET ABOUT IT — YOU EITHER GET IT OR YOU DON'T.'

'They were small and beautiful and never added much to your luggage.'
Kenn: Glass eye baths

'I find them quite attractive, very brightly coloured, and I'm interested in the images. They are all eaten. I'm not interested in high art, but practical art.'
Nick: Tomato cans

Sense of belonging

'I found the Australian Barbie Club and decided to join. I had no idea there were adult collectors! Soon my mum became a member too and between us we collected around 300 of our favourites.'
Joy: Barbie dolls

'As you have probably guessed I think about sneakers quite a bit. Most of us sneaker dudes keep quiet about it — you either get it or you don't.'
Wood: Sneakers

Melbourne Museum undertook this project to share the resources of the museum with Victorian collectors, and with those visitors who want a glimpse into their strange and wonderful worlds. One advantage for the museum is that occasionally an object or collection which the museum wishes to acquire — and the collector wishes to find a home for — may be unearthed. A number of Museum Victoria collections started their lives in private hands. The Violet May Wilson collection of pieces of prize-winning needlework provides an insight into rural history between 1923 and 1976, as does Jack Chisholm's collection of 900 different types of barbed wire, bequeathed to Museum Victoria in 2001.

Community Collections 2004 was a great success, and we are repeating it in 2005. We learned last year that our changeover time was too short, so in 2005 the program is running for the full year, and changeovers are monthly rather than weekly. Many expressions of interest have arrived from collectors, and include coat hangers, theatre programs, miners' banners, tea sets and farm models. Interestingly, we have an application from someone who mirrors the museum's interest. He is a collector of collectors.

For more information, check the website: www.melbourne.museum.vic.gov.au

MARGARET GRIFFITH
 MANAGER VISITOR PROGRAMS, MELBOURNE MUSEUM
 AND
 ALICE UNMACK
 VISITOR PROGRAMS OFFICER, MELBOURNE MUSEUM

COMMONWEALTH CULTURAL GRANTS

Financial assistance for touring exhibitions

The Australian Government's **Visions of Australia** program makes the nation's collection of scientific, heritage, Indigenous and artistic material accessible to more Australians by providing funding to develop or tour cultural exhibitions.

Applications are sought from museums, art galleries, scientific organisations, historical societies and Indigenous and ethnic community groups, for projects commencing from 1 September 2005.

Exhibitions must have predominantly Australian content and be travelling to a minimum of three venues, not including the host venue, with at least one being in another state or territory.

Applications for Round 24 close on 1 April 2005.

Program guidelines and application forms for development and touring grants may be obtained from:

Website: www.dcita.gov.au/visions
 Email: visions.australia@dcita.gov.au
 Tel: 02 6271 1627
 Fax: 02 6271 1122

All organisations are encouraged to consult with Visions of Australia staff before submitting applications.



An Australian Government Initiative

DCITAE004010019

WHYALLA FROM THE DESERT TO THE SEA

PAUL MAZOUREK

The Whyalla Maritime Museum was officially opened in 1988, ten years after the closure of the Whyalla BHP Ltd shipyards. The closure cost the town dearly, as almost 10,000 people left. It can be said, sixteen years later, that this museum opening marked a beginning of a new era for the city of Whyalla in general.

BHP Ltd. had been shipping iron ore from Whyalla, then known as 'Hummock Hill', since 1901. In 1938 the company was approached by the federal government to establish shipyards in Whyalla and production commenced in 1940. The new shipyards accommodated five large building berths, which eventually resulted in construction of some of the largest ships ever built in the southern hemisphere. Between 1940 and 1978 the shipyards produced 66 vessels — warships, carriers, tankers, ferries, container ships, barges and an oil-drilling barge.

The shipyards were complemented by the construction of steelworks in 1960. However, it was the shipyards that left the deepest imprint on the Whyalla community. The people of Whyalla took part in every ship launch. The construction successes and problems encountered were reflected by times of prosperity or by strikes and not-so-prosperous periods. For better or worse, the shipyards were the city's lifelines.

The idea of establishing a Maritime Museum in Whyalla was bound to the project of bringing back the very first ship built in the

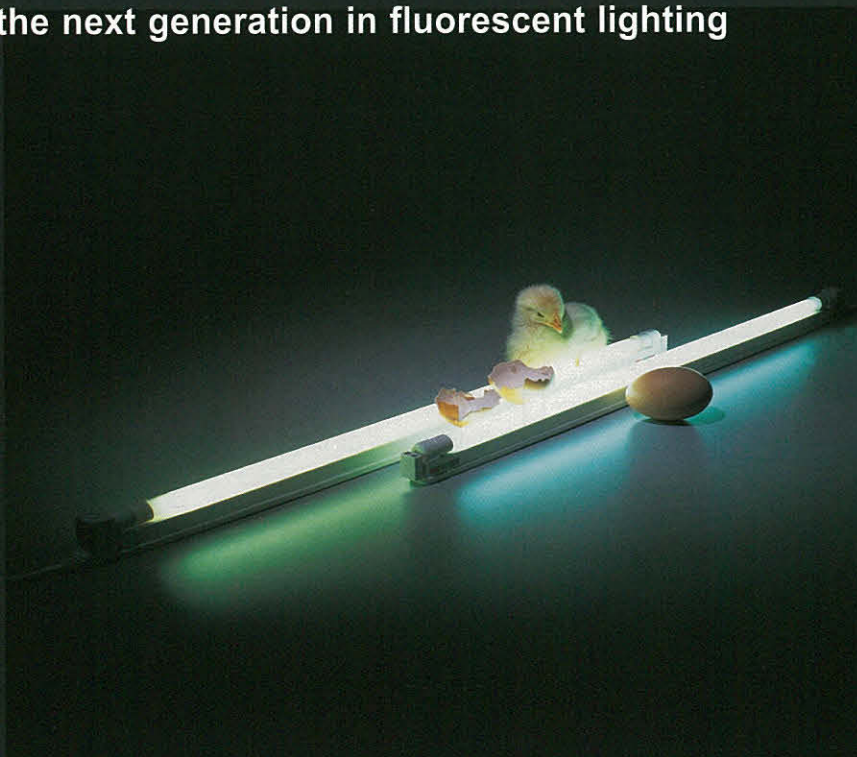
Whyalla BHP shipyards — HMAS *Whyalla*, a World War II corvette that saw distinguished service in the South-West Pacific. The city councillors made the right decision about preserving the first modern warship ever constructed in South Australia: they established a unique tourist drawcard for Whyalla by placing the warship near the highway.

The 1941 HMAS *Whyalla* was an attraction that became synonymous with Whyalla's new image. The city started moving away from its almost entirely industrial identity. Its long-term vision and planning turned to alternate opportunities for employment, such as retail, education, health services and tourism. The steelworks, nevertheless, retained its position as a major employer.

The Whyalla Maritime Museum has undergone major changes and improvements since 2000. The permanent exhibition was divided into three separate galleries interpreting the naval history, the story of shipbuilding in Whyalla, and the early maritime heritage and natural history of the northern Spencer Gulf. The museum preserves two vessels — HMAS *Whyalla* (1941) and *Valkyrie* (1951). All these developments have been a great success with the public. Apart from local visitors, most of the clientele comes from South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia.

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IT WAS THE SHIPYARDS THAT LEFT THE DEEPEST IMPRINT ON THE WHYALLA COMMUNITY. THE PEOPLE OF WHYALLA TOOK PART IN EVERY SHIP LAUNCH. FOR BETTER OR WORSE, THE SHIPYARDS WERE THE CITY'S LIFELINES.

Whether you travel interstate or even overseas, you often meet someone who lived and worked here, or knew someone who had been to Whyalla. The shipyards and steelworks employed people from all over Australia and over 60 different nationalities of migrants.

The Whyalla Maritime Museum has already been recognised nationally and internationally. There is still much promotional work ahead to reflect these various communities — both past and present — and to obtain appropriate recognition of their identities.

PAUL MAZOUREK
CURATOR
WHYALLA MARITIME MUSEUM

Above: SES using the HMAS *Whyalla* for their vertical exercises

Below: New entry to the Whyalla Maritime Museum



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CELEBRATING COMMUNITY IDENTITY

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MUSEUM VICTORIA AND RURAL VICTORIAN WOMEN

LIZA DALE-HALLETT & KERRY WILSON

The Women on Farms Gathering project is a living history partnership between Museum Victoria and Victorian rural women that celebrates the vital contribution of women to the sustainability of rural Victorian communities.

Having been invisible to history and museums for so long, these women have taken the initiative to forge this partnership with Museum Victoria to document, preserve and interpret the contemporary and past lives of rural Victorian women.

Since 1990 Victorian rural women from all areas and backgrounds have come together at an annual weekend event to share common interests, exchange information, and explore contemporary developments and issues. These Women on Farms Gatherings celebrate rural women's contribution to their farms and communities, and offer a time for women to regenerate their energies in the face of continuing rural crises.

The Gatherings, now held across all states, have become a major symbol for rural women and are a significant agent of change in rural Australia. Each Gathering is rich with symbolic icons, stories, memories, videos, banners, photos and memorabilia, and is a testament to the challenges and changes in these women's lives.

The Beechworth Gathering appointed a Heritage Group in 2001, with members from across Victoria, to represent the Women on Farms Gatherings and to seek advice and assistance from Museum Victoria in documenting, preserving and interpreting the contemporary and past lives of rural women, as represented by this annual event. A formal partnership was signed in 2003.

As a living collection, most of the material is displayed as part of the annual Gathering. The partnership has made possible the development of a portable and flexible display that continues this cultural activity while also offering interpretation and giving the objects protection. This display can now also be used by other organisations that have an interest in rural women's lives.

A good example of the contemporary and dynamic nature of the collection is the perpetual banner. This is a constantly changing object, as each year a new patchwork square is added. Each square, its image and theme, gives form to women's stories and articulates

THE GATHERINGS HAVE BECOME A SYMBOL FOR
RURAL WOMEN AND ARE A SIGNIFICANT AGENT
OF CHANGE IN RURAL AUSTRALIA.

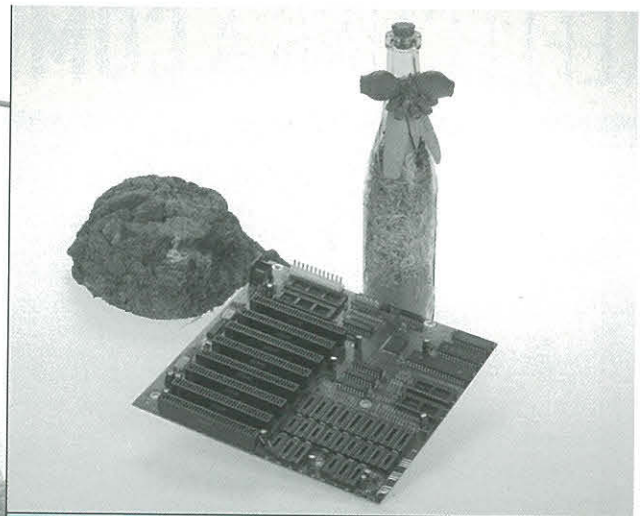
the key issues, messages and identity of rural women. An important ritual of each Gathering is the prominent display of this banner.

The closing of each Gathering and the anticipation of the next is celebrated with a formal 'baton changing' ritual, where an 'icon' is handed over from one organising committee to the next. Each icon represents a story or message of some of the key themes and issues which have shaped the meaning and experience of these women. The collection is a colourful and often humorous insight into the ways in which rural women perceive themselves, their roles and their future.

A cow pat from Numurkah was not just a reflection of the local dairying industry; for some it represented an unexpressed desire relating to a visiting politician who said some ill-chosen words about 'farmers' wives'.

The computer motherboard was selected by the Bendigo Gathering in 1997 to symbolise the place of women at the heart of rural communities. Just as the motherboard is essential to the functioning of a computer, so women were seen as fundamental to the function and survival of their farms and rural communities. The computer is also an example of the way in which women have taken a lead in using new technologies in farm management. The computer has also proven to be an important networking tool for the Australian rural women's movement, and has facilitated the unity that comes from sharing stories and exchanging experiences across the diversity and vast distances of rural Australia.

And the desert sands and seeds from the Mallee region of Victoria suggest the delicate balance of farming in marginal lands and the preciousness of the soil to sustaining life. The layers of soil, barley, oats and wheat symbolise the different layers of experience and the power of unity.



Above: Cow pat, computer motherboard and Mallee sands, icons from the Women on Farms Gathering collection
 Left: Janet Taylor and Ann Jarvis at the launch of the Women on Farms Gathering display, Horsham, March 2004
 Courtesy Museum Victoria

There are significant and exciting benefits emerging from this partnership. There is a greater understanding and appreciation of the relevance of museums to rural communities. As a community initiative, the partnership has empowered rural women to identify, value and interpret their own stories. The direct participation of the community has created a rich and powerful display, ongoing research program and collection.

The project is like a rainbow: it records the tough going and celebrates the achievements of often 'invisible women on farms'. It allows women from an incredible diversity of backgrounds to enjoy their achievements, to display their colours to the broader community, to be proud of lives well lived.

The development of a 'living collection' creates a dynamic link between the museum and contemporary culture. This extends our current understanding of rural Victoria, and offers the future a story which otherwise would be lost. The partnership is also a gateway to documenting contemporary issues shaping the future of Victoria, and which offer a way of linking the interests of rural and city communities. A few examples include: toxic waste campaign, clean and green food, water use and wind farming.

And finally, the partnership is a means to assist communities during periods of change. It is also a way of helping Museum Victoria adapt to the changes communities need to see in museums.

The project goes right to the heart of what many people are looking for in museums: a place that exhibits and celebrates their stories. Stories from across their diverse country. Stories that resonate in their memories. Stories that point to their future. The stories of changing Australian lives.

LIZA DALE-HALLETT
 SENIOR CURATOR, SUSTAINABLE FUTURES, MUSEUM VICTORIA
 AND
 KERRY WILSON
 MEMBER, WOMEN ON FARMS GATHERING HERITAGE GROUP

THE PROJECT IS LIKE A RAINBOW: IT RECORDS AND CELEBRATES THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF OFTEN 'INVISIBLE WOMEN ON FARMS'.



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REFLECTING A COMMUNITY DISASTER



Above: Cabinet from *The day the sky turned black* exhibition at CMAG. Courtesy of Roslyn Russell

Top right: Pine trunk burned and sand blasted by the firestorm. On loan from ACT Forests. Courtesy of Paul Webb CMAG

Below right: Dishwasher in situ at Somerset St Duffy 4 February 2003. Courtesy of Dale Middleby CMAG

Canberra is an historical and cultural crossroad, a community sometimes noted for transience and isolation and yet with a dynamic and diverse identity. Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG) is a young regional museum evolving with the community whose story it tells, seeking out connections between suburb, community, region and national capital. This article observes how a significant event prompts a redefinition of community identity. To illustrate the premise, I will trace the measures CMAG took in response to the Canberra bushfires of January 2003.

The museum's role as a repository for the collective memory of a community was fully activated by the devastating fires which took lives, injured many and burned 70 per cent of the ACT. As shock gave way to action across Canberra, CMAG staff attended drop-in centres to learn how museum resources could best be used. As well as staff joining the army of helpers cutting sandwiches and distributing clothing, free holiday programs for children from fire-affected families were offered at the museum. We consulted with colleagues in the national institutions and took part in conservation information sessions. Aware of the need to act with sensitivity, we used the media and community newsletters to tell the community that CMAG staff were available to advise on how to stabilise and store fire-damaged material they wished to keep.

Community demand was such that a series of 'keepsake gatherings' were arranged, at which salvaged material was brought into the museum for expert conservation advice. During these gatherings it became clear that people were already keeping and creating things to remember the crisis; tangible and intangible

evidence of a highly significant event in their lives. From melted engine parts to poetry, quilts, art, clothing, family heirlooms and photos, songs, prose, emails and videos, CMAG established a confidential register in which material brought to these gatherings was documented. This register comprises an archive of memories and objects which the museum will draw on to source future interpretation of and research into the event.

It became evident that the 'keepsakes gatherings' had a therapeutic aspect that we, as curators, had not anticipated. At the second gathering counsellors from the Government Bushfire Recovery Centre were in attendance to help cope with the emotions unleashed by handling the salvaged objects and giving accounts of the event. While the media provided an excellent vehicle for some to express their stories, the museum, as a neutral and confidential space, was particularly useful for those not comfortable about telling their story publicly.

Collecting and displaying material from significant people, places and events in the life of our community is a fundamental museum activity. Consequently, an exhibition was planned for January 2004 to mark the first anniversary of the fires. *The day the sky turned black* (on show until early February 2005) is an exhibition generated by and for the Canberra community to share a collective experience of the event. The title comes from the *Community Update Reflections* edition of 18 July 2003, and is a quote from Fiona Dear, WIN TV's Chief of Staff. Contributors to the exhibition told their stories and displayed their newly wrought heirlooms refashioned by fire. These objects are tangible evidence of the event and are often

IT BECAME EVIDENT THAT THE 'KEEPSAKES GATHERINGS' HAD A THERAPEUTIC ASPECT THAT WE, AS CURATORS, HAD NOT ANTICIPATED.

IN THE YEARS AHEAD, TIME WILL SIFT THE STORIES AND OBJECTS GENERATED BY THIS EVENT AND WE WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO GRASP ITS IMPACT ON OUR COMMUNITY IDENTITY.

emblematic of profound personal change. Looking at a pine trunk sculptured by fire and sand blasted by fierce wind and soil, we marvelled at the object's transformation and reflected on our own.

A fully laden dishwasher, now standing encased in Perspex, was donated to CMAG by a family whose home was destroyed by the firestorm. The charred remains of a mobile phone are among the debris that came to rest on the dishwasher as the shelves above it crashed down. Familiar objects show signs emblematic of an event that changed them and us forever. Provoked by the objects on display, the gallery space quickly became a forum in which to reflect on and discuss our collective experience.

The exhibition symbolises the community's need to remember and to move forward. Inevitably, shock waves from this event will reverberate in our collective consciousness and alter the nature of our community. CMAG is privileged to be the museum best placed to reflect the shared sorrow, fears and hopes generated in response to this disaster. It is in this context that the meaning of such an event is understood.

CMAG has acquired both art and social history objects for

its permanent collection: *Broken Garden*, a bronze sculpture by GW Bot, a direct response to the artist's exploration of Canberra's forest after the January bushfires; the ACT/NSW border sign from Mountain Creek Road from where the McIntyre Hut fire crossed from NSW into the ACT; and the dishwasher, its broken and seared form signifying a family's sudden loss of domestic wellbeing. In addition, the Community Collections Register continues to grow and will be a primary source for future exhibitions exploring the nature and identity of the Canberra community through the things we keep.

In the years ahead, time will sift the stories and objects generated by this event and we will be better able to grasp its impact on our community identity. Our documentation and record keeping today will fuel tomorrow's interpretation and understanding of the Canberra bushfires of January 2003.

DALE MIDDLEBY
ASSISTANT CURATOR
CANBERRA MUSEUM AND GALLERY

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OTHER FEATURES

FICTIONAL REALITIES AND THE TROPENMUSEUM JUNIOR

CHRIS NOBBS

The Tropenmuseum Junior in Amsterdam immerses children in fictional realities and experiences which directly challenge their ideas and perceptions of non-western cultures. Chris Nobbs describes their current fictional reality...

Near the entrance to the Tropenmuseum Junior, a small group of children and their parents gathered on a large sloping platform representing an ancient Persian rug where they were welcomed by Sahand Sahebdivai, a museum staff member. By simply adorning himself with a robe and headdress, he dramatically changed character and became Ferdosi, an ancient Persian poet. He began telling a traditional story important to Iranian identity today, about the 'grey-haired baby of a wise man, a child born to bring peace to two families who had fought each other for centuries'. Ferdosi enthralled the children with dramatic scenes from the story and then led them into a small theatre representing the Alborz mountains, where music, theatre, lighting and sound were used to immerse the children further in the ancient Persian story. This

powerful introduction served as the inspirational source for the activities that followed. From the theatre the children were led to an Iranian tea-house, where traditional protocols for men and women were explained before entering. Parents were left behind and asked to return an hour-and-a-half later to participate in the children's final presentations.

Inside the 'tea-house of a thousand hands' there is a large central courtyard for performances, a kitchen and a mezzanine balcony for painting workshops. The children are divided into groups for activities organised by museum staff with specialised skills, knowledge and experience related to Iranian history and culture. Some children put on traditional costumes and learned a traditional Iranian dance, while others were involved in learning traditional music, painting or preparing food and tea. The results of their endeavors all came together in an extravagant presentation for the children, parents and teachers.

Ferdosi the poet welcomed everyone back to the tea-house of a thousand hands and introduced the presentations.

THE TROPENMUSEUM JUNIOR HAS CERTAINLY ACHIEVED ITS STATED GOAL AND BECOME SPECIALISED IN CREATING FICTIONAL REALITIES DESIGNED TO BUILD ON CHILDREN'S KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF NON-WESTERN CULTURES.

The dancers entered dressed in white chadors and spread them out to catch the projection of images representing different regions in Iran. After removing their chadors to reveal their costumes, they danced to the music played by the drummers. Some artists told the audience stories about their ceramic tile designs which would be added to the growing mural on the surrounding walls, or their calligraphy and paintings in the style of Persian miniatures designed for a large book. Their images were projected onto a large screen for all to see. Some of the children served tea and food for the stomach and the mind in the traditional Iranian way. The children appeared to be under a spell, and the excitement and engagement with Iranian life and culture were very apparent. Ferdosi thanked all the children, parents and teachers for their participation and, before he said farewell, alerted everyone to their website where the children could see the outcomes of their visit online.

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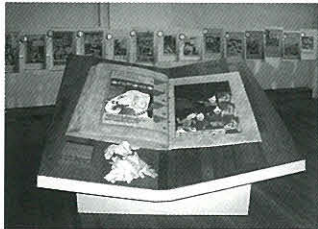
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in schools, as well as a CD ROM containing Iranian music, all of which provides children with opportunities to contextualise their visit to the Tropenmuseum Junior.

Liesbet Ruben, who is Deputy Head of the Tropenmuseum Junior said, 'The current exhibition's themes are: cultural diversity, identity and the urge to create'. This evidently guided the design of the activity spaces which children bring to life by singing, dancing, music and narratives. As with all of their exhibitions, the museum staff was engaged in months of research and collaboration with the Iranian communities in Amsterdam and Iran. All the utensils, costumes and instruments were collected in Iran. Museum staff were employed to engage children with the program, including Iranian Sahand Sahebdivai who acted the role of Ferdosi and who is immersed in his family history and is a passionate storyteller and musician.

This exhibition opened in September 2003 and will conclude early in 2006, having completed the usual two-and-a-half year season. Tropenmuseum Junior is housed within Tropenmuseum Senior, which provides complementary programs for schools offering another layer of object-rich exhibitions about Indigenous cultures, history and the environment for children. The stated goal of the Tropenmuseum Junior is to 'bring children into contact with non-western cultures with a view to giving them knowledge and understanding of and respect for those cultures'. Established twenty-five years



From top:

1. Children in the teahouse of a thousand hands waiting to serve traditional Iranian tea. The mural in the background depicting the ancient Persian story is composed of tiles painted by children who have participated in the program.
2. Ferdosi the Persian poet introduces the children's presentations.
3. A large book opened to show children's paintings made to illustrate the ancient Persian poem.
- 4 & 5. Near the entrance to the Tropenmuseum Junior children can read each page of the ancient Persian poem, which is accompanied by lavish illustrations.

Courtesy of Chris Nobbs

ago, the museum targets children from 6-12 years of age, and has organised a series of highly successful exhibitions and associated programs based on the history, culture and issues associated with ethnic groups from countries such as China, Morocco, Surinam, Turkey, Bolivia, Bali, Ghana, Australia, and now Iran.

The Tropenmuseum Junior has certainly achieved its stated goal and become specialised in creating fictional realities designed to build on children's knowledge, experience and understandings of non-western cultures — perhaps even changing attitudes. Elements of the Tropenmuseum Junior

museology and pedagogy are employed in the design of exhibitions and programs for children in Australian museums, but it's a very hard act to follow.

Tropenmuseum Junior website for Paradise & Co. www.kit.nl/tropenmuseumjunior/ and www.paradijsenco.nl

Chris Nobbs visited the Tropenmuseum Junior in Amsterdam in October 2004 while on a pilot international exchange program working at the Übersee Museum in Bremen, Germany.

CHRIS NOBBS
EDUCATION OFFICER
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM



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WUNDERKAMMER AT CMAG

DOREEN MELLOR

'Looking for new interplays, fresh resonances and subtle dialogues between different fields ...' Luk Darras 2004

Wunderkammer: Collection of His Excellency Mr Luk Darras, Ambassador of Belgium was presented by the Canberra Museum and Art Gallery (CMAG) in early 2004 in the context of the Canberra Multicultural Arts Festival. As CMAG Director Peter Haynes explains in his exhibition catalogue preface, the sixteenth-century concept of a Cabinet of Curiosities, from which modern museums and other collections emerged, itself drew on previous expressions as 'cabinet of arts' and the even older 'treasure cabinet' of medieval times.

As well as presenting his personal collection of objects Luk Darras created twelve accompanying works — in his own words 'collages of art, science and spirituality, nourished by my recent Australian experience'. Speaking with Luk Darras, his fascination with relationships and interlinkages between people, objects and ideas became apparent. This article

traces just a few of his thoughts on the exhibition and related issues, recorded during a conversation in May 2004.

Darras was keen to point out that the exhibition was put together as a reflection of the original concept of a Cabinet of Curiosities. 'I created it as a meta-sculpture, where synergies, sympathy and dialogues are established between the different pieces, with sub-texts and sub-stories. A kind of musical composition, where the notes are replaced by objects, generating a new coexistence between scientific instruments, shells, rocks, minerals, African sculptures, Asian statues, and different artefacts I brought back from my multiple travels. Altogether encyclopaedic in approach, emphasizing the exceptional, the rare and the marvellous.'

Each individual item in this array of objects may have no direct relationship with other items, but in bringing together 'the big pillars' of what he finds interesting — spirituality and science and creativity and art — the opportunity emerges for 'creating something new and something strange where everything is part of the totality.'

For Darras, the act of collecting is far more than assemblage; it is 'a philosophical project, as an attempt to make sense of the multiplicity and chaos of the world and perhaps even to find a hidden meaning in it.' He speaks of the collector as an artist, and of every collection as 'a theatre of memories, a dramatisation and mise-en-scène of personal and collective pasts, of a remembered childhood and of remembrance after death. The most important piece in a collection is always the next one ...'

Darras has a particular interest in looking for a more open and spiritual way of understanding science, and searching for connections and synthesis. He quoted scientist Peter Medawar: 'Among scientists, some are collectors, classifiers and compulsive tidiers-up; many are detectives by temperament and many are explorers; some are artists and others artisans. There are poet-scientists and philosopher-scientists and even a few mystics.'

Underpinning the exhibition are Darras's self-avowed leanings towards philosopher-

scientist and poet-scientist practice and his abiding interest in creating linkages and connections: 'the whole spirit of this exhibition somewhere is: let us build bridges, give some chance to imagination. Let us invent, look outside the box, all leading to personal growth and self discovery, and let's not be enclosed each in our own field. Mystics touched by science, scientists involved in poetry.'

On the exhibition's last day, Darras was there to take some photographs. He was surprised to see a visitor looking at the collages with a magnifying glass, focusing for an especially long time on one of the maps. After speaking with him, Darras discovered he was looking for the place his grandfather had fought during World War I. They talked for a while and Darras pointed out the villages where his own mother and father had been born. He found this a gripping moment, realising that through art he had connected on a human level with another person and his life journey. It brought to mind for Darras, the precept in one of the texts he'd written, that 'the viewer finishes the work. The artist or the one who wants to communicate



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THIS I LOVE IN ART

ALSO, ALMOST THE

IMPROVISATION, THE

INTUITION AND THE

MIRACLE.

through art — and I think it's a big word, 'artist' — shows his things and has some ideas, and the unexpected happens. This I love in art also, almost the improvisation, the intuition and the miracle.'

Darras's interests are reflected in this installation of interlinked objects. He is very active, and tells of his kayaking in Greenland; his walking with the local people in Tibet; travels with Tuaregs in the African desert and many other remarkable journeys. His experience of place is connected with the cultures and people of that place, something which reflects his long career as a diplomat and his desire to

understand people and their engagement and connections.

Darras also speaks of the complexity and diversity of the world, and of his exploration of this complexity underpinning his endeavours to 'develop a deep osmosis with the country we're in and so ...

I am reborn every three, four years, as a diplomat in a new country, a new culture, a new environment.'

Luk Darras's thoughtful presentation of objects indicative of his life's interests was one that engaged and captivated a variety of audiences. The exhibition reflected a deeply-held aspiration to 'open doors and

show perspectives and draw people's attention to the fact that things are much more beautiful and more interlinked [than we realise]. Especially the inter-being of human beings and getting to new levels of human experience and self-consciousness ... all these things are terribly linked.'

The Canberra community was the richer for this generous contribution to its cultural life and the foresight of the Canberra Museum and Art gallery in making the exhibition possible.

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As I continue running I start to think too much about the fact that I have no food or water and no one knows where I am.



Above: Mandy Ord 2004 (dark woods)
Right: Undergrowth (detail)

The Dark Woods Catalogue
Hobart: CAST Gallery: 2004

REGIONAL PLAYERS REAP THE REWARDS OF TOURING NATIONALLY

Australian audiences have become familiar with the international and national touring exhibitions developed by national and state galleries and museums. And now smaller regional galleries and organisations are also looking at ways of promoting their collections on the national stage.

It's a development backed by the Australian Government's Visions of Australia program. Visions is encouraging regional galleries and museums to tour exhibitions around the country, not just in their own states.

In the program's latest round of funding, almost half the successful grant recipients were regionally-based galleries and organisations.

What's in it for the smaller players though? Why would an under-resourced and over-stretched regional gallery, for

example, want to take on the extra cost and work of putting together a national tour?

The Bendigo Art Gallery has received several Visions development and touring grants. Its Director, Karen Quinlan, says the rewards of national touring outweigh the demands.

The gallery has toured its own collection of nineteenth-century narrative art and is now developing the *Town and Country: Portraits of Colonial Homes & Gardens* travelling exhibition, which will be touring to Newcastle, Sydney, Gippsland, Geelong and Launceston during this year.

'Things are changing at Bendigo Gallery, we're getting a bit more adventurous with tours and are exposing ourselves to wider audiences who wouldn't normally see our work', Quinlan said. 'We want to tour work in Western

Australia and South Australia not just Victoria, for example.'

'It does stretch our resources and we normally just break even financially but we enjoy getting our name out there, being seen as a gallery that is contributing to the regional exhibition circuit, that has the ability to do national tours, just being a player.'

The Cairns Regional Gallery has been using tours to highlight the artistic wealth of its region nationally and internationally. The gallery's *Escape Artists* exhibition took the work of artists who have lived or worked in the tropical north out to the rest of Australia. In 2001 the gallery toured a groundbreaking exhibition, *Ilan Pasin — this is our way*, a collection of traditional and contemporary cultural material from the Torres Strait Islands.

Gallery Director Louise Doyle said the touring exhibitions attract people to the rich environment of northern Queensland. 'They see the work and want to come and experience the country', she said. 'We are contributing exhibition product to public galleries across Australia and bringing out wonderful works of art from public and private collections that are rarely viewed by a broad audience.'

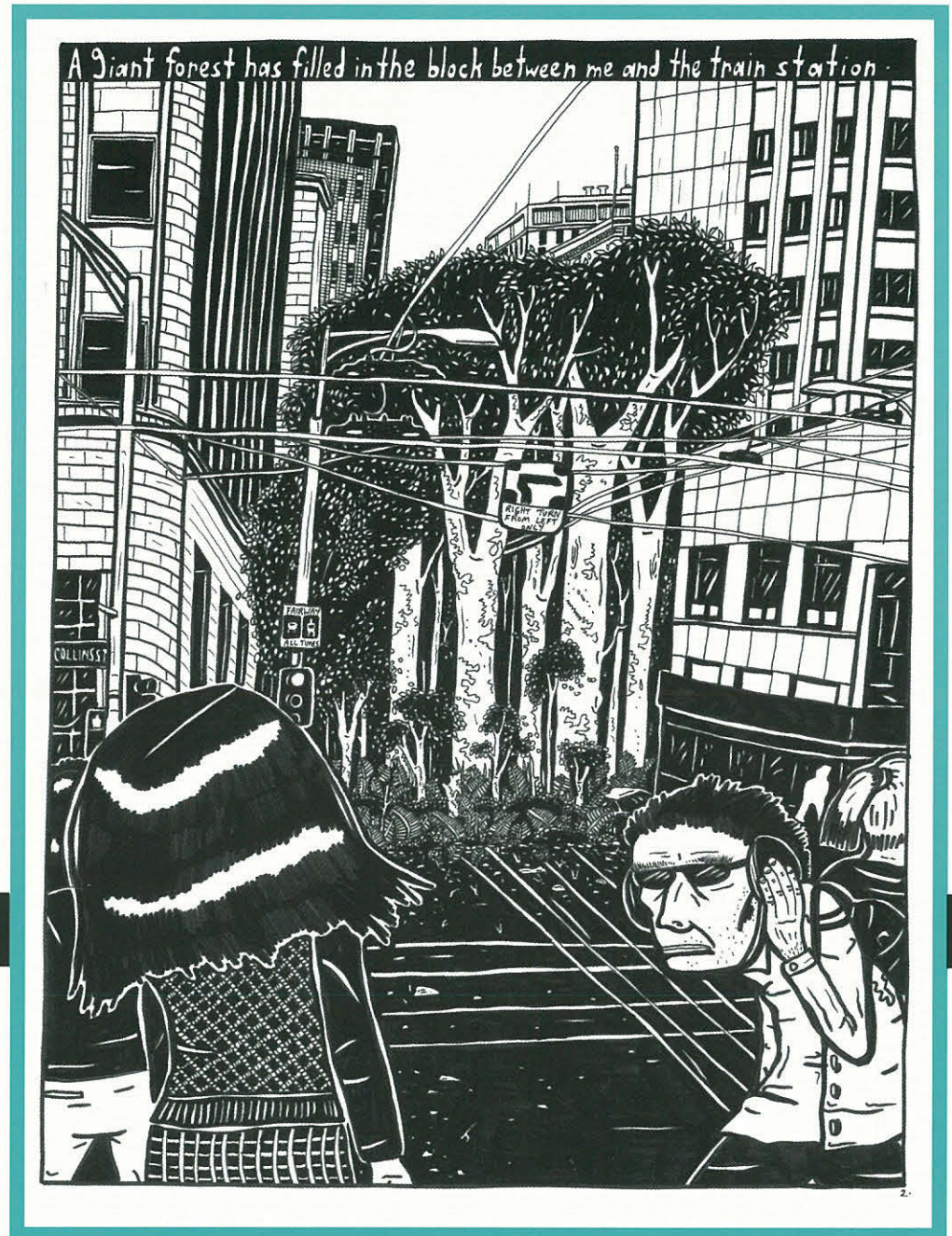
This year the gallery will tour *Encounters with Country: The Landscapes of Ray Croke*, which showcases the artist's landscape paintings of Cape York's remote Gulf Country and scenes from Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales.

Doyle said the research and documentation that the Visions program funds to prepare tours adds value to the gallery's collections and

Do you work for a regional organisation, have an exciting exhibition concept or fully developed exhibition and are interested in sharing it with a wider audience? Applications are now invited for Visions of Australia development and touring grants, with Round 24 closing on 1 April 2005. Here's a few things to remember while working on your application:

1. Read the program information carefully and align your project to the program principles and assessment criteria.
2. Contact the Visions' Secretariat to discuss your application, leaving time to make any appropriate changes or refinements. Visions' committee members can also provide guidance on applications, but contact with committee members should be made via the Secretariat.
3. Check out projects that have received Visions funding — a list of past recipients is available on the Visions' website which is listed below. Organisations within your network may also be happy to share their experiences on applying for Visions funding.
4. Supply high quality support material, including images. The Committee is unlikely to know anything about your project and has a limited time to learn. Ensure your support material conveys the strengths of your exhibition.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE VISIONS PROGRAM, INCLUDING DOWNLOADABLE GUIDELINES AND APPLICATIONS FORMS, IS AVAILABLE AT www.dcita.gov.au/visions. OR CONTACT THE SECRETARIAT ON 02 6271 1627 OR 026271 1265.



the region's cultural heritage. 'It's about professional development, enhancing our archives and records and in the case of Ray Crooke for example, that work will be there for future generations.'

The Visions program is also encouraging large and small galleries and museums to work collaboratively to develop exhibition and touring expertise. The idea is for more established museums and galleries to mentor less experienced players. *The Dark Woods: An Exhibition of Australian Comics*, which is currently touring, is a good example. It

is an exhibition of alternative comic work by young Australian artists, exploring issues such as identity, family breakdown, looking for work and suicide.

A cutting-edge collection, it was put together by two young cartoon artists, Sarah Howell and Leigh Rigozzi, with support from the Hobart City Council's Carnegie Gallery and Contemporary Art Services Tasmania (CAST).

Carnegie Gallery's Mary Knights and CAST's Director Michael Edwards guided Howell and Rigozzi through the development of the exhibition, the designing of the catalogue,

installation, and organisation of public workshops. 'It was a pretty exciting team effort for CAST and Carnegie Gallery, it didn't feel like a one way effort', Knights said.

'The young curators were very generous with their knowledge of the zines and comic culture artform that is often marginalised by galleries and we were able to assist them with the professional aspects of how to mount a national tour.'

'A pay off for us is that the exhibition has been attracting large audiences of young people who wouldn't normally have come to the gallery.'

RICH COLLECTIONS & EMPTY COFFERS — 'THE PANEL' SUMMED UP

MARIANNE NORMAN

At a panel event in late August 2004, the Museums Australia SA Branch Committee aimed to provide a forum for people working in the museums and galleries sector to discuss common concerns.

The theme was fundamental — having abundant collections but limited financial resources to work with. We invited a panel of people in positions of leadership and/or influence in their respective institutions to present their views on the topic. In the hot seats were Ian Cook, recently retired as Director of Artlab, Tim Flannery, Director of the South Australian Museum, Greg Mackie, Executive Director of Arts SA and Lyn Leader Elliott, Senior Lecturer, Cultural Tourism, Flinders University.

Viv Szekeres, Director of the Migration Museum, chaired the session and began with a short history of the cultural heritage sector in South Australia. She referred to Bob Edwards' 1970s report which led to the creation of Artlab as a shared conservation facility, and the History Trust's development of the Migration Museum and Maritime Museum. 'But most of this government investment in museums both overseas and in Australia was in capital works and infrastructure.'

Viv highlighted recent

substantial government investment in capital works for the Art Gallery, SA Museum, State Library and Carrick Hill compared with much smaller internal upgrades at the Maritime Museum and Migration Museum. Viv questioned whether museums can be all things to all people — keepers, interpreters and researchers — and if so, what are the priorities? In her opinion, 'we are currently seeing a resurgence of the idea of museums as primarily research institutes'.

Greg Mackie agreed that the arts sector is characterised by 'an abundance of opportunities and a scarcity of dollars. That said, the glass is more than half full — not half empty.'

Good news and congratulations followed — Greg announced that the new Collections Council of Australia will be based here at the State Library of SA, and the Rann Government's \$1 million per year of new funding for facilities maintenance for Arts. He applauded Ian Cook's achievements at Artlab, which has been provided with a mere \$9,000 increase in 'funding for inflation; over the last decade, Tim Flannery for SA Museum's recent successes with Australian Research Council funding, and praised Ron

Radford — whose 'drive and vision has made the collection at AGSA one of the most significant state collections in the country'.

Greg also announced that an Arts SA restructure early in 2005 will include 'creation of a cultural heritage section to provide strategic policy advice to government in relation to Arts SA-funded collecting institutions — AGSA, SLSA and Public Libraries, SAM, HTSA, Carrick Hill and ArtLab.

Tim Flannery offered research and public engagement as the key elements for ensuring the future success and survival of museums. He told one of his favourite stories. The 'scrotum humanum' was an object found in the fifteenth century, believed to be the 'petrified private parts of a giant' and subsequently lost (perhaps as a result of some kind of cost-cutting exercise) — but a surviving drawing identified the curiosity as a dinosaur fossil. 'Megalosaur' became the first real name for a dinosaur.

So what did this have to do with our theme? Knowledge and subsequent interpretation of objects and collections change over time — success hinges on distinguishing the difference between tools and fetishes and

interpreting them successfully.

In the nineteenth century exploration of unknown lands captured people's imaginations, and in the twentieth century museums were our windows to the world, a monopoly that has been eroded by film, television documentaries and books.

So how will museums inspire people in the future? Tim suggested microbiology or the study of complex ecosystems will be the new frontier. And we don't want our museums to be full of fetishes (or curiosities) and few tools which can be used to instruct and build knowledge.

Although Tim pointed out the need to successfully integrate research (back of house) with public programs and exhibitions (front of house), his approach of enticing sponsors and other funding bodies with outstanding research may be putting all the eggs (or tools) in one basket.

Lyn Leader Elliott reminded us that without people museums can't survive. People visiting a museum are looking for stories. Lyn believes local, smaller museums do this very well because they have a large volunteer contingent working front-of-house. Volunteers are successful in engaging with people because they like the work they do, and

The day is coming when a single carrot,
freshly observed, will set off a revolution.

PAUL CEZANNE

ART DIRECTION CREATIVE 

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communicate their enthusiasm and passion for their museum and local history to visitors.

Lyn pointed out that volunteers are a precious resource and should be looked after and provided with quality training. Museums should also fund positions devoted to visitor research, which she suggested is a key ingredient for success. How do we make connections with people with a high level of interest who will travel long distances to visit, as well as those moderately interested, and locals?

Although he spoke first, Ian Cook's parting advice for the whole sector was a useful summary. He argued more resources for the cultural heritage sector can be gained from stronger government commitment, fees for services to supplement budgets, federal grants, sponsorship and gifts, and savings through more efficient use of existing funds.

Priorities, according to Ian, should be: 'audience engagement, developing community relationships, contributing to social issues and environmental sustainability'.

It was refreshing to hear him refer to key assets of museums as being collections and staff and the need to provide greater opportunity for more people to

interact with the collections. 'What is needed is a grand plan, a plan to capture the imagination of the community and our political masters.'

Ian's three-point plan for moving the museum sector forward over the next decade:

- Examination of the collecting sector's role with respect to education, community services, research, tourism and the SA economy,
- Articulation of a 'whole of collections' approach to information management, collections care and conservation, and
- Examination of the feasibility of a purpose-built, eco-friendly home for the South Australia Collection not currently on display on North Terrace and elsewhere.

It is time for Museums Australia, Arts SA and the History Trust of SA to lead the way for more discussion, and develop strategies to provide opportunities for the small and large institutions to participate, and not just those that already receive state government funding. 'The Panel' is a good start to this process.

MARIANNE NORMAN, MANAGER,
BAY DISCOVERY CENTRE
MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA SA BRANCH
COMMITTEE MEMBER



Figurines depicting the major characters in the Tichborne Trial, in the collection of the Museum of the Riverina
Courtesy of Museum of the Riverina

TICHBORNE TRIAL EXHIBITION UPDATE

A note at the end of an article in the November 2004 issue of *MAM*, on Hampshire Museum Service's *Milestones* social history museum, announced the development of an exhibition on the Tichborne Trial, one of the most celebrated legal cases in nineteenth-century Britain. The defendant, Arthur Orton, a Wagga butcher, claimed to be the long-lost Sir Roger Tichborne, heir to the family fortune, but was exposed as an impostor and gaoled.

Alastair Penfold of Hampshire Museum Service has written to MAM about progress on the exhibition's development:

'We are making good progress on the development of the storyboard for our exhibition and are constantly amazed by the wealth of material dispersed throughout public and private collections in Great Britain and Australia on the subject. The case has always remained in the public

consciousness in Hampshire and obviously still strikes a chord further afield. We are hoping to develop a virtual version of the exhibition which could in due course receive material from all sources, which would be a good way of incorporating the Australian collections.'

Michelle Maddison, Curator at the Museum of the Riverina, reports:

'The Museum of the Riverina and Wagga Wagga City Council Library (Local Studies Library) both hold significant collections of material related to the Claimant and the Trial, and have been in touch with our colleagues in the Hampshire Museum Service. We are sending them a joint submission outlining all material held by both institutions. This will include a photograph of the painting of the trial, on display in the historic Council Chambers in Wagga Wagga.'



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AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS TO MA BRANCH HEADS

Two MA State Branch heads have received awards in the Australia Day honours list.

Dr Helen Light, President of MA Victoria, received an AM 'For service to the community as Director of the Jewish Museum of Australia, particularly through support for significant exhibitions and community-based programs.'

Chris Tassell, President of MA's Tasmanian Branch, also received an AM 'For service to the arts and cultural development as Director of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, to regional museums and to heritage preservation.'

SITES OF COMMUNICATION2

Friday 18 March 2005 • Saturday 19 March 2005

Venue: Domain Theatre, Level 3, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Museums are sites of communication, and communication is about fostering dialogue. Good communication can be the basis of community itself. At a time when the boundaries between the museum and the real world appear to be lessening, this symposium investigates the art museum's educative, ethical and aesthetic responsibilities in the society of public culture. Given the shift from an industrial/modernist age to a postmodern age of mass media and electronic information, how do we make museums matter?

Key debates revolve around the museum dedicated to the

viewer's space as opposed to the museum dedicated to the object's space. Can an object exist without a living mind to recreate it through fully imaginative participation? And what role does language play in this?

Museum educators aspire to be audience specialists, as do teachers, students and critics. On the other side are the artists, conservators, connoisseurs and curators, who are object-specialists. Both sides have vested interests in the art experience. Lying between them, dividing or uniting them, is language on-site and on-line.

This two-day symposium

program brings together experts, researchers and panel facilitators to discuss how best to stage that dialogue and meet audiences halfway.

This is the second in the series of symposia. The first Art Museums: Sites of Communication was collaboratively presented by the National Gallery of Australia and the National Portrait Gallery, in March 2003.

Registration Fees:

\$250 Full

\$195 AGS members and early bird registrations (by 18 February 2005)

\$200 Concession

\$100 Full-time student

COMING IN MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE



MAY 2005 → Museums bridging cultures → → → AUGUST 2005 → Politics and positioning

Department of Museum Studies

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For further information or to place an order, please contact:

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University of
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RISK MANAGEMENT ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE ACCESS TO ANU'S CLASSICS MUSEUM

LINDA YOUNG

The theft on 8 December 2004 of antiquities from the Australian National University Classics Museum points to one of the most difficult cruxes of modern museum operations: the need to preserve collections but also to make them accessible.

Reporting and opinion have focused on the single issue of the security of valuable objects, with little recognition that further interests might motivate the Museum in everyday practice.

The Classics Museum was established in 1962 as a teaching aid in the study of the ancient Mediterranean world. It now comprises some 600 objects, including loans from government and private collectors.

Curator Dr Elizabeth Minchin is responsible for nearly all aspects of collection management, though without any regular budget or assistance. She and her colleagues also make the Museum available to schools and other interested groups (such as my Museology students at the University of Canberra), thanks more to commitment to the ideals of museums than because they are resourced to do so.

In consequence, a wide range of Canberrans has enjoyed the benefit of seeing and, in some circumstances, handling genuine ancient artefacts — a wonderful service not only to ANU students but to the larger community. Thus rises the crunch of security versus accessibility.

As the International Council of Museums definition states, the function of museums is to collect, conserve, study, display and interpret collections to the public. A collection that is not researched and exhibited is merely a hoard. Hence universities are among the

original keepers of museums.

In fact, having begun in 1683 with Elias Ashmole's bequest to Oxford, the Ashmolean today advertises itself as Britain's oldest public museum. Universities in this tradition were institutions with the expertise and longevity to maintain museums, which made them attractive to donors seeking enduring homes for their treasures.

By the nineteenth century it seemed natural that a university should have a classics museum. The colonial Australian universities acquired important donations of Roman and Greek items, long before ancient Australia was considered fit for archaeology. ANU taught Classics, and therefore it required a museum. It has been mounted in secure cabinets in the foyer of the A. D. Hope Building for nearly thirty years.

In accord with basic standards of collections management, the objects are fully catalogued and photographed, which enabled prompt identification of the stolen items, and the wherewithal to circulate descriptions to police agencies.

Security has, to date, comprised good housekeeping, a well-inhabited space and security staff walk-throughs. Should there have been more and higher security?

A risk management process suggests the following: the highest probability risks at the Classics Museum would be accidental damage when handling; followed by accidental damage by knocking over a display case; probably followed by vandalism, theft, flood and fire. The first two would be rare in a professional museum because visitors are not permitted to get so close to the collection, while the remainder

are risks even in the best-run museums.

At the Classics Museum, the likelihood of all the risks would have to be low to medium. The consequences, however, are grave: from damage to destruction.

The obvious way to reduce the risks are constantly addressed: handling is limited to supervised students with knowledge of the objects; solid cases offer protection against most impacts; the presence of staff and students moving through the A. D. Hope Building foyer limits opportunity for malice, and so forth.

But as even the top museums in the world know, it is nearly impossible to protect against a determined thief. Deterrents or means of slowing down a would-be thief include

physical barriers, surveillance systems and limited access.

Some combination of these should be introduced to the Classics Museum, though with an equal regard to continued access for students and to the Canberra community.

Operating a museum may not be perceived as core university business these days. But having joined the tradition of university museums, ANU has a responsibility not only to safeguard but also to display its collections.

This article was first published in the Canberra Times, 27 December 2004.

LINDA YOUNG
CULTURAL HERITAGE
MANAGEMENT
UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

Spot the difference



In art production, collection, trade and conservation, authenticity is a concern that reaches from the studio to the courtroom. Artists, curators, collectors, conservators, police, lawyers, and insurance providers can all be engaged in issues relating to authentication.

Offered by Melbourne University Private, in conjunction with the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, the **Graduate Certificate in Art Authentication** provides participants with an understanding of the rigorous, analytical interdisciplinary approach and the broad skill base that are needed to deal with issues of authentication and art fraud.

Applications close Friday 1 April, 2005

For further information contact Sally Williams
Phone (03) 9810 3146; email s.williams@muprivate.edu.au
www.muprivate.edu.au/artauth



CAROL SCOTT

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FEBRUARY 2005

TSUNAMI

Before the old year had finished, we had another startling reminder of the immense power of a natural catastrophe when the tsunami hit the islands and coastal countries of southern Asia.

The first stage of the disaster relief has been a humanitarian one, focusing on gauging the number and identity of the missing, recovering and repatriating the bodies of the dead and ministering to the needs of the living.

The next stage will be the massive task of rebuilding communities. During this phase, the museum community in Australia can assist our neighbours in affected countries to retrieve material heritage, collect anew the intangible heritage of the region and build the new museums of the future.

When I sent out the first bulletin of the year on 7 January, I received numerous offers of 'on the ground' assistance from museum workers throughout the country willing to travel to tsunami-affected areas and begin the work. This heartfelt response from the museum community is indicative of the warm relationship which exists throughout our sector worldwide.

The disaster has also been the impetus to focus on a co-ordinated and co-operative approach to the relief effort. Museums Australia initiated and organised a teleconference on 17 January that brought together representatives from organisations across the cultural and heritage sector including ICOMOS*, ALIA*, AICCM*, ACNT*, CAMD*, FAHS*, NSW Heritage, RAIA* and AIMA* to share information and to develop a strategic approach to assist cultural re-building in the affected areas of the region.

- * ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites)
- * ALIA (Australian Library and Information Service)
- * AICCM (Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials)
- * ACNT (Australian Council of National Trusts)
- * CAMD (Council of Australian Museum Directors)
- * FAHS (Federation of Australian Historical Societies)
- * NSW Heritage
- * RAIA (Royal Australian Institute of Architects)
- * AIMA (Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeologists)

NATIONAL MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE 30 APRIL-4 MAY 2005

Politics and Positioning promises to be an exceptional event. Pre-conference tours have been arranged for 30 April and on Sunday 1 May the popular remote and regional stream begins.

The next three days feature the sub-themes of *Challenges, Negotiation and Transformation*. On Monday, we examine current issues facing leadership, changing relationships with audiences, the impact of technology and interpreting history. Negotiated positions will be the subject of Tuesday's sessions when issues of repatriation, custodianship of material culture and the new Collections Council of Australia take centre stage during the plenary.

Transformation is the theme of the final day, when the contributions that museums are making to the knowledge and creative economies, community identity and environmental education are featured.

The conference has been planned by the local MA committee chaired by Rebekah Schulz (MA NSW President) and an energetic team comprising Susan Sedgwick, Annie Campbell, Elissa Blair, Stacey Allen, Bliss Jensen, Serena Mainwaring, Rebecca Pinchin and Bill Storer and is generously sponsored by the Powerhouse Museum and the ABC.

This is an event that you don't want to miss!

NEW LOOK MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA WEBSITE

The New Year will bring new services and new directions to the MA membership.

You will soon see a refreshed website featuring better navigation, improved architecture, more resources and a 'members-only' section. One of the most important documents that will be loaded onto this new website will be our policy *Continuous Cultures, On-going Responsibilities*. CCOR provides guidelines for the conduct of museums and galleries in relation to indigenous cultural material and, along with our policy on *Sustainable Practices*, reflects the commitment and effort on behalf of the Association to these key issues over the last four years.

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MA GALA EVENT WILL RECOGNISE MAPDA 05 WINNERS

The Museums Australia Publication Design Award's increasing local popularity and international appeal will continue to stimulate friendly competition and is anticipated to draw a record number of entries this year.

This year's Museums Australia Publication Design Award (MAPDA) will be held in conjunction with the 2005 MA conference in Sydney from 1-4 May. The awards presentation ceremony will be the highlight of a special gala event to recognise excellence in a broad spectrum of industry design disciplines.

The event, hosted at the National Maritime Museum, will generate a unique creative environment where leading designers, who understand the needs of the cultural sector, will intermingle with MAPDA sponsors, finalists, MA conference delegates and invited guests.

The MA National Conference and trade exhibition will be held at the Powerhouse Museum with parallel sessions occurring at the ABC studios next door. An exhibition of notable MAPDA entries will also create a fascinating focal point for delegates at the Powerhouse throughout the conference and trade exhibition's duration.

The Museums Australia Publication Design Awards annually showcases the breadth of design talent across Australia and beyond. Involvement provides a wonderful opportunity to learn about and contribute to the diversity and vibrancy of the cultural sector and to view what is happening in our major and regional cultural institutions.

'A well designed catalogue,

poster or education kit is a powerful marketing tool for any organisation,' comments Jude Savage, the newly appointed MAPDA chairperson. 'I am delighted to be Chair of MAPDA 2005 and look forward to building on the success of previous awards to make the MA Publication Design Awards a highlight of the Museums Australia National Conference in Sydney.'

'Good graphic and exhibition design is something of a passion for me,' Jude Savage continues. 'As Head of Travelling Exhibitions at the Australian War Memorial, it is always a key creative challenge to find designers who have sensitivity to, and empathy for cultural material and collections, whether it is a painting by a leading Australian artist, a relic from the battlefields in France or an historical photograph.'

'The evening's highlight will undoubtedly be the announcement of winners,' says Bruce Brown, of Mental Media, a regular MAPDA sponsor. 'Here, MAPDA recipients will take centre stage to receive their award from each category's sponsor. The MAPDA presentation ceremony will distinguish each of the awards via a Mental Media-produced audiovisual of a quality comparable with the merit of our contemporaries whose design work will be recognised that evening.'

Award classifications embrace excellence in exhibition and collection catalogues, newsletter and magazine originality, as well as innovation in book

and corporate publication. There are also awards for outstanding multimedia published on CD and DVD or on a website in addition to accomplishments in traditional print, from invitations, posters and calendars to promotional publications, media kits and educational material.

A full list of award categories, entry fees and submission deadlines will be available on the Museums Australia website [www.museumsaustralia.org.au] for those of you who will take up this year's MAPDA challenge.

From across this broad spectrum of category-winning publications, judges also honour the 'Best in Show', the MAPDA overall award for excellence.

This award programme could not continue to succeed without the support of our MAPDA sponsors. The MAPDA committee thank and acknowledge their invaluable support and involvement. If your organisation would like details of the many benefits of becoming a MAPDA sponsor contact Jude Savage, the Museums Australia Publications Design Awards Committee chairperson.

Further information for participants can be accessed on the Museums Australia Internet site: www.museumsaustralia.org.au (Select 'Programs' from the menu), or by contacting the MAPDA awards committee chairperson Jude Savage at the Australian War Memorial.
T: 02 6243 4574
F: 02 6243 4582
E: jude.savage@awm.gov.au. Jude will also welcome enquiries from would be MAPDA sponsors interested in aligning their organisation with achievement in design and communication.

MEGAN CROESE

Batik and Kris: Duality of the Javanese Cosmos: Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville. Open from September to November 2004.

The significance of textiles in Indonesian culture is well recognised. Extending beyond the mere provision of attire, they 'speak with cloth' to identify the ethnic background of the wearer, define social status and play a leading role in ceremonies marking rites of passage. In many cases, for both the creator and the wearer, the cloths themselves have a spiritual dimension. Examination of the iconography demonstrates historical and trading links between the peoples of the archipelago and the world beyond, recently exemplified in Australia by the National Gallery of Australia's 2003 exhibition *Sari to Sarong: Five hundred years of Indian and Indonesian textile exchange*.

In what I believe to be an Australian first, *Batik and Kris: Duality of the Javanese Cosmos* brings the focus to one island, Java, and one textile technique, batik. The majority of works for this exhibition was sourced from James Cook University's collection, supplemented by private collections. In melding the archetypal masculine element, the ceremonial dagger or kris, with the feminine cloth, curator Maria Wronska-Friend develops a cogent image of the manner in which the Javanese people interpret their universe as one where opposite forces interact to produce a harmonious resolution.

The generous spaces and high ceilings of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery in Townsville provide an ideal venue to display textiles, and to create the chapters of a visual discourse



Courtesy of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery

for a delight both to the eye and the intellect.

A huge ceremonial skirt cloth with gold embellishment greets the visitor on entry, and an equally dramatic wall of batiks carrying the broken dagger design (*parang rusak*) serves as an introduction. These cloths encapsulate the importance of the courts of central Java in the development of batik designs and the spiritual power with which both they and the wearer are imbued during court and public rituals. Nearby are the wedding batiks, and the intriguing patchwork-design skirt cloth, thought to have had its origins in the priestly Buddhist caste of old Java.

It is appropriate that the several fine examples of kris with their elaborate scabbards are presented in association with the court attire of which they form an inseparable part. The differing shapes, made to match the temperament of the owner, are shown, plus a tantalising taste of the more-than-a-hundred designs known to appear on blades. Of particular interest is the weapon loaned by the Museum and Gallery of the Northern Territory, which depicts *wayang*

figures, well known from Javanese shadow puppetry. Symbolising wisdom and accumulated life experience, they also adorn one of the batiks worn by senior wedding guests. Had more kris been available, the display would have been enriched, but I understand they were difficult to source from Australian collections.

The group of sarongs from the north coast of Java is eye-catching. Their clever mounting on circular stands allows the sarong to be viewed almost as it would be worn. In this group, the intermingling of cultures inherent in coastal regions becomes apparent. The colours move from the blues, whites and browns of central Java to the bright multi-hued palette favoured by descendants of both Chinese and Euro-Asian communities. Flowers, foliage, birds and butterflies predominate, replacing the more geometric and stylised motifs of Surakarta and Yogyakarta. Further departing from the central Javanese tradition, several of sarongs bear their maker's signature. In the batiks from the Cirebon court, we see the green of Islam introduced to the colour

scheme and the dynamic reds and blues of the Chinese cloud motif so emblematic this area.

The phoenix, with its Chinese connotation of rebirth, is the unifying feature of another group of works: altar cloths, silk shawls, and a handwoven shoulder cloth from Tuban. Another of the silks carrying the phoenix design is one of several textiles produced in the late twentieth century, for an exciting feature of the exhibition is its portrayal of batik as a living tradition. Alongside the older cloths we are shown those produced for a sophisticated contemporary market. Supporting photographs give vibrant depictions of recent ceremonies, which serve to reinforce the significance of batik to today's Javanese.

A selection of lino block prints by Adelaide artist Colleen Morrow provides a coda to the exhibition. These works reprise many of the motifs represented in the textiles, and show them not as wearable art, but reinforcing the central argument of the exhibition, as manifestations of a rich cultural tradition. *Batik and Kris* is the most recent of several collaborations between Maria Wronska-Friend and

Perc Tucker Gallery. We in Townsville are fortunate to have been the beneficiaries of such a stimulating and fruitful partnership.

MEGAN CROESE IS A FREELANCE ARTSWORKER IN TOWNSVILLE, WITH A PARTICULAR INTEREST IN INDONESIAN TEXTILES

JULIAN BICKERSTETH

Conservation of Furniture.
By Shayne Rivers and Nick Umney. Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003.
ISBN: 9-7506-0958-3

Furniture conservation has been a poor cousin in the materials conservation literature, traditionally dominated by paintings and paper, and to a lesser extent textiles and metals. Why this is so is due largely to the craft/trade nature of the practice of furniture conservation. A furniture conservator needs to be a proficient cabinet maker and polisher before he/she can begin training as a conservator, as well as knowledgeable not only in wood, the most common furniture material, but also the diverse other materials with which furniture is constructed or decorated.

As a result, the relevant literature has tended to concentrate on the practical rather than the theory and science. Butterworth's series on conservation and museology has set benchmarks in the field, and this latest long awaited addition to the series is no exception. Written by Shayne Rivers and Nick Umney of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, with contributions by thirty-two other experts, this

mammoth book (805 pages) is quite unlike any other furniture conservation reference book.

Previous books have tended to prescribe the best way of doing things. Here, whilst much practical advice is offered, it is given in the context of a thorough understanding of why the problem occurs, followed by a range of options from which the conservator can choose.

The general form of the book is in four parts, respectively covering history, materials, deterioration and conservation. Given that this is a reference book, navigation is made easy by a well laid-out twelve-page table of contents, a comprehensive index and bibliography at the end of each chapter.

'History' covers furniture from the earliest times to the twentieth century. 'Materials' covers wood, upholstery (including leather, cane, synthetics), coatings, adhesives and other furniture components such as lacquer, ivory, bone, tortoiseshell, metal, gold leaf, ceramics, glass and colorants. 'Deterioration' covers the same ground in the context of a review of the effects of the environment. Much useful information is provided on how and why each type of material deteriorates. The discussion on the effects of light, heat, relative humidity and pollutants on plastic furniture is particularly enlightening, given this type of furniture has been all but bypassed in the current literature.

'Conservation' begins by setting the process in context, working through ethics, examination, documentation, studio organisation, and health and safety — an issue now at the forefront of all conservation treatment decisions. As noted, rather than providing prescriptive solutions, the

individual chapters present *principles* to guide treatments — an intelligent and respectful approach to practitioners' existing skills.

Furniture conservation tends to divide into two areas, the structure (where cabinet making skills may apply) and the surface finish (where polishing skills apply). The latter is broadened in this book to 'Conserving transparent coatings on wood', which allows for discussion of all types of oil, wax, shellac and some modern finishes. The final chapters cover traditional gilding and other materials, covering the obvious as well as the more obscure but still useful, from paper labels, *pietre dure* and shagreen to painted furniture.

So what to make of this extraordinarily comprehensive book?

At every level its scholarship stands out, in the comprehensiveness of each chapter's bibliographies, the breadth of the coverage of all forms of furniture (the summary of plastics is outstanding), and the way in which it contextualises furniture conservation within the materials conservation discipline.

I quickly found myself immersed in tables describing the shrinkage properties of representative furniture woods, the frequency of occurrence of various kinds of damage in a sample of two thousand treatments at the V&A, and scanning electron microscopic images of deteriorated surfaces.

On the minor gripe front, I would have left out the furniture history section; it is too general to be of much use, and some of the illustrations are too small and too obscure to be meaningful. I also suspect that most working furniture

conservators will continue to keep their traditional reference books by the bench to check on tried-and-tested ways of solving structural or finish problems. But these are small details when viewed against the quantum leap this book achieves.

For too long furniture conservation has existed on the periphery of mainstream conservation theory and practice. Rivers and Umney place it firmly in the mainstream. This will be the standard reference book for years to come.

JULIAN BICKERSTETH WAS THE FIRST MUSEUM FURNITURE CONSERVATOR IN AUSTRALIA, WHEN HE JOINED THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM IN 1983. HE IS NOW MANAGING DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION SERVICES.

VIV SZEKERES

Leading with Passion: Change Management in the 21st-Century Museum.
By Sherene Suchy. Walnut Creek, CA, Altamira, 2003.
ISBN: 0-7591-0366-6

Sometime after I had agreed to review this book, I came down with a very heavy cold and, making use of the enforced bed rest, I took the opportunity to get stuck into Suchy's *Leading With Passion*. Not a great idea for the sick bed, for it soon became evident that this was going to be one of those 'should read' rather than a 'must read'.

Firstly the subtitle, 'Change Management in the 21st Century Museum' is really quite misleading. For those of you who have lived through the management-speak of

'downsizing', this book is not about the best ways to sack people (which seems to be what is usually implied when work places embark on 'change management'). Furthermore it is not really about museums in the twenty-first century. It is about *art* museums and their directors. If you have aspirations to lead and manage an art museum, then this is the book for you.

Although I had misgivings about some aspects of the book, especially the management-speak, it did make me think. I found I could relate Suchy's case studies to the industry at large and to leadership styles I have known or heard about. I am sure we all know examples of poor leadership, but some management styles create workplaces that range from the mildly dysfunctional to the toxic and even brutal. So I congratulate Suchy for her attempt to analyse and understand the dynamics which create a humane workplace. As we all spend increasing amounts of time at work, it is really heartening to know that there are clear and identifiable behaviours and attitudes in leaders/managers which support and encourage creative people.

The main thrust of the book is an analysis of the changing role of a leader in art museums at a time when the idea of the leader as expert (curator in museum-speak) in a specialist field is in serious decline. The specialist curator is being replaced by managers who can deal with complex organisations that require management and entrepreneurial skills. Suchy employs a mix of interviews, research in the literature on management, and testing models such as Stratified Systems Theory. This is a model that helped some organisations make sense of work relationships through analysing seven levels of complexity.

I am not at all against trying anything that helps us understand ourselves, each other or the task at hand, but at times I was left feeling that the application of common sense to the problem might have had equal success! Suchy concludes that whilst a leader certainly needs 'cognitive capability' (namely, intelligence), the use of 'EQ' 'emotional intelligence' (such as intuition) is probably more useful: a conclusion that feels right to me!

I enjoyed the analysis of the difference gender can make to good leadership. Despite the difficulties that still face women who want to be leaders, Suchy's sample group showed that once a woman was in the position of director, many old work practices gave way to more 'participatory leadership style and cross functional teams'. She quotes one director who believes that women are 'more flexible, better organisers, can show their emotions, are less hierarchical and more pragmatic.' In my experience, another attribute which differentiates women from men (and doesn't just apply to managers) is that most women are able to do more than one thing at a time.

I really liked Suchy's list of attributes which she identifies as essential to good leadership. In addition to intuition she lists self-awareness, trust, taking responsibility for one's own actions, creativity, compassion, appreciating other points of view and forgiveness. I would also add a generous spirit, sense of humour and ability to acknowledge the work of others. But Suchy says she was surprised to find that 'risk-taking' was included by successful leaders as a factor in their success. I'm surprised at her surprise. When I look around at the handful of truly successful museum directors who are leaders of the calibre that this book sets out to find

or to make, they have a well-developed sense of intuition and are prepared to go beyond safe boundaries.

By the time I reached the end of the book I had warmed to it, probably because my cold was better and it confirmed most of my own prejudices and beliefs about what makes a good leader. I am not sure whether *Leading With Passion* would be categorised as a handbook or a guide, but either way, there are some nuggets of solid gold to be found even if you have to delve to find them.

VIV SZEKERES IS THE DIRECTOR OF THE MIGRATION MUSEUM IN ADELAIDE, A POSITION SHE HAS HELD SINCE 1987 AND STILL REGARDS AS A PRIVILEGE

KATE RAVENSWOOD

***The Promise of Cultural Institutions.* By David Carr. AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, 2003. ISBN: 0-7591-0292-9**

The subject of David Carr's *The Promise of Cultural Institutions* is the transformative power implied within the educational *raison d'être* of cultural institutions. This set of essays is devoted to the ontological experience that Carr contends sits at the very core of museums, libraries and other places of cultural enquiry. All of the essays focus on the educational imperative whereby the individual comes into being as it were, as a direct result of the learning experience engendered within cultural spaces. Carr celebrates the 'reflective life' and indeed discusses his own relationship to cultural spaces as one which has assisted him in living a 'life that is more coherent, less isolated: a life with more purpose and less fear...'

This is an author who believes in the capacity of education, via an intimacy with culture, to transfigure human existence. In his discussions of the learning experiences that are possible in cultural institutions the idea of 'becoming' and of moving towards change features prominently and it is the 'promise' of the institution which gives these shifts their experiential form, shape and direction. Carr's homilies to the power of cultural knowledge are declaimed with great passion and eloquence and with a fine understanding of the emancipatory potential of knowledge. And if these themes sound hauntingly familiar to us it is because Carr's 'learner' is a rendition of the nineteenth century Romantic hero writ large.

Romanticism is a much abused term but I use it here in the context of a body of thought which sees the notion of the 'individual' come to the fore. This manifestation of self as a form of independent consciousness is an essential factor for the Romantic sensibility and it can be understood in a variety of ways. Firstly, there is the self as a site of value, as the place where meaning is made and in an increasing chaotic world, the self becomes a repository of knowing. Secondly, there is the sense in which the self illuminates the world and in fact determines it. Overall, Romanticism is marked by awareness that the individual life can be manufactured, contemplated, shaped and performed.

The learner at the centre of *The Promise of Cultural Institutions* bears the stamp of this Romantic individual. For Carr, cultural institutions 'offer deep and implicit opportunities for their users to become different human beings' and thus we see the 'self'

positioned, as in Romanticism, as a site of reinvention. Carr truly believes that through an immersion in culture, via the institutional structure, the individual will forge his or her character, imagine themselves into being and recreate themselves in such a way as to become the heroic protagonist of their own story, or perhaps more accurately, David Carr's story. At the very heart of this we can see the spectre of Ruskin and the notion of the moral redemption of the individual through the union of education and culture.

The thing that concerns me most in Carr's rhetoric is that it is untouched by any sense of the ideologies that motivate cultural institutions. He treats these organisations, and by implication their worth and status within our communities, as a given, almost as though their value is beyond question. Such a tendency towards the universal is not helped by the fact that the text uses terms such as 'great' museums and collections, makes reference to 'masterworks' and describes cultural institutions as 'living cultural trusts'. In fact, so deep is Carr's belief in the institutional structure he makes the quite outrageous claim that the 'mindful experience', one that promotes authenticity and integrity, can only happen in cultural institutions and not in 'television, film, radio, or school'.

I believe that the ideas put forth in *The Promise of Cultural Institutions* are seriously outmoded. This book seeks to reduce the complex relationships between audiences, institutions, access, learning to a simple moral equation—that a mind educated by 'high' culture is free from the tyranny of the ordinary and the everyday. This is bourgeois ideology at its most homogeneous and bland where the aspiring middle classes visit

museums for the acquisition of taste and cultural status. Carr's sympathies would appear to lie with the nineteenth-century idea of cultural institutions as spaces of social regulation and self improvement; spaces that are still and contemplative; spaces that hark back to a less fractured and chaotic self. I hope he is in the minority.

KATE RAVENSWOOD IS HEAD OF ACCESS, EDUCATION AND REGIONAL SERVICES AT THE QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY

GREG MARGINSON

Culture Incorporated: Museums, Artists, and Corporate Sponsorships.
By Mark W. Rectanus.
Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
ISBN: 0-8166-3851-9

'Imagine using the power of the arts to help feed the hungry'. So begins *Culture Incorporated*, a fascinating and detailed critique of the impact of commercial cultural branding.

Photographer Annie Leibowitz collaborates with American Express on a portrait exhibition. Absolut Vodka engages artists for their advertisements. Philip Morris mounts an 'Arts Against Hunger' campaign in partnership with prominent museums. Is it art or public relations, and where is the line that separates the artistic from the corporate? Much existing literature on corporate or arts sponsorship readily accepts and assumes the dominant paradigm of art, sponsorship and marketing. Mark Rectanus, however, argues that these mergers of art, museums, events, festival etc represent today's worldwide privatisation of culture.

The book is in three parts. 'Corporations and Culture: The New Partnerships' argues that global corporations have institutionalised their own cultural politics. Rectanus begins with a detailed review of corporate politics and globalisation via corporate sponsorship examples. He then contextualises them with an overview of the shifts from corporate philanthropy and patronage to contractual sponsorship.

Rectanus pushes the boundaries by examining how corporate architecture and property development influence social policy and public space, particularly where real estate developments integrate cultural programming, the arts once again as the 'feel good' element, or the sharp end marketing ploy. He explores how corporate identity is increasingly linked to artistic creativity and technology in defining the transnational corporation. As a contra-study, Rectanus investigates artist Hans Haacke's installations, which deconstruct the interests embedded in corporate cultural politics by examining links between urban sites, national identity and corporations.

'Culture, Artists and Events' was, for me, the most interesting section of the book. Here Rectanus looks at sponsorships and how they relate to changing definitions of culture as lifestyle and event. He traces the contradictions of the emergence of the corporation as, on the one hand, producer of mass consumer culture and yet, on the other, as a mediator of culture through sponsorship of (usually) high cultural product. A particular focus is the conflation of high and low culture in the everyday environment, made famous by artists like Andy Warhol but increasingly appropriated by corporations like Absolut Vodka.

The framework here is the complex promotional culture

of partnerships between corporations and cultural institutions, leading to 'image transfer' of the values and tastes of the museum, art gallery, orchestra, ballet etc to the corporation. Rectanus exposes the sheer commerce of the exchange, implying but not expressing a twinge of cultured disdain for business.

The phenomenon of multicultural programming also comes under Rectanus's review. He notes its fusion of concepts of ethnicity and cultural identity that integrates identity and culture as part of the sponsorship message. In some cases American ethnic minorities are targetted to build a not so subtle link with particular target groups.

No book of this sort would be complete without examination of the proliferation of event culture, based as it is on corporate sponsorship. Rectanus exposes how eventism plays a central role in the construction of individual and collective experience of cultural institutions' products, and how they are shaped by the corporate interests at stake. He contrasts these activities with the non-sponsored culture of Woodstock and Christo's Wrapped Reichstag in Berlin, where the artist message is untainted by the corporate or sponsorship overtones.

'Museums, Cyberspace, Audiences' focuses on the redefinition of the museum as a privileged yet contested site of culture. It looks at the convergence of the institutional interests of corporations, governments, nonprofit cultural organisations and foundations through an examination of 'the museum', in terms of its politics of space, image politics, and its role in local politics. Not surprisingly, one of the exemplars under scrutiny here is the Guggenheim Museum, and the emergence of its many satellites. The final

chapter updates the issue of cybersponsoring through meta-museums, virtual museums, and corporate cultural politics in cyberspace.

Museums Australia Magazine readers will wonder if there are any Australian examples in the book (the focus is America and Germany). I found only one, scrutinising the National Gallery's 1999 cancellation of the 'Sensation' exhibition from the Brooklyn Museum of Art (featuring the works from the Saatchi Collection and auction houses). Rectanus notes, 'the direct impact of the Brooklyn Museum case in Australia reflects not only the globalisation of the exhibition market itself but, more notably, the concrete effects on local cultural politics and museum practices resulting from global media coverage.' (p.13) He notes that such exhibitions should bring scrutiny to the disquieting links between corporate collectors, auction houses and museums.

Australian galleries, take note?

Except for those entirely unfamiliar with the concepts and language of cultural studies, Rectanus is a stimulating read. The various chapters are illustrated by a variety of examples that serve well to illustrate his points. I found the book is not to be read over a short, intense period of time, but to use as a primer on a myriad of corporate-cultural issues. *Culture Incorporated* has much to offer to the practitioner willing to step back and open up to reflection on the wider cultural implications of museums, culture and sponsorship.

GREG MARGINSON IS A FORMER EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA, MANAGER OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA AND FREELANCE ARTS MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT IN CANBERRA

MICHAEL BARNETT

The James & Mary Emelia Mayne Centre: home of the Art Museum of the University of Queensland.

Questions of the purpose of university art museums in the new century are very much live. Temple, trophy cabinet, or teaching aid – what role do these places serve? When evaluating the recently completed refurbishment of Mayne Hall as a venue for the University of Queensland's art museum, this question lies at the heart of the relation between architecture and fitness for purpose.

Design suitability has emerged as a critical issue in commentary on the dynamism of museum building over the past twenty years. In the icon-building concept epitomised by the Bilbao Guggenheim, visual arts museums have evolved into signature structures 'thematising' their function through dramatic architectural articulation and spatial character.

Over the same period, the museum function of providing a suitable environment for the housing of and engagement with works of art has had to encompass the conceptual as well as aesthetic extension of the presence of art. Depending on the nature of the art to be shown, the nature of the display space has become a critical element, whether as a white cube or as an evocation of a particular propositional setting. In this sense, the nature of an artist's practice is strengthened by authentically presenting the experience of wall works, sculpture or interactive installation.

Given the interpretive imperative and the elision between iconic modern architectural space and works of art, the issue of appropriately reusing an

existing, architecturally-explicit structure becomes a concern. The transformation of the thirty-year-old Mayne Hall into the James & Mary Emelia Mayne Centre provides a fascinating case study of the essential dilemma that shadows building adaptation.

Previously hidden in rudimentary, out-of-the-way facilities and presented at the Customs House in downtown Brisbane, the University Art Museum used to feel rather distant from students and somewhat dissociated from the rest of the institution.

Mayne Hall, on the other hand, was designed by Robin Gibson in the 1970s as a Miesian modernist composition to augment the University's formal frontage as a venue for special occasions and performances. The magnificent coloured glass window by Nevil Matthews added a grandeur to the ritual uses of the building as a showcase of the University.

Now converted to function as a gallery, the rigorous abstract styling of the architecture instead foregrounds the University's collection. Here it handsomely acknowledges the generosity of University Art Museum donors (UQ holds the second biggest art collection in the state, with important colonial, modern and Asian collections). It also commemorates the largesse of the Mayne siblings, who in part provided for the 1927 purchase of UQ's St Lucia site.

The proximity to students and the expansion of specialised exhibition space also builds the Museum's educational potential, not only for students of the visual arts, but also of architecture. As an object lesson in respectful transformation, the Mayne Centre provides an exemplar of the adaptive reuse of an existing building.

Australia's Burra Charter provides guidelines for the

redevelopment of buildings of cultural significance, recommending that interventions remain distinct from existing fabric, and if possible, be reversible. The aim of this approach is to preserve a sense of the original, though this can be difficult when the requirements of the new use are conceptually opposite to those of the previous.

The original Mayne Hall was a robust concrete, steel and glass shell, housing a clean volume designed for acoustic excellence. It had a static visual geometry and a single focus. Now the building has been totally reconfigured as an arrangement of internal walls with a quite different visual geometry serving a mobile audience. Designer Hamilton Wilson's cool and considered intervention is set like a giant piece of furniture within the original volume. It delivers restrained and pragmatic management of lighting, circulation and environmental conditions in a respectful solution that sensitively serves the diverse requirements of the University.

In toto, the Mayne Centre straddles the disparate purposes of temple, trophy cabinet and teaching aid with a solution that is appropriate to the tenor of the University collections while providing the additional flexibility to exhibit works of a variety styles and different modes of viewer engagement.

MICHAEL BARNETT IS SENIOR PROJECT OFFICER, BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT, AT THE QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY.

RACHEL FAGGETTER

Gardenesque: A Celebration of Australian Gardening.

State Library of Victoria. Open October 2004–February 2005.

In its 150th year, and like a cuckoo clearing the nest of its rivals, the wonderful State Library of Victoria spreads over the whole city block it once shared with the Art Gallery and Museum. Now it has room to move, the Library is undertaking serious exhibitions. The large collection of portraits and landscapes hangs permanently in the Cowen Gallery, while a space is set aside for temporary exhibitions, such as the recent 150-year survey of cartoons from *The Age*.

Now gardening, our most popular outdoor activity, takes its turn. The nation's all-time bestseller is the *Yates Garden Guide*, published since 1895.

Gardenesque: A Celebration of Australian Gardening was originally envisaged by Suzanne Hunt to present the history of immigrant/settler gardening in Australia. Garden historian Richard Aitken took up the challenge to curate the exhibition and write a companion book-cum-catalogue. He had access to the Library's books, journals, manuscripts, diaries, plans, photographs, commercial ephemera and art works from the Garden History Archive.

Aitken's approach is chronological, organised thematically into decades from the 1800s. He presents the evolving cultural politics of gardening under such titles as 'Adapting to the Antipodes 1820s-1830s', or 'Velvet Lawn 1940s-1950s'. Some ideas recur through the decades, as with gender differences in practical gardening: vegetable virility in the backyard, floral femininity in the front, though my Italian neighbours subvert this by growing their basil and tomatoes

in the front in the north sun. Importing and acclimatising foreign plants is a fascinating and never-ending story.

The first decade 1800s-1810s is called 'European Imagination', but this could well be the title of the whole exhibition. While there have always been people who delight in the discovery and celebration of Australian flora and foster 'native' gardens, in general our imagination has remained consistently derivative and suburban. We were unable to see, let alone understand, our new landscape and once it was obliterated, all we could think of were ordered lawns, shrubs and flowerbeds. After a short heady burst of 'Living in the Australian Environment 1960s-1970s', we reverted to the whitefella dreaming of cottage gardens and white picket fences.

But coming to grips with the water crisis may be the last gasp of European gardening. Aitken suggests the emergence of a Republican garden, and invites us to imagine what it could be. Will we pull down the fences and create new landscapes for water, for wildlife and for each other? Will we acknowledge that our 200 years of gardening is set in a landscape culturally constructed by 50,000 years of Aboriginal land management, even if we cannot not yet call it gardening?

While the exhibition has many wonderful things to look at, important ideas to discuss and much intellectual energy, it is let down by the design and presentation. At this point let me play the part of visitor advocate.

The show needs good orientation and a clear circulation pattern, especially for its chronological arrangement. The volunteer guides complain that many visitors go 'the wrong way'.

The wall texts need to be carefully placed and readable. A good deal of trouble went to

explaining and justifying the cute title 'Gardenesque', but people missed it because the introductory text was badly placed.

The Library must acknowledge that designing a readable caption at a comfortable height for people standing up is a specialised art. So is writing a label visitors want to read!

And lighting is critical. Yes, precious treasures must be protected, but you need to see them. Modern lighting technology offers many options.

While the excellent book of the exhibition is provided, there is nowhere comfortable to read it. Intense looking at an exhibition is tiring and it's good to sit down and reflect.

The British Library won a recent Museum of the Year award for *Turning the Pages*, a multi-media exhibition of their most precious treasures. Books such as the Lindisfarne

Gospel are presented in glass cases specially designed for leaning on. You can examine the books at very close range, and they are well lit. Thanks to digitisation, they are no longer just objects to be gazed at, but texts with which to engage: turn the pages, use the zoom, listen to a reading in the original language. Visit from your own computer at www.bl.uk/collections.

Designing and interpreting an exhibition demands specialist skills, and if libraries are going to stage exhibitions, they need to acknowledge this and be more courageous and creative about presentation. Then their exhibitions may match their other state-of-the-art achievements.

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



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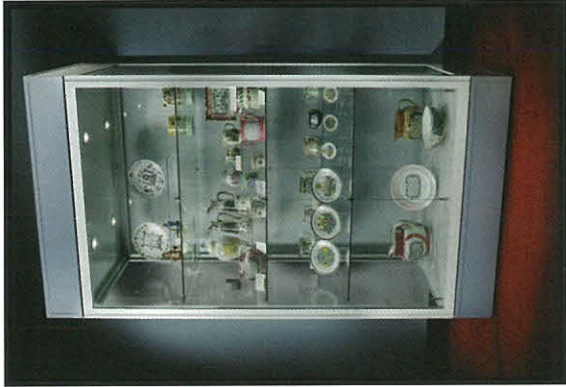
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