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MAGAZINE

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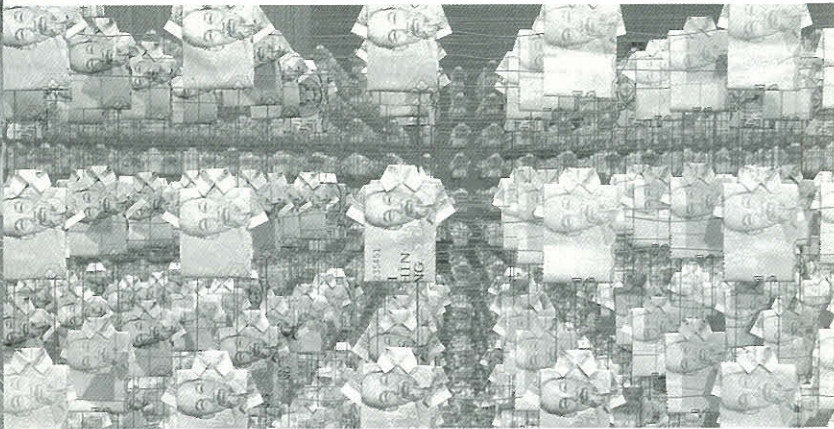
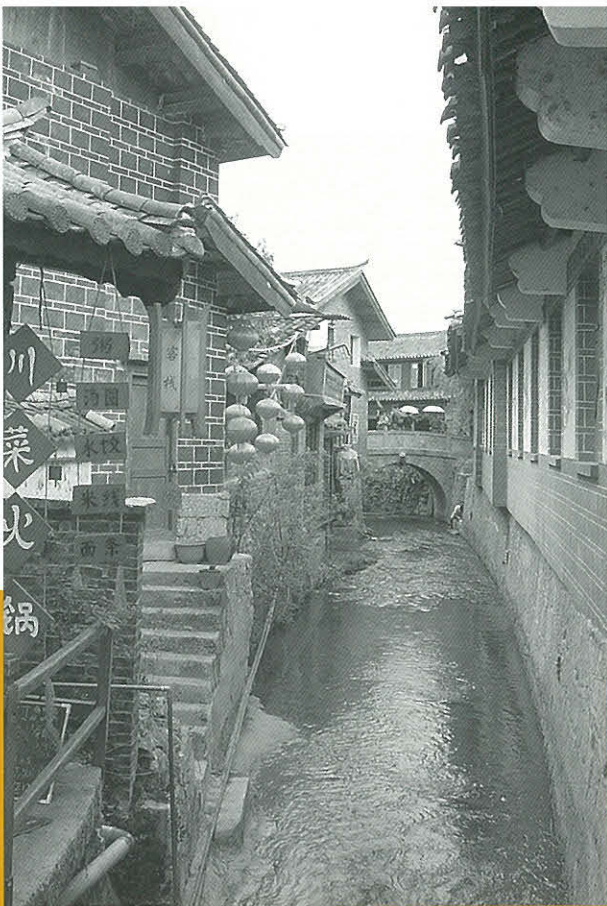
**Roslyn Russell**, Managing Editor



#### COVER IMAGE:

A one-handled kylix is perhaps the most precious vessel of all those on display in *Greek treasures: from the Benaki Museum in Athens*, now at the Powerhouse Museum, one of the venues for the Museums Australia annual conference in May. Made from hammered gold sheets, the kylix is decorated with repoussé, with three dogs running around the body of the vessel.

Gold kylix (cup), possibly from Dendra, Greece, late 15th century BC.  
© Benaki Museum, Athens.



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## FROM THE EDITOR

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, museums and galleries in Australia recorded 31 million admissions in 2003–04. It is not surprising, therefore, that politicians and others concerned with economic development, particularly in tourism, reach for a museum-driven solution to what they perceive as flagging visitor numbers to a town, city, state or territory.

The most recent manifestation of a tendency to demand that the museum sector tailor its offerings to boost visitor numbers is a call by the ACT's shadow minister for the arts for 'more blockbuster exhibitions in Canberra to attract visitors' (*Canberra Times*, 16 July 2005).

The appeal of the blockbuster for such people is obvious. Special hotel packages bring visitors from out of town; parking areas are full of cars with interstate plates; restaurants and cafes are full; and colourful banners flaunt the latest cultural offering. It is heady stuff and, in common with other things that go to the head, it can become addictive.

At the Museums Australia annual conference in May, museum consultant Kylie Winkworth reminded us that at the core of our mission are our collections. A primary focus for museums and galleries such as that recommended by tourism supremos, to display temporary exhibitions of 'exciting' and high-profile works that produce a 'wow' factor — especially if they can deploy the words 'European', 'Masters', 'Impressionists' or 'Monet' — means that permanent collections are, by implication,

relegated to a lesser status. Overwhelmed by the blockbuster juggernaut, they receive less attention in terms of curators' research time, conservators' treatments, and public programs' promotion, to mention only three areas where scarce resources must be redeployed to service the behemoth.

Craddock Morton, Director of the National Museum of Australia, rose to the challenge of articulating the Museum's position on this issue:

'It is not a high priority for us to have an unending series of blockbuster exhibitions in Canberra from overseas. Of greater importance to us is developing a range of small and medium-sized exhibitions which we can show not only in Canberra, but in rural and regional Australia.'

The National Gallery of Australia is currently exhibiting the work of finalists in the National Sculpture Prize (see p. 5). This exciting and engaging exhibition of the work of Australian sculptors has already seen increased attendance at the Gallery. It is not going to pull in the usual blockbuster punters who will drive down from Sydney especially, and return with a carrier bag printed with 'big ticket' names from an art encyclopedia or a detail of 'Waterlilies', but if current trends are maintained, it will delight and challenge an appreciative audience whose horizons will be broadened by their exposure to the best of Australian sculpture this year.

ROSLYN RUSSELL,  
MANAGING EDITOR

## ARTEFACTS

## FRESH FIELDS FOR NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

The National Portrait Gallery will relocate to a prize 'paddock' in Canberra's Parliamentary Triangle, between the High Court and Questacon, further bolstering Lake Burley Griffin's south shore cultural credentials.

With an estimated construction budget of more than \$50 million, registrations of interest are being called for internationally in the search for an architect to design the gallery.

Director of the National Portrait Gallery, Andrew Sayers, said the project would be built in an 'appropriate scale' and in keeping with 'the natural beauty of Canberra, its distinctive light and landscape setting'.

The gallery has outgrown its existing home at Old Parliament House, which can only show about 130 portraits from its collection of more than 800, compared to the new gallery which will show up to 500 works.

## DINOSAUR FIND GIVES FARMER NEW HOBBY

When Queensland grazier David Elliot happened upon an unusual and incredibly old jumble of bones while mustering sheep on his Winton property six years ago, he found more than he bargained for.

Rather than standard pastoral remains, Mr Elliot had discovered something of a far larger scale: Australia's biggest site for dinosaur bones, more than ninety million years old.

Last year, over a period of only four weeks, more than eighty mostly intact dinosaur bones were uncovered on Mr Elliot's property by the Queensland Museum. The find included the thirty-metre 'Elliot', the best remains of a giant Cretaceous sauropod ever found in Australia.

Queensland Museum palaeontologist Scott Hocknull said that, despite the museum commencing excavations four years ago, the site was still a largely untapped dinosaur 'lucky dip' of international significance.

## CATE PLAYS MATE

Cate Blanchett recently flew the flag for country and cobber at the Venice Biennale, opening proceedings at the Australian Pavilion for friend and Australian representative, artist Ricky Swallow.

*The Art Newspaper* reports the event was particularly touching by way of 'Ms Blanchett's evident nervousness as she delivered her heartfelt and eloquent praise of Swallow's intricate wooden carvings, proving that acting is considerably less stressful than saying what you think'.

Admiration for Swallow's collection was also reported from the modern master of macabre, Damien Hirst. It seems a posse from Hirst's office was sent on assignment to perform a 'reconnaissance mission', paying particular attention to a seated carved skeleton entitled *The exact dimensions of staying behind*.

## ATTEMPT TO PREVENT RETURN OF INDIGENOUS ARTEFACTS TO BRITISH MUSEUM FAILS

IAN McSHANE

The attempt by Dja Dja Wurrung elders to prevent the return of artefacts on loan to Museum Victoria, to the British Museum and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew ended with the handing down of a judgement in the Federal Court of Australia on 20 May 2005.

The artefacts were two bark etchings, dating from around 1854 and originating from Dja Dja Wurrung Country in the area around Boort, and a ceremonial emu figure made from river redgum and decorated with red and white ochres. The items had been displayed in an exhibition entitled *Etched On Bark — 1854 Kulin Barks from Northern Victoria* between March and June 2004.

Action to prevent return of the items began with an emergency declaration under provisions of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* by Rodney Carter, a Dja Dja Wurrung elder and Inspector under the Act, acting on behalf of Dja Dja Wurrung and Jupagalk representatives. The declaration was intended to 'protect and preserve the three cultural heritage objects from further threats of injury and desecration' by their removal to the British Museum without the written consent of the owners. The declaration directed the Victorian government and Museum Victoria to negotiate with the traditional owners about the future location of the objects.

The Victorian government's initial response, by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gavin Jennings, was to urge the Dja Dja Wurrung elders to negotiate with Museum Victoria to reach an 'amicable solution' and

agree on access to the material. However Carter's emergency declaration sought to enliven larger repatriation issues by directing the Australian and British governments to negotiate the 'final repatriation of all Indigenous Australian Ancestral Human Remains and Grave Goods held without consent by various British institutions and privately for recovery, return and reburial by Australian Traditional Owners'.

The dispute was the subject of two Federal Court actions. One was taken by the Museums Board of Victoria to seek dissolution of a series of subsequent emergency declarations made by Carter. The second was launched by the Dja Dja Wurrung elders to force the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to issue an order for preservation and compulsory acquisition of the artefacts. The Dja Dja Wurrung applicants argued in court that return of the artefacts to the British Museum constituted a threat of injury and desecration to them. The applicants also argued that the British Museum's advice that the artefacts had not or would not be on display suggested they would not be available for educational purposes: 'If the objects are locked away and inaccessible to our community they cannot be used to educate or perpetuate Aboriginal culture and tradition, and in the case of the ceremonial piece, it could never be used in ceremonies'.

The dispute raised a question about who could 'speak' for the objects under this significant piece of Commonwealth legislation. While the Dja Dja Wurrung people claimed the artefacts



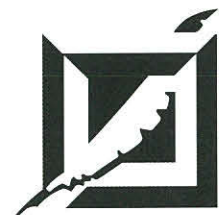
Courtesy of Museum Victoria

as part of their cultural heritage, the Act appeared to provide that, as the artefacts were located in Melbourne, the Wurundjeri Council was the appropriate cultural group to advise the Minister on the significance of the artefacts. The Wurundjeri Council subsequently made an application under the Act in support of the Dja Dja Wurrung elders. Ultimately, this had no bearing on the final court judgements, but it calls into question the capacity of the Act

to deal appropriately with loans or other situations involving expatriated cultural material.

Time will tell whether the dispute will have ongoing consequences for inward loan requests of Indigenous material held by overseas museums. The court judgements (2005 FCA 645 and 2005 FCA 667) can be viewed at the online legal database [www.austlii.edu.au](http://www.austlii.edu.au).

IAN MCSHANE IS CHAIR OF THE EDITORIAL STANDING COMMITTEE OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA



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PRINT A POSTER OR CREATE YOUR CATALOGUE ON DEMAND

For many people, a visit to a museum or art gallery is not complete without purchasing a reminder of their experience, often a postcard, poster or a catalogue which shows their favourite object or image from the collection on display. For some of us, it seems to be a law of museum and gallery visiting that a poster or a postcard of the work with which we have fallen in love is not available at the museum or gallery shop. Those who work in these shops report disappointment that this is so — they are often asked by visitors to 'look under the counter' or 'out the back' to make sure that a bundle of copies of a treasured image

is not lurking undetected on a shelf. Or a catalogue containing the favoured image may just be too expensive as a souvenir — and not nearly as easy to pop into a frame.

This disappointing experience can now be a thing of the past, with the aid of computer technology and leading-edge printing techniques. Audio interpretive technology company Espro Acoustiguide Group is collaborating with Hewlett-Packard to enable visitors to art galleries and museums to select copies of their favourite works in an exhibition or gallery, and either order them as posters, or create their

own catalogues of personal favourites, using two services, 'My Poster' and 'My Catalogue'. This new technology acts to strengthen the links between a museum or gallery collection and its visitors, and to enhance visitor satisfaction.

Visitors use Espro's hand-held audio guide unit, called exSite, to 'bookmark' favourite items as they wander through an exhibition. At the end of the visit, they can elect to download their selection to a printer, and choose to have either single posters or a customised catalogue, add personalization with their appropriate text — and print it as a unique reminder of their visit.

Posters come in a range of sizes, from A1 to A3, and are printed on photographic paper or cloth, such as silk, cotton or canvas. Catalogues can be from nine to twenty-one pages, and can be either printed and bound within minutes, or delivered later.

This new service, launched in April this year, is already in use in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. It is now available in Australia from Acoustiguide Pty Ltd.

Below: Interacting with the kiosk.  
Bottom: Printing, *A big show*  
Courtesy of Espro

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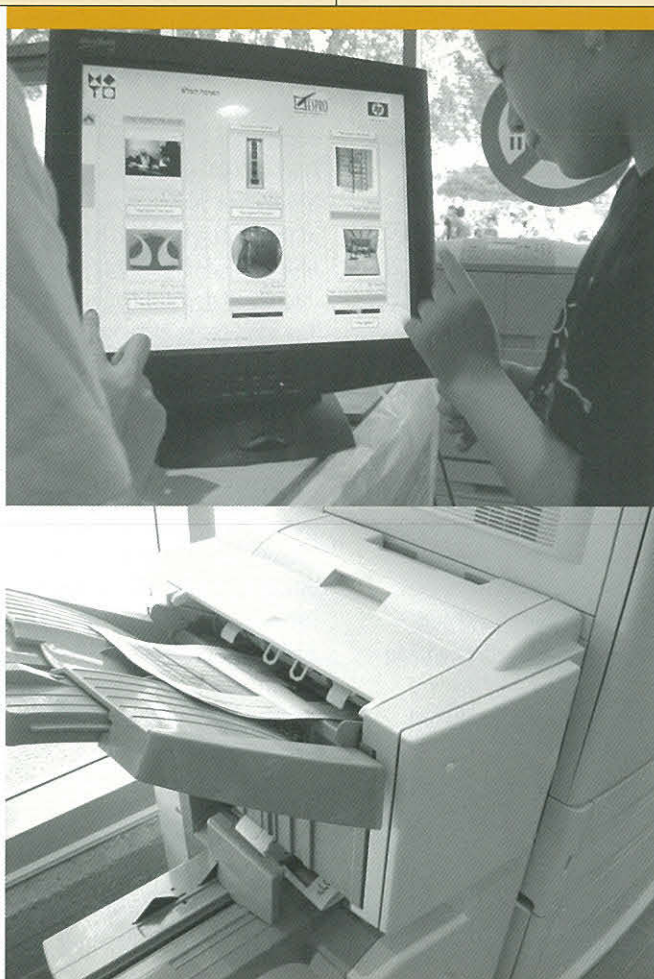
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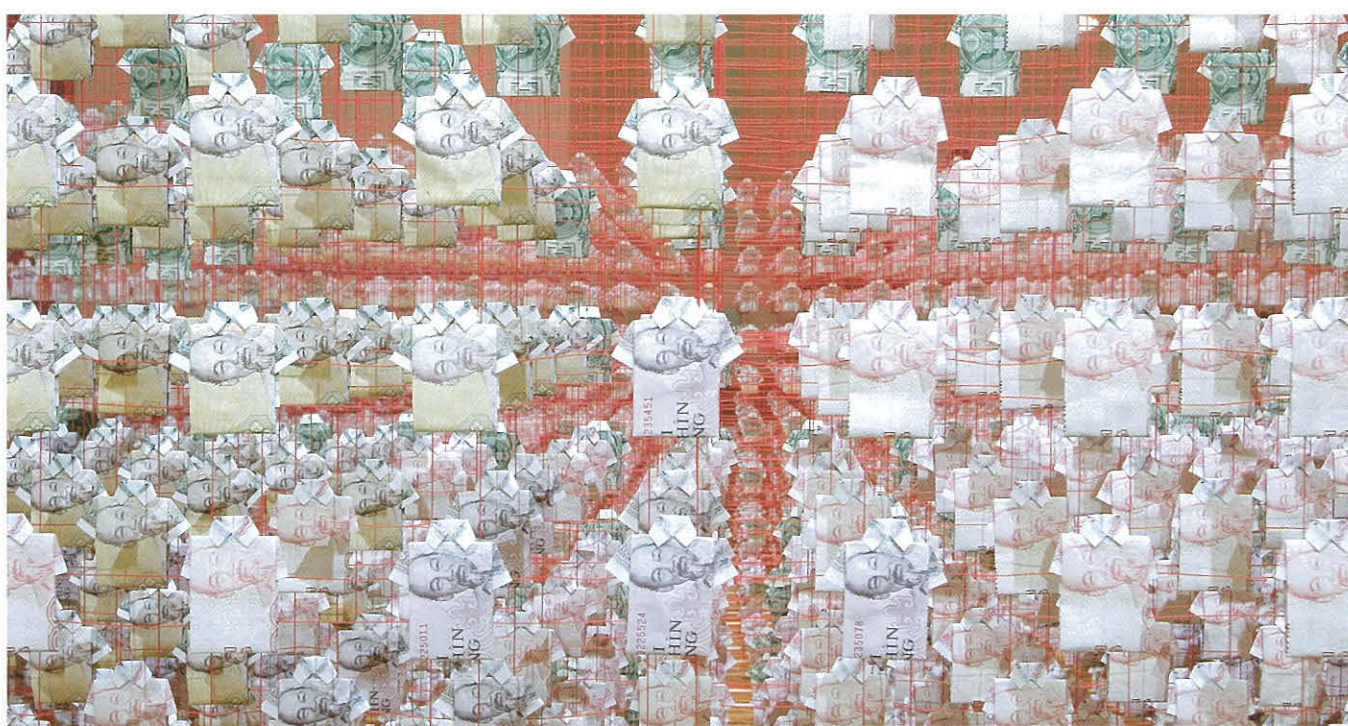
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Glen Clarke  
*American crater near Hanoi #2* (detail)  
2004

Vietnamese and US currency, cotton thread, wood  
Courtesy of the National Gallery of Australia



## NATIONAL SCULPTURE PRIZE 2005

An intricate and powerful work by Glen Clarke, *American crater near Hanoi #2* has won this year's National Sculpture Prize.

The 'crater' is formed by graduated rows of tiny shirts made of folded US and Vietnamese currency and suspended on lines of red cotton thread. Clarke says

that it 'references Australia's involvement with Vietnam and Vietnamese migrants in Australia'.

The National Sculpture Prize and Exhibition, on display at the National Gallery of Australia until 9 October, demonstrates the diversity of sculpture practice in Australia

today, from Geoffrey Drake-Brockman's 128 robotic but utterly fascinating *Floribots* — a guaranteed crowd-pleasure as they rise and descend, and snap their origami flowerheads open and shut — to the Bridget Rileyesque stripes of Fred Fisher's *Tilt*, and many other works of distinction.

*Canberra Times* journalist Ian Warden advised visitors to 'Allow yourself a whole day to visit the National Sculpture Prize and Exhibition' (*Canberra Times*, 15 July 2005). Better still, for those who can make return visits, take time to explore the works and the ideas behind them.

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# REGIONAL ROUNDUP

## INTERPRETING NO 1 PUMP STATION ON THE GOLDEN PIPELINE

ANNE BRAKE

THE GOLDEN PIPELINE FOCUSES ON THE HERITAGE OF THE WATER SUPPLY SCHEME WHICH FIRST TOOK WATER UPHILL FROM PERTH TO THE EASTERN GOLDFIELDS.

An integral part of the original Goldfields Water Supply Scheme (GWSS) and one of the bookends of the newly developed Golden Pipeline Heritage Trail, No 1 Pump Station has recently reopened its doors after an extensive renovation program. It is located thirty kilometres east of Perth in the picturesque Mundaring Weir precinct. The immediate area includes walk and bike trails, the Mundaring Weir Hotel and various craft shops and galleries making it a popular day trip for Perth visitors and locals.

The National Trust of Australia (WA) manages the Golden Pipeline, a project which focuses on the heritage of the water supply scheme which first took water uphill from the hills to the east of Perth to the eastern goldfields 560 kilometres away over a hundred years ago. Engineered by C Y O'Connor and championed by Sir John Forrest, the pipeline, somewhat expanded, still operates.

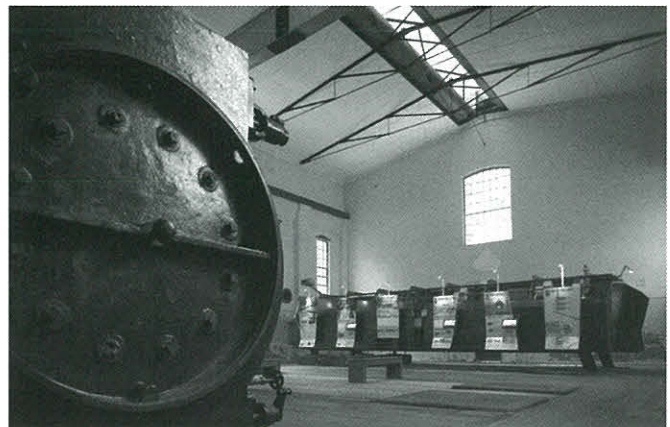
No 1 was the first of the scheme's eight steam pump stations. After being gradually decommissioned through the

1950s and 1960s, some of the old pump station buildings were used to house a variety of industries including a cement factory and a local museum. Others were left derelict. Six remain extant.

The C Y O'Connor Museum was established by the then Water Authority of Western Australia at No 1 in 1964. While popular with visitors to the Mundaring Weir precinct and school groups, the original displays had become tired. With the centenary of the opening of the water supply scheme looming, the National Trust took up the challenge of developing a major cultural tourism project that had the potential to deliver significant heritage and economic outcomes for regional Western Australia. The redevelopment of No 1 was a key element in the plan as it had the ability to be a major tourist drawcard close to Perth.

The approach to interpretation at No 1 was guided by a number of factors.

- No 1 is located in the Mundaring Weir precinct which is still an operational water supply precinct — various pieces of historic and contemporary infrastructure stand side by side providing a fairly unique education and interpretation opportunity.
- The building still houses its original three Babcock and Wilcox boilers and Green's Economiser and one of the three Worthington high duty triple expansion steam engines.
- The Trust has very few objects provenanced to the



pump station itself or to the story of the GWSS

- No 1 was to be developed as a stand-alone experience but it was also to function as an element of the wider pipeline interpretation.
- The Heritage Trail already mentioned has twenty-five sites which were designed to tell various elements of the pipeline story — No 1 Pump Station was to act as an introduction to these other sites and as a teaser to encourage people along the trail.

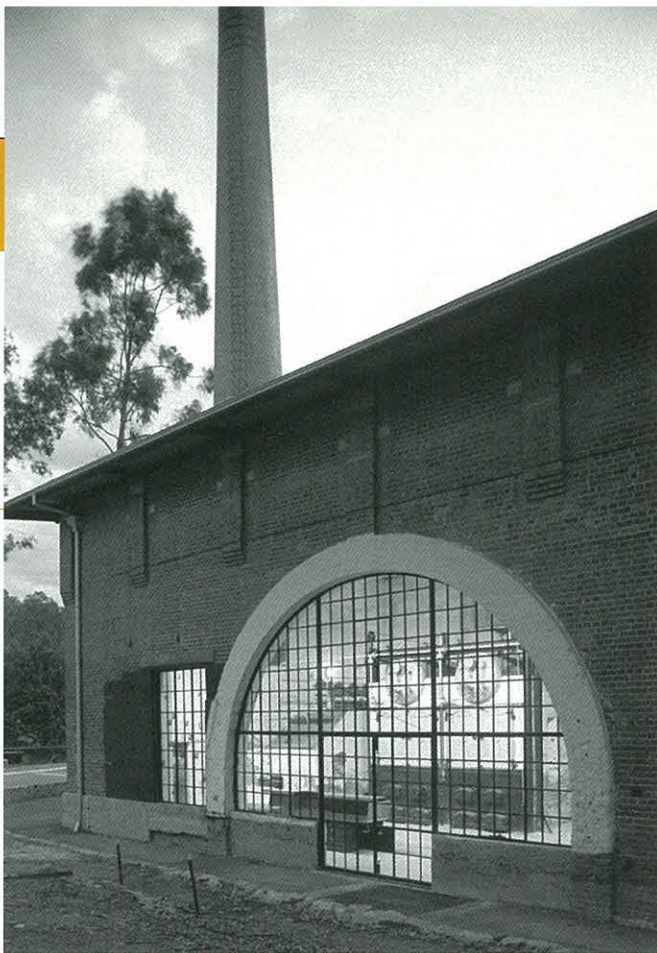
Of all these elements, the desire to present the building as the primary artefact was the main driver, but the building also had to act as a gallery space for telling the fascinating tales of political intrigue and personal tragedy that make up the history of the place.

The 1964 exhibitions, which crowded the walls and the floor space, were removed. Conservation work to the building now allows the various layers of the building's history to be read. A graffiti technique — literally writing text onto the fabric of the building — is

used to highlight important elements. Mesh flooring allows views to the basement area through the space where one of the engines once stood and lighting further encourages visitors to engage with and read the building. The main 'exhibition' is presented in the space where the third engine stood. The same volume as the original machine, the new interpretation machine contributes to an understanding of the original pump station while incorporating more traditional exhibition techniques to carry the main storylines. A mix of computer interactives, visual presentations and manual operating devices speak of the history as well as the contemporary nature of the main topic — water.

A soundscape evoking the notion of pumped water and a symbolic map culminating in a stylised water fountain, reminiscent of the stand pipe which features in a photograph of the 1903 opening ceremony, are examples of how the interpretation has been designed to intrigue rather than dictate.





A final stage of works to 'complete' the interpretation is currently underway. While people stories were told in the main displays, these were of a general nature. Stage 3 will take the form of a changeable exhibition space and will focus on the stories of individuals. Oral histories, moving images, objects and text will be used in ways relevant to the specific person. Various themes, such as the displaced people who were contracted by the government to work on the scheme, and their families, will be explored over time. As a significant number of Western Australians have a link

to the goldfields or the pipeline there will also be a place for people to record these links and their own story.

The interpretation within the building is supported by landscaping works which improve the visitor amenities and provide alternative activities for visitors to the precinct. The grounds immediately adjacent to the building are used extensively in the pump station's education programs. Paths and paving follow the lines of various underground pipes and drains. Two walk trails in the precinct provide links between the

Left:  
No 1 Pump Station Mundaring Weir  
Photographer, R Frith, Photo courtesy  
NTWA, Mulloway Studio

Previous page:  
The interpretation machine fills the space of the original C Engine and uses a variety of exhibition techniques to carry the main interpretation of the scheme.

Photographer, R Frith, Photo courtesy  
NTWA, Mulloway Studio

pump station and the various elements of the precinct.

No 1 Pump Station, as with many Trust properties, uses volunteer staff. A comprehensive training course with ongoing sessions helps volunteers to better understand the story as well as the approach to conservation and interpretation at the place. An advisory group continues to guide the interpretation programs. It has been a fascinating and exciting team effort thus far, and we look forward to continuing the exploration of opportunities that are there for us.

#### No 1 Pump Station

Open: Wed to Sun and public holidays 10-4 (fees apply)  
National Trust of Australia (WA)  
08 9321 6088  
[www.goldenpipeline.com.au](http://www.goldenpipeline.com.au)

PROJECT MANAGER: ANNE BRAKE, MANAGER GOLDEN PIPELINE, THE NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (WA)  
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**The interpretation work at No 1 has won a commendation and an architectural award in two different states. The project was one of two winners in the Heritage Council Conservation Award category of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (WA) Awards (exciting to see interpretation being recognised as an integral part of the conservation process) and it also received a commendation (no awards given) in the collaboration category of the South Australian Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.**

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## GOOD AND BAD NEWS ON ANCIENT CIVILISATIONS

The afterlife of ancient Egypt may be flourishing at Melbourne Museum, but ancient sites and artefacts in Iraq continue to face serious threat.

Visitors to Melbourne Museum's *Mummies, Ancient Egypt and the Afterlife* can discover the secrets of an ancient civilisation through a wealth of ancient Egyptian relics including hieroglyphics, mummified bodies, embalming jars and tools.

However, the fate of Iraq's antiquities is not as certain, with the entire country being included in the latest list of the 100 Most Endangered Sites in the world.

The list, produced biennially by the World Monuments Fund (WMF), is based on the recommendations of heritage groups, archaeologists, and



government agencies, and aims to bring to international attention important sites that are under threat.

While war damage at specific sites in Iraq such as Nineveh, Ur, Babylon and Samarra is noted, the WMF listing acknowledges the serious threat to cultural remains throughout Iraq.

The reopening of the Iraq Museum continues to be delayed because of the dangerous security situation in Baghdad. Museum Director Donny George told a New York audience that 'we thought everything would calm down after the January elections, so we planned an exhibition for July, but instead things have escalated'.

There is some relief for Iraqi cultural heritage despite these

grim proclamations as around 8000 artefacts, more than half of all those looted from the National Museum in Baghdad in 2003, have been recovered.

Mr George said US Customs intercepted more than 1000 objects in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Baghdad. Four thousand were recovered in Iraq itself, and around 3000 more have been found in countries such as Syria, Kuwait, Jordan and Italy.

Left:

The story of a wealthy Egyptian woman named Keku (whose outer sarcophagus is shown here), illustrates the journey from the land of the living to the afterlife. It is highlighted in a hands-on Tomb Room in the exhibition at Melbourne Museum.

© National Museum of Antiquities, Netherlands

## Department of Museum Studies

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- maintain an international perspective and reflect the department's collaborative approach to working within the sector



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## BEGA PIONEER MUSEUM

KATHERINE HENDERSON

On 9–10 June I went to the Bega Pioneer Museum as a Museum Studies student to observe how a small museum is run.

Located at 87 Bega Street in Bega on the far south coast of NSW, the Bega Pioneer Museum is run by volunteers. I met with the Bega Valley Historical Society's president, Penny Davies, who talked me through the issues the museum confronts on a daily basis. Taking a year off paid work is a sacrifice Penny has made so that significant changes can be made to the museum. As a result of her initiative and networking the museum is looking to become commercially viable. A new front of house has seen the entrance fee rise to \$5 for adults and marketing plans are in place to sell conservation materials. Research fees are charged to government agencies and individuals seeking information on local records or family history, and a good working relationship with the local RSL and Bega Council has resulted in an exemption from rent and council rates, a cost that brings many small museums undone.

Over the last couple of years the museum has received grants from the Ministry of Arts to conserve flags flown during fighting at Tobruk and Gallipoli. Penny developed an

exhibition concept, 'From the wharf to a foreign shore' to show off the newly conserved Gallipoli flag. The introduction of temporary exhibitions has encouraged more people to visit. The Ministry for the Arts also provided a grant for a significance assessment of a horse-drawn vehicle in the collection. When panels were removed from the vehicle for restoration, 400 ten-pound notes were found rolled up inside tobacco tins. These notes are now held in a safety deposit where they are drawn upon according to the needs of the museum. The museum recently purchased a new computer with this money; it is one of only two used by volunteers. One volunteer is currently working on indexing the collection by hand, and eventually this will be transferred onto a database. This is a priority, as no one really knows what is in the collection. New items are uncovered everyday from storage.

Throughout the two days I realised the museum acted as a meeting place for the community as much as it did a museum. A total of five visitors came to see the collection, but there was a steady flow of people who came in just for a chat and a cuppa. The men who come here are a wealth of knowledge

WHEN PANELS WERE  
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on who married whom, who owned what land, as well as the local scandal and gossip. An effort is being made to record conversations between members. The museum holds in trust a number of items that are sensitive to families in the area and are not to be displayed. Indigenous community members who have visited the collection found a message stick sitting amongst other objects on display, and requested that the message stick be removed because of its sacred significance. It is now stored in the archive room. The fact that there is now a dialogue between the Indigenous community and the museum is encouraging.

I sat in on the Historical Society's committee meeting as an observer. The committee is a really diverse group of individuals, all with differing opinions on how the collection should be managed. The issue of saving the textiles

display was on the agenda. The Powerhouse Museum in Sydney has conducted conservation workshops and supplied resources to the museum so that volunteers can build on their knowledge. The committee decided however that there were insufficient funds at this time to buy more textile conservation boxes, and discussed what should be done with a parcel containing a 1920s wedding dress that had been left on the doorstep. They decided that it had no real significance to Bega but could be used as a prop. The next issue raised was the progress of plans to give the museum a web presence by collaborating with begavalley.com. This is still in its initial stages. The meeting concluded with the news that the plumbing had been fixed free of charge, another example of how important networking is for the survival of the museum.

The time and effort the volunteers dedicate to keeping the museum open and running is to be admired. I enjoyed the two days and found the inner workings of this small museum really interesting.

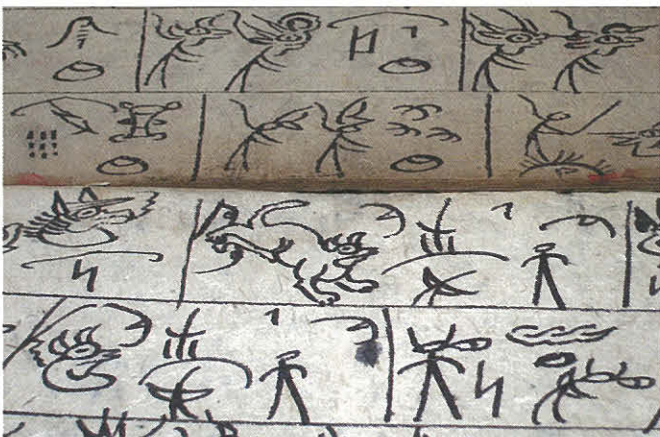
KATHERINE HENDERSON IS STUDYING FOR A GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS AT THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY.

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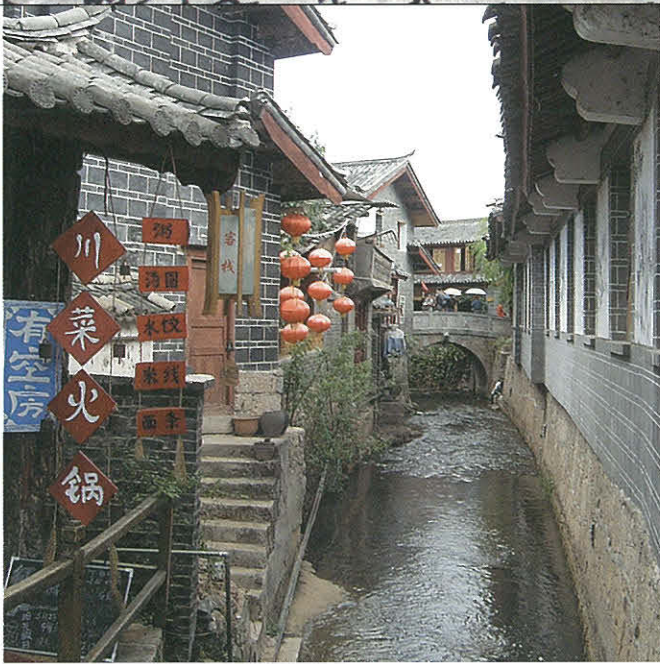
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## UNESCO MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER GAINS 29 NEW ENTRIES



The International Advisory Committee (IAC) of UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme for the preservation of documentary heritage recently recommended the inscription of twenty-nine new items or collections from twenty-four countries on the *Memory of the World Register*. For eleven of these countries this was the first time an item of their documentary heritage was recommended for inscription. Australia has two items on the Register, the *Endeavour* journal of Captain James Cook and the Mabo Case Manuscripts, both held by the National Library of Australia and inscribed in 2001.

Nominations recommended for inscription include medieval manuscripts on medicine and pharmacy from Azerbaijan, children's stories by the Brothers Grimm from Germany and the archives of children's author Astrid Lindgren from Sweden, film of Roald Amundsen's South Pole Expedition of 1910–1912 (Norway) and the Battle of the Somme (United Kingdom), records of the International Anti-Nuclear Movement from Kazakhstan, a collection of Gothic Architectural Drawings from Austria, the papers of Namibian leader Hendrik Witbooi, and records on the introduction of the decimal metric system from 1790–1837 in France.

The IAC also judged the inaugural UNESCO/Jikji *Memory of the World Prize* for documentary heritage preservation, which was won by the National Library of the Czech Republic. The prize is

given biennially to individuals or organisations who have made a significant contribution to the preservation and accessibility of documentary heritage, and was set up to commemorate the inscription in the *Memory of the World Register* of the oldest known book of movable metal print in the world, the *Buljo jikji simche yojeol* from South Korea. The National Library of Australia's PANDORA web archive was shortlisted for the Jikji Prize.

The IAC meeting was held from 13–17 June in Lijiang in Yunnan Province, China. Lijiang appears on three international heritage registers: the UNESCO World Heritage Register for both natural and cultural sites (for the natural environment of the region, and for the ancient town of Lijiang); and on the UNESCO *Memory of the World Register* for the Naxi Dongba Ancient Manuscripts created by one of China's minority ethnic cultures.

IAC members associated with the museum sector who attended the Lijiang meeting included Alissandra Cummins, Director of Barbados Museums and President of ICOM, Ralf Regenvanu, Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, and Roslyn Russell, Managing Editor of *Museums Australia Magazine*.

Top left:  
Naxi Dongba ancient manuscript  
Below left:  
The river flows through the town of Lijiang, Yunnan Province, China  
Photos by Roslyn Russell

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# POLITICS AND POSITIONING

MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, SYDNEY, 1-4 MAY 2005

THERE IS AN UNRECOGNISED CRISIS  
WITH HERITAGE COLLECTIONS  
IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA.

WE NEED TO HAVE A ROBUST DEBATE  
ABOUT THE POSITIONING OF COMMUNITY  
MUSEUMS, AND THE CREATION OF  
SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE COLLECTIONS  
IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA.

**The New South Wales Organising Committee for this year's annual Museums Australia conference challenged the sector to engage in some hard thinking about the political realities facing museums, and the ways in which we can articulate our values and assumptions about what museums can and should do in relation to prevailing political, social and economic situations.**

With a diverse range of issues up for discussion, it is not possible here to do justice to them all, so this summary will concentrate upon a few of these. For examples of many other issues and topics aired at the conference readers are encouraged to read the papers collected on the Museums Australia website.

Museum consultant Kylie Winkworth took the initiative to challenge her audience, with her paper\*, 'Fixing the slums of Australian museums; or sustaining heritage collections in regional Australia' to the Regional and Remote Museums day on 1 May. Drawing on her many years of experience with this part of the museums sector, Kylie drew attention to a looming 'crisis' in collections in regional Australia:

'There is an unrecognised crisis with heritage collections in regional Australia. Volunteers are dying and with them go the unique stories, memories and provenance of their collections — the all-important associations that make their collections significant in a local, regional or national context. By and large, there is no next generation of volunteers willing to work in decrepit buildings, which lack the elementary facilities for good museum practice...

We need to have a robust debate about the positioning of community museums, and the creation of sustainable heritage collections in regional Australia.'

Drawing on the methodology of Alcoholics Anonymous, Kylie

set out a 12-Step Program for achieving the goal of sustainability in this crucial part of the sector. While not all museum practitioners at the session agreed with every one of her prescriptions, the words of a committed and experienced consultant, as Kylie Winkworth is, certainly made people aware of the situation in community museums, and encouraged them to examine assumptions about how best to address the problems.

At the opening of the conference in the ABC's Eugene Goossens Hall, Secretary of the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts, Roger Wilkins, also placed collections at the forefront of attention, pointing to the formation of the Collections Council of Australia and the trend towards grouping cultural facilities — libraries, galleries, museums — together at the local and regional levels. Stating that museums occupied the same cultural 'space' as libraries, archives and even universities, he posed the question: 'Will we still be having separate museums conferences in the future?' He asked us all to 'Think beyond the existing institutional framework in the future of museums'.

Federal Minister for the Arts and Sport, the Honorable Rod Kemp, pointed to increased funding for collecting institutions and the 'important development' represented by the Collections Council of Australia, which is intended to give 'an Australia-wide assessment of how things are working'. The federal government had 'great hopes that this can drive the sector forward'. At the conclusion of the conference, Sue Nattrass, Chair of the Collections Council, and Margaret Birtley, Chief Executive Officer, delivered a paper\* outlining the tasks before this new organisation.

In his paper, 'Controversy and change' that covered an enormous amount of ground, and left conference delegates in no doubt that complacency was not an option for museums, Adrian Ellis of AEA Consulting, New York, set out the 'need for the museums sector to have a more carefully calibrated response to government expectations'. He believes that museums are 'not as well placed as we might be to weather stormy weather ahead'; and that the cultural sector must ready itself to face six challenges: contractualisation, instrumentalisation, privatisation, globalisation,

ADRIAN ELLIS BELIEVES  
THAT WE HAVE  
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TO UNDERSTAND OURSELVES.'

THE ANZAC STORY ACTS AS A  
'SCREEN MEMORY' OF AN HEROIC STORY  
ENACTED 'OVER THERE', ONE THAT  
ALLOWS US TO OVERLOOK THE VIOLENCE  
OF THE LOCAL STORY.

democratisation and digitalisation. He stressed the importance of clarity in articulating expectations in contracts between museums and funding bodies — whether these are about achieving specific social effects, or increased visitor numbers, to name only two. Despite the vast literature developed to justify the need for funding for museums, Adrian Ellis believes that we have 'not found a sustainable public language in which to talk about our institutions'.

Public and political expectations of how the national story should be represented in museums were the focus of a number of sessions, mostly centred on the interpretation of this story in the National Museum of Australia. In several well-attended sessions there was robust debate indeed around this topic. In a panel discussion, 'Interpreting the nation: which stories, whose voices', Graeme Davison, John Carroll and Bain Attwood presented divergent views of how the national story should be represented.\* Graeme Davison said that there were problems with the creation of a unitary master narrative that would interpret the history of Australia: the only story with almost universal endorsement was that of Anzac. Rather than see it as the task of the National Museum to tell all the national story — or stories — he believes it is more useful to see all the national collecting institutions as telling their parts of the story. Calling them all the 'national museum' (in much the same way as its various constituent museums make up the Smithsonian in Washington) would relieve the National Museum of the burden of trying to represent the whole national story — the Australian War Memorial, for example, is already manifestly the custodian of the Anzac story. His view is that it is the task of a national museum 'to offer space for many stories to be told'.

This view had little appeal for John Carroll, Chair of the 2003 Review into the National Museum of Australia. He believes it is the task of the Museum to 'tell the Australian story — whatever that is', and that, as religious belief has waned in Australia, there is a need for a sustaining myth that provides us with the clues to what binds us together and what is the past from which we have come: 'The overwhelming requirement of a national museum is to help us to understand ourselves.' While he agreed with Graeme Davison

that the Anzac story was the only one with 'overwhelming charge and force', he agreed that this was 'taken'. His Review instead argued that Australian 'achievements' should be celebrated in the National Museum, and he cited historian Geoffrey Blainey as saying that the two signal achievements of the nation had been national development and productivity; and the creation of Australian democracy. The negative stories, in Blainey's view, were the fate of the Aboriginal people and the land.

Bain Attwood challenged the findings of what he called 'John's Review', which he claimed had returned us to 'a particular hierarchy of stories — a white, male, separatist narrative that avoided a moral dilemma of legitimacy'. Looking 'longingly' at the Anzac myth as the most compelling national story allows us to displace the story of Aboriginal dispossession enacted here. The Anzac story acts as a 'screen memory' of an heroic story enacted 'over there', one that allows us to overlook the violence of the local story.

Kirsten Wehner and Mat Trinca, Senior Curators at the National Museum responsible for the implementation of the gallery redevelopments as a result of the Carroll Review, in their paper 'Interrogating Pluralism: Representational Politics in the Museum', suggested that 'the Museum can usefully move the emphasis away from abstract questions of national identity and, instead, accent place and location as frames for understanding the national past ... Stressing the relationship between artefact and place is useful in recovering a conception of the body to historical understanding.'

Taking a similar position, Andrea Witcomb spoke on the topic of 'Beyond the Politics of Representation: Towards a New Approach for Engaging with the Past in Museums'. She said that we should 'pay more attention to the ways in which history was experienced', and postulated an exhibition topic that would fulfil the requirements for narrative, a sense of 'everyday lives', and a plurality of voices:

'Imagine an exhibition on pastoral life from the point of view of the experiences of all those who had contact with the station, or an exhibition on exploration which questioned that very frame by also presenting the perspectives of the Aboriginal guides. A focus on the experience of everyday life might make it possible to present



Hans-Martin Hinz spoke on how German museums now interpret the World War II experience  
Courtesy of Hans-Martin Hinz

**'POLITICS AND POSITIONING'**  
CERTAINLY FULFILLED THE PROMISE OF  
**ENGAGING THE MUSEUM SECTOR**  
IN DEBATE OVER THE ISSUES THAT  
WILL DOMINATE OUR APPROACHES  
FOR THE FUTURE.


a history which is held together by a strong sense of narrative but which is nevertheless not presented as 'the' history. There are points of contact but their meanings may not be the same for everyone.'

Hans-Martin Hinz of the German Historical Museum, Berlin, in his paper '1945: The End of the War and its Aftermath', showed how German historians and museum interpreters have told a difficult story about their national past, often in the face of opposition from conservative forces. The interpretation at the site of the German surrender has been devised by teams of both German and Russian curators and the 'focus is now on the individual fates of the soldiers and civilians from both sides, allowing for a quick

emotional involvement of the visitors, since for younger visitors above all the war is in the distant and intangible past'.

'Politics and Positioning' certainly fulfilled the promise of engaging the museum sector in debate over the issues that will dominate our approaches for the future. Only some of these could be discussed here: it is impossible to distill such a rich conference into the space of an article. Visit the new Museums Australia website to sample the full versions of the papers outlined here, and many others from the 2005 annual conference.

\*Paper is available on the MA website under Conference papers/Sydney 2005.




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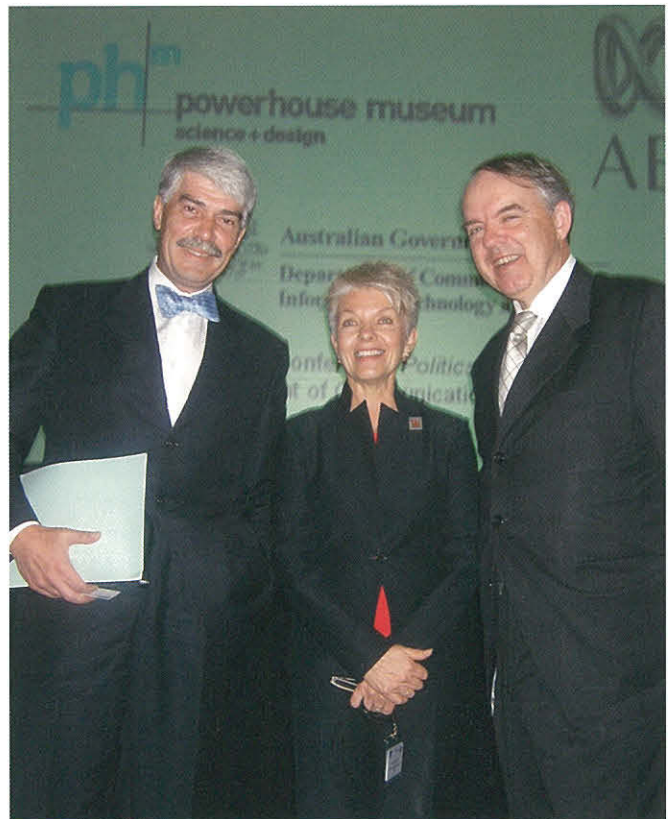
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**FRIENDS Magazine**  
National Museum of Australia



Roger Wilkins, Secretary of the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts, Carol Scott, retiring President of Museums Australia, and Senator the Honorable Rod Kemp, Minister for the Arts and Sport, at the opening of the Museums Australia Annual Conference, Sydney, 2 May 2005

Photograph by Roslyn Russell



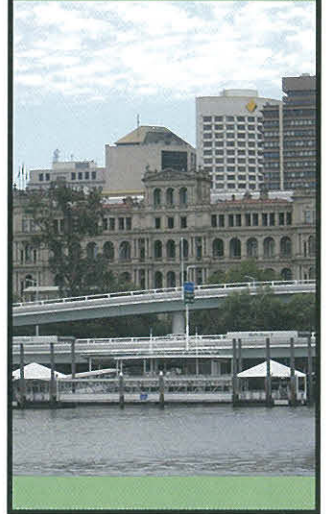


This nineteenth-century costume from Attica is one of a selection of nearly 170 treasures from one of the world's most famous collections of Greek treasures, the Benaki Collection in Athens. Conference delegates were able to preview this exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum during the Museums Australia annual conference.

*Greek treasures: from the Benaki Museum in Athens* is on display at the Powerhouse until 4 September. It will then go Melbourne, and be displayed at the Immigration Museum from 12 October. The exhibition celebrates Greek domestic, political and artistic life over 8000 years.

## AND NOW FOR BRISBANE 2006

The next national conference, *Exploring Dynamics: Cities, Cultural Spaces, Communities*, will be held in Brisbane from 14–17 May 2006. See the inside back cover of this magazine for the Call for Papers.



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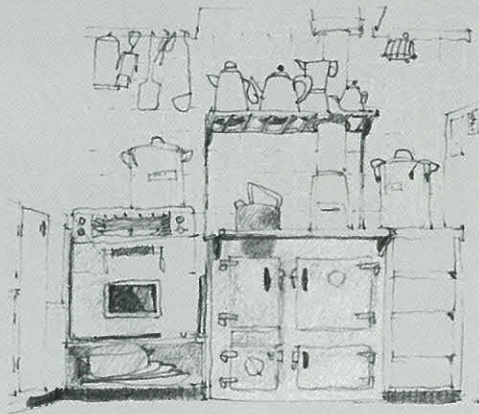
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## OTHER FEATURES

## COOKING UP A STORM

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT at Manning Clark House



Sandy Forbes • Janet Reeves



Left:  
Cover of *Food for Thought*, with sketch by Peter Freeman of Dymphna Clark's kitchen  
Right:  
Portrait of Dymphna Clark by Pamela Houstein, which hangs in the sitting room at Manning Clark House  
Courtesy of Manning Clark House

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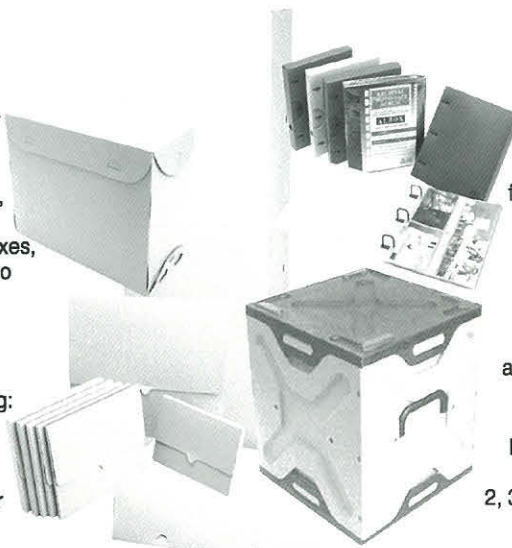
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SANDY FORBES &  
ZANITA DAVIES

Memories of good meals and generous hospitality, as well as the desire to publicise historic places and raise funds, were behind the publication of two cookbooks published recently by Manning Clark House in Canberra and the Magnetic Island History and Craft Centre in Queensland.

Each book has as its focus a woman cook. In the case of Manning Clark House's *Food for Thought at Manning Clark House*, it is Dymphna Clark, wife of the late Australian historian and a distinguished scholar and linguist in her own right. The Robin Boyd-designed home they shared in the Canberra suburb of Forrest is now preserved in their memory, and is a thriving cultural centre, continuing the 'conversations' that were such a feature of the Clarks' dinner table throughout their lifetimes. The cookbook brings the recipes with which Dymphna Clark entertained her myriad guests to a wider audience.

Manning Clark House now hosts dinners featuring distinguished speakers: cooks for these have included Dawn Casey, former Director of the National Museum of Australia and now Director of the Western Australian Museum. Recipes for the dishes cooked for these dinners are included in *Food for Thought*.

Recipes have also been contributed by the Clarks' sons Sebastian and Benedict, former Prime Minister Robert Menzies' daughter Heather Henderson, *Canberra Times* columnist Susan Parsons, cookbook author Claudia Hyles, ANU academics Bruce and Ann Kent and many others. The book, co-edited by journalists Sandy Forbes and

Janet Reeves, also contains photographs and anecdotes about the Clarks, their family and friends gathered around the table. 'This is not just another recipe book but a tribute to Dymphna Clark, and the tradition she established here', said Penny Ramsay, Manning Clark House director.

Another historic property — and the work and life of a woman who lived there — was the motivation for *Nell's Recipes*, published by Magnetic Island History and Craft Centre in north Queensland. 'Nell' was Nell Butler, one of the founders of the first holiday accommodation on Magnetic Island. The former Butler's Health Resort at Picnic Bay was placed on the Queensland Heritage Register in 2004, but the listing was overturned by developers. The last hut remaining from the resort was relocated to vacant land beside the Magnetic Island History and Craft Centre, thus preserving the link to the nineteenth-century holiday accommodation pioneered by the Butlers, whose story was told in an exhibition at the Centre in June and July, *The Butlers did it!*

Nell Butler, who sold the guesthouse in 1941 after sixty-five years, kept an 'unsurpassed table'. The recipes she used have been collected, along with reminiscences and photographs, and published as *Nell's Recipes* to raise funds for the restoration of the Butler hut.

SANDY FORBES WORKS IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

ZANITA DAVIES IS PRESIDENT OF THE MAGNETIC ISLAND HISTORY AND CRAFT CENTRE INC.

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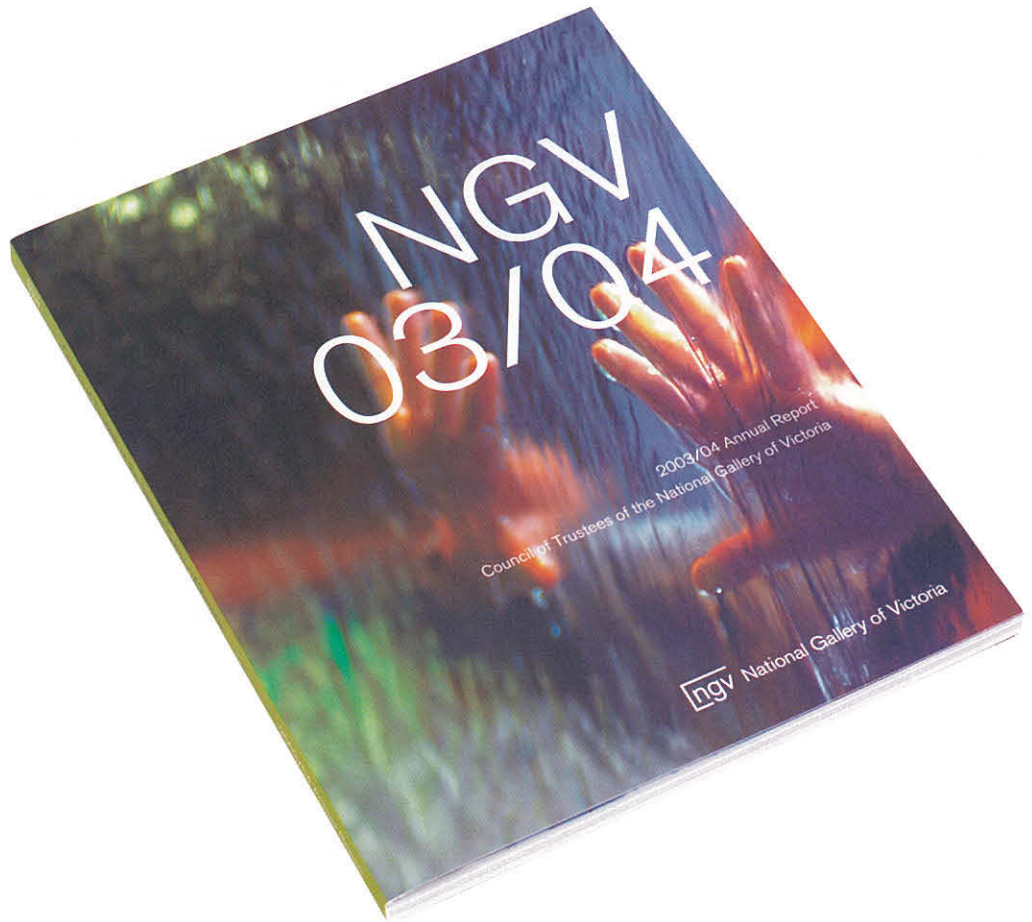
**MELBOURNE GEELONG WARRNAMBOOL**

# 2005 MAPDA AWARDS

No less than 75 award recipients were recognised at this year's Museums Australia Publication Design Award (MAPDA) ceremony at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney. Held in conjunction with Museums Australia's National Conference, the MAPDA Gala award presentations recognise and celebrate excellence and innovation in design and communications tools for the museum and galleries industry.

In her introductory remarks Carol Scott, President of Museums Australia, defined museum publications as 'printed or electronically designed graphic materials intended for distribution'.

Award classifications embrace excellence in exhibition and collection catalogues, newsletter and magazine originality, as well as innovation in book and corporate publication. There were 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.



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## 2005 MAPDA AWARDS

All entries were evaluated according to the submitting organisation's size and shortlisted on their original creative ideas, and innovative concepts' merit. The expert MAPDA design panel selected award recipients based on each entrant's design skills in the expression and extension of their idea through typography, photography, illustration, structure and material use. The judging panel also considered each entry's relevance of purpose, layout and structure to effectively communicate. Production and technical values, the reproduction process, usability and final presentation were also taken into account.

Awards coordinator Ian Watts commented that there was a significant increase in the number of participating institutions in addition to more overseas entries this year. 'As importantly', said Watts, 'the calibre of the publication designs entered was unquestionably world class.'

Institutions entering the MAPDA awards in 2005 represented natural and social history museums, public art galleries, artist-run initiatives, historic houses, Indigenous keeping places, libraries, interpretive centres, zoos and botanical gardens. Establishments that hold collections of cultural material, organisations involved in the administration of museums and institutions that teach courses relevant to museum practice also hotly contested the eleven award categories.

From across this broad spectrum of category winning publications judges also

honour the 'MAPDA Best in Show', an overall award for excellence presented by the Powerhouse Museum. This year the judges elected an individual publication designed by Cameron Midson, the 'Annual Report 2004' produced by the National Gallery of Victoria. The judges agreed that this groundbreaking corporate communications tool was beautifully put together, and challenged accepted design paradigms for an annual report. It incorporated wonderful imagery photographed with an emphasis on ordinary people and the work of a museum. Each page is individually well designed, and the report's sections are clearly divided with an unambiguous hierarchy of information. It is a winner on many levels; concept, design, photography and it's a team effort.

A comprehensive listing of all award recipients is now accessible on the Museums Australia Internet site [[www.museumsaustralia.org.au](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au)].

This award programme could not succeed as it does without the support of our MAPDA sponsors; entrants and award recipients. The MAPDA committee thank and acknowledge the invaluable support and involvement of Gold Treasury Museum, Mental Media, Interactive Controls, Australia Post, Sweet Design, Craftsman Press, Spirit Publishing, the Public Record Office of Victoria and of course Museums Australia.

JOHN EUSTACE, BELLS AND WHISTLES MARKETING



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'Green Turtle Dreaming'  
Designers Susan Barlow & Kathryn Junor

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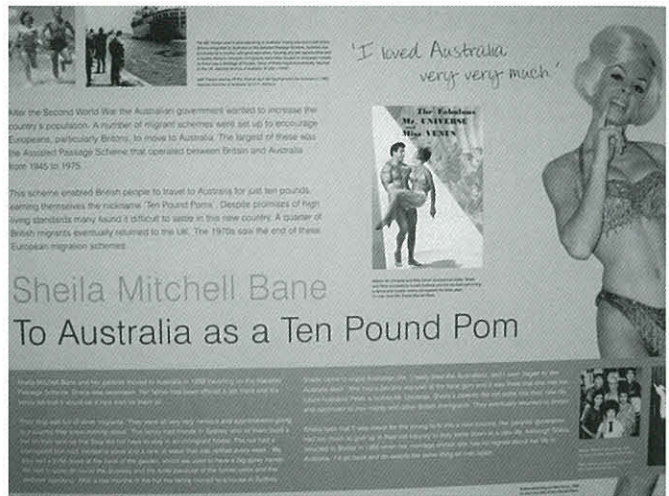
SUSAN MARSDEN

'AS A WHITE ENGLISHMAN BROUGHT UP IN THE 1950s, I WELL REMEMBER THE JINGOISTIC NONSENSE IN OUR TEXTBOOKS. I THINK THERE IS AN EXCELLENT BALANCE IN THE PRESENTATION OF ISSUES. WELL DONE.' [NOTE DISPLAYED ON 'YOUR COMMENTS' BOARD].

I made a keenly anticipated visit to the new British Empire & Commonwealth Museum in Bristol, United Kingdom, in January. For the most part my expectations were realised. The celebrated station building designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel presented a forbidding exterior in winter and the interior lighting was poor, but the museum was so interesting that I spent hours there, reading every panel.

The British Empire was the largest the world has known and its impact is evident worldwide. As an introductory panel in the museum explains, at its peak in the 1920s the British Empire ruled one quarter of the world's people, and the Commonwealth today covers nearly one third. Despite the Empire's former span, the continuing Commonwealth, and the impact of immigration from former colonies and dominions to Britain itself, this history is barely known in the UK today.

Top: British Empire & Commonwealth Museum at Temple Meads Station, Bristol  
Bottom: 'To Australia as a Ten Pound Pom' tells the story of Australia as a destination for British migrants  
Photos by Susan Marsden



That fact seems to be the main motivation for the creation of this new museum.

It seems astonishing that this museum represents the first significant attempt in the UK to present a public history of the British Empire. The lack of government support for the museum suggests a lingering embarrassment about imperialism, or an unwillingness to acknowledge issues which the museum

openly addresses, such as racism and slavery, economic exploitation, cultural imperialism and environmental damage.

The museum was established as a trust in 1986 and acquired a lease on Bristol's landmark Temple Meads railway station, which dates from 1839. It opened in 2002 and was shortlisted for the title of European Museum of the Year in 2004.

AN AUSTRALIAN VIEWS  
 MORE CRITICALLY  
 REFERENCES TO  
 ITS HISTORY. I WAS  
 DISAPPOINTED IN  
 THE ROOM 'ISLANDS  
 OF EMPIRE'

The themes and approaches are set out clearly in the first room. The 500-year history of the Empire and the emergence of the Commonwealth are presented throughout eighteen themed galleries, beginning with John Cabot's voyage from Bristol to Newfoundland in 1497. The maritime, military and technological 'triumphs of empire' are documented, but so too are their social and cultural costs. The exhibition takes a decidedly postcolonial perspective on empire and ends by discussing the creation of

multiracial Britain. A diversity of speakers on film illustrate the museum's guiding principle: to allow people of all backgrounds to learn about their unique collective history, to help them to make sense of modern British society.

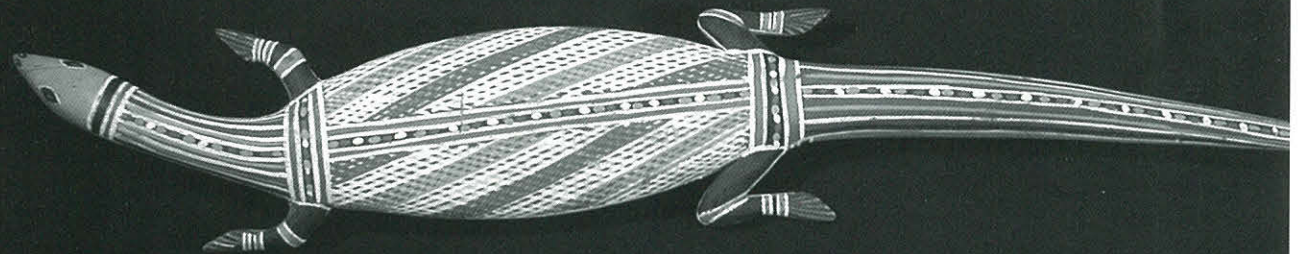
The galleries mix a wide array of objects, film, photographs and sound recordings. Many objects have been loaned from other British museums but increasing numbers are being donated. The exhibition is rich with optional additional information, including 'object information' (provided on laminated pages), flip-ups and books. Oral history is presented not only in 'sound stations' but also as quotations within black circles on the walls.

Rather like checking a book's index for references to your own place, an Australian visitor seeks and views more critically references to Australian history. Perhaps for this reason I was disappointed in the room 'Islands of Empire', dedicated to Australia and the Pacific islands during the first phase of empire-building (1480–1800). There are indigenous images and a section on 'colonizing convicts', and some other biographies, but no account of the annexation or administration of these territories, nor even a useful map. Indeed, discussion of the formal apparatus of empire seems curiously lacking in the museum — I searched in vain for any reference to the all-powerful Colonial Office

— but there are many individual accounts by colonial officials, intermixed with the experiences of people from the other side of history, in particular, aboriginal peoples.

In later discussion with a Bristol historian she agreed that weaknesses in parts of the exhibition reflect the fact that this is still a museum in the making. However, she also drew attention to a great strength not usually noticed by exhibition visitors: the museum's rapidly growing library and archive. The Oral History Archive alone holds over 1000 interviews with people who lived and worked in the Empire and the Commonwealth.

SUSAN MARSDEN IS A HISTORIAN AND HERITAGE SPECIALIST.



## UQ Anthropology Museum



THE UNIVERSITY  
 OF QUEENSLAND  
 AUSTRALIA

The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum's collection comprises over 26,000 ethnographic objects from Australia and the greater Oceanic region.

The Anthropology Museum welcomes visitors and researchers. Tours can be booked for the Gallery, and researchers are invited to browse the collection catalogue and database.

**Opening hours:** 10.30am – 2.30pm  
 Monday to Thursday  
**Location:** Level 2, Michie Building,  
 UQ St Lucia Campus  
**Telephone:** (07) 3365 2674  
**Email:** asmuseum@uq.edu.au

## AND THE ENEMY CAME BY BICYCLE

GLEN JOHNS

Main: Hotel Puri Malacca, Malaysia  
Background: 'They [Japanese soldiers] came at night by pushbike', picture from an unsourced newspaper, Hotel Muri Museum [detail]  
Courtesy of Glen Johns



Across the river at the end of Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock Street in old Malacca is the museum precinct. Alas it was a special holiday and the many wonderful public buildings were closed. Nothing to do? Don't you believe it! We just turned around and retraced our steps.

Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock Street (named Heeren Street by the Dutch and still known today as Holland Street to the locals), when settled by the Dutch in the early 1800, quickly became Malacca's 'millionaire's row'. The Dutch taxed property according to its width, so to avoid taxes the owners built long and narrow houses. The street retains its charm, with most of the houses now being faithfully restored. Some reflect the opulent living of their time, others host private museums and galleries. On the way we paused at a Chinese Society Meeting House, where

ENGLISH COLONIALISTS  
WERE OUTSMARTED  
BY A JAPANESE ARMY  
THAT LANDED IN THE  
NORTH AND MOVED  
SOUTH BY PUSHBIKE.

an artisan was painstakingly replacing the gold leaf over the entrance.

Our next stop was the Puri Hotel a notable Peranakan structure with a mixture of Chinese, Western and local styles which was the ancestral home of the descendants of Chinese migrant Tan Kim Seng, who purchased the house in 1840. Seng, who resided across the road, amassed a fortune from his rubber plantations and established a revered reputation as a philanthropist.

The hotel has been faithfully refurbished, preserving much of the original structure. Chinese couplets of good fortune, health and happiness adorn

the doors and windows. The English tiled mosaic floor of the Ancestral Hall reflects its initial beauty. Sunlight filters through the original air well in the ceiling. We rest in the comfortable chairs and absorb the atmosphere.

Refreshed, we leave by the rear door and enter the hotel's private museum. The space is small, but with the effectively chosen objects traces the history of Malaysia from the Malacca sultanates in 1400, Portuguese rule 1511, Dutch 1641, British 1795, Japan 1942–1945, and then independence from the British in 1957.

The reminder of the Japanese occupation is simple but stark. A pushbike painted black leans against the wall. The accompanying annotation reminds us that the English colonialists expected a sea-launched attack from the south, but were strategically

outsmarted by a Japanese Army that landed at Kota Bharu in the north and moved south by pushbike.

We walked from the Puri Museum into the late afternoon sunshine and decided to dine in the open air restaurant that adjoins the museum. We enjoyed our meal, not once thinking of the lions, tigers and other wild animals that once roamed the space when it was Tam Kim Seng's private zoo.

**Postscript:** Tan Ta Sen, owner of the Puri Hotel, is a museums advisor to the governments of both Malaysia and Singapore. He is currently consulting on the New National Library of Singapore which opened in July.

GLEN JOHNS IS PRESIDENT OF BOOROWA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND IS CO-ORDINATOR OF THE LACHLAN CHAPTER OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA



## MOVING ON

**Mae Adams** has replaced **Rosie Potter** at Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute in Adelaide.

**Steven Alderton** is the new Director of Lismore Regional Gallery.

**Audray Banfield**, inaugural Director of Albury Regional Gallery, is retiring in August.

**David Hansen** has resigned as Senior Curator of Arts and Humanities at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

**Leonie Hellmers** has left the National Portrait Gallery for a research position in New South Wales.



Linda Young

**Lucia Pichler**, formerly Director of Port Pirie Art Gallery, is now Director of the Riddoch Art Gallery, Mount Gambier, SA.

**Lisa Sullivan** has been appointed as new Curator of Geelong Gallery.

**Linda Young** has left Canberra for Melbourne, where she is teaching Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies at Deakin University.

## NEWS ABOUT PEOPLE

**Rani Austin**, Accessibility Development Officer for the National Archives of Australia, and author of the article 'Making Australia Home' in the May issue of *Museums Australia Magazine*, has recently spent two months in Washington as an intern in the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, including attending the annual Folklife Festival on the Mall. The Festival Director, Dr Richard Kurin, visited Australia last year to lecture on 'cultural brokerage'.

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### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Since the AGM and the very successful Sydney National Conference, 'Politics and Positioning 2005' (with many thanks to Rebecca Schultz and the team at MANSW), Council has held two teleconferences to establish connections with new representatives, nominate members of the Standing Committees and Working Parties and set the program for the remainder of the year.

Issues on the agenda to be actioned include:

- respond to the findings of the members' survey, (see MA's website for a summary of results);
- implement the strategic plan
- review the By-laws for ease of application and consistency;
- provide the Minister for the Arts and other politicians with information relevant to the museum sector

- keep a watching brief on relevant federal government policies
- build stronger ties with our fellow associations such as AICCM, ARC, ALIA, Museum Shops, CAMD, CAAMD, ICOM, ICOMOS, CHASS.

Being a member of MA means that though you live in a remote area or even an urban environment there are opportunities for you to contribute directly to the activities of the association. We need you!

Whilst many of you may only have the time to attend local MA Branch or SIG events and the annual conference, the Council welcomes those members/experts who would like to be involved with the various national Standing Committees and working parties. All you need is a telephone; an email address and a willingness to

BEING A MEMBER OF MA MEANS THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU TO CONTRIBUTE DIRECTLY TO THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSOCIATION.

contribute your ideas, energy, experience and skills.

Some committees looking for more members include:

- **External communications;**
- **Fund raising and Finance;**
- **Member Services and Marketing.**

These committees would benefit vastly from contributions from those of you in the corporate/resource/service sectors of museums. Your expertise is vital, not only to the ongoing viability of the museums you work in, but also to a balanced and active Museums Australia. Please contact Patricia Sabine (patricia.sabine@awm.gov.au) or John Cross at (exec.officer@museumsaustralia.org.au) if you would like to assist.

PATRICIA SABINE

### COMING IN MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE

**NOVEMBER 2005** → Keeping and sharing: stories from people who make Australia's museums and galleries work

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## REVIEWS

ZOË SCOTT

**Starting Right: A Basic Guide to Museum Planning.** By Gerald George & Cindy Sherrell-Leo. 2nd edition. Walnut Creek CA, AltaMira Press, 2004. ISBN: 0-7591-0556-1

I enjoyed reading *Starting Right*, as so many of the issues raised are all too relevant for community museums and their managers, still!

While the book is aimed at people considering establishing a museum, I found that much information is relevant for those already working there, and for local government staff who have museum management thrust upon them, as it were.

The book is divided into two sections, the first dealing with the hard work and responsibilities associated with museums, and the second containing checklists for budgets, policies, legalities, staffing — in fact, all the everyday museum management issues that can go so wrong if not addressed.

The book's American setting means that the money situation is very different in Australia, but *Starting Right* emphasises the necessity of researching and maintaining the museum's funding and support base. Importantly, Part 2 stresses the role of community stakeholders.

Yes, the references to American sources of assistance, and American books, are tantalising. But the references are very comprehensive and our Australian *Museum Methods* could learn from them, making the end-of-chapter information sections more national and less local.

Once you get past this minor irritation, the chapters are full of good practical information and ideas. Above all, they constantly reiterate the

importance of planning in all aspects of museum work.

A key chapter outlines the possibilities for alternatives to starting a museum. Suggestions include partnerships with other collecting groups to establish a regional museum (what a good idea!); giving collections to an existing collecting organisation with staff and facilities; holding an annual festival or commemoration day; publishing books and pamphlets to maintain heritage awareness; and — radical thought! — using that saved historic building for office space or shops whose income would fund further heritage activities.

George's and Sherrell-Leo's ideas are aimed at people thinking of establishing an institution, but the suggestions offered are also worth considering by 'mature' museums and heritage groups. While there are always new museums starting up, there are always some struggling to survive.

The authors say plainly: 'It makes no more sense to turn over a community museum to an inexperienced volunteer to manage than it would to turn over the local health clinic or public library to an untrained person.' (104)

Many would consider these fightin' words. I'd say the context in which the statement is made provides valuable food for thought.

From my viewpoint, our local and state governments, and especially local communities, don't take the management of the community's built and object heritage as seriously as they do the management of an art gallery or library.

Why do people consider that the nation's movable cultural heritage is of less value than books or artworks, in terms



Zoë Scott 'building social capital' with the President of the Rockhampton Historical Society at the Rockhampton City Council's inaugural Heritage Conference last year

Courtesy of Zoë Scott

of provision of responsible professional management?

We are not always going to have volunteers available to take care of the distributed national collection. In fact, as a Museum Development Officer, I constantly work with museum communities that are in crisis due to the decline in volunteers.

*Starting Right* asserts the real positives that accrue to local government and

communities through the professional management of heritage collections.

The employment of professional museum workers is not just an American trait. Our trans-Tasman neighbours, per head of population, employ more professionals in community museums than Australia does.

It is more than time for the Australian museum industry to

## Extending Our Reach

### The fourth biennial International Museum Theatre Alliance (IMTAL) conference

Hosted by the National Museum of Australia, the Australian War Memorial, Old Parliament House, Questacon: the National Science and Technology Centre, the National Film and Sound Archive, and the National Gallery of Australia.

Canberra 13 – 16 October 2005

Over four exciting and engaging days, delegates from the world over will share their knowledge and expertise in the field of museum theatre and performance.

Featuring keynote speakers **Robyn Archer**, singer, writer and director, **Sam Ham**, Professor of Communication Psychology at the University of Idaho and **Catherine Hughes**, IMTAL founder, this is a conference not to be missed!

For more information, please contact Daina Harvey at the National Museum of Australia on telephone (02) 6208 5139, email [d.harvey@nma.gov.au](mailto:d.harvey@nma.gov.au) or check the website at <http://www.nma.gov.au>

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take seriously the management of community museums and their share of the distributed national collection. After all, the Carnegie Institute's report into museums in Australia in 1935 recommended the necessity of professional staff in regional and community museums.

The sensible information and practical suggestions for managing a community museum presented in *Starting Right* make this book a good starting point for that discussion.

ZOË SCOTT IS MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT OFFICER THROUGH THE QUEENSLAND MUSEUM'S MUSEUM RESOURCE CENTRE NETWORK, AND IS BASED IN ROCKHAMPTON.

KIRSTEN WEHNER

***Kylie: A travelling exhibition by the Arts Centre, Melbourne. National Portrait Gallery until 14 August; Queensland Performing Arts Centre, September–December; Powerhouse Museum, January–May 2006.***

It may be that everybody treasures a Kylie Minogue moment. A friend of mine remembers wandering through Sydney on Mardi Gras night with *Spinning Around* filling the evening air. Another broke up with his girlfriend after she played *Locomotion* for five straight hours of highway travel. And who could forget Absinthe the alcoholic green fairy from *Moulin Rouge*, or the Sydney Olympics showgirl on a thong? Wherever popular culture is, there you'll find Kylie, from our underpants to the National Portrait Gallery.

Now Kylie has her own exhibition, a travelling show produced by curator Janine Barrant of Melbourne's Arts

Centre and drawing on some 300 items donated by the songstress. The exhibition brings together a variety of objects and images. At its heart are Kylie's costumes from tour, video, film and tv performances, many of them designed by folks like Collette Dinnigan, Jean-Paul Gaultier and Dolce & Gabbana. 'Names' that even I, disciple of only a few seasons of *Sex and the City*, recognise as fashion somebodies worthy of a design student's attention.

The costumes are beautifully complemented by an extensive display of Kylie portraits. Drawn from publicity, fashion and art-house shoots, these images pay tribute both to Kylie's ability to realise many characters, and to the transformative skills of costume and make-up designers and photographers. Again, many of the 'image-makers' featured are at the height of their professions and it's wonderful to view the variety of their work.

And, of course, the exhibition includes film clips from Kylie's concerts and music videos. When I viewed the exhibition, the music was definitely a favourite with visitors, with many people watching video after video. Flip-books including scripts and performance notes add a level of interpretation rarely afforded commercial media like music video.

The exhibition is a slightly weird experience. First of all, how is it possible that anybody could ever actually fit into those hot pants? Kylie is an absolute dot of a person! ... err, sorry ... The publicity bills the show as 'the complete Kylie experience'; and I was looking forward to surrendering to the luxurious banality of pop music. It's not everyday that you can indulge a passion for the superficial en masse, particularly now that tickets to Kylie concerts are so expensive.

But the exhibition delivers only a semi-satisfying excursion into the realm of

surfaces. Through costume and images, we encounter Kylie's reincarnations as, for examples, daggy Charlene of *Neighbours* days (yes, her overalls with the flower patches are on display), seventies sex kitten in gold lurex hot pants, and hyper-sexualised vamp of *Can't Get You Out of My Head*. The photographs, in particular, depict Kylie as a canvas for the re-making of pop icons.

Curiously, however, visitors are invited to respond rather coldly to Kylie's astonishing mutability. An art gallery aesthetic dominates, demanding that we stand back and ruminate on the phenomenon of Kylie, when the natural impulse is to dive into the very cultural playfulness that makes Kylie so endearing. I was constantly wondering why the music was so quiet. How could you sing along to that? And where were the people dancing badly under a huge spinning disco ball?

In the plain light of the exhibition hall, Kylie's costumes are revealed as merely tacked together bits of fabric decorated with some rather gaudy sequins. All the skill is seen to be in the design and none in the craft (except perhaps for the expert application of 'tit tape' as it is wonderfully described in the flip-books). The costumes just don't look like quality, and quality is what you expect in an art gallery.

Even more confusing, instead of being titillated by the sliding gaze of a music video camera, you could just, well, look at the costumes. And it turns out that plastic mannequins are not very tantalising. They're sort of freaky! Removed from their natural habitat — the sound and light show — the costumes are diminished and their interpretation as milestones in the evolution of high fashion rings a little hollow.

This disjunction between the exhibition and its subject

is also evident in the exhibition text. The labels seek to reveal Ms Minogue as a serious artist. They discuss her 'significant contributions' to the arts of music and performance, lamenting how these are often obscured by her commercial success. Yet this all sounds a bit desperate — an attempt to recover an on-going celebration of the contingency of cultural meanings to a regime of value grounded in expert judgements of significance. I wonder if the curators would agree when Kylie says, as she does, that it's all about the fans.

To be honest, I can't quite decide whether *Kylie* fails as a coherent exhibition or manages to pull off a subtle exploration of the post-modern gaze in popular culture. As a friend who came along with me remarked, he couldn't quite decide whether he felt overwhelmed, bored, gay or terribly pervy. For me, *Kylie* was a lot of fun, even if not quite as much mindless fun as I'd hoped, and a source of many conversations.

KIRSTEN WEHNER IS A SENIOR CURATOR AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA.

ANDREA WITCOMB

***Grasping the world: The idea of the Museum. Edited by Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, Ashgate, Ashgate and Burlington, 2004. 779 pp.***

***Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts, edited by Bettina Messias Carbonell, Blackwell, Malden, Oxford and Carlton, 2004.***

If the weight of these two books is anything to go by, museology has not only arrived in academia and in the publishing world — it also has a history long enough and weighty enough to catch the

scholarly eye. Museology has become a discipline. But as with other disciplines, the moment of its codification, of its arrival, is also the moment of its greatest danger for it risks becoming ossified and set in its ways.

For these two books can be taken as a 'Dictionary of Received Ideas', as marking the boundaries of our thinking in relation to both the history of museums and museum practices. And while there are certainly signs of this danger, there is also hope that there are still some cracks in the fortifications which will allow the discipline to renew itself and keep its outlook alive.

Both books offer a carefully selected collection of previously published articles, and extracts from books. In doing so, the editors are also at pains to explain their selection by offering an introductory essay to the book and to each thematic section. Of interest therefore is not only their choice of works but also their choice of themes as interpretative frameworks for their selections. Of almost equal interest are all the possibilities they do not take up.

While the editors of both books are careful to point out the provisional nature of their choices, pointing to the possibility of other arrangements of the same material and providing an extended bibliography, each book has a distinctive pattern which is worth pointing out in light of the dangers mentioned above.

*Grasping the World: The idea of the museum* is a book with a narrow focus. Despite its weight (779 pages), *Grasping the World* is only concerned with the history of ideas about museums, not with the world of everyday practice.

This focus would not be a problem if the way it was represented was more inclusive. However, this interest is limited to discussions about the idea of museums from

within the academy, mostly from within the disciplines of art history and anthropology and, in a very minor way, from history and cultural studies.

Further, its selections are informed by the cultural theory of the last thirty to forty years. Theory is such a strong impulse that three of its six chapters include work by major theorists such as Michel Foucault, Michel De Certeau and Homi Bhabha. Their names point to the main motivation of the editors — to show how the museum, as both idea and institution, has always been implicated in relations of power and will continue to be so.

It is thus not surprising that the six chapters of the book, despite the attempt to use different themes, end up replicating the same point from different perspectives.

There is the history of power relations in the early incarnation of museums as cabinets of curiosities, the history of power relations in museums in the age of nations, of empire and more recently its failed attempts at democratisation.

While all of the essays selected were important at the moment of their first publication and offered a much needed critical commentary on museums, their republication needs a further effort at contextualising — one that is not offered by these editors. They need to be offered not only as providing a history of and critical engagement with 'the museum' but also as marking a particular moment in the history of ideas about museums.

In other words, the selection of works and their editorial framing is in danger of ossifying both museums themselves and the intellectual apparatus we use to study them, despite the strength of the tools and the skills of those who deploy them. The result is a book which offers little in the way of new insights, tends to assume that the job of the critic is to unmask

the real museum, and that neither museum professionals nor museum audiences have the critical skills to do this for themselves.

*Museum Studies: An anthology of contexts* provides an interesting contrast. Equally weighty at 640 pages, its conceptualisation is much broader.

To begin with there is the choice of authors. There are museum professionals from the late eighteenth century through to the twenty first. There are poets and novelists. And there are those who study museums from within the academy as well.

This broader spectrum of voices opens up the field immediately — there is an interest in the history of the idea of the museum. The voices who reflect this interest however are not only late twentieth-century ones.

There is an interest in how this history of ideas is reflected in actual practices and how museum professionals themselves think through the issues. And there is an interest in what audiences make of museums — both through the work of poets and novelists but also in the emergence of audience studies.

The result is not only a capturing of a more interdisciplinary museum studies, but a more nuanced understanding of the way in which power relations are produced, maintained and even challenged in museums.

There are continuities of course, and even a sharing of authors, although these are surprisingly few in number — only three.

As in *Grasping the World*, *Museum Studies* offers a focus on the early history of museums, the relationship between museums and the nation and museums and empire. Issues of class, race and gender are canvassed.

But the range of museums represented is wider and

includes, for example, more natural history and social history museums, as well as art and anthropology. The most important difference however is the inclusion of essays that deal directly with the relationship between museums and audiences and the inclusion of a more varied set of voices.

Neither of these collections deals effectively with the links between museums and tourism, museums and contemporary media culture, or the importance of pleasure in museum visiting.

Other than offering an encyclopedia of some of the most important reflective pieces on museums and their practices, what do collections like these offer the reader?

For the student they offer ease of access to important moments in the history of thinking about museums, as well as important analysis of the history of museums. *Museum Studies* is particularly useful in this context offering as it does access to pieces that are not deposited in most Australian libraries.

But for the Australian student neither book offers a one stop shop in museology, as there are issues that are left out and most importantly, no representation of Australian museums. Both are dominated by North American, British and a few European voices looking at their own museums.

For the museum professional interested in engaging in a critical reflection on their practice and the history of the museum as an institution, both books offer a lot. As well as a guide to recent thinking, they offer insights into the history of museums and the effects of that history today.

The effect is to sharpen the awareness of our own practices, be able to identify them and think through their effects.

For example, I am taking away two valuable insights from *Grasping the World* — the first is the extract from Stephen

Bann's book *The Clothing of Clío*, in which he explains how objects have come to have meaning within narratives which represent these meanings as intrinsic to them when in fact they are external to them. Understanding how we produce meanings around objects is therefore central to the way in which we might produce new kinds of narratives — an essential task in the new conservative environment in which we find ourselves.

The importance of this task is for me further highlighted by Preziosi's and Farago's proposition that what we need to do now is to move beyond the attempt to achieve fair representation through a model that assumes that it is possible to give equal representation to all. What is needed, they suggest, is a recognition of the basic fallibility of the framework of representation itself.

Given the debates around the National Museum of Australia of late, this is a proposition which is worth thinking about.

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MOYA SMITH

***Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader.* Edited by Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown. Routledge, London, 2003. ISBN: 0-415-2052-2.**

This collection of papers goes far beyond anthropology to deal with relationships between museums and the communities whose objects are collected, stored, researched and exhibited. It tackles issues of ownership and control, not just of cultural objects and images, but also the construction and

maintenance of identity through the materials that museums house.

Editors Peers and Brown envisage a target audience of museum staff working with communities, communities working with museums, and students of social anthropology or museum studies. I would suggest that this easy-to-approach reader would be ideal for anyone interested in 'the human experience' or in the various significances of objects and the people with whose lives they intersect.

The thirteen essays are grouped in three themes, each with an introductory essay: museums as a 'contact zone' or field site; repatriation of images and their content — knowledge of ancestors, history and material culture; and case studies of exhibitions based on collaboration. The essays draw on experiences of source communities in Australia, the Pacific, Africa and North America.

Contact zone essays tie together Old and New World, each essay sharing the understanding that objects are a powerful medium for transforming relationships of power between communities and institutions. Fiennup-Riordan describes the visit of Alaskan Yup'ik elders to Berlin's Ethnologisches Museum. While museums are frequently said to fear such visits as the basis for demands for repatriation, this visit enriched all. The curators learned more about the objects, and the elders and accompanying anthropologist learned from each other and were stimulated with knowledge they could share back home: 'With this work, our roots and culture will come closer to us.' (37)

Similarly the Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition program developed with Sikh communities transformed the relationship between the institution and the community,



Noongar Visitor Services Officer Jeff Kickett in *Katta Djinoong — First Peoples of Western Australia*, the newly reopened reinvigorated multivocal exhibition in the Western Australian Museum, 2005.

Courtesy of Helen Healy

recognising the need to devise strategies to sustain the positive relationship after the specific exhibition.

*Museums and Source Communities* articulates the philosophical underpinning of policies such as *Museums Australia's Continuing Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities*. Yet its case studies reflect what could best be seen as a lack of institutional commitment to the theory. 'Typically anthropology [and archaeology and history, I'd add] curators are the interface between the museums and a source community, while few other museum employees may be involved in co-managed projects.' (10)

I found the section on the repatriation of images particularly moving, given the emotional response amongst community members to the individuals, places and events they recalled, revealed or relearned by viewing images. In our own Museum, a group of Desert women began 'crying for country' as they saw photos taken some forty years ago when they were teenagers. Images are indeed powerful, possibly more evocative than objects.

We have to acknowledge that for museum staff the return of images may be less confronting than the return of objects. After all, images can be copied, can remain in collections, can remain within curatorial

control. Throughout *Museums and Source Communities*, one senses the schizophrenia that besets curators negotiating competing interests. At least one author notes that in the end he did not leave images with community since they wouldn't last in tropical conditions. Well, they may not last long, but sometimes the act of returning them, whether they endure or not, is very powerful. It is salutary however to remember that 'not all reconnections with collections will be positive'. (151)

The final theme in the volume focuses on community collaborations in exhibitions. Philips identifies two prevailing models for collaborative exhibitions: community-based or driven, or multivocal. In the first, museum curators are facilitators for communities to represent themselves, whereas multivocal exhibitions are a framework for multiple perspectives. The latter is most familiar in Australian museums. A pithy reading of non-collaborative exhibitions comes from a coastal Salish man (Vancouver) '[It's] like having a stranger decorate your home, all the objects are there, but the feel is wrong' (175).

I found *Museums and Source Communities* an incredibly stimulating collection of essays. It pulls together cases from around the world, exploring and articulating many of the



Worora man, 'Samson, 6 feet 6 inches tall', on a mangrove pole raft, Camden Harbour, Kimberley, 1917. While this is clearly a romanticised image it is also one that Aboriginal community members frequently request  
 Photographer William Jackson; WA Museum Anthropology collection

issues that cannot be ignored in museums dealing with cultural property, no matter the source.

My only concern is that the politics of engagement between museums and source communities receive little attention. There is no discussion about paths when local communities are not in agreement, nor is there any reminder that there may be legislation that constrains both sides. There seems regrettably little place for curatorial expertise, and no acknowledgement that it may be disingenuous to foist decisions upon communities.

Nonetheless, 'You should read this great book I'm reviewing!' I've lost count of the number of times I have said this about *Museums and Source Communities!*

MOYA SMITH IS AN ETHNO-ARCHAEOLOGIST AND HEAD OF THE WA MUSEUM'S DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY. SHE CURATED KATTA DJINOONG, AND IS COMMITTED TO MULTIVOCAL EXHIBITIONS!

**LINDA YOUNG**

**'Objects of Desire: Erotic, tactile and spiritual': Radio National's The Deep End 'Your Gallery' project at the Newcastle Region Art Gallery.**

'An experiment in democracy, art and reality radio' opened in May at the Newcastle Region Gallery. Er, what?

Well, you had to be a Radio National listener to understand, but that's probably a high proportion of *Museums Australia Magazine* readers, so you already know that it was an audience-curated exhibition, coordinated by ABC presenter Vicki Kerrigan and Newcastle Gallery Director Nick Mitzevich.

As you probably suspected, it was all a bit of a gimmick. The show was 'curated' by weekly on-line voting among a number of options. As the project web page notes, the vote was 'simply a straw poll', which The Deep End felt should not bear any serious interpretation.

But it's the evidence for a product and the mechanism of its process, so a canter through its parameters seems

justifiable in the context of discussing professional practice in museum public programs.

The project began very correctly with the question, 'What kind of visitors do you want to attract to Your Gallery?' Touchingly, 64 per cent of voters envisaged that the show should be for people who rarely or never go to art galleries.

The vote split on selecting a title theme, between 'Objects of Desire' and 'Controversy', but the former won fairly securely. Listeners were more certain that the show should draw on the entire span of the Gallery's collection, rather than, say, twentieth-century works only, or contemporary. There followed four weeks of choosing works from given lists, viewable on-line.

Participants were much less confident in deciding what kind of label texts should accompany the works and opted for a mixture. The biggest proportion of discrete ideas, which wasn't very big, thought labels should comply with standard minimal practice. Opinion on the style of the hang was also conventional.

Planning the opening occupied a couple more weeks, with decisions about champagne and oysters versus white wine and chicken sandwiches, and the nature of the musical accompaniment. The opening was broadcast live on The Deep End, with a further Radio National spot the following weekend.

You'd have to say 'Your Gallery' was a big, playful success for the Newcastle Region Gallery: ten weeks of weekly RN focus is wonderful public coverage. Congratulations, Nick!

As a public participation project, it's a healthy reminder that the steam technology of radio in tandem with internet interactivity can generate horsepower to propel an art museum into the ken of a large number of people. Or is the sum of Radio National listeners already composed of museumgoers who need no encouragement?

From the point of view of taking listeners through the steps of developing an exhibition, 'Your Gallery' surely raised consciousness about the business end of museum work. (It was irritating that presenter Kerrigan consistently spoke of putting on a gallery, rather than an exhibition, a line that is semantically faintly plausible, but probably not what she meant).

As a purposeful exhibition of art presenting some identifiable idea or perspective, I thought the product of 'Your Gallery' was pretty thin, but luckily the Gallery was chock full of other, very substantial exhibitions.

Utterly engrossing was 'World Towns', a huge montage of panorama photographs by Newcastle-based Allan Chawner, detailing urban places and the people who inhabit them. These intense glimpses of other people's worlds veritably sucked visitors through 'Your Gallery' into what

appeared to be long, satisfying museum-looking.

Downstairs was the second installation of 'Town & Country: portraits of colonial homes and gardens', travelling from the Bendigo Art Gallery. Composed of works by accomplished house-portraitists such as Martens and von Guerard as well as more humble sketchers, the exhibition includes several rare works, some from private collections.

Curated by Tracey Cooper-Lavery, it is a treat of a show for history/heritage fanciers and connoisseurs of colonial art, with good catalogue essays by Jane Clark and James Broadbent but regrettably little detail in the labels. It's a nice catalogue, unfortunately subverted by production in A5 dimensions, which means that reproductions at anything less than full page size (and many are) are useless postage stamps. A shame.

If anyone besides me visited the Newcastle Region Gallery specifically to have a squizz at 'Your Gallery', I reckon they must have found more than something of interest. It's a dead-smart operation. Free entry?

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CAMPBELL BICKERSTAFF

***Presenting Pictures*. Edited by Bernard Finn. 'Artefacts' series: Studies in the History of Science and Technology. London, Science Museum, 2004. ISBN: 1-900747-54-5**

*Presenting Pictures* is a compendium of essays exploring the development and impact of communication and photographic technologies. Subjects include the usual

suspects — printing press, photography, fax and internet — as well as more obscure cases such as chronophotography and mail tubes. The essays constitute an ambitious archaeology of objects from collections around the world, written by museum professionals.

The essay methods fall broadly into four categories. There are those that muse philosophically upon material and its interpretation. Some are broad annotations of specific collection fields with directions to primary material and appreciations of their significance, accessibility and interpretation within cultural institutions. Others are chronological explorations of specific technologies and their developments, cleverly articulated through the socialisation of the technologies. And yet others are expositions on the bodies of work of specific pioneers in the field.

The volume offers substantial, clear and exciting starting points to reappraise existing collections and histories of image and communications technologies. For instance, Larry Schaaf's essay details the origin and dispersal of William Henry Fox Talbot's apparatus, workshop, tools and prints, providing a novel account of its sporadic and, at times, questionable distribution; it also details their present location. Jonathan Coopersmith's foray into the development of the facsimile machine offers a succinct social analysis of that technology. The history of a device now ubiquitous is cleverly articulated through a study of the technology's advances, acceptance and final market penetration.

Other authors bring to light hidden and obscure material, create order and coherence where there is little or chaos and offer enlightened

ruminations on the significance of their fields. Just such a study is that by Cornelia Kemp on the subject of Ernst Kohlrausch and his experimentation with chronophotography. Kohlrausch's chronophotographic machines rotated photographic plates to a static exposure point, thus eliminating perspective changes unresolved by others. As a result he was able to produce images that accurately captured changes in movement and enabled him to extract precise physiological measurements from his chronophotograph sets. Kemp's close examination of his prototypes, working models and photographs reveal the weaknesses in the work of other pioneers in the field such as Muybridge and Marey.

*Presenting Pictures* publishes findings that show us what effective research can extract from collections and how it can be applied to display. Specially interesting is Steven F. Joseph's commentary on the new presentation in the communications gallery at the Conservatoire Nationale des Arts et Métiers (CNAM) in Paris, discussing the narrative structure that drives the layout of objects. The display now charts the reception, growth and expansion of the technology, seen as

phases in the socialisation of photographic technology. The author laments the atmosphere of luxury and aesthetics in conventional displays of photographic material, and describes how the CNAM's approach, by contrast, was guided by the principle of process-leading-to-product that underpinned CNAM's historical collecting methods.

What these essays deliver, where other volumes concerned with the field may not, is to bring the reader back again and again to the object or the person. In this, the studies differ from broad histories of technology, because they spring from particular, surviving objects and archives in museums. John Ward's appreciation of the Walter Nurnburg photograph collection is a good example, resting on the presence and power of the original images. Ward describes Nurnburg's training, philosophy and understanding of his subject and how this was exercised in his photographic technique by incorporating dramatic staging and lighting. However it is Nurnburg's original photographic prints that deliver the most powerful evidence.

There is little to criticise in this excellent collection of studies. I feel that Oskar Blumtritt's essay on Manfred



Courtesy of Campbell Bickerstaff



von Ardenne and the flying spot scanner touches too lightly on, and even omits, important contributions by others in the field. However, considering that research in television camera development is loaded with the baggage of decades of corporate propaganda leading to inaccurate and biased histories, Blumtritt brings praiseworthy understanding to his subject.

Before urging readers to part with their hard-earned ready to buy *Presenting Pictures*, I should come clean with my personal passion for the subject — most of the research in this book fits and feeds neatly into my own at the Powerhouse. At the same time, the styles, methodologies and sources contained in this book provide a variety and spice that should also invite wider audiences interested in communication, technology and design.

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LIZZIE ANYA-PETRIVNA

***The Art of Keeping House: A Practical and Inspirational Guide.* By the staff of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW. Melbourne, Hardie Grant Books, 2004. ISBN: 1-74066-158-3.**

House museum curators are often asked for advice by visitors who are either enthusiastic home renovators or owners of personally significant objects that require care. This poses interesting philosophical and diplomatic challenges. It frequently needs a certain translation to explain decision-making in conserving historic interiors and collection

objects at the museum level. Ideally, explaining the difference should inspire appreciation of this highly specialised professional skill.

*The Art of Keeping House* anticipates the need, and while it addresses the general audience and their homes rather than the house museum, it draws on the Historic Houses Trust's extensive curatorial expertise.

The book reviews the many readings of 'keeping' — what is it that we do when we 'keep' house? Do we pay 'due regard', and 'retain possession of,' or is it more that we do 'not lose or destroy', but 'maintain, preserve, and reserve'? These dictionary definitions present a nice semantic exercise, for they change according to context, museum (public) or home (private). In practice, the book considers the latter definitions.

On approaching *The Art of Keeping House* I hoped to discover how that most subjective of spaces, the home, and its care, could be informed by a text published within a museological framework. I was interested to observe how the specialist language and practice of conservation science could be transformed into a practical 'how to' guide. Not to disappoint, the text describes techniques such as cleaning methods in sensible, accessible language, intermingled with advice 'curios' from nineteenth-century manuals in popular use in Australia.

The seven contributors provide overviews of Australian historical styles, decorative treatments for building elements and furniture, and cleaning techniques, including twentieth-century materials. The book's design announces a decidedly contemporary feel. It is illustrated throughout with an appealing focus on mid-twentieth-century interiors, which are beautifully photographed, with surprises in colour and choice.

*The Art of Keeping House* joins a long tradition of household manuals, and the bibliography reveals the expected stalwarts of domestic advice, alongside texts on interior decoration. A book that straddles both domestic and museum purposes, the English *National Trust Book of Housekeeping* (1984; I believe it is being re-published) has dominated the genre for twenty years. It describes preventative conservation embedded in traditional housekeeping practice, imparted in a very pragmatic voice, and concentrates on cleaning and care as the major work of housekeeping.

By contrast, *The Art of Keeping House* splits the focus into cleaning and decoration. It seems to position housekeeping as a supplement to the glamour of decoration and ornament, to the point of omitting kitchen and bathroom service areas from its decorative ambit. At the same time, this in no way compromises the quality of the advice.

Museum houses are reclaimed private spaces, put to public use. The decisions made in conserving significant interiors in a museum space are based on policy frameworks; the decisions made in a private home are, of course, subjective. Museum approaches are therefore generally inappropriate for modern private housekeeping. On this topic, *The Art of Keeping House* is gentle in its advice, which is really the only position to take.

The introduction, where some of these philosophical issues are deftly raised, might be overlooked by the non-professional reader, as the book is structured for quick reference. This is great for ease of use, but I would have liked to see the arguments about preservation/maintenance versus reconstruction/

reproduction come across more clearly.

*The Art of Keeping House* covers caring for objects, though the personal reasons why people keep and collect are not explored. Something on collecting would have been welcome here, and there is plenty to be said — which is perhaps why it's not included! It would also have been interesting to include some personal anecdotes from the curator-writers, stories from their own professional experience. (The authors would probably agree. If only publishers would too!)

The book is oriented toward an Australia-wide readership. The difficulty of this approach is noted, but the attempt to incorporate advice for differing Australian contexts — regional conditions, differences in manufacture, colonial styles — is perhaps too massive an undertaking. The result is understandably NSW-centric, though with some South Australian examples. Nonetheless, the book has broad potential outside the confines of the museum shop.

To echo a familiar lament from earlier domestic advice books, a household manual is a project that fulfils a need. *The Art of Keeping House* may well succeed in its aim to inspire the 'art' of cleaning, even in an age when caring for your Ikea presents interesting conundrums, and the notion of 'furniture for life' seems an archaic ideal.

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## CASHING IN ON CURRENCY

Budding Donald Trumps, and those of us fascinated by money, should put the new Museum of Australian Currency Notes at the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) on their list of things to do in Sydney. Conveniently located on the 'museum mile' at the corner of Macquarie Street and Martin Place, visitors can combine this with visits to other attractions such as Parliament House, the Mint and Hyde Park Barracks.

Ian McFarlane, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, said 'the objectives of the Museum are to display to the public currency notes and related material held in the Bank's archives and tell the story of how Australia's currency notes have reflected the country's economic and political development'.

These objectives are achieved admirably in the Museum of Australian Currency Notes. A clear and focused mandate from the RBA Governor gives this relatively small, 'single issue' museum an advantage over much larger museums that need to be 'all things to all people'.

The museum is on the ground floor of the RBA head office,

and is easily accessed by the public, including by wheelchair. The Reserve Bank building is heritage listed, and great care has been taken to integrate the museum design and construction with the marble and black granite structures and general ambience of the original building.

The museum explores five stages of currency note development: Before Federation (1788–1900); A New Currency (1900–1920); The Commonwealth Bank and the Note Issue (1920–1960); The Reserve Bank and Reform of the Currency (1960–1988); and A New Era — Polymer Currency Notes (1988 onwards).

Well-crafted displays of coins, notes and other objects, and good graphics with clear text document the early years of the fledgling colony through to the end of the twentieth century, providing extensive information on the men and women represented on Australia's notes over the years. Plasma screens show archival film and photographs of Australian social, economic and political development, as well as allowing visitors to appreciate the detail of various

features of our currency notes.

The artefacts are fascinating and have been well mounted and displayed. There is plenty of space to pause and reflect, and the lighting levels are comfortable. The only audio in the museum is of the dollar bill jingle (to the tune of 'Click Go the Shears') used in the publicity campaign to introduce decimal currency in 1966.

Displays of artwork used in the design of various notes have proved a big drawcard for visitors interested in art and design. There is a particularly interesting display on the creation of our current polymer (plastic) notes, which have placed Australia at the forefront of currency note technology around the world. Over twenty countries have now issued polymer currency notes using Australian polymer substrate technology.

The exhibition works well on a number of levels. It successfully imparts a great deal of information, appeals to our Australian identity, and is aesthetically pleasing. In an unexpected way, the Museum of Australian Currency Notes succeeds where some major social history museums fail.

It demonstrates how Australia's currency notes are an everyday symbol of who we are and how we have seen ourselves over the years.

Students from Years 6 to 12 will find a visit to the museum, either in person or through its website, stimulating and rewarding. It is a must for students of Economics, Commerce and Business Studies, and is also recommended for History, Geography and Visual Arts students.

The Museum of Australian Currency Notes is located at the Reserve Bank of Australia, 65 Martin Place, Sydney NSW 2000, telephone 02 9551 9743, email [museum@rba.gov.au](mailto:museum@rba.gov.au)

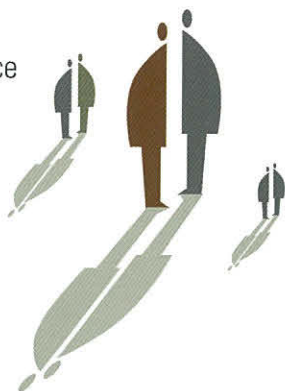
The Museum is open between 10am and 4pm Monday to Friday (except public holidays and NSW Bank Holidays), and admission is free.

JANE WESLEY HAS WORKED IN EXHIBITION RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT FOR MANY YEARS, AND HAS CURATED AND PROJECT MANAGED A NUMBER OF HIGHLY ACCLAIMED EXHIBITIONS THAT HAVE TOURED BOTH NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.

Museums Australia National Conference

# Exploring Dynamics

Cities, Cultural Spaces, Communities



# 06

May 14–17  
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## CALL FOR PAPERS

*Exploring Dynamics: Cities, Cultural Spaces, Communities* will examine the dynamics and priorities that exist both within and outside museum and gallery walls and will ask how these concerns are reflected in strategic thinking and programs. It will endeavour to advance discussion on key tasks of the sector:

- exploring the dynamics of design, cultural space and collections, place and publics.
- understanding the social and political drivers and the diversity of our communities.
- establishing and sustaining mutually beneficial, creative and profitable collaborations with individuals and organisations.

The 2006 Conference will also aim to foster a dialogue on relevance and engagement with a wider world.

We welcome papers and collaborative panels, as well as poster and skill sessions, that tackle these issues, inspire debate and offer examples of constructive outcomes.

We welcome papers, themed panels, posters and skill sessions that address these challenges, stimulate debate and provide examples of creative solutions.

We invite contributions from individuals and groups within museums, galleries, the wider arts and natural history fields, and beyond to address one of the following sub-themes:

### EXPLORING DYNAMICS: CITIES

What is a city? Who belongs to a city? Can we understand the city as a museum or collection? What is the role of art galleries and museums in the life of a city?

### EXPLORING DYNAMICS: CULTURAL SPACES

What were and what are our cultural spaces? How do people claim and subvert them? What marks a cultural space?

### EXPLORING DYNAMICS: COMMUNITIES

What do communities want from museums and art galleries? Do we generate social capital or erode it? Do people use or visit us?

### EXPLORING DYNAMICS: REMOTE & REGIONAL ISSUES

How can we sustain regional and remote museums and art galleries? What are the strategies, challenges and successes in working with local government, engaging communities and broadening audiences?

**CLOSING DATE FOR ABSTRACTS → 16 SEPTEMBER 2005**

Details on preparing and submitting an abstract can be found at [www.museumsaustralia.org.au](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au)

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