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FEBRUARY 2006



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Contributions from those involved or interested in museums and galleries are welcome.

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Additional articles can be found at
www.museumsaustralia.org.au

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Li Shuqin, Spring returns, made in 1962, Colour wood block print
Courtesy Ministry of Culture People's Republic of China
Exhibition toured in Australia by the Embassy of the Peoples Republic of China in Australia.

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National Director

RE-IMAGINING MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA

Early in November I joined Museums Australia as National Director. Outgoing Executive Officer, John Cross, was fortunately able to continue work on contract from Melbourne for several months. I was immeasurably assisted in gaining an understanding of recent organisational history and membership, activities and programs by John's assiduous collegiality and his expertise in working with Museums Australia. (Congratulations to John on his new position in the adult learning field.)

Over three months of reacquainting myself with the national body, it has been challenging to revisit the reasons for creating this single national association in January 1994. Museums Australia was formed to answer some national needs that could not to be addressed effectively by a series of separate museums bodies (some going back to the 1940s) serving particular disciplinary interests: natural history and science (MAA); art (AMAA); and education (MEAA).

These associations did pioneering work: meeting professional needs for basic training and standards development, and building collegiate principles, comparative practices and ethical norms. They served their communities well, especially by exchanging professional knowledge. However they could never speak with a 'national' voice - either professionally or to governments.

Museums Australia has now existed as a national body for twelve years. It is particularly service-oriented in its provision at the state, local and regional levels, especially through MA State Branch offices. MA has also continued specialist museum activities focused on disciplinary contexts or shared themes for professional work through Special Interest Groups (SIGs).

Long-standing objectives continue to animate the efforts of the National Office in Canberra's Old Parliament House: advocacy, policy and program development, assistance to far-flung cultural communities, professional advice to governmental agencies, training, membership service, standards, community awareness, and interaction with cultural and natural heritage bodies nationally.

Museums Australia is considering possible measures to re-engage specialist constituencies that might not be so involved in general museum affairs, as well as fostering professional initiatives that embrace cross-functional concerns and diversity. Possibilities of change are being explored to strengthen the association as a useful, centrally co-ordinated body, but also as a geographically dispersed, well-networked national agency of social and cultural development - through the multiple communities that museums serve.

Over the coming months I will work with Council to seek advice from members, professional constituencies, and other partners and agencies in the cultural heritage sector. We intend to maintain an effective national association, achieve long-term sustainability, and provide value and service to the members of the association and the constituencies to which their work is addressed.

Bernice Murphy

National Director, Museums Australia

(Past Vice-President, ICOM (1998-2004) & current Chair, ICOM Ethics Committee)

From the President

Hopefully you have had the chance to absorb the rich offerings of the Exploring Dynamics Conference Registration Brochure for MA's annual conference in Brisbane May 14 -17 2006. If not could I recommend that you take the time, especially if you have not yet decided whether you are coming to Brisbane this year!

Now apart from experiencing the pleasures of an energetic sub-tropical city in late autumn, one with a dynamic mix of the contemporary and the historic in museums, art galleries and botanic gardens, you can expect challenge, differing and confirming ideas, and debate, wherever you are from in Australia's museum world, curatorial, public programs or corporate.

The Queensland organising committee has invited twenty-three local and international keynote speakers, selected papers from over eighty of your colleagues and planned a strong Regional and Remote Program. They have managed an excellent balance of content around the conference sub-themes of cities, cultural spaces and communities and attracted extensive support from both sponsors and participating organisations. I would like to thank our sponsors, our bursary providers and our supporters, in particular the Australian Government through the Minister for the Arts, Senator the Honorable Rod Kemp, and DoCITA for enabling the Regional and Remote program.

But a conference is only as good as its audience, where discussing the addresses presented over a cup of coffee or at a social event, starts to generate the ideas and actions for which we have come together.

Coming to this conference will also be important from the perspective of future directions for Museums Australia. At the AGM National Council will put forward a framework for future development of the organisation. It is our annual opportunity to meet you, our members, face to face and to take a real measure of how well we are serving you and where you are wanting to go.

So please, take up the financial benefits of being an early bird registrant, convince a friend to come with you and don't forget to submit your entry for MAPDA. I look forward to catching up with you in Brisbane.

Patricia Sabine, President

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to another year of *Museums Australia Magazine*, this time in a new format that will allow us to bring you news and views about museums and galleries in a lively and timely fashion.

As I mentioned in the November issue we are, in effect, splitting *Museums Australia Magazine* into two modes of delivery. The paper-based magazine you are now reading will still appear quarterly, but will be slimmer. The magazine's on-line component, MAM On-line, is located in the Members' Section of the MA website. It will carry articles uploaded at the time the print magazine is sent to members, and will also be updated every month with news, articles and more to keep you in touch with what is happening in the sector. An MA Bulletin will be sent to members alerting you to new items uploaded to MAM On-line as they appear.

Each print version of *Museums Australia Magazine* will carry a short description of each article and a section of each review uploaded to the website. You can find these under Stories On-line and Reviews On-line on pages 11-12 and 14-15 of this issue. A key advantage of this approach is that we can now accommodate longer articles and reviews than has been the case in the past, complete with references if the authors have provided these.

Roslyn Russell

Managing Editor, Museums Australia Magazine

News about People

Rebekah Butler, formerly of Umbrella Studio, is now Director of Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery.

Grace Cochrane has retired from the position of Senior Curator, Decorative Arts at the Powerhouse Museum.

Michael Desmond has left the Powerhouse Museum and is now Curator at the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra.

Stephen Fox has left Old Parliament House to become Project Manager for Gallery Development at the National Museum of Australia.

Audrey Hoffman has retired as Director of Warwick Art Gallery. The new Director is Karina Devine, formerly of Dogwood Crossing@Miles.



Jennifer Phipps, formerly Curator of Early Modern Australian Art at the National Gallery of Victoria has left the Gallery to become an independent curator and valuer.

Dr Michael Pickering is now Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program at the National Museum of Australia.

Photo: Roslyn Russell



Martin Portus has left his position as Director, Public Affairs at the National Museum of Australia to take up a position as Senior Policy Adviser to the Lord Mayor of Parramatta.

Photo: George Serras, National Museum of Australia



Audrey Hoffman (far left) and Karina Devine (third from right) with Vicky Warden at 'Collections Matter', Small Museums Conference, Caboolture, Queensland, October 2005.

Photo: Roslyn Russell

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Regional Roundup

VERA HATTON WINS ARTS AWARD



Vera Hatton

Photo: Courtesy of Lady Denman Heritage Complex

Vera Hatton, a very well known identity in museum circles, has won the 2005 Shoalhaven Arts Award for her role in establishing the Lady Denman Maritime Museum at Huskisson, NSW, as well as for her wider role on the Arts Advisory Council, Co-ordinator for the Illawarra and Southern Highlands Chapter of MA, and her role in encouraging and raising standards in museums generally. Vera had been Honorary Curator at the Lady Denman since the inception of the Museum in the mid 1980s - some twenty years - as well as serving as a member of the Board. She retired after Graham Hinton was appointed as part time Curator earlier in 2005.

Robyn Oliver

Director

Lady Denman Maritime Museum

TEA COSIES TRIUMPHANT



Karina Devine

Photo: Roslyn Russell

Karina Devine, formerly of Dogwood Crossing@Miles, (Murilla Shire, Queensland) shows off the winner in a tea cosy competition that attracted 300 entries during the MAID in Murilla (Moving Arts into Dogwood in Murilla) playwrights' festival. This event, Karina told the delegates to the Small Museums Conference, 'Collections Matter', at Caboolture, Queensland, in October last year, put Miles on the map as 'the Tea Cosy Capital of Australia'. For more details of Dogwood Crossing@Miles see <http://www.dogwoodcrossing.com/>

Dogwood Crossing @ Miles is a place to relax and explore the local life stories and legends. View art and craft works by local artisans in the Art Gallery or use the computer database to explore the wealth of local talent.

CHINESE PRINTS ON GOLD COAST

Gold Coast City Art Gallery is hosting an exhibition, *Selected Chinese Prints of the 20th Century 1900-1999*, to celebrate the beginning of the Year of the Dog. The exhibition runs until 12 March and offers a fascinating glimpse into China's history and culture through printmaking, in a time of massive upheavals and change. For public programs associated with the exhibition, go to gallery@gcac.com.au 

For contact details of branches see:

www.museumsaustralia.org.au

Point of View

MUSEUMS ARE FOR THE MIDDLE-AGED!

Who are museums for? A newly-arrived Martian looking at websites and public programs listings would easily conclude that museums are for children, what with dedicated kids' pages and discovery centres and holiday programs.

The Martian wouldn't be alone. It's a well-attested idea among Earthlings that museums are for kids, a stereotype of public expectation: museums are good for kids.

And it's true: museums couldn't sustain the public faith if it wasn't. Museums do offer fabulous services for young people.

But there are some tedious consequences of the power of the idea that museums are for kids. Some apply to a fetish about getting children in. Others blinker attention to further audiences and diminish their validity.

How often have you heard the line: 'We've got to get the young ones in' in order to inspire them with a love of things heritage? The implication is that without converting young people, museums and other heritage manifestations will crumble away as the current generation of museum-keepers falls off the twig.

This idea is naive in terms of the various theories of learning and of taste which inform contemporary understandings of museum visiting.

In the first place, learning is rarely thought of today as filling empty vessels with knowledge via exposure to a museum. It takes more than a museum visit to inspire a love of (or even an interest in) heritage.

What motivates children's interest in museum-type knowledge is overwhelmingly the influence of the home environment. Whether parents value museums or remember their own school trips as dreary compulsion colours the expectations of their children far more than the aura of a museum visit per se.

In other words, it's not enough merely to take young people to museums. But while this is an important understanding, it's not the argument I want to make here.

In an opposite but somehow compatible facet of the stereotypical public view, the 'natural' audience of museums has long been suspected to be middle-aged and old people. Who else is interested in old stuff, comparative taxonomies, art (aside from nerds)?

This stereotype too is correct. Leaving a bit vague just what is meant by 'middle-aged' and 'older', museum visitation is heavily, even predominantly, a grown-up activity.

This truth underlies my present concern with ageism in much museum strategy, planning, marketing and, at root, values.

If you think it's just a function of my age, you're probably right.

Yes, I'm a baby boomer, and my generation is beginning to flex its economic and cultural power in yet another field: we did revolutionary alternatives in our twenties, me-me greed in our forties, and we're anticipating creative leisure in our sixties.

In other words, the middle-aged and older are, and will be even more so, ideal museum customers. We are well-educated, well-behaved and well-off.

And yet the large numbers of middlies and oldies in the visitor statistics are often read as proof that museums are irrelevant to youth, and therefore out of touch with social reality.

Senior management in some big museums are obsessed with strategies to reach the sexy young adult demographic. They crow when they can report that a program drew large numbers of youngies.

Of course museums should aim to cater to all age groups, and it is increasingly understood that this requires specifically targeting market segments. There is no such thing as the singular general public - and hardly any museum program can be effective for all age groups.

But museums need to acknowledge the existing (and growing) interest of middle-aged and older people, indeed, to offer us more! It is high time for museums to abandon the implication that middle-aged enthusiasms are not as valuable as those of the young.

(And on behalf of those who are already arthritic myopics, please lift labels above knee-level and don't put them inside glass cases!)

To acclimatise to the idea that middlies and oldies are a promising market, museums might begin to view museum visiting in a life-cycle framework, rather than trying to be all things to all people all the time.

The most frequent small social group of museum visitors is families, though it's not always a big number; after all, there are fewer and fewer children around. The kind of parents who bring their children to museums have a powerful chance of convincing the next generation that museums are interesting places.

But after parent-induced visits, the next life-cycle stage of museum visitation for most children will be compulsory school trips. Little kids



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Linda Young shows that museum activities are not just for the kids at Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, New Zealand

Photo: Roslyn Russell

often love their visits, but the distaste of adolescent school visitors is legendary. Compulsion, resistance, and boredom (real or assumed) can turn off anyone without the positive inputs of parental values.

Consequently, I'd like to see teenage school visits prohibited by museums. It's for the teenagers' own good – don't let them be turned off!

And frankly, why should museums have to compete with the attractions

of young adulthood? Sex and drugs and rock'n'roll are much more exciting alternatives when you're fifteen, eighteen, twenty three... But most people grow used to such pleasures, and even outgrow them eventually.

At this point, the life-cycle model suggests that adults who weren't turned off museums begin to visit under their own steam. They might be motivated to enjoy a program with their own children; or to see a fabulous touring show; or to take their visiting friends and relatives to see the local sights. Busy grown-ups come to use museums as social venues.

It's the next stage of life-cycle circumstances that contains the really rich potential for museums to service their visitors. The years may wear down the joints and compromise the eyesight, but time also endows the experience which we can sometimes call wisdom.

People with the resulting headspace use museums for personal growth. As learning becomes a mode of leisure, the middle-aged and older segments of the population are ideally situated to consume museum programs. The grey audience segment may soon outnumber kids in museum attendance, at least for a generation as we boomers surge through our later years.

But it won't mean a cataclysm of social irrelevance, because Generation X and its successors will follow in our footsteps. Museum marketers, take note: museums are for the middle-aged!

Linda Young is a grumpy old woman. She is also Senior Lecturer in Museum Studies at Deakin University. 🍷



Image: Our recent design and fit out project, Captivating & Curious Exhibition, National Museum of Australia

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RICKY SWALLOW - KEEPING IT (SUR)REAL IN VENICE

From the brightly coloured tourist map Venice appears to be two fish intertwined in a cosmic handshake. Its history as the major trading port between Europe and Asia predisposes the city to cultural exchange. For close to 2000 years the new has been grafted to the old. Cosseted by Byzantine and Renaissance masterpieces and transfixed by the significance of her artistic legacy, Venice is simultaneously an ideal and bizarre location for a contemporary art show.

Each Biennale of International Art, since the first held in Venice in 1894, has stimulated widespread debate about the nature, relevance and definition of contemporary visual arts. This Time Another Year was the title of the exhibition of Ricky Swallow's work in the Australian pavilion curated by Charlotte Day. His finely carved wooden sculptures are both beautiful and unsettling. Below the surface of the washed-out pale wood Swallow melds his own personal experience, memories and sense of loss with universally felt fears and perceptions. Titles fuse with the sculptures to create new and surprising meanings.

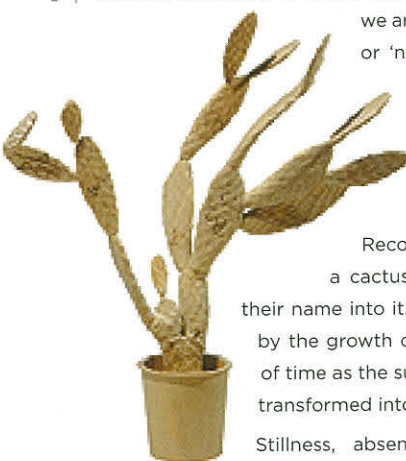
It is perhaps inevitable that Swallow, being an x-generation artist making work in post-modern times, would be influenced by Surrealism's hyperrealist aesthetic. On the replica kitchen table of *Killing Time* (2003-2004) is a banquet-style homage to dead sea creatures whose lives Swallow and his father-fisherman put to an untimely end. Looking like a 3D version of a seventeenth-century still-life painting, it is nonetheless a typically modernist gesture as the attention to fine detail is also the work's point of departure from that period's artistic conventions. The memento mori in this work is what the artist describes as 'a debt paid in time'.

Swallow's sculptures occupy space and transform our perception of both space and time. In their presence we are made aware of the time taken by the artist to create them and of the passage of time while we are viewing them. Through the still life or 'natura morta' of *Salad Days* (2005)

Swallow seems to crystallise the point at which the birds of the sky and creatures of the land are transformed from life to death; from animal to object. In *Field Recording/Highland Park Hydra* (2003)

a cactus immortalises those who engraved their name into it. The text is stretched and distorted by the growth of the plant, measuring the passage of time as the succulent endures, adapts and then is transformed into wood by Swallow's hands.

Stillness, absence, time, loss and memory are recurring themes in all of Swallow's work. Both the autobiographical skeleton in *The Exact Dimensions of Staying Behind* (2004-5) and the staff that has been whittled by the carver's hand measure the time spent 'staying behind'. With his face positioned heavenwards, it is as though the essence of what was once a man is perpetually, ironically, awaiting the final transformation by his own maker.



Come Together (2002) and *The Arrangement* (2004) emphasise the absence of humans. In *Come Together* the beanbag performs the function of an inverse plinth or a perverse couch-potato-body for a skull that nestles deep within its folds. The moment of coming together seems recent, as though we just missed out on witnessing the event of the skull falling from a great height. Conversely, the snakes that have made the ventilation spaces of a bike helmet their home in *The Arrangement* seem to have taken a long time to (re)claim their space. With the works of over ninety international artists from seventy countries exhibited, it is hard for the Biennale visitor not to be overwhelmed by the volume, if not diversity, of the art offerings that transform the city into a giant gallery. The event was impressive and enjoyable, the exhibitions on both main sites were well organised and many of the works outstanding. For me it was Swallow's work whose sculpture signals a return to beauty and material culture in the contemporary visual arts that kept it real.

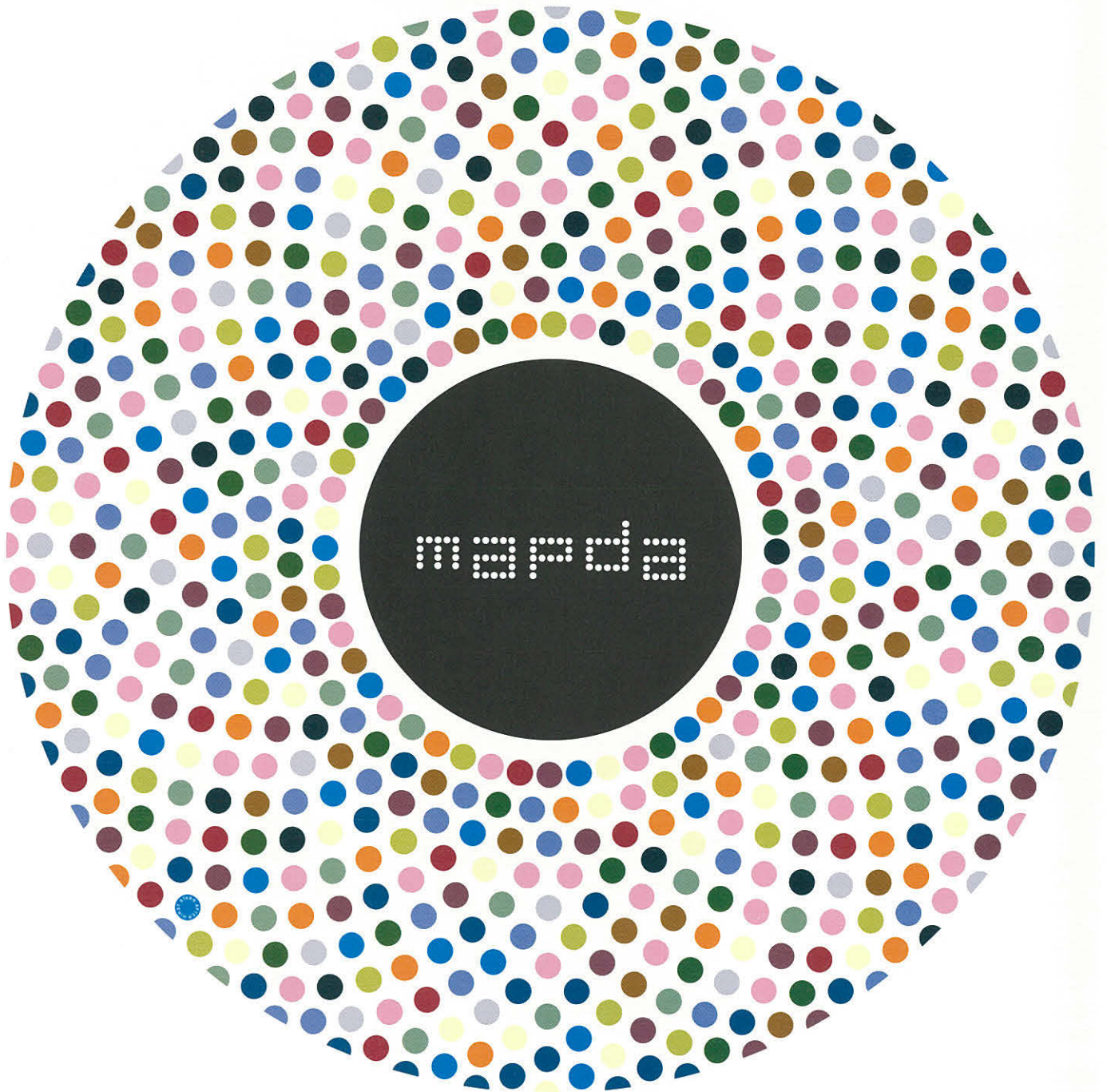
The 51st International Art Exhibition took place from 12 June to 6

November 2005 in Venice. The event comprised two exhibitions; one held in the Giardini della Biennale, curated by María de Corral and titled *The Experience of Art*. The exhibition in the Arsenale di Venezia, titled *Always a Little Further*, was curated by Rosa Martinez.

Maria T. Rizzo is an arts writer in Melbourne



Ricky Swallow images courtesy of the Australia Council.



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Call for Entries 2006

Call for Entries

Celebrating excellence in design and communication in the museum and collections sector across Australia.

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The awards cover 11 categories within three entry levels – A, B and C – corresponding to the size of the museum or related organisation.

The winner in each category at each level will receive an 'Award of Merit', and the entries of high distinction will be recognised. Shortlisted entries will be posted on the Museums Australia website from mid April 2006, and be on exhibition at the Queensland Art Gallery during the Conference.

The MAPDA awards ceremony will be held at the Queensland Art Gallery, Monday 15 May 2006 5.30 - 7.00pm.

Winning entries will be published in the August 2006 issue of *Museums Australia Magazine*.

Entry forms and payments must be received by 5pm, Friday 17 March 2006.

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- There is no separate Category for videos; these may be entered under Multimedia, Corporate or Educational Material.
- A publication is defined as printed or electronically designed graphic material intended for public distribution.
- Publications must have been produced between 1 January and 31 December 2005 (a one-year duration).
- Museums may enter multiple publications in any Category, but each publication can only be entered in one Category.
- A series of publications may be submitted as one entry (e.g. newsletters, magazines, posters).
- One copy only of any publication must be supplied in its intended form - printed materials as hard copy, video, DVD or CD. Website entries to note the address for viewing and supply a printout of Homepage and two key pages.
- An impartial judging panel drawn from the museum and graphic design sectors and including a member of the museum-going public will judge entries.
- The judging panel reserves the right not to make an award in a category if it considers no award is merited; or to make a joint award. Decisions are final and no correspondence will be entered into.
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AUSTRALIA, THE LAND, THE PEOPLE

Rijksmuseum Voor Volkenkunde, Leiden

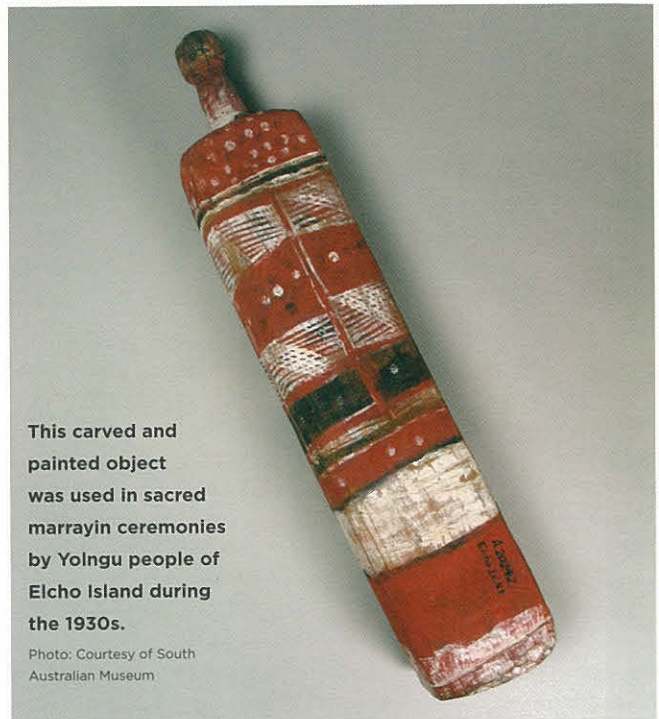
7 October 2005 - 27 August 2006

Throughout 2006 people of the Netherlands and Australia can expect a wide-ranging program of events to mark the 400th anniversary of Dutch contact with Australia and draw attention to the links between the countries. Among the offerings exhibitions will loom large, picking up on some of the 'official' key themes, notably the role of the Dutch East India Company in the mapping of coastal Australia during the seventeenth century, and Dutch emigration to Australia between 1947 and 1971. In addition, two Dutch museums will take the opportunity to present complementary exhibitions providing audiences with some insights into Indigenous Australia.

Australia, the land, the people, the first of these, opened in Leiden at the National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum Voor Volkenkunde [RMV]) in October 2005. The result of a close collaboration between RMV staff and guest curator Philip Jones (Senior Curator, Anthropology, South Australian Museum) made possible with bilateral government funding, philanthropic and corporate sponsorship, the exhibition makes an impressive launch into the cultural proceedings to come.

In the first instance it is a vast undertaking, occupying over 1000 square metres and spread across two floors of the museum. It is being billed as the largest exhibition of its type ever to be mounted in the Netherlands. Drawing on both Dutch and Australian collections, the exhibition is also object rich, displaying countless beautifully crafted utilitarian, ceremonial and decorative pieces. Moreover it is a slick production, elegantly installed and executed with all the bells and whistles we have come to expect from contemporary design teams. Perhaps most impressive, however, is the scope of the project, in that it exposes and grapples with much more than we might expect from the celebratory context of its production.

The exhibition begins with the arrival of Aboriginal people on Australian shores some 50,000 years ahead of Dutch seafarers in 1606. The opening gallery also charts in some detail early encounters - friendly and not-so-friendly - between the Dutch and the Aboriginal communities along Australia's northern coast, including those of western Cape York, Arnhem Land and the Tiwi Islands. A linked gallery mainly displays tools and weapons from central and southern regions



This carved and painted object was used in sacred murrayin ceremonies by Yolngu people of Elcho Island during the 1930s.

Photo: Courtesy of South Australian Museum

of Australia to illustrate how, over millennia, Aboriginal people adapted in tough and challenging conditions as they spread out across the country. While interesting in themselves, these two galleries serve a largely preparatory function, setting the scene for the arrival of the British in 1788. From this point the exhibition is essentially concerned with Australia's contact history, looking at European impact on Indigenous culture and examining, as described by Jones, 'different phases of black - white relations'.

Exhibition content is organised thematically under the headings 'misunderstanding', 'conflict', 'exchange and adaptation', 'control and classification', and 'appreciation' - illuminating the myth of terra nullius and its myriad ramifications for Aboriginal people to the present day. The final theme of 'appreciation', exemplified by bark and acrylic paintings, works on paper and figurative carvings mainly from remote Australia, points to the important and instrumental role Aboriginal art has played, particularly in very recent years, in providing European audiences with tangible ways of approaching Aboriginal culture. The

Continued on page 10

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lack of contemporary expressions by Indigenous artists from urban Australia in this section is somewhat problematic in that it presents a view of Aboriginal culture in a very traditional guise.

Nevertheless urban perspectives are to be found in other parts of the exhibition, as we see in the inclusion of works such as *Trespassers Keep Out* (1982) by Avril Quail, and *Crisis: What to do about this half-caste thing* (1991) by Richard Bell. In addition, on small screens placed throughout the galleries, visitors hear accounts from many different Aboriginal Australians. These help to flesh out the central themes, and bring to the fore the complexity of Aboriginal culture as it is lived and experienced in modern times.

Numerous display techniques are deployed which not only create visual texture, but also aid in the transition between central themes and effectively add to their explication. For instance, a wall of spears mounted as if to ambush the visitor upon entering the second floor leads evocatively into 'conflict'; and the quasi-taxonomic presentation of information in the section relating to 'classification' helps capture the way in which Aboriginal people have been the subjects of anthropological inquiry. Another installation, a series of projected maps splayed across a dais and dissolving one into the other, invokes a sense of the scale of European impact as we see traditional tribal boundaries, charted by anthropologist Norman Tindale in the early twentieth century, gradually giving way to urban development, agriculture and mining.

Embracing multimedia, the exhibition also presents some information through touch screens. This is very successful when used to run a series of specially commissioned interviews conducted by the Dutch-Australian filmmaker Herman de Boer with members of a white Australian public about national identity, Indigenous culture and reconciliation. Filmed at Uluru and in front of the Sydney Opera House, these accounts pull into focus one of the exhibition's underlying concerns: the extent to

which today's Australians engage with and comprehend Indigenous culture.

A second film by de Boer screening at the end of the exhibition returns the visitor to the Tiwi Islands, where in mid 2005 a Dutch multinational, with mining interests in the region, has sponsored an event to commemorate the landing of Maarten van Delft, a Dutch explorer known to have met with many Tiwi during his expedition in 1705. This documentary footage spotlights the way in which history can be exploited to serve, as stated in the accompanying text, 'the priorities of the powerful', and concludes the exhibition on a provocative note.

Without a doubt, *Australia, the land, the people* is a weighty exhibition. Incorporating many Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices, it presents a frank and honest treatment of the subject, illuminating the nature of black-white relations in Australia as a complex and ongoing story. There are however some misspellings (eg Jack Nawilil not Niwilil; James Iyuna not Lyna; Bob Burruwal not Buruwal) and the late England Banggala is falsely recorded as member of the Rembarrnga and not the Gun.nartpa language group. Unfortunately errors such as these are not uncommon in exhibitions of Aboriginal culture.

This aside, the exhibition is robust and likely to resonate with a Dutch audience, sensitive to the social and cultural costs to Indigenous peoples resulting from its own colonial history.

Thanks to Philip Jones and Dirk Smidt (Curator, Department of Oceania, RMV) for speaking with me about the exhibition at a very busy time prior to the opening.

A full list of exhibitions and other events taking place in 2006 to celebrate 400 years of Dutch contact with Australia can be found at: <http://www.nederland-australie2006.nl/index.php?mod=wlc>

Fiona Salmon worked with Maningrida Arts and Culture from 1998-2002 before joining MA(Vic) for twelve months in 2003. She is currently living and working in Amsterdam. 🍷

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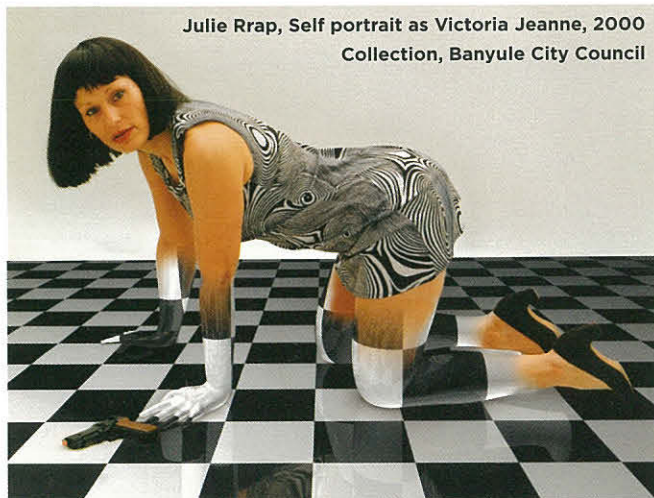
REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Glen Johns, Museum Standards

Glen Johns of the Lachlan Chapter of MA says of the experience of a small museum submitting itself to a Museums Standard program: 'Every question provided participants with new insight into their museum. At times it was a pat-on-the-back, on others a kick 'you know where'. Sometimes one could even sit on the fence (well, every survey allows for a few little white lies) by responding that we planned to do it. Yes! The Survey provided an outstanding snapshot of our museums and we had lots of fun trying to focus the picture.'

Georgia Rouette, Trail Blazing: Victorian museum collections traversing the touring circuit. Museums Australia (Victoria) Regional Exhibition Touring Initiative (RETI)

This article raises awareness of the Regional Exhibition Touring Initiative (RETI) within the museum sector, and encourages other state branches to point to this program to leverage support for similar activity. RETI is an innovative program developed by Museums Australia (Victoria). It has operated since 1999 to support and improve museum sector touring activity in the state. Its vision is to assist collecting institutions in developing high quality regional touring activity, and to promote links between museums and other community groups.



Julie Rrap, Self portrait as Victoria Jeanne, 2000
Collection, Banyule City Council



OUT AND ABOUT

Martin Portus and Peter Morton, National Identity after Occupation: Museums of Occupation in Estonia and Latvia

Martin Portus and Peter Morton discovered some challenging stories when they travelled in the Baltic states of Estonia and Latvia. Confronting the history of foreign occupation by Nazi and Soviet rulers is the task of two museums: the Museum of Occupations in Tallinn, Estonia, opened in 2003; and the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia in Riga, dating from 1993. Both museums use powerful evocative objects to illustrate these nation's painful twentieth-century stories; and 'tell a recent horrific history to a still divided population'.

Mark Thomson and Stephen Bowers, Strange Riches: The Museum of Jurassic Technology (MJT), Los Angeles, California

Visit a quirky twenty-first century 'cabinet of curiosities' with Mark Thomson and Stephen Bowers, who write 'The contents and work of the MJT do not reach out to the public in the usual way; there is no recognisable focus or singular theme for exhibits. Rather, the MJT's peculiar interpretive displays and intellectual stance suggest that it deliberately sets out to occupy a sort of netherworld between scientific fact and classical fiction, between ambiguity and amazement, speculation and assurance.' Intrigued? Read their article at MAM On-line.

Continued on page 12

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Rae and John Sheridan. The Tais that bind: developing the 'CAVR Exhibition' to mark the closure of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) of East Timor

Rae and John Sheridan volunteered their expertise to help develop an exhibition to honour the victims, living and dead, of past human rights abuses and to recognise their contributions to independence and to East Timor's history. They tell the story of how this moving exhibition came about, and of the main vehicle of memorialisation, a 'Memorial Circle of Stones and Tais'. Tais are distinctive East Timorese fabrics with ritualistic meanings.



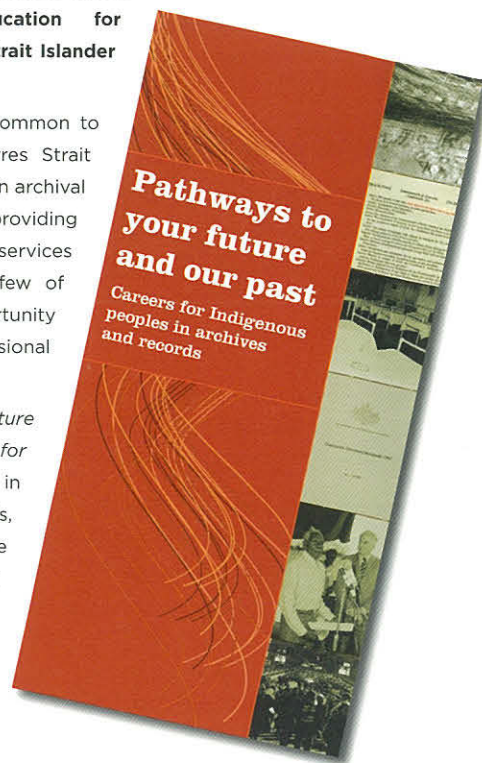
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OTHER FEATURES

Jill Caldwell, Pathways to professional record keeping education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

While it is not now uncommon to find Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in archival institutions, particularly providing reference and indexing services for Indigenous clients, few of them have had the opportunity of studying for professional qualifications.

Pathways to your future and our past; careers for Indigenous Peoples in archives and records, was developed by the Indigenous Issues Special Interest Group (IISIG) of the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) with the support of the Records Management Association (RMAA) to address this issue.



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Applications close 3 April 2006.

Photos: Marcus Tatton, *Hand-shaped Urn*, 1996 (detail); Susan Barlow, *Migration Map*, 2004 (detail); Afghan ceremonial coat, 1890s, Migration Museum Adelaide (detail); Kate Forster, *Rings*, 2002 (detail); publicity still from feature film *Uncivilised*, 1936 (detail); James Barker Emery, 'Abrolhos', *Sketches of Australian Fishes*, 1837-41.

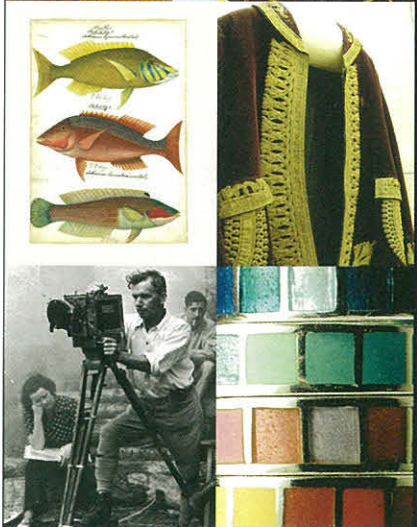


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Reviews on-line

Kiss of the Beast: From Paris Salon to King Kong.

Queensland Art Gallery:

16 November 2005–22 January 2006

'Kiss of the Beast' occupies the largest enclosed space at the Queensland Art Gallery, needing this expansive room for its ambitious scope. The show explores the symbolic positioning of the gorilla and other brutes in art, science, literature and popular culture since the late nineteenth century, via objects, books, posters, maps and prints. Coinciding with the opening of the QAG's Australian Cinémathèque, 'Kiss' also includes a generous range of rarely seen films.

The exhibition is introduced by the nineteenth-century sculptor Emmanuel Frémiet, who submitted his infamous, larger-than-life sculpture 'Gorilla carrying off a negress' to the Paris Salon of 1859. It shocked jurors and public alike with the violent and sexualised image of a hideous animal carrying off a scantily-clad female corpse.

Holly Arden is a freelance writer and an editor of the arts journal 'Machine'; she also works part time as Curatorial and Collections Officer at Griffith Artworks, Brisbane.

Listening in on Museum Conversations.

By Gaea Leinhardt and Karen Knutson.

Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004.

ISBN: 0-7591-0442-5

In recent years there has been a substantial change in emphasis in studies of the ways visitors use museums: from simply looking at who comes and what they look at, to what the visitors are actually learning and how. The Museum Learning Collaborative, based at the University of Pittsburg and the Learning Research and Development Centre, have conducted a range of studies in this area. An earlier book reviewed in this magazine, *Learning Conversations in Museums*, edited by the same authors, described a range of studies conducted as part of the same project.

Dr Janette Griffin is Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Technology Sydney, Kuring-Gai Campus.

Covering Your Assets: Facilities and Risk Management in Museums.

Edited by Elizabeth E. Merritt. Washington, American Association of Museums, 2005.

ISBN: 1-933253-01-0

From the title of the book, through the Rubens painting decorating the cover to the hundred-plus pages of tables of statistics my initial reaction was one of disbelief. What had I done to deserve to be asked to review this? Anyway, who would have thought of publishing the data from a facilities and risk management survey of 6879 American museums as a book?

Derek Hallam was for many years a project manager in risk management and disaster preparedness for general and heritage buildings at the University of Sydney.

Exploring Museum Theatre.

By Tessa Bridal. Walnut Creek CA, AltaMira Press, 2004.

ISBN: 0-7591-0413-1

Exploring Museum Theatre provides a practical approach to the business of bringing actors into museums to engage visitors' emotions and imaginations via dramatic narrative - that's a summary of definitions of 'museum theatre'. Theatre in the museum is different to the conventional kind in many functional ways: it's shorter; it's free (or comes with the admission price); it's purposeful in the museum's agenda; and it's usually less 'chosen' and more 'incidental' in the visitor's agenda. But like the parent art, museum theatre aims to be a transformational experience.

Thus Tessa Bridal begins her book with a review of the history of the art, emerging from theatre in education, living history and heritage interpretation. She explores the diversity and richness of the practice: storytelling, monologues, historical characters, participatory (or interactive) theatre, mime, music, dance, puppetry - informed by examples from all over. They demonstrate the power of museum theatre in interpreting the themes and collections of cultural institutions.

Daina Harvey is Public Programs Coordinator at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra.

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Creating Connections: Museums and the Public Understanding of Current Research.

Edited by David Chittenden, Graham Farmelo, and Bruce V. Lewenstein. Walnut Creek CA, AltaMira Press, 2004. ISBN: 0-7591-0476-X

Creating Connections is a compelling read about the trend in science museums and science centres to use current scientific research as a content generator. Examples include debates about genetically modified organisms, the cosmos, biotechnology and viral pandemics.

Dr Andi Horvath is Senior Curator in Science Communication at Museum Victoria.

National Treasures from Australia's Great Libraries.

At the National Library, Canberra until 12 February; thereafter to all states, beginning with the State Library of Victoria 10 March-7 May.

Speaking as a museum person, it seems to me that libraries are not under such pressure as museums are to prove that they're socially useful, though perhaps the internet age is nibbling away at the certainty of libraries' value. So it has been fascinating to observe in the last ten years how libraries have adopted the fundamental museum medium of the exhibition to raise their public profile.

Linda Young is Honorary Reviews Editor for *Museums Australia Magazine*

Issues in the Conservation of Paintings.

Edited by David Bomford and Mark Leonard. Los Angeles, Getty Conservation Institute, 2004. ISBN: 0-89236-781-4

Edited collections are risky pieces of literature. They can present the interrelationship of ideas and sources in a meaningful framework. But a patchy mix of tenuously related selections, lacking the ability to support discourse, however individually interesting, is a waste of time. Fortunately *Issues in the Conservation of Paintings*, the second volume in the Getty Conservation Institute's series 'Readings in Conservation', presents a worthy contribution to conservation literature, continuing the high standard set by the first volume.

That was *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, published in 1996. It was universally acclaimed as essential reading for art historians, archaeologists, and conservators, as well as heritage architects, artists and curators. According to the GCI's Director, Timothy Whalen, the series aims to 'collect and publish texts considered to be fundamental to an understanding of the history, philosophies, and methodologies of conservation.' The two volumes so far provide a range of historical and contemporary readings that explore the development of conservation as a profession. They are all the more important because there is a relatively small amount on these topics, and it has been difficult to access some, previously unavailable in English.

Robyn Sloggett is Director of the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, University of Melbourne.

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