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MAY 2006



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Museums Australia Magazine is a forum for news, opinion and debate on museum issues.

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

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www.museumsaustralia.org.au

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Benin bronze, Parthenon sculptures and 3rd Grade children from Our Lady and St Joseph Roman Catholic Primary School, Hackney, on an educational visit to the British Museum.

Photos: Roslyn Russell

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Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage; Australian Government Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts; National Museum of Australia; Australian War Memorial and Museum Victoria

CRESCENT MOON AND CONSTABLE AT NGA

The National Gallery of Australia has a compelling double bill of temporary exhibitions. *Crescent Moon: Islamic Art & Civilisation in Southeast Asia* and *Constable: impressions of land, sea and sky* span a wide spectrum of aesthetic, cultural and historic experience. *Crescent Moon* was previously exhibited at the Art Gallery of South Australia; *Constable* is only showing in Canberra, and in the Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.


Crescent Moon's array of objects generated by the interaction of Islamic faith and practice with the cultures of Southeast Asia puts Australian visitors in touch with the richness and diversity of countries adjoining our own. *Constable* widens our appreciation of the work of one of the master creators of impressions of the English landscape. For many transplanted Britons, Constable's work evokes poignant nostalgia for an idealised place.

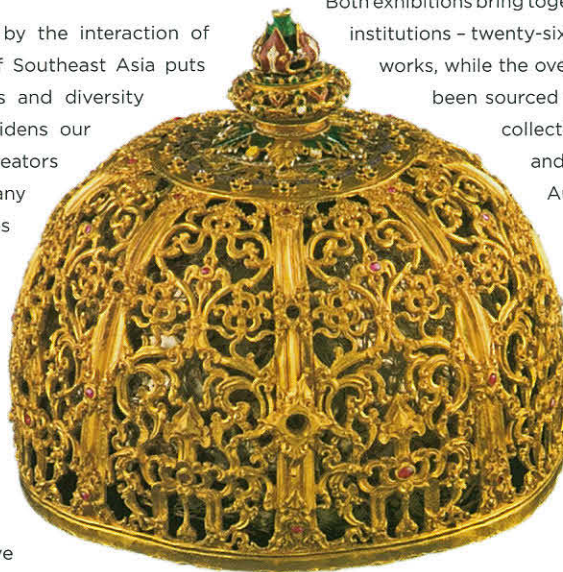
A visitor to both exhibitions can appreciate, on the one hand, the extraordinary skill of the artisans of Southeast Asia in crafting an amazing diversity of objects – delicate filigree gold crowns, buckles and dishes, intricate carvings in wood and stone, the precise calligraphy and delicate illumination of ancient Qu'rans, richly woven and embroidered textiles, and blue and white china – and a comprehensive survey of the work of one of Britain's best-loved nineteenth-century artists on the other.

Some of Constable's most celebrated works feature in this exhibition: the painting of 'Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's grounds' that has defined how visitors view that sublime example of the English Perpendicular Gothic style; his painting for the diploma of the Royal Academy, 'A boat passing a lock'; and 'The Vale of Dedham'. There are also detailed studies of clouds – Constable was the consummate painter of weather – and facsimile copies of his tiny sketchbooks for visitors to leaf through.

The subject matter of these exhibitions is also linked to an Australian context. *Crescent Moon* includes Aboriginal bark paintings depicting visits by Islamic Makassan and Malay traders to our northern shores; and a complementary exhibition, *Australia and Constable* explores the English painter's influence on Australian artists such as Conrad Martens, Hans Heysen, Tom Roberts and, more recently, Leslie Duxbury.

Both exhibitions bring together objects and paintings from many institutions – twenty-six collections have provided *Constable* works, while the over 100 objects in *Crescent Moon* have been sourced from museums, palaces, and private collections in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei, and the Art Gallery of South Australia. The National Gallery's own superb collection of Southeast Asian textiles has provided many of the exhibits in this area.

Dates: *Crescent Moon: Islamic Art & Civilisation in Southeast Asia* is on display until 28 May 2006, *Constable: impressions of land, sea and sky* is on display until 12 June 2006. 



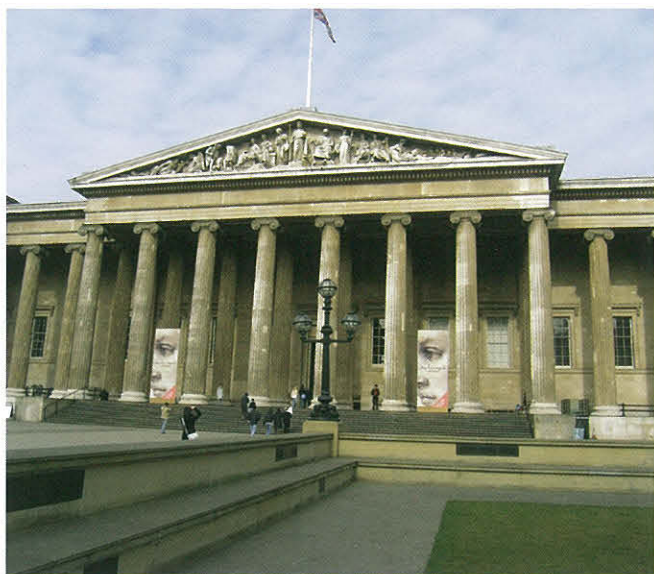
**Crown, 18th century gold, precious stones, enamel, metal.
17.0 x 11.5 cm (outer crown)**

National Museum of Indonesia Jakarta



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ABORIGINAL REMAINS TO COME BACK TO TASMANIA

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre has been successful in a bid to have the cremated ashes of Tasmanian Aboriginal people, acquired by the British Museum in 1838, returned to Tasmania.

This represents a breakthrough in the push to repatriate human remains held by the British Museum. The Museum has in the past invoked its founding legislation to refuse requests for repatriation of natural and cultural material to communities of origin.

According to the *Guardian* (25 March 2006) the Museum stated that the 'cultural and religious importance' of the small bundles of ash wrapped in animal skin 'outweighed any other public benefit' that could be derived from their remaining in London.

The British Museum, London

Photo: Roslyn Russell

SCIENCE FICTION OR MUSEUM FACT?

Short of volunteers to guide visitors through your museum and gallery?

Agrigento Archaeological Museum in Sicily is testing a new robot, dubbed Cicerobot by its inventors at Palermo University, that can guide visitors around the museum, filled with precious objects dating from the 6th century BC.

According to the *Guardian* (22 March 2006) Cicerobot can welcome you in Italian, plan your tour according to your interests, and navigate you around the museum. One of its inventors, Harris Dindo, said 'It uses the technique of latent semantic analysis, which means it can answer many of the questions tourists throw at it and have intelligent interaction with them'.

Dr Dindo pointed out the many advantages of Cicerobot, which at present can only speak Italian (although English and other languages will also be added to its program): 'It never gets tired or bored, is always enthusiastic and it can store a lot more information than a human guide.'

KELLY GANG GOES DIGITAL

The Story of the Kelly Gang, the world's earliest feature film, turns 100 on 26 December this year. The film is now being digitally restored to mark its centenary.

Paolo Cherchi Usai, Director of the National Film and Sound Archive, where the work is being carried out, said of the film's restoration:

'*The Story of the Kelly Gang* is more than an icon of Australian cinema and history. It is also the first evidence of the growth of feature-length film as a form of mass entertainment. Thanks to the major advances in digital preservation achieved in the past few years, audiences will be able to appreciate this treasure in a way that would have been unimaginable only a decade ago.'



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MUSEUMS IN COURT: ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON COLLECTIONS, ILLICIT TRAFFIC AND OWNERSHIP OF CULTURAL PROPERTY

In the last twelve months, public awareness of the provenance of objects entering some of the world's most prestigious museum collections has been galvanised by events surrounding the Italian state's legal actions against looting of classical antiquities from its historic archaeological sites. This first caught public attention when Roman prosecutors opened proceedings last year against the J Paul Getty Museum, foreshadowing similar actions against a number of other high-profile museums and private collectors (often themselves institutional donors) in the United States.

In reality the Italian state's actions stemmed from an offensive begun in 2000: to target elite museums and collectors across the world that had been acquiring antiquities believed to have been illicitly excavated or looted. Italy's actions were not focused exclusively on American institutions. Museums and private collections across Europe were also included in its investigations.

However the trial begun in May 2005 in Rome, naming the J Paul Getty Museum and its (then leader of the spectacular Getty Villa redevelopment) antiquities curator, Marion True, quickly gained world-wide attention. Amidst media coverage of the case in subsequent months, harshest scrutiny of all was applied locally by the *Los Angeles Times*, which inexorably drilled into the Getty's conduct, pressing to the core of the museum's professional practices and the ceiling of the Trust's governance.

The *LA Times'* unremitting investigations eventually compelled a series of high-profile departures: of curator Marion True; of a Getty trustee – a major collector-donor and, more problematically, *vendor* of antiquities to the museum, and (True's undoing) source of a housing loan on a Greek villa to the antiquities curator who, at the same time, processed gifts and purchases from the trustee's and husband's private collection. Following a board investigative committee's review, the CEO-Executive President resigned in February 2006. Most recently, the Getty Trust's Chairman has stepped down. The remaining board, despite presiding over a US \$7 billion endowment ('the largest art philanthropy in the United States'), has only narrowly retained the institution's non-profit status against state and federal investigations for profligacy and betrayal of public trust, on which charitable foundations depend for their privileged tax position.

The forensic disclosure of the Getty's failure in governance, professional and ethical standards will provide an enduring case-study of how a distinguished cultural institution can let its ethical consciousness lapse at all significant levels of its operations, overriding the integrity of beleaguered staff unable to prevent the dissolution of probity controls. It also reveals how public scrutiny may eventually bring an institution to account, with resignations at all key professional and governance levels being the price for misconduct.

Meanwhile the Italian state's ongoing actions turned attention to other museums and high-profile directors in the United States, and the world's media focus shifted beyond the Getty. Since November 2005, a spotlight has been turned on the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New

York and the negotiations taken up in Rome by the Met's Director, Philippe De Montebello.

Despite imperious disdain of archaeologists' complaints about unprovenanced antiquities acquired by the Metropolitan and the cost to scholarship of looting – '[T]he information that is lost is a fraction of the information that an object can provide' – De Montebello astutely recognised how turbulently legal floodwaters were swirling around the Getty's foothills by late 2005. He decided strategically to take the initiative and establish some higher, drier ground from which to address the Italian cultural prosecutors' evidence mounting steadily against prized objects in his own museum. Apart from the threat of messy, expensive legal actions over antiquities, if Italy's Ministry of Culture used its weight to withhold loans, the Metropolitan's exhibitions program could be curbed in other areas.

Most famous of the Met's controversial acquisitions was the superlative 6th century BC 'Euphronios krater', a banquet wine-mixing bowl acquired in 1972 from dealer Robert Hecht (currently a co-defendant in the trial of Marion True). One of the finest Attic vases in any museum, delicately painted with Homeric scenes and signed by the most famous Greek vase-painter of the age, this pivotal work in the museum's collection had been queried publicly since 1973 as to its provenance. In 2001, former Met Director Thomas Hoving had disclosed in a magazine article his belief that Hecht had nefariously obtained the vase (purchased by the museum for \$1 million). Along with prized classical silver and other objects, the Euphronios krater had eventually become a focal point in the Italian quest to quarry the Metropolitan over acquisitions believed to have been looted from Etruscan tombs near Rome and a Sicilian site.

After three months of negotiation, Philippe De Montebello concluded a widely publicised restitution-for-loans agreement, signed with the Italian Minister of Culture in Rome, 21 February 2006. The agreement covered twenty-one objects whose ownership title was surrendered forthwith by the Metropolitan, to be replaced by comparably high-quality loans from Italy. Not all objects were to be returned at once. While the beautiful Euphronios krater remains on view at the Metropolitan until January 2008, its label bears a significantly changed detail: the vase is identified as 'Lent by the Republic of Italy'.

The Metropolitan's groundbreaking agreement with the Italian culture ministry (the first between Italy and a single museum) gained De Montebello a standing ovation at a meeting of the 169-member Association of Art Museum Directors a few weeks later in Florida. However the Association's internal review and recently reissued ethical guidelines (revised under its task-force chair, Timothy Potts, ex-NGV Melbourne) still fall short of ICOM's ethical policy on 'due diligence' required before acquisition of objects, especially antiquities, of unclear origin. Directors in U.S. archaeology museums generally take a very different position:

Continued over page

Point of View

Since the new [AAMD] guidelines leave it up to foreign governments to track down...evidence, 'The burden of proof is in the wrong place.' said Richard M. Leventhal, the director of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, which does not acquire or display works that have surfaced since 1970.

The AAMD guidelines have in fact aroused renewed critique from the Archaeological Institute of America, which continues to protest art museums' neglect of contextual information destroyed by looters who disregard sites and remove objects likely to entice auction houses, wealthy buyers and prominent museums alike (ambitious private collectors often being cultivated donors and patrons of distinguished museums - as revealed explicitly in the Italian cases against both the Getty and Metropolitan museums, which entail further action foreshadowed against their most prized collector-trustee-benefactors of classical antiquities).

There has been a long-standing disciplinary contest, in fact, between archaeologists and art museum curators undergirding the antiquities cases. The concerns of archaeologists in America are clearly stated:

The need for museums to adopt acquisition policies that recognize the connection between their acquisitions and the problems of looting of archaeological sites is pressing. Sites are a non-renewable cultural resource. The looting of archaeological sites damages the heritage of both the country where the sites are located and the heritage of everyone.

Even Philippe De Montebello, flamboyant in his *hauteur* towards archaeology - 'the difference between a looter and an archaeologist is that an archaeologist keeps better records' - remains unrepentant in his emphasis on prized objects versus sites. On the Euphronios vase: 'How much more would you learn from knowing which particular hole...it came out of? ...Everything is on the vase.'

However the Metropolitan's director reluctantly concedes that international cultural property laws have created a tighter situation: 'It means that the amount of archaeological material that is acquired by American museums...will become a trickle'.

Italian culture ministry officials are meanwhile pressing their claims towards other American museums. More appointments and trans-Atlantic flights from the U.S. are being initiated to discuss matters in Rome. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is currently taking steps to address the Italian investigators in a pre-emptive strike against legal action. Its antiquities collection's probity has already been questioned locally for some time: 'A 1998 examination of MFA records by the [Boston] Globe showed that sixty-one of seventy-one classical objects acquired from 1985 to 1987 had no history of prior ownership.'

In overview, the Italian culture ministry's campaign in launching multiple actions internationally has compellingly disclosed the illicit itineraries

of many prized historical objects in rich institutions - objects whose opaque past lives have neither been adequately investigated nor considered a barrier to acquisition. Through photographic evidence from police raids in 1995 and 2000, yielding files and thousands of looted objects warehoused in bonded transit stores in Geneva, Roman prosecutors have exposed (notably in their conviction of elite illicit dealer Giacomo Medici in 2004) that where the international market for high-quality antiquities has risen steadily in recent decades, a more sophisticated distribution system has also been developed to meet the demand.

Success in the illicit market requires removal of identifying source-information - the shedding of scientific data on which scholarship, archaeology and any systematic study of ancient sites depends. Focusing on single objects that can move beyond the domains of history,

archaeology and ethnology, and be transformed into autonomous fine art 'masterpieces' of museum collections, this nefarious trade benchmarks distinguished collector and museum acquisitions as among its highest prizes of legitimation and financial reward - and its greatest stimulus to expansion.

It is no longer possible for museums to avert their gaze or be disingenuous about the fundamental responsibility of their public standing and trust in acquisition practices. Anything less than insistence on scrupulous procedures invites charges of connection to a system that continues to vandalise monuments and sites and destroy irrecoverable information and contextual evidence about the historical evolution of cultures and nations.

The recently published *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* (Paris, 2006) provides the most up-to-date version of a code of professional conduct that ICOM first promulgated in 1986. ICOM's interest in guiding the ethical conduct of the museum profession internationally has been evolving since 1970, when the Executive Council first focused on collections in a public statement on the Ethics of Acquisition.

ICOM has continued to frame a concern for professional ethical standards as pivotal to its international work with the museum profession during the ensuing decades. However it was never anticipated that the ethics of museums' collection development could capture and maintain the prolonged attention of leading international media channels as has occurred recently.

Meanwhile the field of debate about the ethics of acquisition is thicketed by partial argument and defensive expostulation. The concerted international moves against illicit trafficking in cultural heritage that arose in the 1970s were developed for strong reasons. They were not motivated - as has sometimes been argued - merely by sanctimonious moves from countries both rich in cultural sites and rich in the resources to protect their own heritage, who had simply failed to do their job.



The Euphronios krater (6thc. BC, painted terra-cotta, 46cm). One of the finest Greek vases in the world, this wine-mixing bowl is signed by both the potter Euxitheos and painter Euphronios. Its exquisite line-work has been rendered with virtuoso speed, a dynamic grasp of anatomical form and vivid naturalism - a peak achievement of its era.

Point of View

Philippe De Montebello, in a recent panel session in New York, remained dismissive of Italy's position: 'As you know, Italian museum storerooms are engorged with works of art. It's not as if they needed them. This is a political statement.' The deceptiveness of this position, argued from one of the richest encyclopaedic museums in the world, may be countered directly – not by the opinion of government officials but from a scholar-researcher in the Villa Giulia antiquities museum in Rome, Maurizio Pellegrini.

Of antiquities that Pellegrini considers abundant in Italian museums, or of merely 'duplicate' quality, there is no problem about their being dispersed in collections abroad. 'We don't really need it', he says of some contested Apulian pottery acquired by the MFA in Boston. However a rare kylix cup, regained in 1999 from the Getty by the Italian police's art trafficking squad, is of an entirely different order of importance. To Pellegrini this work is 'like a Caravaggio, or a Van Gogh'. Elsewhere he describes Boston's acquisition of an unprovenanced large statue of Sabina and other works from suspect dealers as 'shameful' practice by the museum.

The intention in building international efforts to inhibit trafficking, however, was never aimed simply at 'locking down' culture within national borders. Recent events focused on the classical Mediterranean heritage have deflected memory from the long-desperate pleas elsewhere – of cultural agencies in countries stretching across south-east Asia, for example – in Cambodia, Thailand or Indonesia. These agencies were helpless for decades to stop the looting of antiquities, detachment of temple sculptures and ravaging of historic architecture and sites.

Such countries appealed for international controls to prevent destruction of their irreplaceable heritage, and it was in response to abject pleas for assistance that international legal instruments were developed to curb illicit traffic. It is notable that UNESCO's efforts carried forward the memory of one of the earliest pleas to reach UNESCO after its 1946 founding, from a state that is again in such a plighted condition that the whole country has been assigned an 'endangered heritage' listing: namely, Iraq.

The various Conventions and related instruments evolved since UNESCO's path-setting 1970 Convention to protect cultural heritage and prohibit illicit traffic of cultural objects internationally were aroused by situations of gross abuse to particular cultures and regions. There was a dire need for measures of international support in the name of distributive justice.

It would be to ignore world events to maintain, as some critics have recently done, that a punitive regime of zealotry about illicit trafficking has unfairly prevailed, aiming to inhibit free-market liberality or 'freeze' museum collections in a static condition. It is similarly extreme to assert that the increasing attention given publicly to repatriation claims will – if supported – empty museums of all but material produced within modern nation-states or constrain displays to monocultural historical narratives.

The extravagance of such claims merits committed scrutiny and debate. They emanate frequently from a refusal to grasp the extent of the present situation adequately. Such stubbornness, moreover, ignores new opportunities for working with collections and source communities, source regions or source countries, as some museums have been pursuing for two decades.

Many museums have moved beyond a fixation on their exclusivity of ownership and begun to act insightfully according to tenets of shared custodianship and stewardship of cultural heritage. They have sought to build new kinds of partnerships in research and heritage care – some taking on the challenge not only of protection but also of maintenance and renewal of cultural traditions, especially in colonial historical contexts of rupture and loss. In so doing, some museums have found themselves recipients of new resources and become hosts to expanding knowledge, enlarged collections and innovative exhibitions.

Following new styles of more collaborative work and partnership, museum audiences may also be beneficiaries of greatly expanded programs and services that present collection and exhibition resources more intensively. The very process of forging such partnerships often opens up new possibilities for research, acquisition or exchange. It may stimulate more dynamic programs to museums' constituent communities and most-served audiences – as well as offering needed resources to source communities.

The challenge of the present moment is thus neither a death-knell to acquisitions nor a signal that long cared-for collections are threatened by a prescriptive rectitude of new cultural politics. Neither is it envisaged by those calling for more imaginative action by museums in their cultural stewardship that collection histories could be unitarily unravelled, or that a radical program of wholesale deaccessioning should begin.

Continued over page



Australia under attack, Australian War Memorial, 2005
Image courtesy Australian War Memorial PM/2005_014.08

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Point of View

In fact the most progressive analytical thought on museum collections today (including from indigenous communities) understands that inter-cultural encounters historically have produced profound and permanent legacies of cross-cultural diffusion. It is consequently impossible to reassert any mosaic of autonomous cultural histories as a model for heritage interpretation or creative cultural development in the present.

Some museums have made outstanding moves to show how new approaches to collection development and interpretation might be undertaken affirmatively, spurred by evolving judgement and insight on past practices. There have been concerted efforts by museums acting nationally (for example, in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and other countries forged as modern nations through colonial dispossession of indigenous peoples) to research, provenance, consult and (ultimately, if desired) repatriate human remains to descendant communities from whom they were taken historically.

Some museums in Europe and elsewhere have joined common cause with these efforts and repatriated many types of cultural material from their own collections voluntarily. Others have embarked on long-term loans, as a faster course of action than discussion of permanent repatriation might require. A series of long-term loans of Kanak objects from Europe formed key displays and a reinvigorating cultural and spiritual reunion with their originating communities for the opening of the dramatic Centre Culturel Tjibaou in New Caledonia in 1998.

Closer to home, the British Museum – for years unassailable in its aloofness to any discussion of possible repatriation – has quietly and constructively assented to conversation about some case-claims under the current Director, Neil MacGregor. The recent repatriation by the British Museum to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community of some Aboriginal remains taken in the 19th century by George Augustus Robinson marks an important step across the new ground that is being ventured upon slowly by some of the most resistant citadels of European collecting.

Others have still not begun to rethink their history and options, but have tended to retreat behind defensive ramparts. In December 2002, a specious argument claiming a select echelon of ‘universal museums’ was put together in a ‘Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums’, signed by nineteen directors from Europe and North America proclaiming their institutions’ special status. The position was explored by ICOM in a dynamic public debate in Paris in June 2003. It was reviewed afterwards by the then-Chair of ICOM’s Ethics Committee – and noted as more evidently a defence against repatriation claims than any persuasive rationale for a special status among museums.

Despite diverse institutional histories, the Universal Museum Declaration is shaped by both Enlightenment legacy and a specific discourse of the museum. It cannot claim any exclusive category position in museology. It is impossible to sanction an elite of museums as having their podium situated above the world of men, women and communities – as if they should not be called upon to participate in processes by which all museums affirm that they are institutions evolving *in* time and *of* history, and accordingly subject to changing thought and social judgement.

Museums are challenged to recognise the inescapable connectedness of their collections and knowledge, and the interdependent resources they command. Rather than proclaiming a coterie through the dissembling rhetoric of the Universal Museum, museums are called upon to live up to their humanist ideals of embracing multiple cultural heritages: to honour more generously their encyclopaedic valuing of difference and cross-cultural interchange in shaping human history.

The challenge open to museums with rich historical collections is to show imagination and leadership in finding new strategies for collaborative development of collections, other than reliance on an unregulated international market to yield continuing acquisitions. Opportunities abound for museums to collaborate with universities, research institutes and cultural agencies around the world. Many agencies would be willing to guarantee rich additions to museum displays, exhibitions – and even augment permanent collections – in exchange for initiatives that support systematic research and heritage care strategies that are of benefit to source communities, scholars, diverse publics and museum constituencies alike.

Most of all, the myth must be dispelled that a call for more ethical action by museums over acquisitions rests upon a simplistic disentangling of the diffuse cultural histories that underpin collections long held, or would revoke the complex, layered evolution of institutions long developed. Those histories themselves will remain as important as ever to consideration of museums and understanding of their work for the imaginable future.

Bernice Murphy*

**Chair of the Ethics Committee of ICOM (International Council of Museums, Paris)*

Full text with reference footnotes is available in Web-posted version on MA Website

FROM THE EDITOR

This is the second issue of MAM in our new format of combined print and on-line delivery.

From what we hear, people are accessing the on-line articles and reviews described in the magazine or announced in MA Bulletins, and generally familiarising themselves with the new delivery mode.

To maintain the level of service we have set for ourselves – a monthly upload of articles and features in between hard copy issues – we need regular contributions from our members. And of course we need material for hard copy issues too.

Have you run a successful public program recently, and want to share your experience with your colleagues in the museum sector? Have you achieved a great result with a small budget in any area of your operations? Is there new technology out there that has made your museum life easier? Have you won any awards or other recognition of the service your museum provides to the community? Have you visited any museums whose displays and public programs could provide useful models for others? Is there a museum issue that you would like to address – maybe sustainability, repatriation, copyright issues, the use of the Internet to make collections accessible, or the problems of attracting and retaining volunteers? – the field is immense.

This is your magazine – we want to hear your voices, read your insights, share your experiences. If you have an idea for an article, please email me at editor@museumsaustralia.org.au

Roslyn Russell

Managing Editor, *Museums Australia Magazine*

ARTS ACCESS AUSTRALIA DISABILITY ACCESS & AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT SURVEY 2006

In 2005 Museums Australia agreed to develop an access policy for people with disabilities. At about the same time Arts Access Australia, the national peak body for arts and disability, launched a national research project into access and audience development issues for people with disabilities by surveying stakeholders and organisations involved in the arts in Australia. This stage of the project is funded by the Community Partnerships and Market Development Division of the Australia Council for the Arts.

The survey is enclosed with the magazine you are reading. Please complete the survey as the results will inform the work of the Museums Australia Disability Access Sub-Committee. If you would prefer an electronic copy of the survey then please email ed@artsaccessaustralia.org

One in five Australians has a disability and this is projected to rise as the population ages. Cultural participation rates for people with disabilities are well below that for the general population. These trends make addressing issues of access and audience development a necessary opportunity for arts and cultural heritage organisations to ensure their current and future sustainability.

This research project will assist in developing a national overview to:

- Identify arts organisations and programs of support in Australia for increasing access
- Identify real and perceived barriers to increasing access to cultural participation by people with disabilities

- Identify best practice and gaps to develop effective strategies for organisations to increase access
- Identify international models that can stimulate new approaches to access
- Improve coordination and identify existing resources that can have national application and exchange

As part of this project Arts Access Australia will be involved in a number of access related sessions at the 2006 Museums Australia Conference in Brisbane. We hope to see many of you there. Arts Access Australia will continue to work with Museums Australia throughout 2006 and 2007 as part of our contribution to the Museums Australia Disability Access Sub-Committee.

In the meantime you may wish to have a look at our latest publication. Making The Journey: Arts and Disability in Australia presents twelve case studies and resources demonstrating how people with disabilities can be involved in cultural activities. The publication is, at the time of writing, the most downloaded resource on the Australia Council website at http://www.ozco.gov.au/arts_resources/publications/making_the_journey/

Hard copies of the publication are also available from the Arts Access Australia member in your State or Territory. Should you have any queries about the enclosed survey or want to know more about the work of Arts Access Australia then please get in touch.

Gareth Wreford
Executive Director
Arts Access Australia, ed@artsaccessaustralia.org



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

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Regional Roundup

THE KOREAN WAR HONOUR ROLL QUILT: CAPTURING HISTORY IN A FABRIC MEMORIAL

Three hundred and forty Australians died on the harsh battlefields of Korea between 1950 and 1953: 27 July 2003 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the armistice that concluded active hostilities in the Korean War. To honour the occasion, a group of women from the country town of Coleraine in Western Victoria stitched the names of each of the 340 men into a fabric memorial to the fallen, and in doing so created the Korean War Honour Roll Quilt. For the families and veterans remaining the creation of the quilt signifies the first recognition of the individual soldiers of the 'Forgotten War', and provides some comfort that the sacrifice of their loved ones and mates will not go unnoticed.

A chance meeting between Mrs Olywn Green, widow of Lt Col Charles Green, and Nola Gunning, led to the idea for the quilt. A keen quilter, Nola had previously been involved in several community quilt projects. She enlisted the support of the local Uniting Church Sit and Sew group in Coleraine in Western Victoria and set to work applying for a Department of Veterans' Affairs grant to produce the quilt. She also enlisted the expertise of textile designer, Meredith Rowe, who designed the quilt.

Meredith Rowe had recently returned from an Asialink Visual Arts/Craft Residency at Kookmin University in Seoul, South Korea where

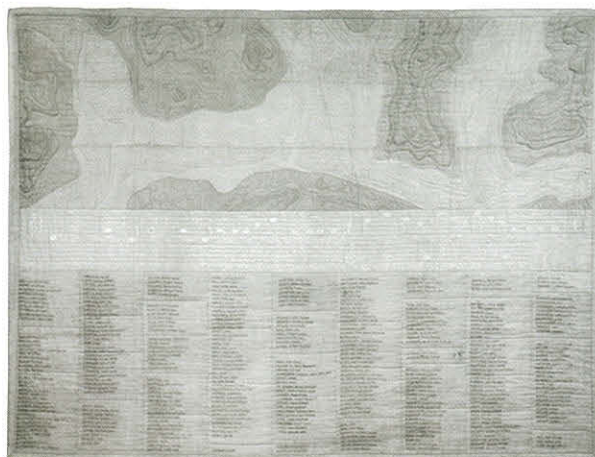


Photo: Terence Bogue

she spent seven months living, working and lecturing extensively. Traditional Korean quilting and her attendance at the 2001 Kapyong Day service - the Fiftieth Anniversary of one of the most significant battles fought during the conflict, inspired her design. The double bed-sized quilt incorporates much symbolic detail across its palette of monochromatic greys, silver, white and black. It is constructed from silk and handmade Korean linen, which has been hand-dyed in ink to an ash colour to symbolise sadness and mourning.

The quilt consists of three sections. The top section features the topographical lines of the Korean landscape around Kapyong, the

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middle portion contains the refrain from 'The Last Post' and 'Lights Out', while the lower panel highlights the individually hand-stitched names of all 340 soldiers killed in action.

The quilt took over 1000 hours of volunteer labour to produce. Once completed, it was launched at a special ceremony in Grafton and handed over to the Australia Korea Foundation as custodians.

During the process, the quilters became curious about who these men were and why they volunteered to fight. They were also touched by the amazing gratitude expressed to them by both the next-of-kin of those killed and many veterans. From this curiosity came the idea of producing a booklet providing a social history of some of the men and profiling the women who made the quilt. The Australia Korea Foundation provided the funding to produce the book entitled *The Korean War Honour Roll Quilt: Quilter and Servicemen Biographies*. The booklet now accompanies the quilt and provides a rare insight into the men killed and the motivations of the women who created the fabric memorial.

Given that the families of servicemen were dotted throughout regional and metropolitan Australia, initial steps were made to tour the quilt. Funds were secured from Museums Australia (Victoria) for a Regional Exhibition and Touring Initiative (RETI) grant, a highly successful program outlined by Georgia Rouette in the February issue of MAM. This funding enabled the production of a small exhibition that toured four regional galleries and museums. Without such funding, the quilt would not have been able to reach the wider community and begin the process of educating people about the Korean War. The quilt was also lucky enough to be featured in the RETI on film project. The story captured has now become a part of the exhibition. The quilt was also commended in the Victorian Community History Awards.

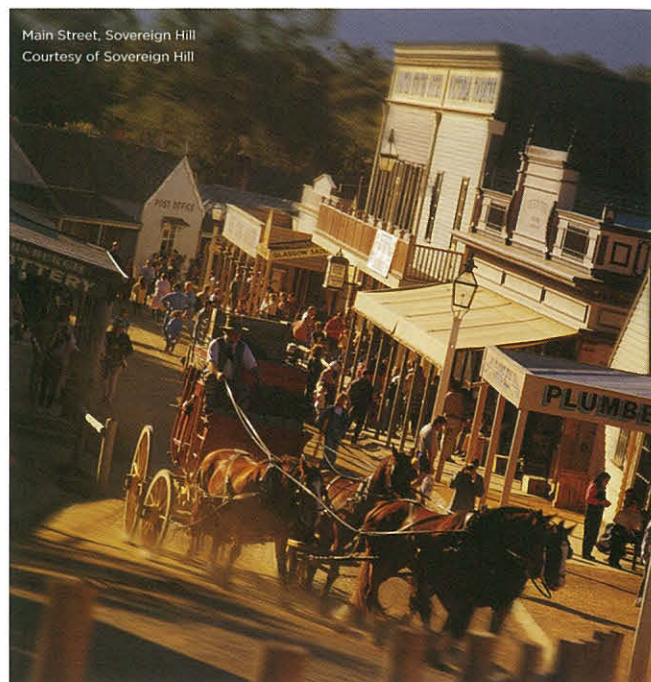
Following the successful touring program, the quilt moved to Grafton where funding is being sought to develop a permanent Korean War display.

The Korean War Honour Roll Quilt will next be featured at The Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. The quilt will be the centrepiece of an exhibition to commemorate the Korean War and will be on display from 22 June–6 August 2006. Quilters, Korean War veterans, historians and the general public are all encouraged to attend.

The quilt is currently in the custodial care of the Australia Korea Foundation, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It is hoped in future that the quilt will be able to tour more widely. Any galleries or museums with an interest in the quilt should contact the Australia Korea Foundation on 02 6261 3831.

Lynn Gunning is a freelance writer from Melbourne involved in the quilt project

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Main Street, Sovereign Hill
Courtesy of Sovereign Hill

NATIONAL AWARD

Sovereign Hill, Ballarat, Victoria has won the Major Tourist Attraction award for the whole of Australia this year. The goldfields recreation site, now thirty-five years old, also won the award in 1993. Sovereign Hill Museums Director, Tim Sullivan said the national award was a credit to the staff and volunteers and the interpretive programs that have been introduced at Sovereign Hill.

READ ABOUT ANOTHER AWARD FOR A REGIONAL PROJECT ...

The National Trust's No 1 Pump Station, Mundaring Weir, received an honourable mention in the Society of History of Technology's (SHOT) 2005 Dibner Award.

The Dibner Award for Excellence in Museum Exhibits is an international award established in 1985 through the generosity of the late Bern Dibner and the Charles Edison Fund. It recognises excellence in museum exhibits that interpret the history of technology, industry, and engineering to the general public.

Cairns Regional Gallery celebrates ten years of exhibiting ...

Opened in 1995, the Gallery averages thirty exhibitions a year - local, national and international - with a high percentage of local content in the program. These are mounted in the gallery's four exhibition spaces - including the Lady Norman Gallery, often used for travelling exhibitions from national and international collections; the Ireland Family Gallery which showcases the work of visiting artists and artists from the region; and the Loft Artspace, a smaller attic space.

Read these stories, and others placed on line since the last issue of MAM, in MAM On-line on the Museums Australia website



PROFILE: ALISSANDRA CUMMINS, PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS (ICOM)

In 2004 Alissandra Cummins, Director of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, became the first woman, the first West Indian and the youngest person to be elected president of the International Council of Museums.

An art historian by discipline, with a BA Honours in the History of Art from the University of East Anglia, and a Masters degree in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester, Cummins has written on Caribbean museum history and art, and is on the editorial boards of the *International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship* and the new *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*.

Cummins has been Director of the Barbados Museum since 1985. Wryly describing herself in a recent interview with a Barbadian magazine as 'married to the Museum', she is passionate about the capacity of museums in Barbados to create a sense of national identity, and also display the cultural treasures of the country to tourists.

She and her staff are currently planning a renovation of the Museum's main galleries, and are also working with international contractors on the development of a parliamentary museum and National Heroes Gallery in the Barbados parliamentary buildings in the capital, Bridgetown. And there also is a National Art Gallery in the pipeline, as well as a travelling exhibition on the work of eighteenth-century Italian artist, Agostino Brunias, whose prints depicting the people of the Caribbean can be found in museums around Europe and the Americas.

Dividing her time between international and local commitments is a challenge that Alissandra Cummins faces cheerfully. She is as committed to promoting the global work of ICOM as she is to



Interior courtyard, Barbados Museum and Historical Society

preserving the cultural heritage of her beloved island. ICOM marks its sixtieth anniversary this year. Its agenda is very much up to date, with emphasis placed on such current concerns as improving access to information, disaster management, and fighting the trade in illicitly acquired cultural material. Funding this huge enterprise worldwide is one of Cummins's major challenges.

In addition to her ICOM responsibilities, Cummins also chairs the Barbados National Commission for UNESCO, and is a member of the Bureau of the UNESCO *Memory of the World* programme for documentary heritage.

Naturally this all commits her to a great deal of international travel, and she is well supported by her 'seasoned staff' when she has to be absent from the Museum. Nevertheless, she has been known to breathe a sigh of relief when she has been able to spend a couple of months consecutively in Barbados. This is not surprising: the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, housed in a former British colonial-era military prison, is now a paradise of mellow brick and lush tropical foliage in serene courtyards – surely one of the most beautiful museum settings in the world.

Alissandra Cummins' work for museums in Barbados and internationally was recognised by the Government of Barbados in 2005 with the award of the Gold Crown of Merit for 'her contribution to museum development, heritage preservation and development of the arts'. Midway through her three-year term at the head of ICOM she continues to make a significant contribution to the wider world of museums. 

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News about People

Susan Herbert has left the National Gallery of Australia and relocated to her home state of Victoria. She can be contacted on susangabrielle@optusnet.com.au for consultancies related to the art museum industry.

Tom Layton, Executive Officer of the Friends of the National Museum of Australia, has left the Friends to develop a new organisation dealing with vocational training for disabled people and the long-term unemployed.

Elizabeth McNiven is the new Curator of Indigenous Collections at the National Film and Sound Archive.

Colin Jack Hinton, formerly of the Western Australian Museum and the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, died on 22 March 2006.

CHALLENGE AND CHANGE: IN PORTS, THEIR TOWNS AND CITIES

Australia ICOMOS National Conference 2006

Ports have played a crucial part in the development of our nation. From technical developments that have taken us from crude unloading by manual labour, to the highly mechanised container operations of the twenty-first century, changes in the way ports operate have constantly shaped and reshaped the towns and cities that have developed around them. Today those changing demographics see less and less people who actually work in the port living in these towns, as many of these areas are engulfed by urban sprawl and the ravages of gentrification.

Original fabric is often obliterated as new facilities are built and new people come to town, but a variety of professionals ranging from architects and archaeologists, to historians and museum curators are salvaging, collecting, conserving, analysing and interpreting a wealth of physical and documentary evidence of these significant places.

The 2006 Australia ICOMOS conference hopes to explore the efforts of these people. To be held from 9-11 November, at the Fremantle Town Hall, the theme this year is challenge and change in historic port cities.

The conference will explore issues of change in historic port cities, such as adaptive reuse, economic drivers, urban and industrial expansion, evolution and development, the role of interpretation and the ongoing use of industrial sites and waterfronts. It hopes to attract a wide audience from government to private practitioners, and from archaeologists and planners, to architects and wharfies.

Further details, and the opportunity to register your interest, can be found on the 2006 Australia ICOMOS conference website at: www.promaco.com.au/2006/icomos

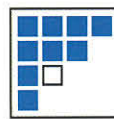
The website also features a brochure about sponsorship opportunities and benefits. All queries about sponsorship, and the conference in general, can be addressed to promaco@promaco.com.au

We hope to see you in Fremantle in November!

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Reviews on-line

The Spirit of the Games: the Opening Ceremony Revealed. Melbourne Museum. Open until 26 July 2006.

Less than twenty-four hours after its spectacular appearance at the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games, the Flying Tram was installed in the foyer of the Melbourne Museum.

It is the triumphant teaser for *The Spirit of the Games: Revealing the Opening Ceremony*, an exhibition opening only two days after the event in the MCG. In the museum game it doesn't get more 'rapid response' than this: an exhibition of a three hour spectacle seen by vast crowds in Melbourne and 1.5 billion television viewers around the world. Speed was the essence. It needed to be open as a Games event so that people could relive the moment immediately.

It is no small task to plan an instant exhibition for a single huge event which no one has yet seen. Although museum staff might start in plenty of time, changes and last minute fine-tuning are inevitable. Thousand of performers, masses of props, very complex technology and complex ceremonial moments for officials and athletes offer plenty of colour and movement, and risk.

Rachel Faggetter works in the field of natural and cultural heritage interpretation.

Museum administration: An introduction.

By Hugh H. Genoways and Lynne M. Ireland. Walnut Creek, CA, AltaMira Press, 2003.

ISBN: 0-7591-0294-5.

This new textbook on museum management is intended for US programs in Museum Studies (which has been happening there since the early 1900s), but many of its topics are highly relevant to the Australian museum and cultural industries. The book will assist local readers develop their knowledge of museum administration and thus improve professionalism. Typical of a textbook, it has case reviews, case studies and exercises distributed through the text to assist readers understand the important concepts it describes.

Genoways and Ireland use a managerial approach, basing their book on the perspective of taking responsibility for getting things done. Their book can be split into three sections: management and ethics; collections and public programs; challenges and the future of museums.

Terry McClafferty is Regional Manager of the Western Australian Museum at Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

Yesterday's Tomorrows: The Powerhouse Museum and its precursors 1880-2005, Edited by Graeme Davison and Kimberley Webber. Powerhouse Publishing in association with UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005. ISBN 0 86840 985 5

As a child in the 1940s, Peter Tyler, now a professional historian, spent many afternoons visiting the Technological Museum, one of the Powerhouse Museum's precursors. According to Peter, 'it was magic'. (65) He even appreciated the broken interactives: there was always an element of surprise to his next visit regarding which interactives had been fixed and which ones hadn't. Neville Wran, one-time Premier of NSW and one of the most important political forces behind the inception of the Powerhouse, which opened in 1988, also regularly visited the old Museum as a child, remembering it as a 'fusty, musty, fascinating place to spend a wet day'. (32)

Maryanne McCubbin is Head of Strategic Collection Management at Museum Victoria.

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Is History Fiction?

By Anne Curthoys and John Docker. Sydney, UNSW Press, 2006. ISBN: 0-8640-734-8


Australian historians have responded to the so-called history wars with several insightful publications that contextualise debates around evidence, narrative and the uses of history. These include Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark's *The History Wars* (Melbourne University Press, 2003) and Macintyre's edited collection of essays *The Historian's Conscience – Australian Historians on the Ethics of History* (Melbourne University Press, 2004). Bain Attwood and Stephen Foster's *Frontier Conflict – The Australian Experience* (National Museum of Australia, 2003) contextualises the treatment of this topic in museums, responding in particular to the controversy over the National Museum's *Contested Frontiers* installation. Amongst several articles that have appeared in the major Australian history journals, Mathew Trinca's 'Museums and the History Wars' in *History Australia*, December 2003 provides a thoughtful museological response.

Ian McShane is with the Institute of Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology, researching the history of community infrastructure.

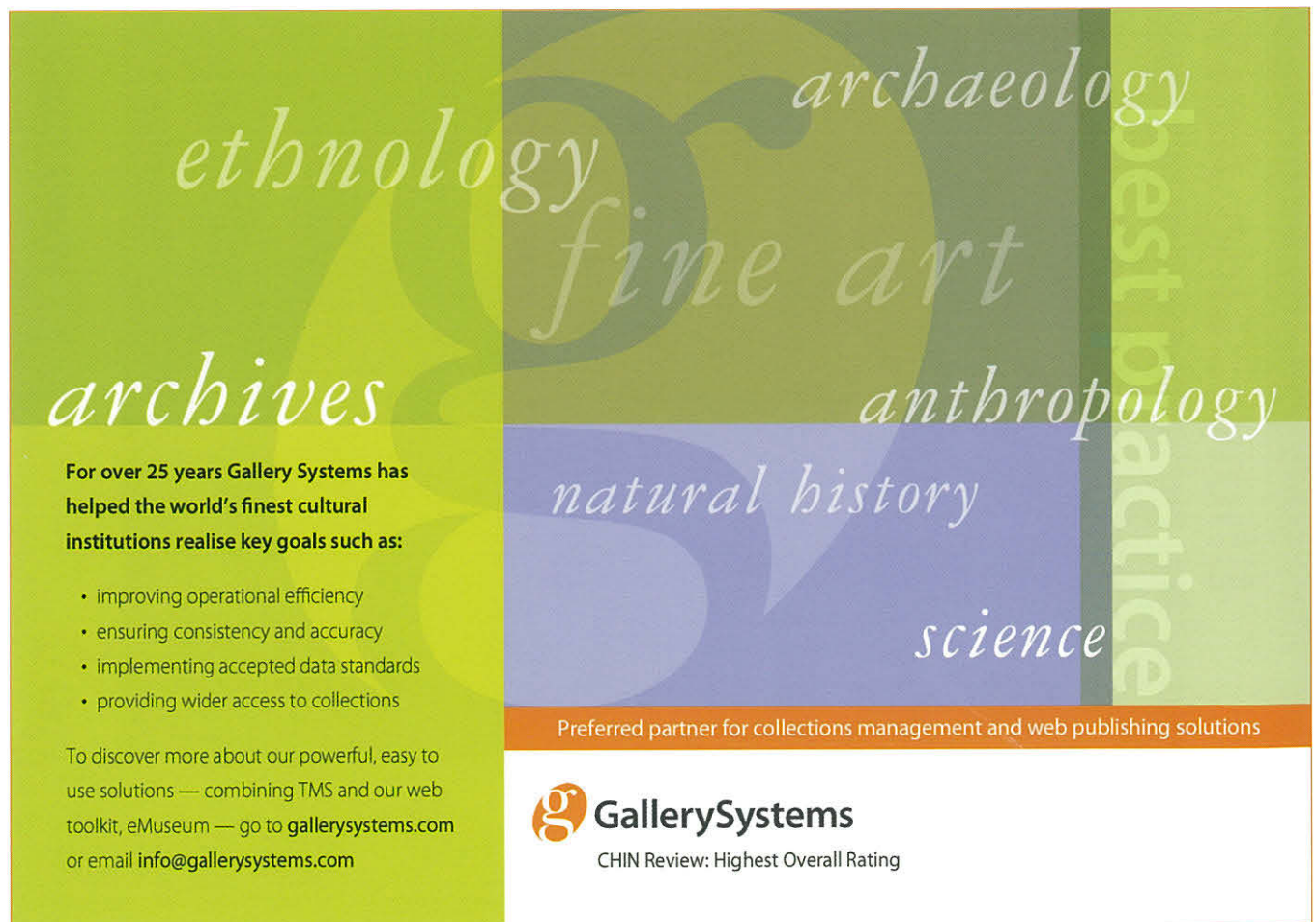
Reshaping Museum Space: architecture, design, exhibitions. Edited by Susan MacLeod. Routledge, London and New York, 2005. ISBN: 0-415-3434-53.

Reshaping Museum Space: architecture, design, exhibitions is an extremely stimulating collection of essays. In a field where the majority of discussion concentrates either on a critique of the content of exhibitions or on a discussion of the architectural vision of famous architects, editor MacLeod creates a space to discuss an equally important aspect of contemporary museological practice – an awareness that the spatial qualities of exhibitions and the buildings that encase them contribute to, and even ground, the narrative interpretations on offer and the experiences of the audiences that engage with them.

Dr Andrea Witcomb is Senior Lecturer in Cultural Heritage Studies, in the faculty of the Built Environment, Art and Design at Curtin University, Perth.

This review was written for *Media Information Australia*, issue 119, May 2006, and published here by the courtesy of the Editor. 

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