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AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES ISSUES • NEWS • VIEWS

NOVEMBER 2006

## A QUESTION OF ETHICS



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**COVER PHOTOGRAPH:** Terracotta figure of a standing crossbowman from the mausoleum of Emperor Qin Shihuang, Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE). Collection of the National Museum of China.

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# Exhibition News

## GOMA AND APT5 IN BRISBANE



The 5<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, opening on 2 December 2006, will be the first exhibition in Brisbane's newest art venue, the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA), and in the refurbished Queensland Art Gallery. GoMA will be the largest modern and contemporary art gallery in Australia, and will display the Queensland Art Gallery's collections of modern and contemporary Australian (including Indigenous Australian), Pacific, Asian and other international art.

APT5 will display over 300 works from thirty-seven Asian, Australian and Pacific artists, and two multi-artist projects. Around seventy per cent of the works in APT5 will be from the Gallery's own collection.

## SIZZLING ASIAN SUMMER IN SYDNEY

Sydneysiders and visitors to Sydney this summer can escape the heat and head into two wonderful Asia-focused exhibitions at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) and the Powerhouse Museum.

*Goddess: Divine Energy* at AGNSW runs until 28 January, and examines the different ways female deities have been depicted in Hindu and Buddhist art; and explores the wide range of mythological roles they have played. Curator Jackie Menzies has brought together more than 150 sculptures and paintings from public and private collections, featuring goddesses such as the gentle Lakshmi and the fearsome and destructive goddess of death, Kali. These works originated in Tibet, India and Nepal, and date from 2000BCE to the twentieth century.

The Great Wall is emblematic of China for many Australians, and now we have the opportunity to see the first major international exhibition on this iconic landmark. The Powerhouse Museum, in collaboration with the National Museum of China in Beijing, is now showing *The Great Wall of China: Dynasties, Dragons and Warriors*, until 25 February 2007, when it will move to the Melbourne Museum from 23 March-22 July 2007. More than 140 objects related to the building of the Wall tell the story of its 2000-year history and military use. The exhibition also features a series of audiovisual presentations setting the context for the building of the wall at various periods, methods of construction according to the building material resources of the various regions, and computer simulations of what the structure would have looked like before it suffered the ravages of time and erosion. There are also interactive games allowing visitors to see how a crossbow worked, and to piece together a ceramic horse and rider from an archaeological dig.

## PICASSO: LOVE AND WAR 1935-1945 AT NGV

The creative relationship between Picasso and the Surrealist photographer Dora Maar was captured in a comprehensive exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria International. Examples of both their work were displayed, including Dora Maar's photographic chronicle of the creation of Picasso's anti-war masterpiece, *Guernica*, now housed in the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid. *Guernica* was painted in response to the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica by the Nazi Condor Legion in 1937. Commenting on the exhibition in the *Australian Financial Review* (14 July 2006), Michael Desmond concluded:

There have been exhibitions of Picasso in Australia before but none has been adequate to match his grand reputation as the dominant presence of the 20th century. It is too late for the kind of major survey that would do justice to his astonishing output in all media. The best that can be hoped for is to see thoughtful groupings that tease out particular aspects of this artist's evolution and production. The NGV's exhibition achieves this.



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## THE ETHICS OF ACQUISITION AND CURATORIAL CONDUCT

Museums Australia has recently been approached by the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) and the Claims Conference (Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany).

They have raised questions as to what consideration has been given to creating an Australian Internet provenance portal for research of Nazi-era works, as established for museums in the USA (NEPIP <<http://www.nepip.org>>). NEPIP currently has 151 participating American museums, and the searchable registry encompassed by this portal lists some 18,000 artworks nominated for investigation. Such research aims to clarify whether any works might have unclear provenance in the period 1933-1945, or have been acquired in circumstances entailing dubious ownership or right of sale in the post-war period.

The queries from abroad have highlighted a number of issues. Museums Australia has not formulated a framework approach for dealing with Nazi-era works comparable to guidelines of American bodies such as the American Association of Museums (AAM) or the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD).

Nevertheless three of our state and national art institutions – the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV, Melbourne), National Gallery of Australia (NGA, Canberra), and Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW, Sydney) – have already launched provenance research on their own collections.

It is very painful for institutions that might have acquired works in good faith to address possible restitution claims on objects long admired and absorbed into the category of local or national heritage, though originating from afar. Such is the case with the NGV's beautiful seventeenth-century oil painting by Gerard ter Borch and studio, *Lady with a Fan*. Acquired through the Felton Bequest in 1946, it is now subject to a claim from a Chilean descendant of a Holocaust-torn family originally from Europe.



**Gerard ter BORCH and ter BORCH STUDIO**

*Lady with a fan* (c. 1660)

oil on canvas

67.7 x 51.2 cm

Felton Bequest, 1946

The ter Borch reached Melbourne from the context of large movements of artworks through the London art market in disrupted cultural circumstances after World War II. The very date of acquisition (1946) signals a red alert today – as was not realised decades ago.

Holding on to such works is morally untenable as a reflex position, if they can be shown to have been looted or illicitly gained. Nevertheless museums have to move carefully, checking all facts that deeper research may disclose, since they also have a moral duty to the communities that believe their public collections are held in trust 'in perpetuity'. Museums do not deaccession objects lightly or quickly – that is part of the complex ethical responsibilities they must manage rigorously in seeking to behave justly.

By the ethical standards of ICOM's latest Code of Ethics (ICOM, Paris, 2006), museums need to be *responsive in good faith* to serious claims that may be made on collections (a cultural heritage duty undertaken through their international obligations to consider both individual claimants and *source communities*). Conversely, they also need to be *protective in good faith* (a public duty of protective care they bear in the name of their *constituent communities* locally).

Professional ethics today constitute a complex and urgent topic in museum affairs internationally, and are not likely to subside from public interest. The subject of possibly looted antiquities has not yet been addressed publicly in Australia. However, one step at a time.

It is worth highlighting meanwhile the NGV's ethical decision to move forward on the painful task of retrospective 'due diligence' on acquisitions about which provenance questions may now be raised. It has placed a list of paintings on its public register of works needing further scrutiny (some acquired as recently as the 1990s, and one of 2000).

The NGV is in the most stressful position nationally concerning any problems of inadequate provenance that might now surface, through the unparalleled depth and extent of its European old master collections. Of all art museums in Australia, the Melbourne gallery has most at stake in what its provenance research might uncover. Nevertheless the NGV has publicly projected its commitment to taking a harder look at the biographies of works in its collection that might have gaps in the Nazi-era provenance period. Its benchmarking PROVENANCE portal may be consulted on the Internet: <<http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/provenance>>.

Ethical duty in the museum world calls us all to strive for standards that are difficult to achieve but important to uphold. A self-regulative disposition to pursue internationally recognised ethical standards is at the core of the museum profession. It is crucial to museums' demandingly high but inestimable standing in public trust.

It is timely for Museums Australia to resume the task of reviewing the national body's Code of Ethics. There is evident need to attend to some recently heightened issues and clear omissions in our ethical documents. Some matters highlighted above had not obtruded so sharply into collective awareness when the MA Code was first formulated (by the transitional Council of Australian Museums Associations/ CAMA in 1985); or last revised (by the Policy Committee of the MA National Council in 1999).

Museums Australia's Code is a good document, and covers key principles of ethical conduct. However there is no reference to measures to address Holocaust-era works, to intensify 'due diligence' on provenance, or to heighten awareness of expanding international instruments (conventions) to safeguard cultural heritage and inhibit illicit traffic in looted antiquities. There is also no specific heading or discussion of the concept of *conflict of interest*. This needs attention.

It is imperative that museums act in concert to address these subjects, raising awareness collectively about binding duties of protection of public interest in the ethics of acquisition, and the importance of observing proper conduct in relation to cultural markets generally.

**Bernice Murphy is National Director, Museums Australia, and chairs the Ethics Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM, Paris)**



## BIRDS AT AGNSW

Two artists who approach the subject of birds from two very different perspectives are displaying their work together in *A Bird in the Hand*, an exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in December 2006 and January 2007.

This exhibition of works by contemporary artists Tony Clark and John Wolseley shows how they approach the subject of birds from the perspectives of their very different backgrounds and artistic positions, and explore their many charms in diverse ways.

John Wolseley's concern is to document and analyse the ecosystems of the natural world. In common with natural history painters over several centuries, he bases his images on first-hand observation of bird species in their natural environment.

Tony Clark's work contrasts with that of John Wolseley by drawing on different cultural conventions of imaging birds and styles of art. He has been inspired by traditions ranging from Baroque painting to Middle Eastern decorative art. While Wolseley's birds can be seen as 'real' birds, Clark's are 'dreamt' birds, creatures of the imagination, embodying cultural traditions and symbolic meanings.

Curator Robyn McKenzie says that what the artists do share 'is an inheritance in the gentleman-amateur tradition of eighteenth-century collectors'.

'The dilettante collector of the eighteenth century would combine objects of different sorts in the one display case: natural history

specimens alongside cultural artefacts. The 'wonders' displayed in the collector's 'cabinet of curiosities' were admired for both their scientific and aesthetic interest. Similarly, the work of these two artists can be admired for both their scientific/scholarly content and commentary, and their aesthetic appeal.'

This exhibition presents birds as a presence in the natural environment. We are constantly reminded how fragile that environment is - like the fragile bodies of the birds that inhabit it. Birds are also part of the complex system of cultural symbols we use to make sense of our experience of this world. This exhibition brings together both these points of view.


*A Bird in the Hand* is on display from 14 December 2006 to 28 January 2007 on Level 2 Contemporary Project Space, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery Road, The Domain, Sydney

[www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au)

**Tony Clark *Parrot-portrait with flowers*, 2003. Acrylic and permanent marker ink on canvas, 62x46.5cm, courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney**



**JOHN WREN**  
VISIONARY ENTREPRENEUR 1871-1953



*Image Detail - John Wren c.1900. Courtesy Scribe Publications*

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# Point of View

## ART, MUSEUMS AND MONEY: AN ETHICAL HYPOTHETICAL

Art, museums and money can be stirred into a potent brew. The high monetary value of artworks and the public trust invested in art museums exist in a delicate symbiosis, whereby the financial capital of the one is guaranteed by the symbolic and cultural capital of the other. Money and prestige are the currencies of this exchange and they are mutually convertible.

The museum end of such transactions takes place in the well-lit sphere of public funding and accountability. Or that is the theory.

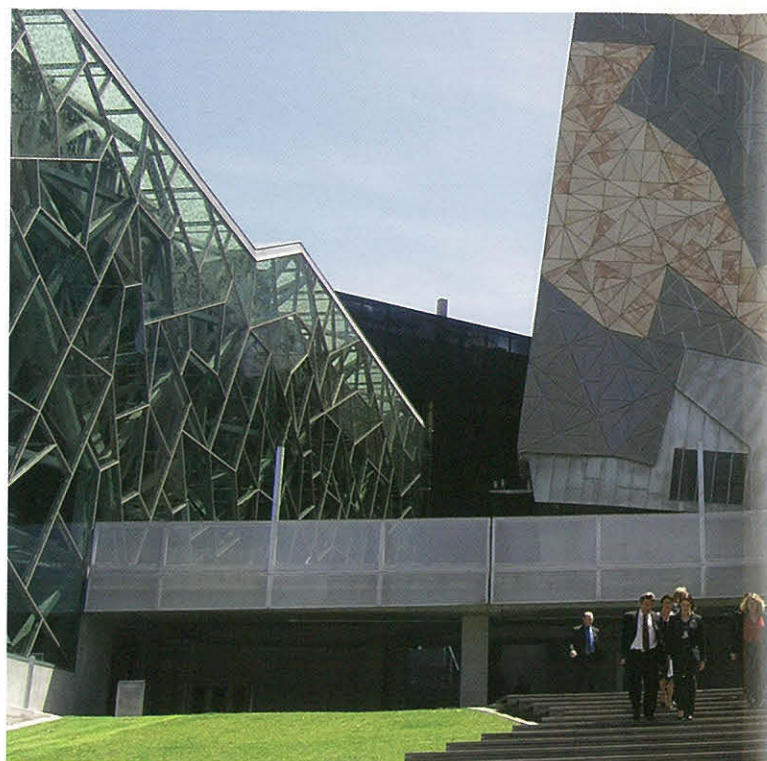
RMIT Gallery, led by Suzanne Davies, one of the most professionally engaged curators in the country, recently focused a torch into some dark corners of the financial aspects of art museum acquisitions. Some eighty people attended an 'Ethical Hypothetical' session in the Gallery on 16 August 2006. (A transcript of the evening's discussion is now available at <http://www.rmit.edu.au/rmitgallery/>)

The session brought Berlin art consultant Anne Marie Freybourg back to Melbourne, where she had addressed the MA conference in 2005 on the ethics of the pressures exerted by certain collectors of contemporary art in having their collections acquired by public museums. Her visit had been planned well in advance, but she arrived at a specially sensitive moment.

An unspoken 'Thinks' cloud hung over the audience: the current scandal of a senior curator at the National Gallery of Victoria being investigated for revealing in a contested property case that he had used his professional role to advance the interests of a particular private dealer.

As chair and co-speaker Stephen Fenelley, arts correspondent for Crikey.com, said in introducing the topic: everyone knows about it, everyone knows about other cases, and no-one is willing to mention names. Indeed, as he opened public discussion, he reminded the audience of the defamation laws that constrain explicit comment.

Freybourg put forward her argument that art museums are complicit in the 'art system' whereby curators validate the cultural value of artworks, thereby enabling them to be valued in higher monetary terms than if without their imprimatur.



She made the point that this is specially important in the market for contemporary art, where the aesthetic worth of newly-produced objects is not as straightforward (relatively speaking) as it is for historic items. She presented her fear that public collections are distorted by private tastes that manage to gain curatorial credibility via acquisition.

Fenelley was entertaining, telling of journalistic encounters with variants of Freybourg's case and the NGV curator's case - no names, of course. At the same time, he condemned his own trade, the media, for promoting rather than critically reviewing or investigating the arts, concluding savagely that trivial coverage correctly represents the social irrelevance of the arts in Australia. Ouch.

He became passionate in drawing out the ethical consequences of these situations: the rights that ought to belong to public enquirers, the responsibilities of publicly funded museums, the argument for

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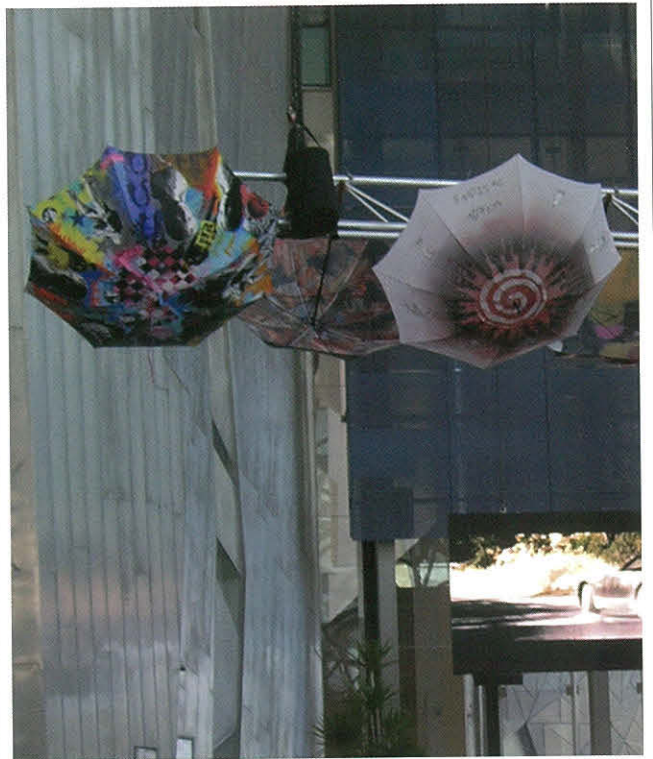
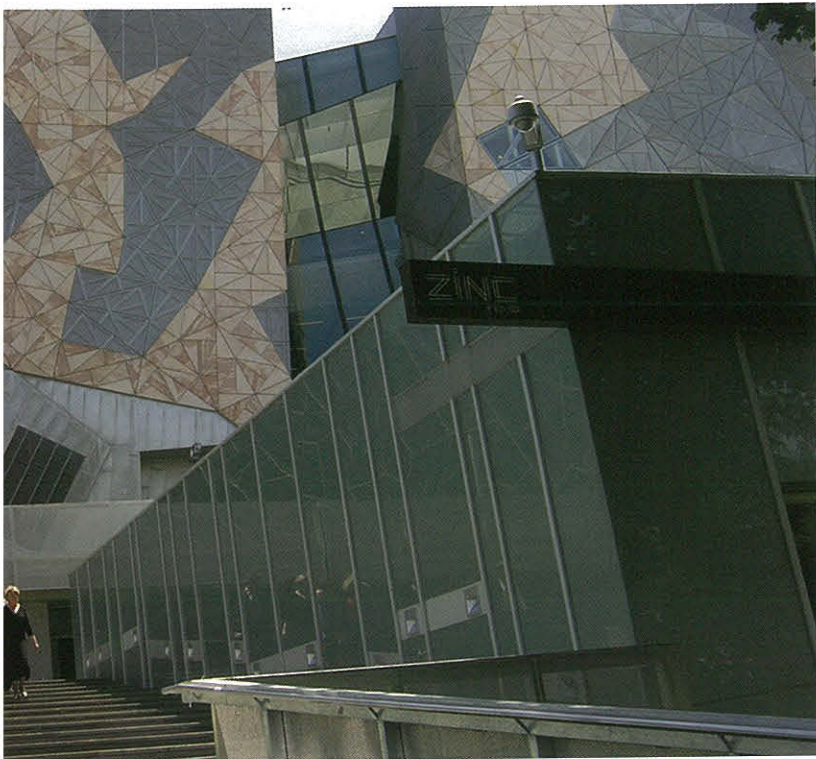
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# Point of View



Photos: Michael Jones

transparency, the corrupting effects of silence.

The audience was heavy with Melbourne art honchos with (nameless) stories to tell and points to make. They revolved around the need for ethical standards in acquisitions (specially from private sources), sponsorship, representation on boards, and exhibitions with strategic rather than aesthetic agendas.

The ICOM Code of Ethics (<http://icom.museum/ethics.html>) emerged frequently as the agreed statement of professional standards. However, as one participant pointed out, in her career she had never been required by management to sign the Code or any other undertaking.

Suzanne Davies led the conclusion by asserting that it is the personal responsibility of the professionals who staff public institutions to take an ethical stand, to draw the line on what behaviour is acceptable.

This is an admirable moral line, but throws all the responsibility onto individuals, overlooking the complex environment of the art system, as Freybourg argued. After all, can museum people really be expected to be morally superior to all other human beings? They say we all have our price, but not all of us have been tested.

In my opinion, responsibility for ethical practice in all fields of museum work must be explicitly adopted by museum management, and staff required literally to sign on. But even this course has its limits. Where temptation and risk balance out in individuals' minds, it will be worth acting unethically – just as, despite a vast and ancient body of law, our society still has criminals.

Freybourg and Fenelley were interviewed subsequently on ABC Radio National's 'The Deep End', where their arguments were again powerfully presented. The topic certainly resonated with the Melbourne audience at the RMIT Gallery – it is an issue that merits vigorous, continuing discussion.

**Linda Young teaches Museum Studies and Cultural Heritage at Deakin University, Melbourne.**

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# Point of View

## PAYBACK

Since early 2005, dark, thunderous and strife-laden clouds have been seen forming over the \$345 million dollar-refurbishment of the Getty Villa at Malibu, California and its re-opening as a museum of antiquities. The Getty Villa reopened in late January this year amidst a downpour of allegations centred on stolen loot. Legal eagles were wading through piles of witness statements, tens of metres deep, detailing art theft and an elaborate operation surrounding the re-birthing and distribution of illegally obtained artworks. The crux of the matter is that the Italian authorities have alleged that the former Getty Antiquities curator, Marion True, had knowingly conspired with a core of antiquity dealers and tomb-robbers, to buy looted artworks for the Getty. The issue of purchasing stolen artworks to one side (and it is a big issue to put to one side), documents related to the accusations allege that at least one prominent antiquities dealer stumped up a not insubstantial deposit for Marion True to purchase an Italian holiday cottage.

In all my years of working in and commenting on the arts as an industry, the issue of art museum curators receiving a golden thank-you from art dealers and/or collectors for their part in facilitating an art museum acquisition or exhibition, remains relatively unexplored territory. Few on either side of the industry fence really want to go there.

Accusations surrounding art museum curators and secret sales commissions and golden hellos and goodbyes are difficult to substantiate even if true. After all, the art dealers and art museum curators in question are hardly going to break down in the dock of public opinion and openly admit their illegal behaviour - that sort of evidential unburdening only ever happens on American television. And let's face it, such scuttlebutt about who's doing what to whom, could well bubble up from the spring of competitive arts industry spite. Taking all that on board, there does seem to be an informed arts industry body of opinion that is sticking to their conflict of interest guns on this one. A good number of art dealers and industry players that I have spoken with - all with considerable industry experience - believe that the kick back arrangements between a core of sharp art dealers and some art museum curators are as common as muck. It must be said from the outset, that allegations of this nature swirl around the very few - as is always the case, and certainly in my profession, it is the few bad apples that spoil an otherwise delicious barrel.

From my experience I do not know of any instance where an art

curator has received an introductory sales commission for their role in convincing their art museum to buy an artwork. On that side of the curator/art market conflict of interest equation, I draw a blank. However I do know of one contemporary art museum curator who accepted, without so much as a second thought, a 'gift' of an artwork valued at around \$17,000 from a private collector whose collection had been the focus of a major art museum exhibition. Snap.

I also know of a recent major contemporary art exhibition, held at an important university cum state art gallery, where the paintings were for sale from the museum walls. This is quite common. The curator, in conjunction with an art dealer, organises a solo show at the museum. With or without the curator's knowledge, the dealer simply sends his clients in to view the artworks at the museum. It is as you can imagine, a great selling tool. It is so common in the world of contemporary art, that one would have to believe that the curators are aware of - if not complicit in - this form of piggyback selling. While the curator kickback is just one small step away.

An art museum curator's position is fertile ground on which to sow the seeds of conflict of interest. As public servants, art museum curators are modestly remunerated. Curators work in an industry where they can largely not afford to own anything like the artworks they handle. In opposition to this financial reality, their position is often one of considerable influence. Most likely without any real knowledge of or experience in the art market, curators play a significant role in deciding just what art museums will buy, from whom and for how much. Alongside a mere handful of art dealers and collectors, art museums comprise a most significant buying force in the market. Last year, the Art Gallery of New South Wales spent a reported \$4.5 million to purchase Cy Twombly's *Three studies from the Temeraire* [1998-1999] - the first work of art by Cy Twombly to enter an Australian public collection.

Let there be no doubt in anyone's mind that art curators are heavily duched by aspects of the art trade (mainly the cutting edge contemporary art dealers). The process of entertaining and hopefully influencing a curator's purchasing decisions has been described to me by one leading art critic as 'essentially a cheap date. Wine' em, dine' em and then you know'. Curators like many in the business world are subjected to a round of lunches and dinners, paid for by others, in an attempt to build rapport with the curator and massage their decision-

*Continued on page 11*



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## TJURUNG-UNDITJKA\*

### Aboriginal Health Worker

#### Alan Palmer writes:

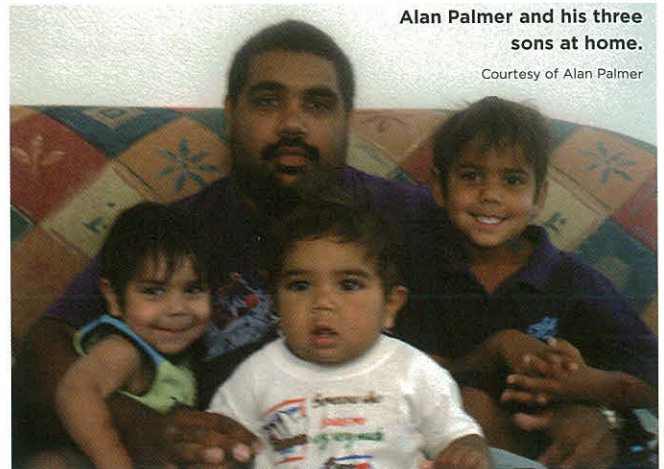
Aboriginal culture and lore, to me as a descendant, is a very important part of my life as it gives me a sense of identity in Central Australia. It tells me my history and lets me know who I am and where I come from. I am born of mixed race and tribes. I come from three tribes of Central Australia: Arrernte, Kayititje and Alywerre. I am a registered Aboriginal Health Worker and work for the Northern Territory Government - my title is Aboriginal Men's Health Worker Educator for Preventable Chronic Disease. I was initiated into manhood by my father's mother's people (family), the Kayititje from around Barrow Creek. There I learned a bit about my father's country which is my country, Anarbib. This is where my father's lore comes from and where my identity is. My three sons along with my brother's sons all come from in and around this place - we are all born to this place and its lore (Tjurunga).

Tjurunga is a word used by Aboriginal men in Central Australia to describe art, artefacts, songs, dances and stories in men's ceremonies. They are the way that men pass Knowledge on to the next generation. Today we have Tjurunga (art, songs, dances and stories) but no artefacts. Many of our artefacts are held by museums and other collectors in Australia and around the world. Aboriginal men have made do without these particular Tjurunga in their ceremonies for about two or three generations. Old men thought that this type of Tjurunga were lost for good, but with help from the Strehlow Research Centre I have found some of the Tjurunga that come from in and around Anarbib.

All of our Totems (Tjurunga) lived or passed through this area - our traditional country. My grandmother's people (family) told me stories about my Tjurunga and their storylines from Anarbib. They told me which other skin groups also belong to the lore (Tjurunga), as well as which skin groups are the caretakers (custodians) of that country. They told me stories about my great grandfathers and grandfathers - of how smart and knowledgeable they were in culture, lore and stockwork (station work). I asked how they knew these things about the Tjurunga storylines and they said the old people told them. They explained how two or more storylines can cross over one another as had been taught to them. I was taught about my storyline by some old men who came from Anarbib, some of whom had known and worked with my grandfathers and great grandfathers. At the time of my initiation, all my father's fathers were gone, and most of my older uncles had passed as well. The ones that are still alive today are no longer that knowledgeable in the lore (Tjurunga) from Anarbib. Maybe they were either too young to learn, or just not initiated when our old people were alive. Now only a couple of old men from Anarbib are still alive today.

In the work that I do, I see and hear a lot about how Aboriginal men have poor health and their life expectancy is a lot less than that of non-Aboriginal men. I ask myself: why do Aboriginal men in Central Australia die so much younger today than in the past? Why are they suffering from chronic diseases so much younger than other Australian men? It seems to me people have developed a 'that's good enough' attitude which I believe comes from the recent past and is now causing us a lot of problems today.

Though the recent past history of Central Australia, generations of



Alan Palmer and his three sons at home.

Courtesy of Alan Palmer

Aboriginal people lived on missions and cattle stations where they had little or no control over their own lives or destinies. This was very different from the way they had lived day to day to when they practised their pre-contact culture. The setting-up of missions and cattle stations, along with other overwhelming events, meant they had little or no control over their culture when things were taken from them like their Tjurunga, their country and their children. It doesn't matter whether these important parts of culture were either sold, given away or stolen - what matters is that Aboriginal people had little or no control over their circumstances. They just learned to accept what was happening to them as a part of life, the price of survival - and this is what I believe played a big part in developing a 'that's good enough' attitude.

I used to ask the old men and grandfathers about ceremony. They said it was hard back then because the old people were very strict and everything down to the last detail had to be done properly. Old people told me those old days were hard both on the stations and within the culture, but these same old people say those were the 'good old days' - they smile when they talk about them because those days made you feel like you were a part of something, and made you act like a man. Those 'old days' made a man out of you, both through Aboriginal culture and work, because in both roles you were given responsibility; culture to look after and respect, as well as knowing your lore (Tjurunga). Through both station work and culture you had to provide and look after your families. These were the two main responsibilities for Aboriginal men in those days, and so it should be today.

Aboriginal men need to have a purpose in daily life and our culture; it is both our Tjurunga and family that really matter. We need to know where the Tjurunga are, so we can start to have access and contact with them. They are, to men's lore, some of the most important things in our culture - now just as much as before! As Aboriginal men we are supposed to uphold the lore and take care of our Tjurunga, but how can we when they are sleeping in a museum or someone's house somewhere? We could take them back home for a visit one day so we can wake them up and bring them back to life. We can then learn our lore (Tjurunga) and pass it on to our sons while the old people still have a chance to show us. As men we will have a purpose again and it will make us stronger in men's lore. Then like in those times before ours, we will be able to take care of our Tjurunga and our families just like our ancestors did for so long and so well.

**Alan Palmer**

\*Literally 'Tjurunga - give me'.



# Out and About

## CHINESE MUSEUMS: TRANSFORMING THEIR MISSION AND POSITION IN THE WORLD

China recently staged a gathering of its museum directors, organised by the Chinese Society of Museums. The 2006 Beijing International Forum of Museum Directors was held for three days in September in Beijing. A directors-only gathering, the Forum provided a snapshot of the huge economic and social changes currently sweeping China, and their impact on museums.

Chinese museums and museology are opening to the world. There is a widely stated desire to 'internationalise' their practices, now a pressing challenge imposed upon Chinese museums as a state-sponsored objective for cultural institutions in the slipstream of preparations for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. A further imperative for internationalisation was added in June this year, when ICOM voted to award the General Conference and Assembly of ICOM (International Council of Museums) in 2010 to Shanghai. Two university museum directors from Korea (Kim Byung-Mo and Bae Kidong), pivotal in organising 'ICOM 2004' in Seoul, delivered presentations on how the whole profession in China would need to gear up to hosting 'ICOM 2010', including meetings of ICOM's thirty specialist International Committees.

Five other international guests were also targeted for papers: on museology training (Prof. Peter van Mensch, Reinwardt Academy,

Amsterdam; Prof. Chen Kuoning, Taiwan Tainan University of Arts); new thinking in museums internationally (Tereza Scheiner, Museum Studies, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro); development of exhibition exchanges as social capital (Gail Dexter Lord, Lord Cultural Resources, Toronto); and international ethical standards for museums and the ICOM Code of Ethics (Bernice Murphy, Museums Australia; Chair, ICOM Ethics Committee).

Chinese directors gave fine papers representing the diverse work of their own museums. Their papers were detailed and moving, and frankly discussed the complex tasks of establishing new technologies and methods of working, setting these against the background of Chinese museums' history in the twentieth century (when contact with western museums was confined to the former Soviet sector).

Some very fine work was presented: for example, a lovely paper on the intangible heritage values of the fish-rice agricultural system, highlighting its ecological and cultural interconnections and needs for subtle conservation. There was another on the effort to revive and conserve Kunqu classical opera, by the director of the China Kunqu Museum in Suzhou, where the form was centred historically - home also of the remarkable Humble Administrator's Garden, one of the foremost examples of the classic Chinese garden and pavilions surviving from the sixteenth century. The Kunqu opera has UNESCO recognition, under programs for the Protection and Transmission of World Intangible Heritage.

The transformation of The Forbidden City and Palace Museum (established in 1925), including recent commissioning of an Encyclopaedia of the Palace Museum to be compiled by a team of scholars, is already an impressive undertaking. Many parts of the

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# Out and About

Forbidden City will be opened as a 'museological work in progress', with some conservation and rebuilding work on view as part of its interpretive transformation. The aim is to revitalise the huge complex of one million square metres as a centre of Imperial Chinese culture and history, in ways that reflect its status as one of the most important site-museums in the world, and to provide amenities that meet international standards.

The director of the new World Art Museum in Beijing, Ms Wang Limei, reviewed this first-of-its kind museum in China. Housed within the skyline-marking China Millennium Monument, this new multifunction facility (20,000 square metres) was inaugurated in 2006 as a major art exhibitions venue and instrument of interaction with museums internationally. The museum complex includes a Digital Art Gallery (a virtual museum, to represent cultures of the world that China never collected historically); a major temporary exhibitions space; and a Permanent Gallery, to present an overview of world art and a stated 'platform for communication among cultures', for the first time in China.

Wang Limei presented a review of the ambitious temporary exhibitions program involving foreign cultural ministries and art museums eager to work with China. *Mirror of the Times: Italian Renaissance Art* opened in January 2006, with impressive loans from Italy (eighty works from twelve Italian museums); this was followed by *Impressionist Paintings from the Cleveland Museum of Art* (May-July). Most recently the peak project, *Great Civilizations*, opened in October. Sampling six civilizations - Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, India and Meso-America - this ambitious exhibition incorporating historic survey-quality loans will remain on view until September 2008, targeting the Beijing Olympic Games audience.

In addition to an Olympic Games amenity, the *Great Civilizations* exhibition seeks to build on the Renaissance and Impressionist exhibitions earlier, to 'provide Chinese audiences [with] a first comprehensive view into the rich and diverse heritage of world cultures', as encapsulated in the prospectus and mission statement for the opening program of exhibitions at China's first World Art Museum.

During the International Directors Forum, an associated, trade-fair-style exhibition of Chinese museums, their resources and products - a 2006 Relevant Products and Technologies Exposition - was opened at the China Agricultural Museum in Beijing. This presented a visual panorama of Chinese museums undergoing perhaps the most profound technical and conceptual change in their history. With only twenty-one museums in China before 1949; 365 museums at the time of the Cultural Revolution; 1013 by 1990; and 2300 by the end of 2005, Chinese museums development has been unique in world history.

This large museums community has now opened to international exchange and is seeking partnerships with the world, while also needing to find paths of stabilisation (including ethics and museological principles) while it takes on the challenge of new facilities and new ways of working, through sponsorship and earned income. Chinese museums deserve supportive friendship from international museum colleagues right now, as they navigate the complex challenges of unprecedented transformation, engaging a new generation, and new styles of work in moving out into the world.

**Bernice Murphy is National Director of Museums Australia and chairs the Ethics Committee of ICOM**



PAYBACK

*Continued from page 8*

making processes. Breaking bread with almost anyone is hardly ever a problem. Real difficulties with all these lunch and dinner dates arise when the art curator is not up with the game. Being up with the game is one of the big differences between, say, a high net worth individual dining with a banker, and a curator dining with an art dealer. From my experience working with the more astute banking community, when you go to lunch with a banker it is always made obvious that business is to be found as the basic ingredient of the meal. In the art world I have witnessed all too many curators, like bunnies in the headlights, bewildered by all the love bombing and personalised attention to the extent that they actually believe their art dealer host is their new best friend. Many art dealers are indeed close friends with curators ... whilst they are curators. From my experience many of the cutting edge art dealers befriend the position, not the person.

Curators often get cheap art. There is certainly nothing wrong with that. In fact curators who collect are from my experience way ahead of the game when it comes to knowledge and taste. But there is a fine line between purchasing for an art museum and leveraging that purchasing power to collect below the going market rate for themselves. Many art dealers will substantially discount the purchase price of an artwork, if purchased privately for a curator's collection. The old one for them (art museum) and one cheaply for me trick. Out and out gifts of artworks are not uncommon. But there is more. I knew of a very senior former member of an art museum management committee who dealt in art. Yep, they went in a consortium of art dealers to purchase and re-sell European paintings - privately and through auction. Such professional stupidity defies the imagination.

Museums Australia published a code of ethics in 1999 [www.museumsaustralia.org.au](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au) Some of the conflicts and issues discussed in this article are touched on lightly in that document. I urge all art museum curators to read that code of conduct.

**Michael Reid is an arts journalist and art dealer. This article first appeared in his June/July 2006 client magazine**



# Out and About

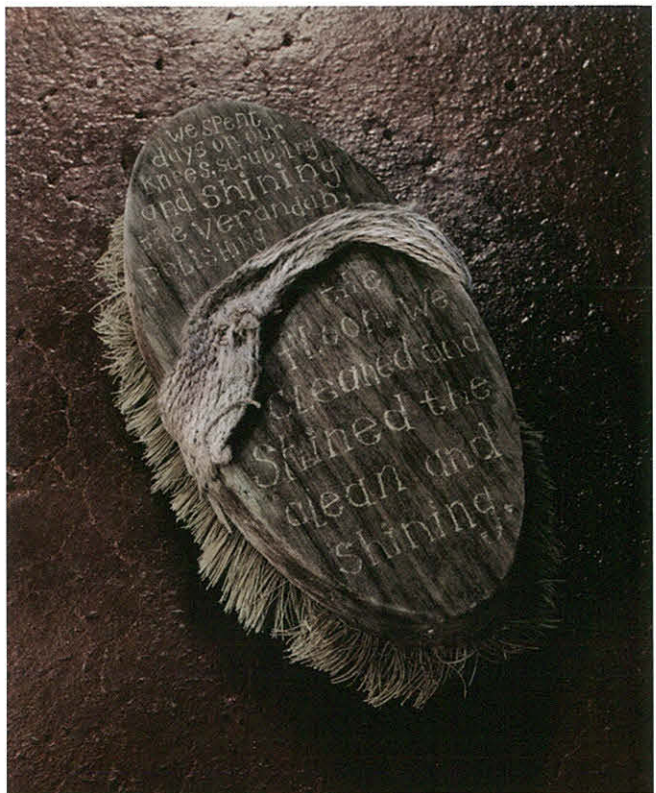
## PAST IN THE PRESENT

### Past in the present: Commemoration and healing at the Women's Jail in Johannesburg

Sites of past atrocity which become museum spaces challenge heritage interpreters and confront visitors. They often set out to do much - commemoration, healing, reconciliation, and the rebuilding of divided nations. In post-apartheid South Africa such sites include Robben Island (where Nelson Mandela spent nineteen of his twenty-seven years in prison), and Constitution Hill (which encompasses parts of the old Fort prison and the new constitutional court - central symbol and focus of the shaping of the new democracy).

The Constitution Hill site includes the old Women's Jail, which was opened to the public on 9 August 2005. This is a unique museum and site specifically honouring the memories of the many thousands of women imprisoned there since it commenced in 1910. The jail incarcerated women for offences ranging from brewing traditional African beer (one of the few ways poor women could make some money), contravening the laws controlling people's movement from one area to another (sometimes women had come to the city to try to be with their migrant labouring husband), 'immorality' (having sexual relations across the colour bar), fraud, prostitution and theft.

Some of the prisoners were political activists, including Winnie Mandela, Fatima Meer, Albertina Sisulu, and Barbara Hogan. Black and



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Women's Jail Exhibitions at Constitutional Hill. Opens 9 August 2005.

CONSTITUTION HILL

Courtesy of Constitution Hill Archive

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white women were held separately and under very different conditions. Enormous overcrowding and a relentless routine of meaningless work were the order of the day. A wardress who worked there in 1959 said 'this place was not suitable for human habitation'.

Entering the jail, as I did last year with Dorothy Matshoba, one of the former political detainees as guide, was a significant experience. At the entrance, where she had been brought at night by the security police many years ago, she lifted her head and sang the song of solidarity, consolation and defiance just as she had then. The echoes of suffering, sacrifice and triumph reverberated in the atrium which opens out from the narrow entrance way.

This circular dome I at first found filled with the light and grace of Victorian architecture. Yet as the former prisoners' stories were told by the women accompanying us and via text panels, the elegance of the space was shed. Instead, I saw the panopticon - the place of perennial surveillance.

The museum designers have worked with former women prisoners to create the representations. First, there are the physical spaces - a complex of buildings, some post-dating the use of the place as jail, the Victorian entrance, the courtyards, office spaces, the cells. What to keep? What to restore? What to recreate? There was debate about the precinct seeming too spick and span. And then there are those spaces which are no more - the tin sheds the security police had constructed to hold particular political prisoners, and which they destroyed to hide their atrocities. The decision was made not to restore these, not to reinstate them, but to leave them destroyed. Instead a metal footprint



# Out and About

of one such shed has been created on the fresh green grass of the courtyard.

The permanent exhibitions focus primarily on women's stories, as part of the museum's mission to 'recognise women as the makers and tellers of history'. Some of these are on glass panels, which in their transparency represent a layering of past and present – story, panel, buildings and grounds.

While this museum is largely based on the significances and interpretations of its physical spaces, the authors have also chosen to use object-based displays. How do you choose objects for such a museum? What the authors have done is to emphasise that which makes women's experiences in prison distinct, selecting objects familiar to prisoners' daily lives. On the upper level of the atrium, an open balcony, there is a tall pile of red polish cloths and brushes – the work of women in prison is cleaning, endlessly. One prisoner was quoted as saying: 'We spent days on our knees, scrubbing and shining the veranda, polishing the floor. We cleaned and shined the clean and shining.' What does this tell us about women's role in society more generally?

These exhibits were all the more affecting because of their traditional museum display treatment. Notable was the folded cotton cloth in a glass case which was what was distributed to women as sanitary pads. These were used as a privileging and punishing tool by women having to request them, and by wardresses withholding them.

There is an exhibition space where political activist Fatima Meer's paintings are displayed. These were smuggled out of the jail and are all that exists to show the prison as it then was. They also form part of the recognition of 'women's contribution in the struggle for democracy'. (Women are already being written out of the post-apartheid metanarratives).

Yet the Women's Jail today is not only about the past; it has a range of contemporary uses. It is the location of the Commission on Gender Equality, whose 2005 chairperson, Joyce Piliso-Seroke, in 1976 was held in solitary detention in cell number two. This is part of making the whole of Constitution Hill a human rights precinct. In other words, the transformation made material – from places of atrocity to places promoting justice and dignity. This is complemented by continuing activist and locally relevant activities in busy public programmes.

However there are huge uneasinesses about visiting the Women's Jail. And I think that, paradoxically, this is how it succeeds. There is no easy story of triumph over adversity – such as at the Apartheid Museum. It also avoids the nation-building agendas of Constitution Hill as a whole; or the prevalent Mandela-isation of many South African heritage sites. The many stories and shadows of stories are of commemoration, of resilience, of wasted lives and unrelenting sorrow. The former prisoners who helped shape the exhibitions, we are told, were lost at times in grief and remembered trauma through the process. The organisers responded with healing spaces and trauma counsellors – a reminder that contemporary museums of commemoration need to embrace, from the start, very personal processes of healing and reconciliation.

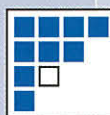
**Carol Low is a museum consultant**

A fully referenced version of this article can be viewed in MAM On-Line on the Museums Australia website, [www.museumsaustralia.org.au](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au)

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# Out and About

## MUSEUMS AT THE AIRPORT

*Taking museums to where people are is an effective outreach technique. Here are two examples of how this can be achieved: by utilising spaces where people often have plenty of time to kill – airports. Museums large and small – from the national to the regional level – could take note of this idea, and build a relationship with their local airport to bring their museum's collection and activities to the attention of the travelling public.*

Not long ago I was in transit in Miami International Airport. I had plenty of time between flights, and was in no rush to get to the departure gate. An attractive display along one corridor wall caught my eye, of large and colourful photographs of an installation by glass artist Dale Chihuly at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Florida. Examining these attractive images took up some of the 'dead time' I had to spend in the airport, and alerted me to the existence of the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. Further along I noticed another photographic exhibition on 'The Art of Boxing' – this was, I have to admit, less alluring than the Chihuly glass art, but I am sure it has its own niche market.

On my return trip through Miami International Airport I saw several more exhibitions: a selection of images from Audubon's *The Birds of America*; historic photos of 'The Roaring Twenties at the Beach' and maritime scenes around Miami's historic waterfront. These came from the Historical Museum of Southern Florida. There was also an exhibition of the work of final year students at the Design High School. All these displays diverted me for a portion of the time I had to spend at the Airport – and sent me to the websites of the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden and the Historical Museum of Southern Florida when I returned to Australia.

I discovered that the exhibitions had been arranged by the Fine Arts and Cultural Affairs Division of Miami International Airport, which had selected over 100 images from the Museum's collection of nearly one million for display at the Airport. The result of the efforts of the Airport's Fine Arts and Cultural Affairs Division's activities has been twofold. I saw some very interesting exhibitions during my time at the Airport and learned more about Florida. And if I have to transit through Miami again, I will try to stay overnight and visit both the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden and the Historical Museum of Southern Florida.

A drop in the ocean of visitors, certainly, but multiply my experience by the millions who pass through Miami International Airport each year, and you can see that these exhibitions have the ability to increase visitor numbers. And even if they don't, people who see them gain some insight into the place in which they are temporarily located.

The capacity of a display at the airport to attract and inform visitors is also demonstrated closer to home, at Sydney Airport. The Qantas Heritage Collection display is located on a mezzanine above Gate 13 in the Qantas Domestic Terminal. The objects and memorabilia on display have been selected from thousands of items donated by passengers and airline staff.

Qantas's history is conveyed in striking graphics and historic photographs that move from grainy monotone to vivid colour as the twentieth century and beyond unfolds, in a timeline printed on banners hanging from the ceiling.

Small showcases of objects on the walls portray vignettes of aviation history. A large space is devoted to a semi-circle of mannequins wearing



**Mangrove Hummingbirds from Audubon's *The Birds of America***

Courtesy of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida



**Claude Matlack, 'Tea Time, Miami Beach, October 15, 1927'**

Courtesy of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida



# Out and About



Qantas uniforms from over the period of the airline's existence. The quite hectic colours of some of the uniforms contrast with a greyish-white background of corrugated iron panels suggesting an outback aerodrome.

Aircraft models are, naturally, much in evidence, in showcases and hanging from the lofty ceiling, presenting a challenge for aircraft recognition buffs. And for those who are interested in the inner workings and parts of aeroplane engines, there are examples of these here too.

The development of aviation is one of our great national stories. Now the nation's flag-carrier brings its contribution to Australian life to a wider audience in the Qantas Heritage Collection exhibition at Sydney Airport.

The Qantas Heritage Collection is open to the public, free of charge, from Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 4.30pm. (Closed on public holidays).

**Roslyn Russell is Managing Editor of *Museums Australia Magazine***



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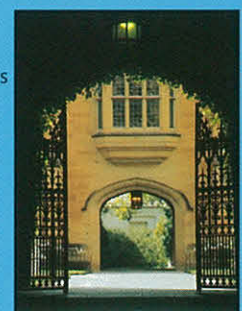
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# Regional Roundup

## TWENTY YEARS OF TREASURES AT CABOOLTURE, QUEENSLAND

To discover that there is a museum outside an Australian capital city displaying objects relating to Prehistoric and Roman Britain, the Classical World, Medieval and Tudor Britain and Europe, the ancient Mediterranean and Middle East, and the cultures of Asia, Africa, Pre-Columbian America and the Pacific comes as a surprise when one encounters the Abbey Museum of Art and Archaeology. And these are only some of the cultures on display at what has been described as a 'mini-British Museum' in the Australian bush, at Caboolture, about an hour's drive north of Brisbane.

The story of the Abbey Museum's origins is almost as fascinating as its diverse collection. The collection came to Australia in 1956 from Cyprus, but the story of its founder and its formation starts earlier, in pre-World War II England.

The core collection - it has been added to by donation and purchase since the Abbey Museum was opened in Caboolture twenty years ago - was formed by Reverend John S M Ward, who founded England's first social history museum, the Abbey Folk Park, at New Barnet on the outskirts of Greater London, in 1934. Inspired by the pioneering work at the world's first open-air museum at Skansen in Sweden, Ward reconstructed a range of prehistoric and medieval dwellings, using them as showcases to display his collection of antiquities. These he had collected from boyhood onwards, when he had been an enthusiastic gatherer of prehistoric flints and Roman pottery. Later he bought from salerooms and combed building sites for artefacts, and by 1940 he had formed a collection of over 40 000 items, and saved thirty historical buildings from demolition.

The outbreak of war and subsequent bombing spelled the end of the Folk Park. At war's end Ward - along with members of the religious community he had formed to live out a philosophy that integrated the spiritual teachings of the East and the West within a monastic setting - moved to Cyprus. Most of his huge collection, with the exception of 4500 pieces, was dispersed. Terrorist activity on Cyprus made this haven unsafe in its turn and, once Ward had died in 1949, the community emigrated once more, arriving in Sydney in 1956. Ten years later its members found a permanent home in Caboolture. In the late 1970s the museum director, Michael Strong, was appointed, and a building to house the collection and make it accessible to the public



was commenced in 1983. In June 1986, thirty years after Ward's community arrived penniless in Sydney with the crated remnants of his collection, the Abbey Museum was opened, and its collections now delight thousands of visitors each year.

The Abbey Museum functions as a survey museum of world cultures, with each of its sections illustrated by a range of objects representing a much wider cultural context. Its richest collections are, not surprisingly, those that reflect Ward's interests in Prehistoric Britain and the Middle East, and the religious faith practised by his community. In keeping with its monastic nature, a major focus of the Abbey Museum is the Medieval period: among its treasures are some very fine

illuminated manuscripts, their presentation enhanced by an animated model of a monk working in a scriptorium.

Other, less pacific aspects of the Medieval period are also on display, demonstrating the military nature of much of the life of the times, and the code of chivalry that dictated the conduct of the nobility. Medieval tournaments held at the Abbey Museum in winter each year bring this aspect of the past to life, as knights in armour joust under the Queensland sun.

With this emphasis on things Medieval, it is not surprising that a detail from one of the Museum's illuminated manuscripts is the cover image for *Unexpected Treasures: highlights from the Abbey Museum*, a new book on the history and collection of the Museum published this year

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# Regional Roundup

to mark its twentieth anniversary at Caboolture. Aptly named, *Unexpected Treasures* tells the history of the collection, and gives a brief but well illustrated survey of every area. The book also describes the Medieval tournaments, and the mock archaeological digs the Museum creates for schoolchildren.

*Unexpected Treasures* costs \$14.50 + \$1.45 P & P (credit card or cheque) from the Abbey Museum, 1 - 63 The Abbey Place, Caboolture, Qld 4510. Or go to the website for an order form: <http://www.abbeymuseum.asn.au/books05.htm>

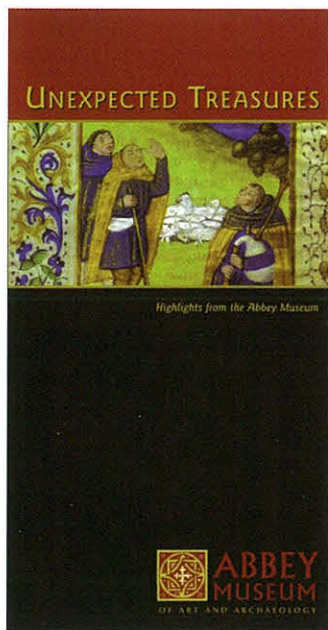
#### Opposite:

#### Venetian glass winged goblet

Courtesy of the Abbey Museum of Art and Archaeology

#### The Age of Chivalry at the Abbey Museum

Photo: Roslyn Russell



#### Right:

#### Tang Dynasty flute player

Courtesy of the Abbey Museum of Art and Archaeology



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# Regional Roundup

## REGIONAL ARTS TAKES CENTRE STAGE

Bringing together a panel of twenty-five key arts decision-makers, arts workers and business leaders, as well as sixty invited observers, the 2006 Regional Arts Summit aimed to develop action plans for the achievement of the *Regional Arts Australia 2006 National Directions* policy, formed through national community consultation during 2005 and published earlier this year.

Held in Canberra in August, the event focused on two issues deemed vital to the development of arts in regional, rural and remote Australia: recognition of the arts in regional Australia and developing partnerships, and extending and strengthening the arts network.

From the Summit, seven outcomes were identified for immediate action:

- Communicate the centrality of arts to sustainable communities;
- Conduct social impact research that statistically proves the benefits of arts in the community;
- Develop a national communication strategy to promote and demystify the arts;
- Introduce new approaches to developing partnerships with local government, philanthropic organisations and other networks;
- Build better physical and human infrastructure in the regions;
- Develop relevant arts programs for young people; and
- Encourage interconnectedness and community exchange amongst regional arts groups throughout Australia.

The *Regional Arts Australia 2006 National Directions* policy also formed the basis for programming of a more celebratory event: *The Pacific Edge*, Regional Arts Australia's 2006 Annual Conference, held in Queensland's Mackay in September.

The event attracted over 750 delegates – by far the largest gathering Regional Arts Australia has hosted for a conference.

Keynote speakers included Rhoda Roberts, Bill Hauritz from the Woodford Folk Festival, Barbara Schaffer Bacon from Americans for the Arts, and Professor Amareswar Galla, who holds concurrent positions at the Australian National University and the University of Queensland.

Arthur Frame, CEO and artistic director of the Queensland Arts Council and artistic director of *The Pacific Edge*, said the 100 conference sessions were grouped around themes arising from the *National Directions* policy: building strong communities, connections across the Pacific Rim, young people with creative futures, art as a powerful agent for change, Indigenous people and communities, reaching new audiences, arts partnerships and collaborations, and innovative communication.

Frame believes last year's community consultation process also prompted participants to attend the conference. 'Taking the trouble to actually talk to people about the issues that are important in their communities and placing those as the themes for the conference, was really one of the successes of the event and engaged people and drew them to it. They wanted to see where the conversation was going,' Frame said.

With eleven venues running sessions, workshops and events



Artspace Mackay was one of the venues for *The Pacific Edge* 'fringe' visual arts program. Photo: Artspace Mackay

### ***The Pacific Edge* artistic director Arthur Frame at the launch of the conference.**

Photo: Dean Whiting

concurrently, as well as a performance and 'fringe' visual arts program organised by Artspace Mackay in venues around the city and in the regions, *The Pacific Edge* delegates were spoiled for choice.

One of the highlights of the conference, according to Frame, was a series of performances by the Kezenoco Theatre Company from Japan. The company, which creates theatre specifically for children, performed its production 'A World of Paper' not only at the conference, but also on a tour of schools in the Mackay region for four weeks leading up to the conference.

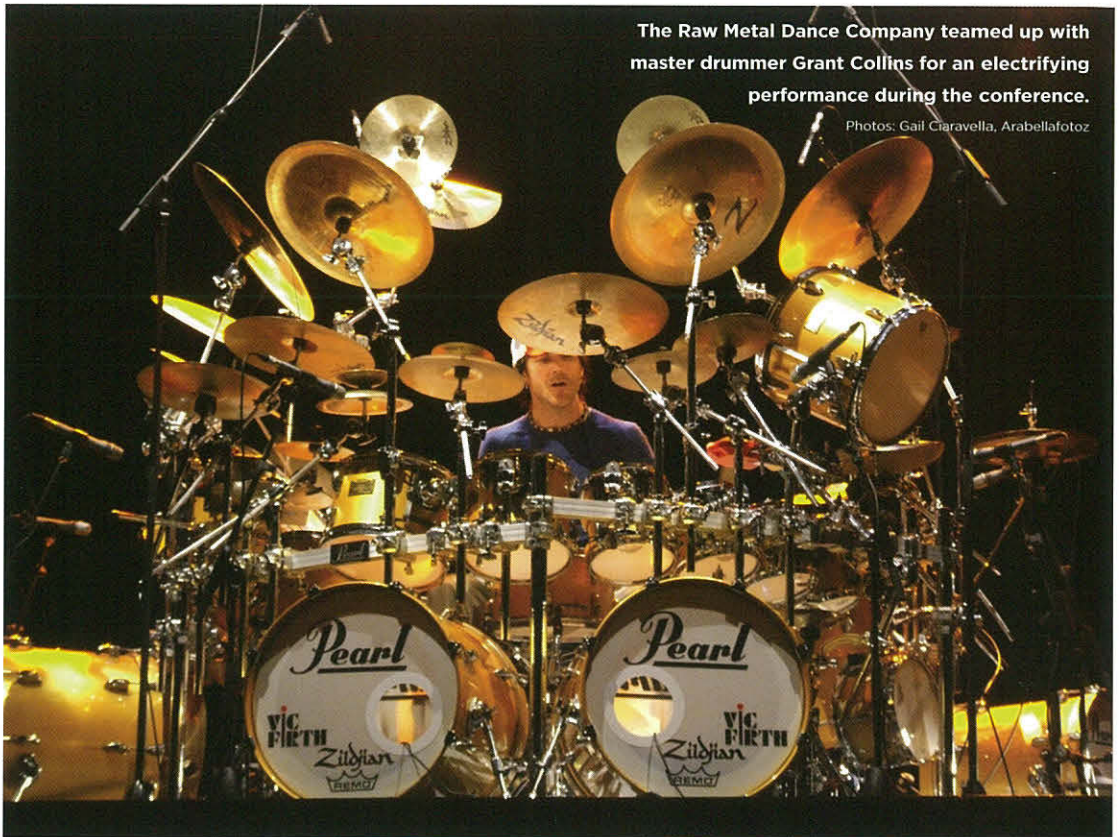
'We also went online with that production, so we had live uplinks to over sixty Queensland schools, and over 2000 students participating, asking the artists questions at the end of the performance through a translator,' Frame said.

Other highlights included a performance for delegates and the public by the Raw Metal Dance Company with master drummer Grant Collins, and a didactic improvised performance at the conference's closing ceremony by the Sojourn Theatre Company from Portland, Oregon, created from interviews with delegates about regional arts issues.

One of the most valuable aspects of the conference, Frame said, was gathering together so many people from an extraordinary range of backgrounds, who share an interest and involvement in regional arts. 'You've got almost all the top arts bureaucrats, there's a lot of regional volunteers, performers and arts educators – it's such a mix, and you get an incredible energy and a unity that comes from that.'



# Regional Roundup



The Raw Metal Dance Company teamed up with master drummer Grant Collins for an electrifying performance during the conference.

Photos: Gail Ciaravella, ArabellaFotoz



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# Regional Roundup

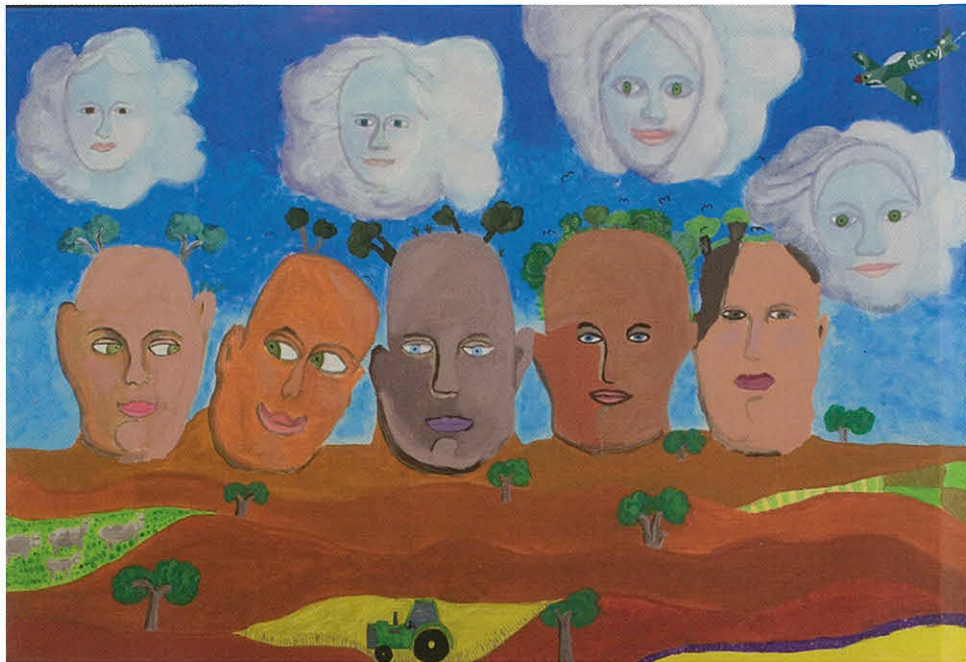
## HEADSPACE

Place the theme for *Headspace* at National Portrait Gallery

An exploration of the youthful creativity of school students can be seen in this year's *Headspace Seven* exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery at Commonwealth Place. This year secondary school students from the ACT and regional Victoria and New South Wales were asked to base their self-portraits on the theme of *Me and My Place*.

The result has been a display of 200 works which 'ran the gamut of the possibilities the word "place" offered, understanding it in a purely geographical way, as meaning psychological space, personal space or of course physical space' (*Canberra Times*, 12 September 2006).

*Headspace Seven: Me and My Place* is on display at Commonwealth Place, ACT until 19 November, from Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm.



**Jamie Carle, Jill Climpson, Renee Farthing, Brady Gilchrist, Jackelyn Hughes, Emily Marchant, Bernadette McShane, Sarah O'Callaghan, Guy Piltz**

Year 7 St. Anne's Central School, Temora

*Down to Earth Dreams*

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery

**Nick Wales**

Year 12 The Canberra College

*Moving and Changing*

lino print

Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery



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Here is a selection of stories that have been uploaded to the Museums Australia website in MAM On-line between August and November

## NEWS AND COMMENT

### TMAG and Tsunami relief

The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) has responded generously and creatively to the devastation caused by the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami in Sri Lanka.

### *Under the Waves* exhibition at Australian National Maritime Museum

The vibrant world that lies below the surface of the sea comes alive at the Australian National Maritime Museum in an exhibition by Western Australian underwater photographer, Glen Cowans.

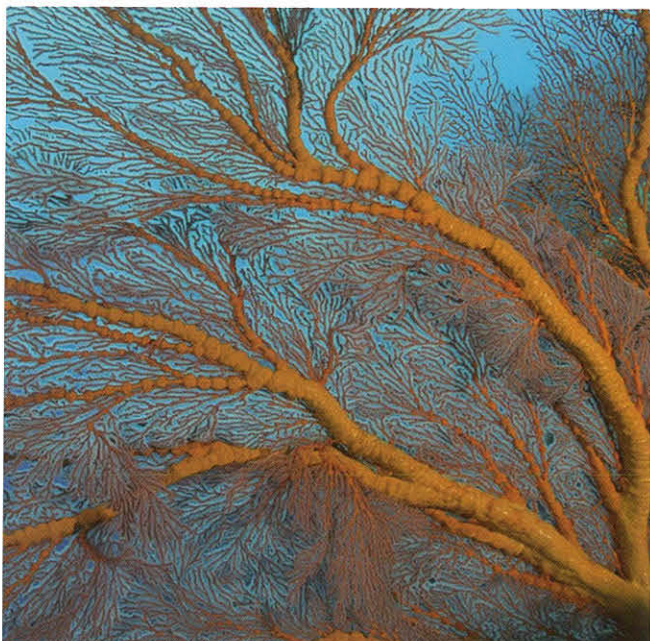


Photo: Glen Cowans

## OUT AND ABOUT

### Christmas at Ngaio Marsh House, Christchurch, New Zealand



Photo: Roslyn Russell

A large theatrical mask, eyebrows raised and wearing a quizzical smile, adorns a closed door in the Long Room of Ngaio Marsh House, Christchurch, New Zealand. The mask serves as a metaphor for the life and work of Dame Ngaio Marsh, for her ability to create characters in detective fiction who hide behind 'masks' until all is revealed; and also

for her passionate involvement in live theatre in New Zealand. Take a tour of this quirky and captivating house museum and learn about this multifaceted 'Queen of Crime' on MAM On-line.

## OTHER FEATURES

Allison Russell, 'Preparing the plot: involving our communities in interpretation'

MAM On-line is pleased to bring you this article by Allison Russell, Senior Curator of the National Motor Museum, Birdwood, South Australia, about a good example of involving communities in interpretation. This article was originally published in *History Matters*, the History Trust of South Australia Magazine, Volume 16, Number 2: July 2006.

## REGIONAL ROUNDUP

### *Freedom, Fortitude and Flies*



A new exhibition at the Battery Hill Mining Centre in Tennant Creek shows there is more to mining than men and machinery. It tells the story of daily life on the Tennant Creek goldfields through the personal anecdotes and observations of the people who lived there.

Photo: Courtesy of Battery Hill Mining Centre

### Community Collaboration on Cultural Display

The Community Cultural Display Case is a joint project sponsored by the Merimbula RSL Club and administered by the Merimbula-Imlay Historical Society which breaks new ground for museum outreach and education on the far south coast of NSW.

## REVIEWS ON-LINE

*Vitalizing Memory: International Perspectives on Provenance Research*. Washington, American Association of Museums, 2005. ISBN: 1-933253-02-9

In late 2004 the American Association of Museums held a two-day International Provenance Research Colloquium in Washington, bringing together specialists from North America and colleagues from western and central Europe to exchange information on the general topic, with an emphasis on World War II provenance issues. Now the published papers clearly indicate how far research into Nazi era provenance of art works has advanced since Lynn Nicholas's ground-breaking volume, *The Rape of Europa*, in 1994.

It is evident that vast financial resources have been very quickly committed to the search and restitution of spoliated items of cultural heritage. The ten years since *Europa* have seen the employment of many professional researchers in museums and the creation of private and publicly funded bodies solely dedicated to provenance research, as well as the creation of widely accessible aids for restitution. Conferences dedicated to issues of spoliation seem countless. And many small museums have committed the time of their limited staff resources to tackle the challenges of a third party title claim . . .

**Laurie Benson** is Curator of International Art at the National Gallery of Victoria.



# MAM on-line

*Things Great and Small: Collections Management Policies.* By John E. Simmons. Washington. American Association of Museums, 2006. ISBN: 1-933253-03-7.

Policies are about people. This is the sensible but often overlooked premise that underlies John Simmons' new book, designed as a guide for producing collection management policies that help museums to meet their organisational objectives. Throughout the chapters covering a wide range of topics, Simmons continually refers to 'when policy meets reality', reminding us that policies must be consultative, easy to understand, and practical if they are to be successful in effectively guiding our collection management activities. The author also makes the point that it is rarely possible to directly apply the policy of one museum to that of another. If it is to be really useful to each organisation, it must be based on the fit to your staff, governance, collection, and community.

The subjects covered are wide ranging: the basics such as acquisition, deaccessioning, loans, documentation and collection care; some more specialist, and important, areas including culturally sensitive material; the full range of intellectual property issues; and issues to do with rapidly growing collections, orphaned collections, and the growing area of risk management. Simmons also outlines the important differences between policies, procedures and plans, and mentions that a collection management policy is usually a set of policies rather than a single item. These discussions are particularly useful for beginner policy writers . . .

**Judy Coombes** is the Manager of Registration and Collection Management at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

*Leonardo da Vinci Machines: An Exhibition of Genius.* Waterfront City, Melbourne Docklands, 1 July-1 October 2006.

As the impact of Dan Brown's hit novel *The Da Vinci Code* continues to reverberate, the genius of Leonardo as an artist and designer is being discovered all over again by old and new audiences. The Museo nazionale della scienza and tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci in Florence has harnessed this renewed interest and launched an exhibition of da Vinci's designs on a round-the-world tour. It could be argued that the success of the exhibition is guaranteed..

One surprise was the complete lack of guides or explainers, and an unusual lack of security personnel. Perhaps the absence of watchful eyes improved the relaxed approach of visitors to the interactives, but the minimal interpretation available was a disappointment. Leonardo da Vinci's machines deserved more than such a bald presentation and I doubt that an education-driven museum would have shown them so thinly.

It was a shame not to take such an approach, for the lasting impression of the show's content and concept was excellent. It just needed more!

**Elizabeth Craft** is a student in Museum Studies at Deakin University, Melbourne.

*Heritage Interpretation: Theory and Practice.* Edited by Alison Hems & Marion Blockley. Routledge, 2006. ISBN: 0415237971.

There's a scene in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in which the hero carries four milkmaids, one by one, across a flooded stream. He confesses to Tess, the last milkmaid and the real object of his affection, that he has no interest in the other three, and has 'undergone three-quarters of the labour entirely for the sake of the fourth-quarter'.

Some collected volumes are like that. Fortunately this fine anthology is not among them. Editors Alison Hems and Marion Blockley, both vastly experienced heritage interpreters from the UK, have brought together a diverse and talented range of commentators and practitioners. Their focus is mainly on *cultural* heritage interpretation, and mainly in the UK. However it is neither devoid of reference to *natural* heritage, nor completely lacking in discussion of non-UK projects (though Australia scarcely rates a mention) . . .

I doubt we'll be reading this volume a century from now, as will be the case with *Tess*. But it will certainly provide much stimulus for heritage interpretation and communication professionals in the present. And it may be that years from now it will be seen to have played a part in increasing the professionalism of heritage interpreters.

**Peter Grant** is Manager of Interpretation & Education for the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service. He is a past President of the Interpretation Australia Association (IAA) and has recently completed a term as the editor of the IAA's newsletter *Interpreting Australia*.

*The National Trust Manual of Housekeeping.* By the National Trust. Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006. ISBN: 0-7506-5529-1 (Available from customerserviceau@elsevier.com)

As Fiona Reynolds, Director-General of the English National Trust, tells us in the foreword to this mighty tome, there have been manuals on housekeeping since the sixteenth century. In twenty-first century Australia, historic houses managers share identical challenges regarding 'open' display and physical access as experienced by the eminent northern hemisphere organisation, custodian of some two hundred houses.

The antipodes has several hundred house museums, not all registered as museums, and a multitude of organisations oversee them. As well as our own National Trusts, many other entities from local government to the Defence Forces own historic buildings with collections. All will surely welcome and benefit from such a comprehensive publication . . .

The *Manual* is a great resource to assist museum professionals and volunteer groups working in the specialist area of historic houses and gardens. It will help us manage the care of our collections and interiors to a higher standard so that they can be enjoyed now and for posterity.

**Richard Heathcote** is Director of Carrick Hill, an historic house and garden in Adelaide and he prepared this review in collaboration with Artlab Australia.

Visit MAM On-line on the Museums Australia website-  
[www.museumsaustralia.org.au](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au)  
 - to read the full reviews



## RELEASE OF REPORT ON HERITAGE CONSERVATION WORKFORCE

A report released on 24 October 2006 shows that there are not enough heritage conservation and preservation workers in Australia. **Conservation Survey 2006**, conducted by the Collections Council of Australia Ltd, surveyed archives, galleries, libraries, museums and conservation businesses in each state and territory. The findings show that:

- there is clear demand by employers for suitably trained conservation/preservation workers in many areas - from paper-based objects (including artworks, books and photographs) to ship models, from digitised records to buildings, from sound recordings to textiles and paintings
- only 11 per cent of the current conservation/preservation workforce is under 30 years of age
- many collecting organisations would like to spend more time caring for their deteriorating collections
- only 10 of the 143 responding organisations paid their conservation/preservation interns in 2003-2005, but unpaid interns and volunteers were used by almost half of the organisations
- there are calls for more conservation/preservation businesses to be established

The report recommends developing a nationwide strategy for educating and skilling more conservation and preservation workers to properly care for cultural heritage collections in Australia.

The six report recommendations include eight actions which concerned

groups and individuals can take. At least two actions urge collaboration between collections sector professional and peak bodies, and for each recommendation the Collections Council states what it can do to stimulate development. This includes:

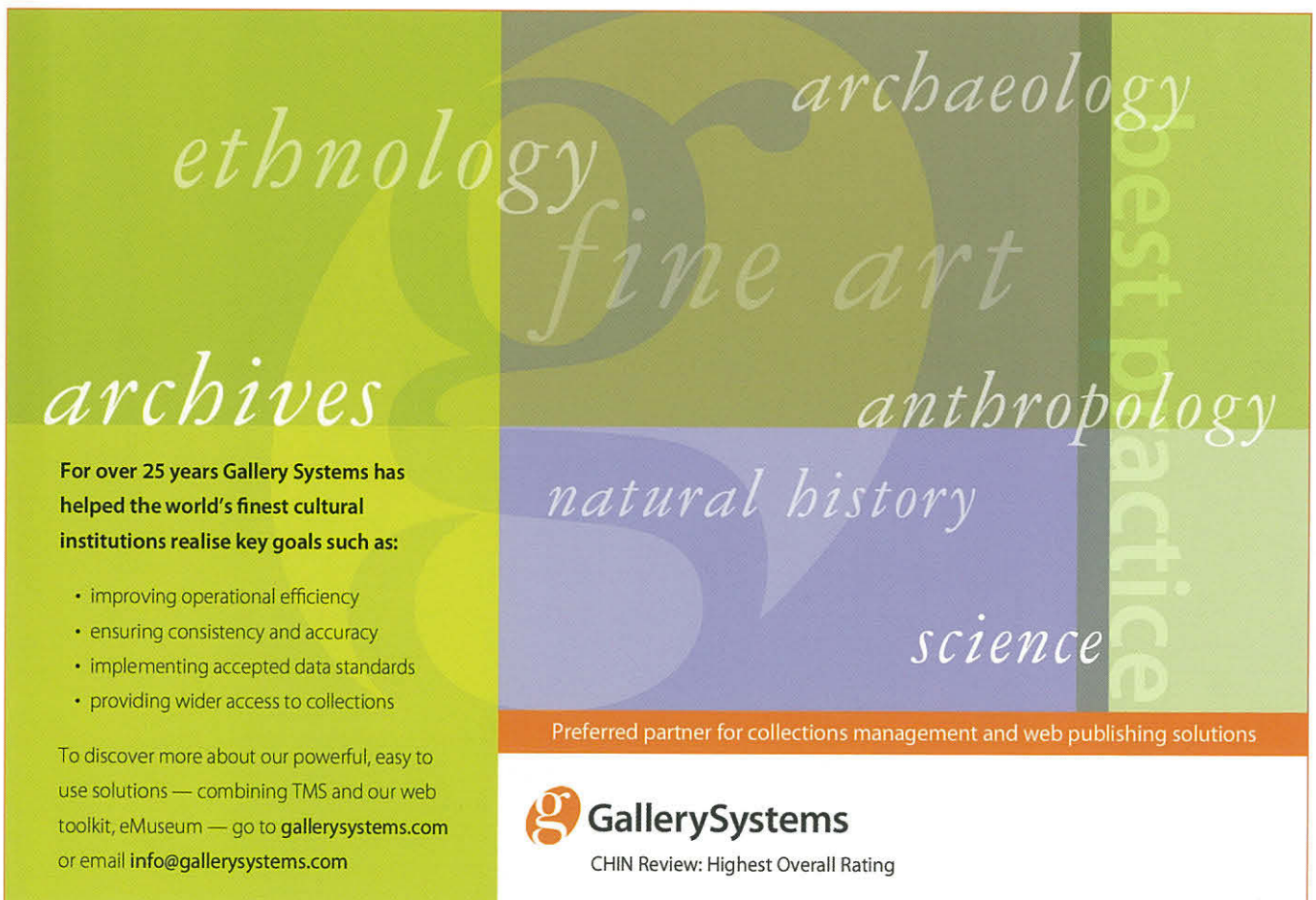
- Investigating the hosting of an Education and Training Summit for the collections sector
- Lodging the Conservation Survey 2006 Report on the Collections Council website, including an easily downloadable Executive Summary brochure
- Establishing a moderated open forum on the Collections Council website from 1 November 2006 for feedback on the report and for ideas
- Coordinating a web page that showcases work in conservation/preservation from 1 February 2007

Collections Council Development Officer, Veronica Bullock, says: 'This Report will help collections managers, educators and workforce planners to focus on ways to collaborate for the long-term benefit of Australia's cultural heritage collections'.

The **Conservation Survey 2006** report is the first major research report produced by the Collections Council of Australia, an organisation founded in 2004 with the aim of advancing the stability and sustainability of collections throughout Australia.

**The report can be downloaded from the Collections Council's website at: [www.collectionscouncil.com.au](http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au)**

**For further information, contact: Veronica Bullock, Development Officer Tel: (08) 8207 7287 or email: [research@collectionscouncil.com.au](mailto:research@collectionscouncil.com.au)**




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