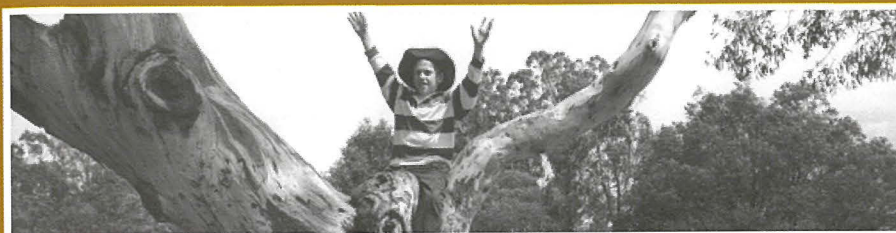
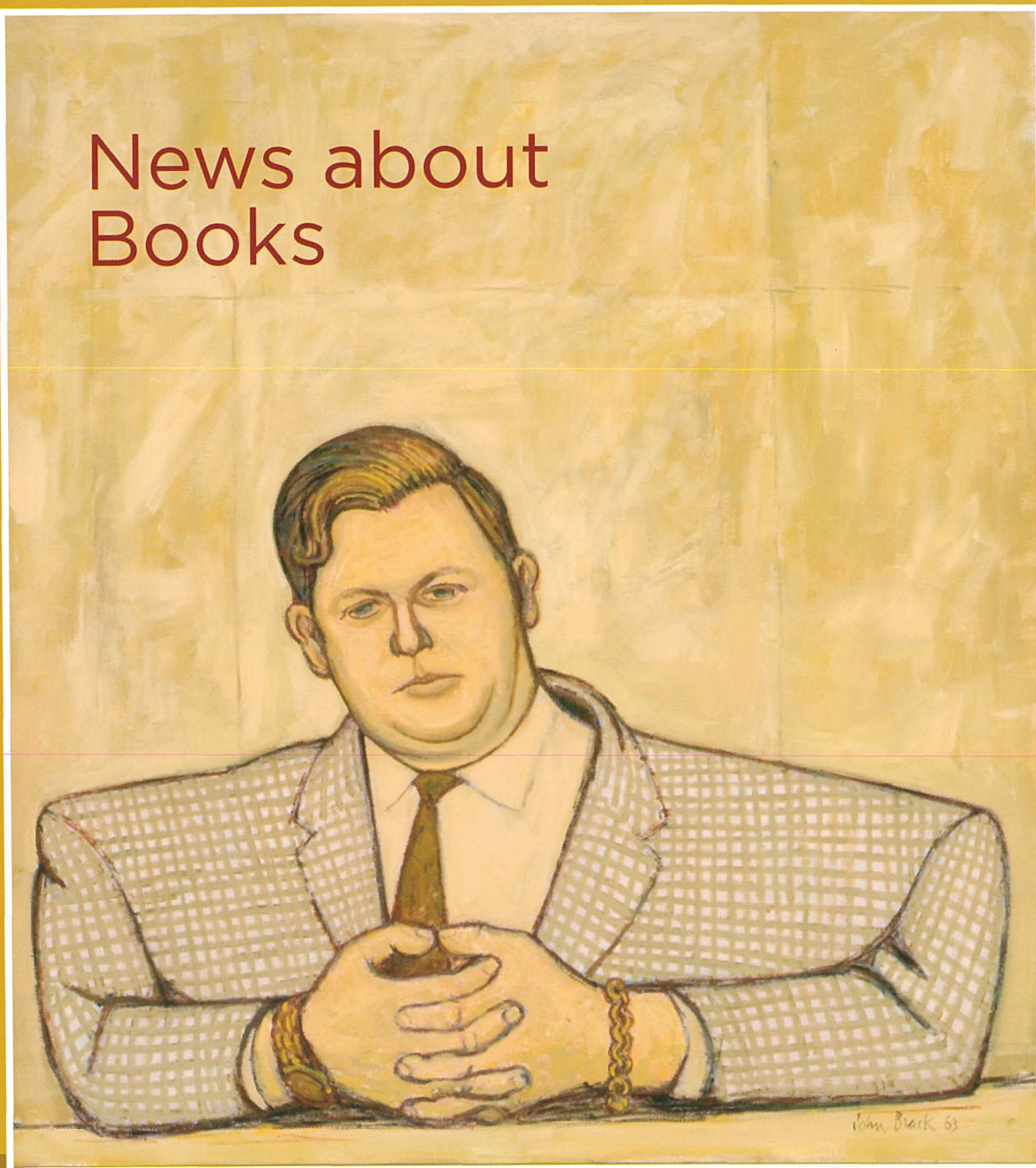


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Above, this page: *Cage of Ghosts*, Mt Stapylton, Victoria, 2001 (detail), Jon Rhodes, *Cage of Ghosts*, courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

COVER PHOTOGRAPHS:

Top: John Brack, *Portrait of Kym Bonython* 1964, Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery.
Below: (left) *The Spook Tree*, Wanniasa, ACT 1998 (detail); (right) *Industrial Grinding*, Terramungamine and Dubbo, 2001-2003 (detail), Jon Rhodes, *Cage of Ghosts*, courtesy of the National Library of Australia

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Exhibitions

National Gallery of Australia turns 25 with *Culture Warriors*

On Saturday 13 October the National Gallery of Australia hosted a party for 2500 of its closest friends to mark its twenty-fifth anniversary. Projections of works in the Gallery's collection lit up the exterior walls, and guests chatted with friends and viewed the latest exhibition, *Culture Warriors: National Indigenous Art Triennial*. The exhibition marks another milestone, the fortieth anniversary of the successful referendum that removed the clause in the Constitution excluding Aboriginal people from the census, an event of huge symbolic power.

Curated by Brenda Croft, *Culture Warriors* showcases the work of thirty-one artists. Central to the exhibition is the work of five painters, the 'big guns' of the show, whose careers span the four decades since the 1967 referendum: Jean Baptiste Apuatimi, Philip Gudthaykudthay, John Mawurndjul, Lofty Bardayal Nadjamerrek and Arthur Koo'ekka Pambegan Jr. Installations by Mawurndjul and Nadjamerrek are described by Professor Sasha Grishin as 'simply brilliant'. The exhibition mixes the work of these and other Indigenous artists, who work within what Grishin calls 'their particular frame of reference', with others whose work has been influenced by their training in non-Indigenous art schools. (*Canberra Times*, 20 October 2007)

Culture Warriors: National Indigenous Art Triennial at the National Gallery of Australia until 10 February 2008.

Cage of Ghosts holds Indigenous memories

Photographer Jon Rhodes has captured evidence of the Aboriginal presence in both urban and rural areas, in his compelling National Library of Australia exhibition, *Cage of Ghosts*, on show until 25 November.

Rhodes tracked down and photographed rock carvings and scarred trees in the Canberra suburb of Wanniasa, on cliff walks around Sydney Harbour, and in regional areas of New South Wales and Victoria. Some were in museums. Many, he discovered, were surrounded by physical protection:

'Combinations of boardwalks, railings, cages, gates and grilles; large wooden constructions, fences, chains and posts; steel viewing platforms, mesh, Perspex, signs, bars and locks are all used to stop or minimise damage to these fragile and vulnerable areas.'

Rhodes found the juxtaposition of these barriers with the 'energy of centuries' of Indigenous ritual disturbing:

'Ironically, these places still exist partly because of the barriers that protect and yet isolate them; that are necessary and yet obstruct; that are practical and yet are obstacles. They deny most visitors any insight as to why these places were of such significance to the original people of Australia.' (Jon Rhodes, August 2007, *Cage of Ghosts* catalogue essay)

Gift to the nation caps off National Portrait Gallery at Old Parliament House

Gallery owner, jazz and motor sport enthusiast, Kym Bonython is an Australian art world identity. His portrait, donated recently to the National Portrait Gallery, and featured in *Portraits by John Brack*,

its last exhibition in Old Parliament House before its move to a new building, has two fascinating stories associated with it.

When Brack painted the portrait in 1963, he omitted to include Bonython's treasured chequered speedway cap. He suggested that Brack add it to 'that blank area in the top right-hand corner of the picture'. Brack declined, but instead, in 1966, painted another small panel depicting the cap, *Portrait of Mr Bonython's speedway cap* 1966.

The portrait Kym Bonython has donated to the nation has another, and sadder, story. It was the only work from his large art collection that Bonython rescued from his Mount Lofty mansion, Eurilla, destroyed by the Ash Wednesday fires of 1983.

Portraits by John Brack at the National Portrait Gallery, Old Parliament House, until 18 November.



TOP:

Andy Warhol's Chairman Mao glows on the National Gallery exterior

Photo: Steve Nebauer, Courtesy of the National Gallery of Australia

BOTTOM:

Turbo Brown, Latje Latje people
Dreamtime kangaroo and bird

Courtesy of Indigenart, the Mossenson Galleries
© Trevor 'Turbo' Brown

OPENING THE COMMON GATE

An exhibition documenting extraordinary life, love, and survival in a time of racial prejudice and exclusion in Broome, Western Australia.

The 'common' trademark of this infamous old pearling town in the far north west of the continent is its extraordinary landscape – 'where the red earth meets the blue sea'. Broome's other trademark, almost as stark as its contrasting colours, is the people – an exotic mix of Aboriginal, Malay, Japanese, Chinese, and European, who were brought together by the pearling industry, formerly the lifeblood of the community.

The characteristics that underpin the town come from this diversity of race, tradition, language, music, art and food, and define what Broome is today. This same influx of different peoples, cultures and social practices most significantly altered the traditional way of life for the Aboriginal people of the Kimberley, and shaped a new existence for them – forever.

The *Opening the Common Gate* exhibition takes its title from a fence that ran along the municipal boundary of the township of Broome. Initially erected to keep the cattle out, the fence became a convenient physical boundary to regulate the entry of Aboriginal people without work permits, and enforce the exclusion of those classified as 'natives in law'.

Stories recounted by thirteen members of Broome's Indigenous community provide the core of the exhibition. The *common gate*, as the fence became known, is used as a metaphoric undertone for the different forms of exclusion imposed on the Aboriginal people, including racial, political, emotional, and social boundaries. These elements bind the individual stories together.

Each story is accompanied by images and archival documents artfully incorporated into boldly coloured panels that capture the vibrancy of Broome and its local people.

Exhibition curator Sarah Yu says, 'we've used each story to tell a different aspect of people's lives and how they intersect with these rules and boundaries that they lived through'. Originally developed to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the 1967 Referendum – which formally recognised Aboriginal people as members of the Australian population – the exhibition simultaneously honours the lives of these exceptional people, and assists in spreading a relatively unfamiliar story to the younger generations of Aboriginal people and wider Australia.

The storytellers speak candidly about their experiences of the past. While incorporating stories of inequalities imposed on them by the authorities, their memories are often recounted in good humour with a surprising 'lack of bitterness'.

Donnelly McKenzie, one of the storytellers, recounts his experience of applying for citizenship rights in 1961.

'In those days we never knew the word Aboriginal, only native ... So I thought in those days my family wanted to be better instead of always being put down and I wanted them to be citizens of Broome, citizens of Australia, so I went for the citizenship, which I obtained ... It made me feel good to have one just in case if I had go somewhere special, I would take it and if they queried me I'd just show them that (the licence) and they'd probably let me in. But without that we were like outcasts.'

McKenzie recounts the feeling of isolation and desperation and the inability to see a way out. 'We were classed as nobody. We were not classed as citizens...' He says 'growing up in Broome and being Aboriginal I never thought in my life that we would ever be free, but we became free and that was good for our people.'

Certificates of citizenship, or 'dog-licences' as they were commonly referred to, further encroached on human rights and dignity of the Aboriginal people. Mary Horne tells the story of life in the Broome Holy Child orphanage and her memory of receiving a certificate of citizenship in the mail in 1968, when she turned 21:

'It was a surprise for me to receive it. I didn't understand what it was all about ... I think I was disappointed, amazed, surprised, I don't know what word to use, that I received a certificate of citizenship to tell me that I was now an Australian. I don't know whether that meant that I wasn't an Australian prior to that, or just the fact that I was a native. So when I received what we used to call the 'dog licence' I was ready to throw it in the bin 'cos I thought it was an insult to me to have to receive that.'

Eighty-three-year-old Lexie Tang Wei speaks of attempts by the Department of Native Affairs to restrict her marriage to her Asian husband. The two fled to Perth to marry. On her return to Broome she was punished by the authorities who confiscated her certificate of citizenship, a deliberate move to restrict her freedom.

Through Jimmy Edgar, local Broome musician and son to Aboriginal activist and first WA member of the National Aboriginal Council, Tommy Edgar, we gain an insight into another side of Broome's past. Jimmy's focus is on the meeting of cultures that nurtured his interest and talent in music. In a different way to his father, Jimmy too helped to change the social dynamics of the town.

'I grew up with music all around me, at church, at school ... they used to play that Malay music, the Chinese music – all types of music was happening – the public and the police and that closed their eyes ... they saw there was a change coming at that stage I suppose. We never realised it ... we just thought we was playing in the band ...'

These personal histories, together with photographs, historical film, and archival letters and documents, illustrate the resilience and dignity of the Aboriginal people who lived through an era of formalised discrimination.

Exhibitions

Pat Dodson, Chairman of the principal funding body of the *Opening the Common Gate Exhibition*, the Lingiari Foundation, believes the exhibition

'highlights how far we've come in terms of a society that celebrates its multiculturalism that forms Broome. It highlights the better relationships that exist between the Indigenous people, and the town, and the main. And it certainly reminds us that freedoms like that need to be protected very zealously.'

Even in the last forty years Broome, as a community, has had an enormous triumph in overcoming one of the harshest memories of segregation, not only black from white, but the segregation of Aboriginal families and friends who lived outside the gate, from those inside the gate. As Jimmy Edgar states when he unburied a piece of the old common gate - 'I dug this common gate thing up ... I was really happy about it, now we can toss this bloody thing away. We can come in now you know ... and sorta laugh about it.' This resilience and humility of character is what typifies the people of Broome and the town itself, and gives this exhibition the strength it has.

Opening the Common Gate exhibition was launched by Dawn Casey at the University of Notre Dame in Broome on 10 July, and has now opened at the Western Australian Museum in Perth until February 2008. The Lingiari Foundation is planning to travel the exhibition to other states.

Sarah Yu is Curator of *Opening the Common Gate*

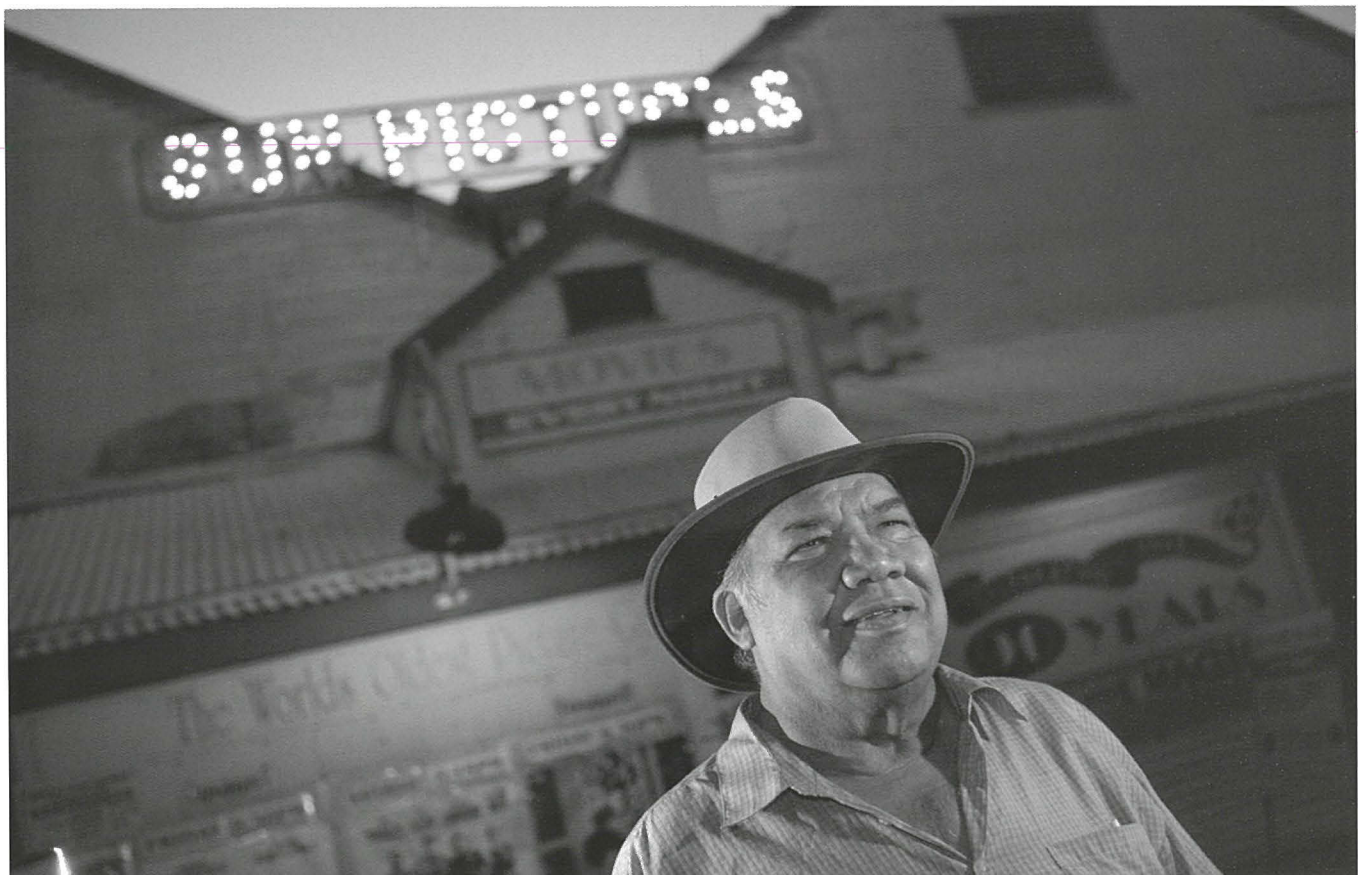


(Top) Text panel from *Opening the Common Gate* exhibition.

(Middle) Lexie Tang Wei with her husband.

(Bottom) Donnelly McKenzie.

Photos: Leon Mead



National Office News

NOMINATING TO THE NATIONAL HERITAGE LIST

The public has been invited to nominate places for inclusion in the National Heritage List. Nominations must be received by 21 December 2007. Places determined to be 'of outstanding heritage value to the nation' will be announced in the latter half of 2008.

The national heritage system is the most recent, and most comprehensive, heritage regime in the nation. It identifies and protects places of natural, Indigenous and historic value. Its objective is to ensure (over time) that those places which tell the whole story of Australia and its people are identified, protected and showcased to the nation.

The National Heritage System began on 1 January 2004, after a decade of intensive nationwide consultation with governments and community associations. There are currently seventy places on the NHL, and they vary from the obvious - the Sydney Opera House - to the little known- Darlington Probation Station; from the natural - Blue Mountains, to the Indigenous - Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape; to the 'historic (meaning post-contact, European) - Mawson's Hut and Flemington Racecourse.

National heritage places define the critical moments in the development of Australia as a landmass and as a nation, and reflect achievements, joys and sorrows in the lives of Australians. These exceptional natural and cultural places are a living and accessible record of the nation's evolving landscapes and experiences.

Each place in the List is assessed by the Australian Heritage Council as having national heritage values which can be protected and managed under a range of Commonwealth powers. Places on the list are protected under the *Environment and Protection Bio-Diversity Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*. The National Heritage List is compiled and maintained by the Department of Environment and Water Resources and can be searched using the Australian Heritage Database: <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/national/index.html>

The National Heritage List nomination and assessment process is open and consultative. The Australian Heritage Council assesses whether or not a nominated place has heritage values against the relevant criteria and makes a recommendation to the Minister. The Council must consult with the owner or occupier of a place as well as Indigenous people with rights or interests in the place. The Minister makes the final decision on listing.

The national heritage values of a place will be recorded in the National Heritage list. It is these values, and not necessarily the entire place itself, that will be protected through listing. Management plans are required for all places listed.

Collections that are integral to the identified national heritage values are also protected under the legislation governing the national heritage system.

Only two national 'museums' have been listed to date, although a number of historic sites have been included, and several iconic historic buildings are listed, including the Exhibition Building and Rippon Lea in Melbourne, and both the original and subsequent parliament houses in South Australia.

Why should you consider nominating your museum or historic site?

Museums and historic sites are places of great value to their communities. Where a museum or historic site is arguably of outstanding value to the nation because of the national heritage value of the place itself - including its collections - you should consider nominating it to the National List. This doesn't mean that the museum must be a national or state institution. The List is intended to cover the story of the nation.

So, ask yourself

- what part of the nation's story is covered by my museum or historic site
- how distinctive, how unique, is the story it tells, and
- how significant might the place, the site itself, be to the nation as a whole?

Where to obtain information

If you wish to nominate a place for the National Heritage List, you can request a nomination kit from the Nomination Manager of the Heritage Division of the Department of Environment and Water Resources in Canberra - call 02 62742149 and/or see www.environment.gov.au/heritage

Nominations must set out the qualities or values of the place that make it outstanding to the nation, and indicate how it meets one or more of the National Heritage significance criteria. The nomination form must identify the national heritage values of the place and provide supporting evidence.

What if you need advice or assistance in developing your nomination?

You are welcome to contact Marie Wood, National Networks Manager, at the MA National Office for informed advice to MA members about nominating your museum or historic site. networks@museumsaustralia.org.au

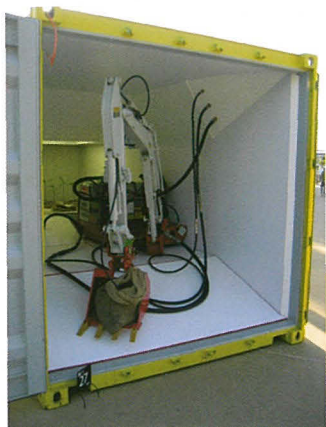


Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney, is on the National Heritage List.

Photo: Roslyn Russell

Regional Roundup

STRAND EPHEMERA MAKES A SPLASH IN TOWNSVILLE



Chris Fox (Sydney, NSW)
The Breadfruit Tree Project
Breadfruit trees, hydroponic systems, mechanical arm, audio

chosen to take their work to a wider audience.

'I thought this would be a great opportunity to get the artists here in our community to hone their public art skills, and eventually get the skills and the confidence to be able to bid for the bigger public art commissions,' Thomson said.

And the Strand was a development 'just screaming out for something'.

'If we wanted to take art to the people, what better way than putting it there, where there is already a huge number of people walking that esplanade on a daily basis. So we found that we were making contact with people that we wouldn't normally, so it just extended our audience,' Thomson said. 'It did everything that a regional gallery should do, but outside in a public space.'

Strand Ephemera 2007 brought together forty-eight works, ranging from the provocative to the humorous. In the grand tradition of the Big Banana and the Big Pineapple, there were some 'big things' in this year's exhibition - including a giant lamington by Sylvia Ditchburn, a large deck chair, commenting on obesity in Australian society, by Thierry Auriac, and Donna Marcus's big sculptures created from vegetable steamers.

But works didn't need to be big to capture the imagination of visitors - as in the case of Vic McEwan's *Hydro-phone*, a red telephone which, when lifted to the ear, allowed the viewer to hear the ocean while looking out to sea.

'It's really simple, but it just blew people away,' Thomson said.

While Townsville already has an active arts community, with the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery receiving around 50,000 visitors annually, *Strand Ephemera* leaves those numbers for dead. The estimate for this year's visitor numbers was 70,000 people over a ten-day period. With artists from around Australia, as well as a couple of international contributors, this year's visitors came from far and wide.

The appeal of *Strand Ephemera* is broadened by the extensive program of events around the exhibition, including regular guided tours, free community and school activities, artist talk sessions, art workshops,

Every two years, a two kilometre beachfront esplanade, known as Townsville's Strand, is transformed into a sculpture-filled walkway against the backdrop of the ocean and Magnetic Island.

Strand Ephemera, the fourth biennial outdoor art exhibition hosted by Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, was this year held on 7-16 September.

The idea for the event was born, said gallery director Frances Thomson, because despite plenty of money being available for public art commissions in Queensland, the regional artists from Townsville weren't being

scheduled street performers, and a public art forum where artists and speakers are invited to contextualise what is going on in the public art domain.

An accompanying exhibition of artists' maquettes or models was also held at the Perc Tucker Gallery. Used by the artists as preliminary designs for the large scale sculptures, the maquettes provide an insight into the artistic process. Over twenty maquettes were on show, including a miniature version of the outrigger crew by Graeme Buckley, Elizabeth Poole's boat patterns made from copper pipe, jeweller Kerry Stelling's directional signs, and a selection of nests by Fibres and Fabrics.

The highlight of the event for Thomson was the way the community embraced the event.

'There is an enormous array of works for people to engage with, and that becomes interesting. People say, "I like that bit", or "That's my favourite", or "I didn't quite get that", so this conversation goes on for the ten days.'

And although the gallery staff usually obtain most feedback through the visitors' book, during *Strand Ephemera* visitors seek them out to say what they loved and hated.

Although the Perc Tucker team are still exhausted after the 'frenzy' of this year's event, they have already had their debriefing on what worked and what didn't, and are planning *Strand Ephemera 2009*.

Thomson said they are hoping to draw a regional arts forum to Townsville to coincide with the next event.

Continued over page

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Regional Roundup

Award winners

A sound machine translating weather into soundwaves, paddles with the distance to our Pacific Island neighbours, and a series of sculptures representing the importance of Queensland Rail and the Red Cross Blood Service to Northern Queensland were among the recipients of the *Strand Ephemera* 2007 Artist Awards.

Judged by Adelaide-based arts writer, Stephanie Radok, and Sydney artist, Chris Fox, the awards were presented at the opening ceremony of *Strand Ephemera*.

Soundstripe by Nameer Davis, which requires the viewer to spend time listening to the aural landscape of the piece, won the Ergon Energy Excellence Award of \$3000. Kerry Stelling took out the Bendigo Bank Distinction Award of \$2000 for her sculpture entitled *A Way to Go*, while James Cook University sculpture student Kalven Lloyd-Smith won the highly commended award for a series of sculptures sited around a swimming pool, called *Stations of the Spike*.

Visitors to *Strand Ephemera* were also able to vote for the People's Choice Award throughout the event, with *Drifter*, a four metre crocodile made from driftwood secured with steel and wire, receiving the nod.

The artists, Steven and Sharon Crowe and Anna Mango, said they had to keep regluing the crocodile's teeth, as they proved too much of a temptation for the public to touch and wiggle loose.

Freya Purnell, Regional Editor



(Left)
Claudia Williams (Ayr, Qld)
Crazy Geckos (detail)
Stainless steel, ceramics, glass, china



(Top right)
Donna Marcus (Brisbane, Qld)
Gross Domestic Product

(Bottom right)
Elizabeth Poole (Toogoolawah, Qld)
White Drawings (detail)

Photos courtesy of Perc Tucker Gallery



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ANZ Banking Museum, Melbourne

Regional Roundup

HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS A HIT WITH MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS

The historic St Clement's Retreat and Conference Centre (some buildings circa 1820s) at Galong NSW (just south of Yass) was the perfect venue for the inaugural *Working Spaces for Museum Volunteers* arranged and hosted by the MA Lachlan Chapter over the weekend of 14-16 September.

In 2005 the Chapter decided to 'bundle' its 2007 workshop program over one live-in weekend and invite volunteers from other volunteer-run museums in country NSW and Victoria to join them.

Maisy Stapleton, Museums and Galleries NSW (MGNSW) CEO shared our enthusiasm for the project and MGNSW agreed to become our Principal Partner.

The partnership was extended with the wholehearted and generous support of numerous national institutions: The National Museum of Australia, National Archives of Australia, National Gallery of Australia, National Science & Technology Centre (Questacon) and the Australian War Memorial. All provided key specialists to lead our wide range of roundtables, working spaces and workshops. Long-time participants in our Chapter activities, Roslyn Russell (Roslyn Russell Museum Services), Kay Soderlund (Preservation Australia) and storyteller Elizabeth Burness unhesitatingly offered their expertise too.

The nature of the three Roundtables, six Working Spaces and three Workshops was determined through a Feasibility Study into the requirements of the sector conducted by the Chapter throughout 2006.

The Workshops (four hours) covered Display Techniques, Technology and Costume & Textile Conservation. The Working Spaces (ninety minutes) included Marketing, Provenance, Oral History, Museum Theatre, Conserving Paper, Maps & Photographs and Digital Photography. The Roundtables (ninety minutes) looked at Museum Standards, Deaccession and programs for children. The number of participants in each topic was limited to provide maximum hands-on opportunities.

Eighty percent of the delegates responded to the anonymous Working Spaces Questionnaire. All were fulsome in their accounts of the outcomes of their experiences. Comments like 'Excellent. Good hands-on and advice on the articles we bought along' (Conserving Maps, Paper & Photographs), 'Absolutely riveting. Want more, more, more'

(Museum Theatre), 'Went away with numerous ideas and all of them cheap, effective and really interesting' (Display Techniques), 'Excellent session. Presenter knew her area and was keen to help everyone' (Provenance), 'Tutors were patient and explained everything in plain English' (Museum Technology), filled the pages.

Overwhelmingly delegates requested that more Working Spaces weekends be held. Almost all wanted sessions in which they had participated repeated, with more time allocated.

The spirit of the weekend was captured by Louise Douglas, General Manager, Audience and Programs at the National Museum of Australia in her closing Keynote Address - *Volunteers and their crucial role in caring for the Nation's Heritage*. Louise drew our attention to the words of James H. Gilmore in his book *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want*. 'There is nothing more authentic than the collections of real objects held by museums. The more this is recognised by the community the more valued and sought after museums and their collections will become.'

Louise concluded that 'despite the dreadful drought and economic hardship regional Australia has been through I wonder if there are better times ahead. I see real estate prices going through the roof in the cities, baby boomers wanting to retire to more restful and small scale places, high pressured urban professionals wanting to downshift and get closer to natural living - all of which will change regional towns and villages - and wonder if this is where we will see the next generation of volunteers.'

Glen Johns is Honorary Coordinator, MA Lachlan Chapter



St Clement's Retreat, Galong, NSW, venue for the Working Spaces weekend. Photo: Roslyn Russell



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Book News

FISH OTOLITHS: TINY TOOLS PLAY A LARGE ROLE IN UNDERSTANDING MARINE FOOD WEBS

Not all wonders in a museum collection stand out and demand attention. Many never go on public display, due to conservation controls, display space restraints or sheer volume of numbers. Some, like different types of fish otoliths, are so small they can just be seen by the naked eye. Otoliths are the tiny ear bones that aid fish in balance and hearing. These hard, calcium carbonate structures can be as small as a grain of sand or up to two or three centimetres in length. Their shapes and surface sculpturing are specific to each fish species. They are fragile and often beautiful and they hold great power as a research tool.

Dianne Furlani is a Fisheries Biologist at the CSIRO in Hobart. Her favourite otolith is from the Smooth toadfish, *Tetractenos glaber*.

'It is tiny, irregular and very complex, with a rough, coral-like sculpturing - it's a small piece of art work.'

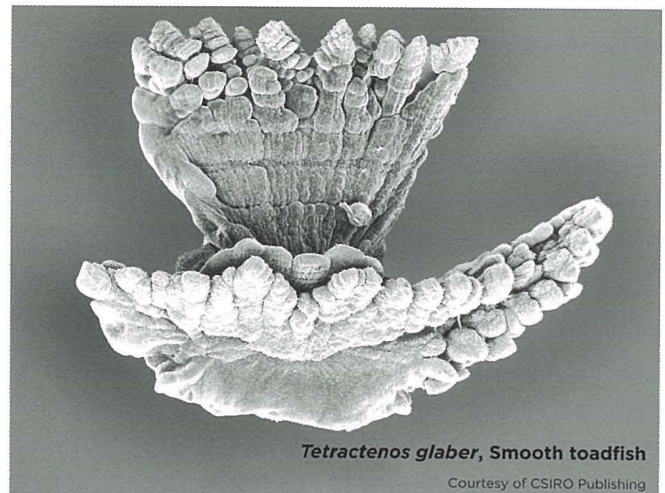
Dianne is the lead author of a new otolith guide published for Australian temperate species. *Otoliths of Common Australian Temperate Fish* provides accurate identification of fish otoliths and will help in the understanding of marine food webs and managing the ecosystem effects of fishing.

Findings from otolith research have provided fisheries scientists with valuable tools for population studies. For example, they are used in some species to estimate the age of the fish, in the same way as counting tree rings. Through their chemical composition, they can also be used to show migrations of a fish stock from one water mass to another, or from freshwater and estuaries through to marine environments.

Dianne says the study of the diet of marine animals is crucial for understanding marine ecosystems, and fish otoliths are an integral part of this understanding.

'The otoliths are one of the last features to be digested so they are often still identifiable when analysing stomach contents or animal scats. As a result, they can indicate which fish make up the diet of various predators, including squid, seabirds, marine mammals and other fish.'

Otoliths of Common Australian Temperate Fish is designed as a reference for marine scientists. Intriguingly it is also a research tool for archaeologists studying diet from remains in middens. It covers



Tetractenos glaber, Smooth toadfish

Courtesy of CSIRO Publishing

a wide variety of both commercial and lower-level food web fishes from a broad geographic range of the Australian temperate region, and summarises the known predators of each prey item.

It's also an example of three people from different institutions coming together to pool their resources to cover 141 fish species.

Co-author Rosemary Gales is Section Head of the Wildlife and Marine Conservation at the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries and Water. She says the guide enhances dietary analysis and provides greater accuracy of food web knowledge.

'Dietary and food web information is used in computer models to simulate the ecosystem effects of fishing and to test management options. An understanding of marine food webs is vital to understanding the ecology of marine ecosystems and managing the effects of fishing.'

Most of the otoliths described in the guide include regressions or equations. These enable researchers to work out, from the weight or length of the otolith, an estimate of the weight and length of the fish that was eaten. This information is useful to estimate 'who eats whom' and in what quantity.

The otoliths came from fishing boats working off the north-west and south coast of Tasmania, from CSIRO research voyages on the east coast of Victoria and southern NSW, and from species collected at Melbourne markets from fishing operations in Bass Strait waters. The specimens have been curated into the collection at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

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Out and About

David Pemberton, co-author and former senior curator of the Southern Ocean and Antarctica at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, says the guide offers tangible evidence of the diverse role of the modern day curator.

'No two days as curator are the same - researching and writing, conserving the collection, working out in the field, liaising with other institutions and getting information out to the public via talks, presentations, the media and books such as this.'

'The otolith guide is but a small product from our diverse institutions, but does reflect the power of research. These minute ear bones are strong research tools. On a recent field trip to Maatsuyker Island, I sat staring at a midden wondering if the archaeologists who dug there were aware of the research potential of otoliths. These small jewels might well one day dispel the dogma that Tasmanian aboriginals never ate fish.'

All the authors agree their work has given them a renewed appreciation about otoliths - and the power of the small object to give a clue to the large questions. Otoliths, through their structure (reflecting contemporary ecological phenomena), and preservation potential (they are tough) may yet play a major role in understanding the changing energy flows of the planet, which of course reflect changing climate - the ultimate source of energy.

The guide is published by CSIRO publishing. More information can be found at: <http://www.publish.csiro.au/pid/5614.htm>

Michelle Nichols is Acting Senior Communications Officer, Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment, Tasmania

THE BEST IN HERITAGE

The Best in Heritage is now an established museums/heritage award event associated with Dubrovnik, Croatia. The beautiful old quarter of Dubrovnik, still bearing its intact character as a mediaeval-Renaissance walled city, is a UNESCO World Heritage-listed site. The city is still rebuilding and repairing the scars after being directly attacked (and many citizens killed) during the horrific war of 1992 in the former Yugoslavia.

Walking the flagged lanes of the historic precinct, once capital of the old Republic of Dubrovnik on the Dalmatian coast, it is hard to imagine such an area sustaining direct bombardment little more than a decade ago. I can recall a chilling silence during a meeting of ICOM's Executive Council in Paris in 1992, when news came by telephone that the library in Dubrovnik was on fire!

Dr Tomislav Šola, a museology professor in Zagreb, Croatia, had the audacious idea, some years ago, of establishing an annual 'global heritage award' event that could achieve the maximum effect with an economy of means. Dubrovnik seemed the appropriate environment for its realisation. This concept provides a good model for Museums Australia to attend to, at a time when the aspiration to achieve a national museums-sector awards event in Australia is bubbling up across the country. This topic was considered by the MA National Council at its recent face-to-face meeting and Strategic Planning Workshop in Melbourne early in October. The national awards issue was in part stimulated by a move by colleagues in New South Wales to achieve their own awards event - already well established in Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia.

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Out and About

The 'Best in Heritage' project in Dubrovnik (now in its fifth year) is a gathering of presenters and projects that have already achieved awards elsewhere. They are recently completed projects that have been judged as outstanding, award-winning achievements in other events held by various museum communities and different regions of the world. This comparative gathering of award-winners is thus a synthesising event through which to explore and celebrate 'the best' in museums and cultural heritage care globally today.

A supreme award (and several others attached to the Croatian event from museum 'industry-sources') is made after three days' evaluation of projects in Dubrovnik. This is achieved consensually by the community of professionals and others present. All (including the presenters) decide, in a straightforward voting process, which of the projects seem to demonstrate the most comprehensive qualities of innovation, imagination, progressive museology and socially effective results.

The atmosphere of this award is generous. All are deemed 'winners' simply by being present. The final laurel is thus a 'highest among peers' honour. Participants also have the opportunity to witness in one place some eighteen to twenty of the most outstanding projects that demonstrate recent innovations in museums and heritage care around the world.

There were strikingly diverse entries in the September 2007 event. Among these was a film-based, multi-media interpretation of a romantic poet's legacy in Hungary (literature is hardest of all to 'present' as the subject of museology). The vividly actualised project of the Churchill Museum and Cabinet War Rooms in London was presented by its

director. An engaging presentation explained the 'reinvention' of the old Museum of Natural Sciences in Brussels (utilising its outstanding dinosaur collection as the basis for inviting the public to assist in its transformation into a user-informed learning institution). There was a remarkably committed, small project devoted to the heyday of British steam-powered engines (one of which, still able to be activated, awed Charles Dickens) - this is the Kew Bridge Steam Museum, at Brentford, UK. Australia was well represented by the outstanding restoration project of the Fremantle Prison Museum.

In interpretative invention and mediated engagement around an historic artefact, there was a small but brilliant project of digitising an historic *1550 Map of Mexico* held in Uppsala, Sweden. This 'virtualisation' opens up new conceptual platforms for narrative interpretation, and even cross-cultural history and counter-historical invention, engaging new on-line audiences today. Still reflecting the Aztec heritage in the detailed city plan (shown through tiny zoom-in pictograms for detailed browsing), the *1550 Map of Mexico* has been the focus of great invention. It utilises the resources of the 'Internet 2.0' cultural phase of interactivity and co-creation of meaning. The digitisation process has incorporated the latest possibilities of a technologically driven interface: to provide access to the particular 'actual' qualities of an ancient object to a global audience, and to mobilise awareness about its context and heritage resources for contemporary historical interpretation.

An exemplary project (which many thought would win) was revealed in a fine presentation of the National Museum of Iceland, reopened

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Out and About

in Reykjavik in 2004 after a complete refurbishment of its 1950s building and installations. A long-established institution (since 1863), the museum had lost its way, was run down, and no longer reached contemporary audiences. During a period of closure and refurbishment, the museum entirely rethought its mission and interpretive possibilities. A fundamentally new vantage-point on communication and engagement was needed, far from the approach of label-writing around a disparate collection of objects.

Having established the important narratives and themes that a national museum owed its contemporary nation in self-understanding, the museum staff then began to seek the most significant objects, materials and supports for such narratives (both beyond the museum's existing collections and within its holdings, stimulating collection development as well using existing resources). Such an approach is well worth studying by any museum with state, national or local community narrative responsibilities.

I was invited to come to Dubrovnik to participate in a new forum event that has been attached to 'The Best in Heritage'. Three speakers (from Europe, North Africa, and Australia) were engaged in a round-table style 'talk show' to present issues of illicit trafficking and threats to heritage today, and to discuss legal and other international instruments (UNESCO Conventions, ethical codes) that are evolving in an environment of sharpened attention to repatriation, relationship-building with communities, and claims for restitution or other forms of recognition and assistance from communities of origin.

Which project finally 'won' the 'Best in Heritage' award this year? It was a brilliantly realised conversion of an old decommissioned hat factory – once the main industry and backbone of the local economy in a northern city of Portugal that had made the finest quality hats throughout much of the twentieth century. The local Town Hall decided to acquire the abandoned building in 1995, and turn it into a museum that explained a once-vital industry that shaped the social history of the town for a century.

The last employee of the hat factory became the first employee of the museum, since all the former workers still alive became primary sources for the history presented, and their voices supplied the label-texts explaining the industrial processes. The Hat Industry Museum Project has even revived a limited-production capacity to make hats: now marketed to tourists and visitors who can be personally measured and place orders with the museum (an astute guarantee of an income stream for this beautifully interpreted industrial site).

Old workers are welcomed to the Museum's canteen to play cards, as well as to assist in the continuing interpretation of social memory. The museum has become their club, in an area alongside the youth education centre which receives their grandchildren's generation to learn anew. This project has achieved maximum potential of all local social outcomes while functioning as a beautiful museum to attract tourists. No local government could hope for more than the Hat Industry Museum delivers. (See www.ufp.pt)

Bernice Murphy is National Director of Museums Australia

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Out and About

MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY

The new Musée du Quai Branly is Paris' latest addition to its glittering museum scene. Personally championed by former President Chirac, who is himself a collector in the area it covers, it combines the former Musée d'Homme and Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie collections. Opened last year in a week-long festival of functions and workshops, in which a number of Australian curators participated, it has been principally commented on in Australia because of the inclusion of the largest ever international commission of contemporary Indigenous art. Initial museological commentary has tended to be critical of Quai Branly for concentrating too greatly on enhancing French national prestige at the expense of saying too little about the histories of the objects within. In the words of Helen Rees Leahy in *Museum Practice* Issue 36 (Winter 2006), 'The Museum says too much and does too little. And the loudest statement is made by the building, rather than its contents.'

So on a recent visit, I was prepared to be overwhelmed by the building and underwhelmed by the presentation of the collections. Certainly the Jean Nouvel designed building is visually arresting. It stands almost within the shadow of the Eiffel Tower facing onto the Seine and surrounded by typical six-storey Parisian residential streetscapes. Thus a mixture of a glass wall at street level leading into the lush gardens, with the stark vertical metal box form of the building overshadowing them certainly stands out. In addition there is the extraordinary external wall of the administration block covered with 150 species of plants growing on a special vertical frame (some plants more successfully than others, with the frame evident in a number of places).

The entrance itself is somewhat obscure and ungrand and leads into a dark central space, dominated by a central vertical glass drum running through the floors and housing the reserve collection. It is a good example of the advantages and disadvantages of the concept of display storage, in that it illustrates the depth of the collections, but provides no further access to them, thus begging the question of what it really does achieve. In addition, presumably because of conservation issues, it dictates the low level of lighting (and therefore uninviting aspect) of the foyer.

Winding up the long Guggenheim-esque ramp to the permanent exhibition galleries raises expectations, with video projections onto the floor of the ramp, with the image frame itself also moving up the ramp. It leads into one vast floor of artefacts in the permanent collection, with separate galleries for temporary exhibitions on a mezzanine floor above or back down off the central foyer. The main space is divided broadly into geographical regions in a very sinuous way, that is, the floor is sloping, and the walls (mostly covered in a brown leather moulded panels – very tactile, so I wonder how long it will look good) wind in and out. As an exhibition space I found it to be exciting and varied in its pace.

Of the artefacts themselves, yes, I can understand how criticism can be leveled at the lack of contextual interpretation. For my money however, the collection is just so rich and so full of extraordinary pieces that I found myself enjoying them for the sheer magnificence of their creation as art forms. That may not be politically correct these days, but at Quai Branly it works. Indeed there is so much there that it is a place to come back and back to. If one does, then there are ample opportunities through video booths and other interactives to dig

into the context of what is displayed. The audio guide provided some background information, but was too didactic for me (e.g., 'Admire this stunning headpiece and marvel at the hours of workmanship involved'.)

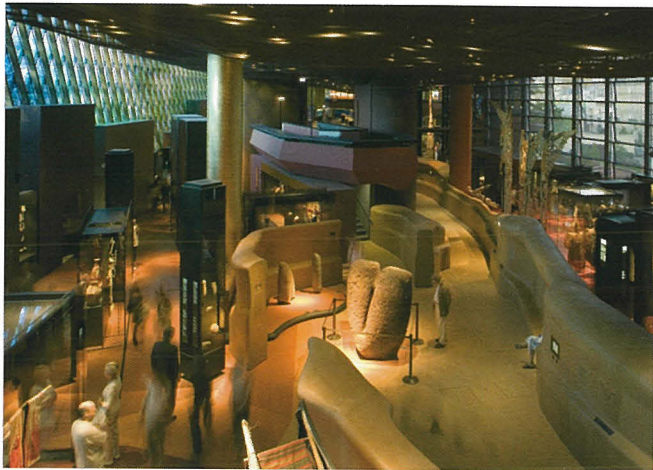
The Pacific collections dominate the opening area of the exhibition space. I don't think it was only that this is an area of particular interest that kept me enthralled. It leads into a disappointing section on Aboriginal culture which seems to consist entirely of contemporary bark paintings. When overlaid with the inaccessible nature of the Australia Council/Harold Mitchell Foundation-funded Aboriginal murals – they can only partly be seen from the adjacent street adorning the ceilings of the Administration wing – it reinforced the impression that our continent's ancient culture does not get much of a look in.

However pride was restored in the temporary exhibition entitled *New Ireland, Arts of the South Pacific* (since moved to Berlin) which is an absolute must-see, and includes some astonishing pieces from our very own Macleay Museum and Australian Museum.

Chirac is of the view that some of the great 'primitive' art rivals the masterpieces of the western world. Certainly there is no better place than the Quai Branly to consider such a proposition.

Julian Bickersteth is managing director of ICS, museum consultants based in Sydney and Canberra.

Have you been to Musée du Quai Branly? Send us your view of this new museum for posting on MAM On-line. Mark your email 'Quai Branly response' and send it to editor@museumaustralia.org.au



Inside and outside Musée du Quai Branly, Paris

Courtesy of Musée du Quai Branly

Reviews

MAM Reviews — a new approach

As a way of broadening the reviewer base for publications I would like to introduce some changes to the previous *modus operandi*. Beginning with the current edition, each edition of MAM will include a list of publications received for review. Readers/members are invited to select a book for review and contact me at the address below. Selection will be based on a 'first come, best dressed' model, and I invite all members who feel the call to participate in this process.

The aim of this changed model is to broaden the base of reviewers and to embrace all aspects of MA membership in an active way.

It is also proposed that MAM may also elect to look at specialist areas in some editions. For example, there seems to be a large number of publications devoted to 'marketing the museum'. This may provide the basis for a themed Reviews section in the future.

I welcome any comments from members re the changes and look forward to expanding the dialogue among museum professionals and our membership.

Peter Haynes, MAM Reviews Editor, Director, ACT Museums and Galleries, peter.haynes@act.gov.au

Book List

Pollock, Griselda & Zemans, Joyce (eds), *Museums After Modernism – Strategies of Engagement*. Blackwell Publishing, Carlton Victoria Australia 2006. ISBN-10: 1-4051-3628-6.

Macdonald, Sharon & Basu, Paul (eds), *Exhibition Experiments*. Blackwell Publishing, Carlton Victoria Australia 2007. ISBN-13: 978-1-4051-3077-6.

Henderson, Carol E. & Weisgrau, Maxine (eds) *Raj Rhapsodies – Tourism, Heritage and the Seduction of History*. Ashgate Publishing Limited, Hampshire England 2007 ISBN 978-0-7546-7067-4.

Rentschler, Ruth & Hede, Anne-Marie (eds) *Museum Marketing – Competing in the Global Marketplace*. Butterworth-Heinemann Publications, Oxford, England 2007 ISBN 978-0-7506-8065-3.

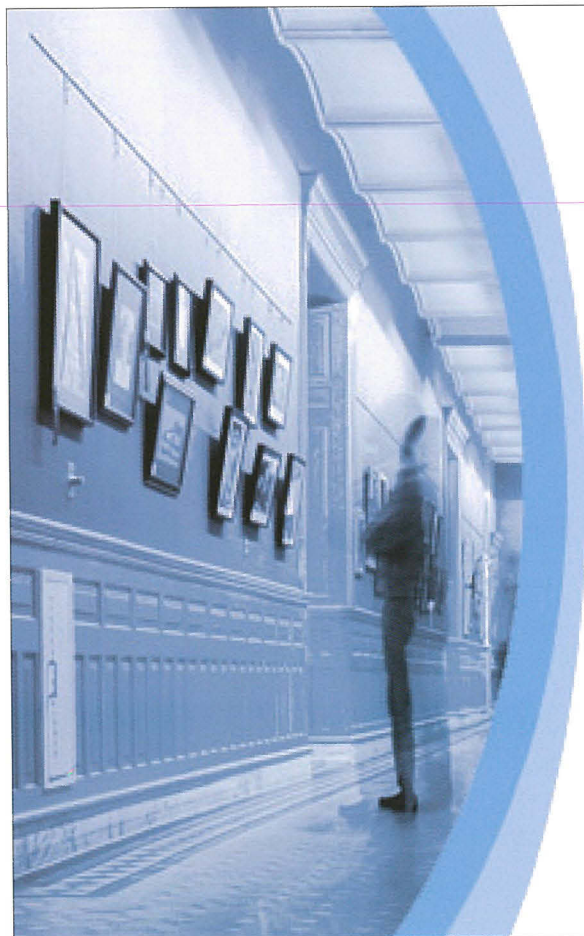
Sandell, Richard & Janes, Robert R. (eds) *Museum Management and Marketing – Leicester Readers in Museum Studies*. Routledge, Abingdon, United Kingdom, 2007 ISBN10: 0-415-39629-8.

Pieterse, Jan Nederveen *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture – Pants for an Octopus*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Maryland, USA 2007. ISBN -13: 978-0-7425-4063-7.

Merritt, Elizabeth E. & Garvin, Victoria (eds) *Secrets of Institutional Planning* American Association of Museums, Washington DC 2007 ISBN 978-1-933253-04-6.

Buck, Rebecca A. & Gilmore, Jean Allman (eds) *Collection Conundrums – Solving Collections Management Mysteries*. American Association of Museums, Washington DC. 2007 ISBN 978-1-933253-08-4.

Jones, Roy & Shaw, Brian J. (eds) *Geographies of Australian Heritages. Loving a Sunburnt Country?* Ashgate Publishing Limited, Hampshire, United Kingdom, 2007 ISBN 978-0-7546-4858-1



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Reviews

Riches, Rivals and Radicals: 100 years of Museums in America. By Marjorie Schwarzer. Washington, AAM, 2006. ISBN: 1-933253-05-3.

To celebrate its centenary, the American Association of Museums commissioned Marjorie Schwarzer to survey changes in museum architecture, collections, exhibitions and people over the course of its hundred-year history. The result is a popular and engaging work that Australian readers will find fascinating, not least because the sheer scale of the American museum industry is extraordinary. In 1928, 1400 museums received 32 million visitors, equal to 25 per cent of the population. Seventy years later, 10,000 museums had 865 million visitors, three times the total population. In total these museums have some 750 million objects, and their collections continue to grow at between one and five per cent each year.

Inevitably in a work that has to cover such a huge field, there are weaknesses. Sweeping generalisations are inevitable and, by dividing the topic into four themes and treating each chronologically, there is considerable repetition. But there is also much of interest. As someone who has often marvelled at the extraordinary art collections held in American galleries, here is the explanation as to how so many paintings, sculptures and artworks made their way into public collections. In 1909 the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act was passed by Congress. This eliminated import taxes on artworks more than twenty years old and four years later this qualification was also lifted. As a result, art collecting boomed and by 1923 Americans spent the then astonishing sum of \$250 million a year. Thanks to the generosity of benefactors like Andrew Mellon, much ended up in public collections. As he wrote to President Franklin Roosevelt in 1936, 'I have been acquiring important and rare paintings and sculpture with the idea that ultimately they would become the property of the people of the United States'.(7) The result was the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

We also meet some extraordinary curators and directors, including Alice Eastwood who, when an earthquake struck San Francisco on 18 April 1906, rushed from the comparative safety of her home in Berkeley to the California Academy of Sciences. She rescued over 1000 records and specimens, lowering them to the street below before the building collapsed. As she later recounted, 'The earthquake didn't frighten me. What scared me more was losing my life's work'.(70) John Cotton Dana founded the Newark Museum in New Jersey and was a great promoter of women in museums. He argued that museum directorship required 'common sense, enthusiasm for education in all its forms, and an eagerness to learn of the good work a museum can do for a community ... in almost every community, large or small today, it will be easier to find a woman than a man who is fitted to the director's task and is willing to take it'.(177) A photograph taken at the 1923 meeting of the AAM shows ten women museum directors. Regrettably Dana's views have not prevailed, as is all too evident in the principally male leadership of museums in Australia as elsewhere.

Schwarzer does not shy away from controversy. She reminds us of the scandal that resulted from Thomas Hoving's enthusiastic deaccessioning at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the involvement of American museums in illicit trafficking of cultural property. But here, as elsewhere, the need to cover such a large field means that complex issues must be dealt with summarily. Schwarzer concludes that the 1983 signing into law by the US Congress of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the illicit import of cultural property marked a significant change, 'Now the museum's duty was not only to safeguard its own objects but to safeguard cultural heritage in a

broader, global sense'.(99) However, as a recent *New Yorker* article on the Greek and Roman galleries at the Metropolitan pointed out, it is only now (twenty-five years later) that American museums are finally accepting responsibility for having acquired stolen objects. In 2006 the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston returned thirteen objects to Italy and the Metropolitan agreed to return twenty-one, including the krater painted by Euphronios, one of Hoving's most prized acquisitions. In his memoir he called it the single most perfect work of art he had every encountered. Under an agreement with the Italian government it is to be returned in 2008 without the Met acknowledging any wrongdoing.

Some museum types are better served by *Riches, Rivals and Radicals* than others. Art museums are given far more extensive coverage than those of science or natural history. But Schwarzer does endeavour to represent new trends such as contemporary collecting, community museums, and museums that seek to represent the marginal and the overlooked. She reminds us of Stephen Weil's analysis of successful museums as being those that moved from being 'about something to being for someone' and points to the crucial role museums played in the recovery from 9/11. Just as after Pearl Harbour the Bishop Museum in Honolulu organised new exhibits and creative art classes for children who could not longer attend school, so museums in New York and beyond organised exhibitions and public programs centred around the terrorist attack.

Given the number of specialist and generalist histories available, particularly of American museums, one could ask if the production of yet another was the best way to mark the American Association of Museums' centenary. For example, it would have been interesting to look at the issues raised at successive annual meetings and to chart their change and development over time. But this is not to say that *Riches, Rivals and Radicals* is without value, for it has much to recommend it. Indeed, for those unfamiliar with the diversity and history of American museums this serves as a fine introduction.

Dr Kimberley Webber is Senior Curator of Australian history & society at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

In Principle, In Practice: Museums as Learning Institutions. Edited by John H. Falk, Lynn D. Dierking and Susan Foutz. AltaMira Press, Plymouth, UK, 2007. ISBN 978-0-7591-0977-3

In the world of Museum Education we are often so absorbed with supporting the learning of others that we forget to support our own learning. With the day-to-day emphasis on program delivery, keeping up to date with new research findings can be a real challenge.

Many of us are so busy doing the job that there's not a lot of time to read and reflect on new developments in the field. If you're nodding in agreement, then fear not - this is the book for you. *In Principle, In Practice* provides an excellent overview of discussion and research on museum learning over the past ten years or so. Some articles present new findings; others survey past research, with the aim of clarifying 'what we know' before considering 'what we *should* know'.

In Principle, In Practice is a collection of work by various authors exploring learning in science centres. Despite the declared emphasis on science education, the findings and insights are applicable to all museum environments. The editors, John Falk, Lynn Dierking and Susan Foutz, describe the book as concentrating on informal learning, however, further reading reveals that they are using the word 'informal' to describe the institution, rather than the nature of the learning

Reviews

- i.e. all museum learning is considered informal learning. The book was born out of a gathering of museum professionals, the purpose of which was to discuss museum learning and develop a research agenda investigating the long term impact of museum visits. Out of this arose an initiative to gather together a body of knowledge that encompasses what we know about learning in museums. The initiative has several parts including this book, the first in the *Learning Innovation Series*. The book gathers research findings and first hand experience to illustrate how far we have come in purposefully designing learning experiences. It details the most significant findings from past decades, investigates how museums can remain relevant in a changing world, suggests guidelines for structural change to support a learning-centred culture, and sets a research agenda for the next ten years. Although the book is not explicitly a survey of the literature, it provides, by virtue of its intent and scope, a great synthesis of what we know about museum learning and where we should be heading next. The authors are generally of the constructivist mindset, an approach now broadly accepted and applied by museum educators. The contributors are clearly writing in the wake of those pivotal volumes, *The Museum Experience* (1992) and *Learning from Museums* (2000), by John Falk and Lynn Dierking. Many of the contributors refer back to these publications, and indeed much of the discussion and research is framed by the work of Falk and Dierking, and in particular their recognition of the contextual nature of museum learning.

For those who are actively involved in museum-based learning research, this book provides valuable guidance on scope, research parameters, common pitfalls, methods of data collection and assessment of the long-term significance of the museum visit. If, like me, you just crave a better understanding of how people learn in museums, this book provides sound, practicable insights into constructing learning environments, with specific reference to Falk and Dierking's Interactive Experience Model as the Contextual Model of Learning.

A highlight for me was Janette Griffin's *Students, Teachers and Museums: Toward an Intertwined Learning Circle*. This article explores the role of each of these players in the museum visit, and includes very interesting sections on Hindering Learning, where Griffin specifically identifies actions, environments or situations that actually impede learning. Griffin includes the kind of theoretical and practical advice that made me want to rush to the photocopier and copy this article for our program presenters immediately. Two chapters in particular, *Research on Learning from Museums* by Rennie and Johnston, and *Understanding the*

Long-Term Impacts of Museum Experiences by Anderson, Storksdieck and Spock, gave beautifully concise summaries of research findings over the past decade. Both chapters are a great place to start if you're feeling out of touch and wanting a concise overview of the current scene. *Investigating Socially Mediated Learning* by Astor-Jack *et al* provides an excellent discussion on the process of learning, as opposed to the outcomes.

The contributors to this book are strong proponents of the view that learning encompasses more than just the content absorbed by the visitor on the day. This is certainly not a new idea, yet the editors have managed to gather a collection of chapters that do help us understand just how wide-ranging the scope of this learning might be.

Lisa DeSantis is Assistant Director: Visitor Services, Education and Public Programs at ACT Museums and Galleries



FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

Communities and Memories – a global perspective

**The third UNESCO International Memory of the World Conference
19-22 February, 2008
National Library of Australia, Canberra, Australia**

Planning is progressing for the conference which looks back on the achievements of the *Memory of the World* programme and forward to its sustained growth, wide acceptance and importance.

The conference is to be held in association with representatives from the Intangible Cultural Heritage sector and will be preceded by a meeting of the Regional *Memory of the World* Committee for the Asia-Pacific Region (MOWCAP) on 17-18 February and a symposium on Intangible Cultural Heritage on 18 February.

Organised by the UNESCO Australian *Memory of the World* Committee the conference program revolves around five key topics:

Memory of the World in the UNESCO framework – examining its status within UNESCO and its relationship to other UNESCO activities, such as Intangible Cultural Heritage, Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, Cultural Diversity, Human Rights and Cultural and Natural Heritage.

Global, regional and national perspectives – looking at the effectiveness of the international, national, and regional programmes, including their registers, in fulfilling the aims of the programme.

Preservation and access – taking a fresh look at the socio/technical and socio/cultural aspects of preservation and access and their roles in the *Memory of the World* programme.

Sustaining the programme – exploring ideas, strategies and experiences to assist the growth of the *Memory of the World*.

Evaluating success – identifying gaps, inconsistencies and inequities in the programme and proposing solutions.

Invitations have been extended to eminent speakers who will deliver papers to spark discussion on these topics. Ample opportunities will be available for all delegates to contribute to the conference outcomes.

The final day includes a UNESCO "Soap Box" where all delegates are given a chance to have their say on any topic they believe is relevant to the development and sustainability of the *Memory of the World* programme. The last day also offers workshops examining issues such as setting up a website, determining significance, submitting nominations, establishing a national committee and sponsorship.

The social program includes receptions in Canberra's major cultural institutions, dinner in Old Parliament House, a train journey, including dinner, to a local village, tours of several cultural institutions and a tour of Canberra.

Registration, including accommodation booking arrangements, will open at the end of September 2007. For further information go to www.amw.org.au/mow2008/mow2008.htm.



Reviews

Civilising the Museum: The Collected Writings of Elaine Heumann Gurian, Routledge/Taylor Francis Group, London and New York, 2006

However you feel about Elaine Heumann Gurian's style (personal, direct) and views (progressive, liberal) – there can be no argument that she has had an extraordinary life in museums not just in the US but around the world. Over the last thirty-five years, she and the late Stephen Weil (she describes him as the 'model for [her] intellectual professional life') produced the most original and considered commentary on museums. Heumann Gurian specialises in illuminating relationships between museums and their communities particularly around education, management, leadership, cultural diversity and over the last twenty years focused on guiding the redevelopment of existing museums or the creation of new ones, either as a member of the management team or as a consultant. And, unusually, for a senior American museum professional, she has done this on an international basis.

Civilising the Museum tracks her intellectual trajectory and the great mission for change she has led: the twenty-two pieces are grouped in five sections covering 1981-2005 – museum definitions, civic responsibility and social service, architectural spaces, exhibitions and spirituality/rationality. Her most active intellectual period was the early 1990s, where almost half the collection is located. Most pieces have extensive and very useful notes and updated bibliographies, and nine have an 'afterword' which capture her recent (2005) reflections. In one case ('The Importance of "And"') the afterword is longer than the original piece! And Heumann Gurian's titles leave you in no doubt you are reading the work of a commentator with a sense of humour: 'A savings bank for the soul: about institutions of memorial and congregant spaces' (1996); 'Free at last: the case for the elimination of admission charges in museums' (2005); and 'Noodling around with exhibition opportunities: the potential meanings of exhibition modalities' (1991).

The nine afterwords are essential reading and my favourite (and the most poignant) paragraph in the whole collection is in the afterword of the 1990 piece titled 'Turning the Ocean Liner Slowly: about the monumentally slow process of change in larger institutions':

'I did not predict that the pressure to change museums would waver and die down, even though the conversation would continue. I did not predict that the changes that were made would be fundamentally small except in a few places. And I certainly did not predict that change could be eroded and stepped back from. I should have anticipated the possibility of failure.'

This sense of melancholy appears in a number of places (on page 7 'I despair more often now ...'). Written in 2005, I hope now in mid 2007, she is a little more optimistic with the seismic shifts in US politics over the last twelve months?

Australasia features extensively – her relationship with this part of the world began when 'Answers to the ten questions I am most often asked' was presented at a museum educators' conference in Melbourne in 1981; since then she has been a frequent presenter of papers here and had a major hand in the development of the National Museum of Australia in Canberra and Te Papa in Wellington. Reading this collection reminds me that the style of the National Museum of Australia's very successful visitor services hosts – who are so much more than just security or

information operatives – can be traced to her advocacy for making the visitor experience as welcoming and inclusive as possible.

My only minor quibble is that, while Heumann Gurian acknowledges that she has rewritten some pieces, the new material is integrated so seamlessly it leaves the reader slightly disconcerted; for example, in the 1991 piece about exhibitions there are references to the National Museum which did not exist until 2001. I applaud Heumann Gurian's desire not to have her work suspended in historical aspic, but it may have been fairer on the reader to differentiate the new material more clearly.

I read many of these pieces on my way through my own professional career, and admit I became somewhat nostalgic in reconnecting with them. If you are coming fresh to her work, this is the most effective way to understand the contribution of one of the most innovative museum thinkers of the last thirty years.

Louise Douglas is General Manager, Audience and Programs at the National Museum of Australia.

A Practical Guide to Costume Mounting. By Lara Flecker. Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 2007. ISBN: 0-7506-6830-X

A Practical Guide to Costume Mounting presents a comprehensive insight into the specialised craft of preparing costume for display in museums and galleries. The material is drawn from the hands-on experience of its author, Lara Flecker, resident Costume Mounter at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, with the support of her colleagues in Textiles Conservation. Flecker trained as a theatrical and historical costume maker, working freelance for several years before coming to textile conservation.

This, her first book, is the result of a growing interest in costume mounting in recent years; to my knowledge, it's one of the few publications on the subject. The book aims to address a wide audience of readers: those who work with dress in museum collections, as well as dress history and museology students, plus readers with limited sewing skills. I feel that Flecker covers all the necessities to meet the purpose.

One of the strengths of the book is its design. The convenient, slightly-smaller-than-A4 size is easy to handle. Presentation is clear and uncluttered, making access to the information direct, thus saving time for the practitioner. The layout and formatting of chapters ensure that the book can be used by the more experienced, who can dip into it for help with individual display problems, or by beginners, who can use it as a handbook guiding them through all the fundamental mounting processes.

It is well illustrated with large colour images and clearly detailed technical drawings that are highlighted to stand out. The text often describes complicated practical processes, but is conveyed in practitioner language that is easy to understand. The clever use of tables and diagrams explain at a glance common construction methods and processes. The book concludes with an Appendix of Basic Sewing Techniques, and a Bibliography and Suppliers List.

A Practical Guide to Costume Mounting is divided into seven chapters, focusing mainly on costume from the eighteenth century onwards, covering every aspect that the practitioner is likely to encounter. For example, Flecker shows how to inject life into a costume, reviving it

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with appropriate display methods to recall its former glory

As Susan North, curator of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century fashion at the V&A, states in the introduction, 'Of all the artistic media, dress is the most challenging to display.' As costume display specialist at the National Gallery of Victoria, I have to agree. This very specialised craft presents challenges even for experienced practitioners.

I feel that in *A Practical Guide to Costume Mounting*, Flecker brilliantly defines and addresses the challenges of preparing costumes for display, though it would be useful to mention the very relevant problems of time and budget constraints. She utilises case studies collated from her many years as a costume designer and display specialist. I enjoyed reading her methods of adapting modern mannequin shapes to suit profiles such as the monobosom of the 1900s and the flattened 1920s chest.

Of course Flecker does not ignore the importance of fundamentals such as conservation, stating that 'A badly prepared garment can put a fragile textile at risk,' as well as 'ruin a display'. Hence she discusses in detail the precautions related to handling costumes, such as examining them for signs of deterioration, dressing a costume onto a figure, and materials commonly used for costume mounting. This information is vital knowledge.

One of the most common tasks in costume mounting, designing and making underpinnings - i.e., providing the right body shape via the correct underclothes of the time - is addressed comprehensively. Flecker demonstrates how to make period silhouettes from start to finish, such as the cage crinoline from the mid-1800s, or the court pannier frame from the late 1700s.

The chapter on trouble shooting addresses common problems that crop up, particularly with fragile, damaged or altered pieces. More often than not, a costume that has been altered is a costume that is fragile and difficult to fit on a supporting mannequin. What can one do, say, when the fastenings are missing? Replace them with the fastening used at the time the costume was originally made or altered? Often these fastenings are no longer available and applying them to the costume can risk further damage. Here the lines between Conservator and Costume Display specialist are blurred. Flecker has documented solutions usually practised by conservators, then added handy techniques developed from her own experience.

Taking yet another perspective, costumes are not always displayed on solid mannequins. Flecker looks at alternative methods too, with instructions on how to make buckram mounts and figures

using ethafoam. She presents the advantages of using buckram to display corsets and underwear, underlining problems presented by manufactured buckram but offering a relatively simple recipe for producing a conservation-friendly buckram, which I look forward to trying in the future.

A Practical Guide to Costume Mounting is a very timely publication. I recommend it as a valuable resource book that caters for a range of practitioners with varying experience, including conservators, curators, theatre and film costume makers and designers, exhibition designers and members of the fashion industry.

Annette Soumilas trained as a theatrical and historical costume designer and maker. She has worked in Textiles Conservation at the National Gallery of Victoria, preparing costumes for display, since 2001.

All the articles and reviews in this issue can also be viewed on MAM On-line on the Museums Australia website -

www.museumsaustralia.org.au

On-line articles often have additional features such as illustrations and full references. For an even fuller story, check out MAM On-line.

Apology - we published the wrong picture of the MAPDA Committee in the August issue. Here is the correct one.



MAPDA Committee members viewing some of the shortlisted MAPDA entries with sponsors and judges - (l to r) Rick Cochrane, Pirion (judge and sponsor); Jude Savage, Chair MAPDA; Dean Stevenson, Interactive Controls (sponsor); David Arnold, National Museum of Australia (judge); and Ian Watts, MAPDA Committee member.

Photo: Steve Keough



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The Australian Showcase Company



*Pacific Cultures Galley @ South Australian Museum housing two Hemlout masks from the Sulka people, East New Britain, PNG
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