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

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

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Museums Australia is proud to acknowledge the following supporters of the national organisation:

**Australian Government Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts;
National Museum of Australia; Australian War Memorial; and Museum Victoria**

MINDFULNESS ABOUT RIGHTS

Many discussions and moves around rights issues have occurred in recent months.

Resale rights of visual artists: In May, Minister for the Arts, Hon. Peter Garrett, announced details of the government's intention to establish a resale royalty scheme for visual artists. The Australian government's decision joins international efforts to recognise and protect the work of artists by creating a resale environment in which artists can benefit from payment of a flat 5 per cent royalty fee on the ongoing market value of their works after first point of sale.

The foreshadowed legislation will not meet all desires and will be quite difficult to administer. Nevertheless it will mark a real advance for artists' rights. NAVA (the National Association of Visual Artists) is a key body for advice on the scheme in terms of the new provisions envisaged.

Indigenous human rights (including Indigenous artists' rights): All viewers of fair mind and conscience will have been deeply stirred by the SBS television series *The First Australians*. It will take time for all our public institutions to work through the substance and implications of all that this series has movingly, searchingly and painfully brought to mainstream public narration for the first time. Suffice to say that nothing short of a comprehensive responsiveness by *all* of our public institutions is required to deal with the depth of the personal and social tragedies that the SBS series lays out, backed by historical records, multiple voices and interpretation – the whole eloquently constructed and forcefully communicated. A question burns for all: What can and must be done to answer such a history, change it, and guarantee a better future for all Indigenous Australians?

Protection of Australian Indigenous artists: This is the next great cause needing affirmative action in the arts area. The ABC *Four Corners* program, *Art for Art's Sake?* (28 July 2008) reinforced the reasons for the 2007 Senate Inquiry into abusive practices of the unregulated art market dealing in Indigenous artworks. There have been fine and reputable dealers for years handling Indigenous art and building a serious audience and market for its sale. The other end of the spectrum of practices revealed by the *Four Corners* program – the activities of the 'carpet-bagging' operators in the market – was chilling and startling to all who have not long known of this situation. Museums must take steps to learn through what sources Indigenous works are reaching the open market, and to ensure that they are not supporting and reinforcing abusive dealings that are appalling at a basic level of *human rights* – before it is possible to raise understanding of improving Indigenous *artists'* rights.

Rights discussions are always of relevance to museums in view of their ethical commitment to the social purpose of museums and their obligations to do whatever possible to ensure fair and equitable participation of all social groups in the benefits of culture and heritage. The issues are difficult, often pointing in different directions, and hard to integrate successfully into good principles and practice for all. The inescapable challenge that Museums Australia upholds is to keep working at these issues.

Bernice Murphy, National Director, Museums Australia

NZMUSEUMS

New Zealand now has a website featuring its museums and collections, launched on 17 September 2008 at Te Papa Tongarewa/Museum of New Zealand. The NZMuseums website provides a directory of 400 museums in the country, and at the time of launching was showcasing 50 of them. The site is growing as more museums add the details of their collections. It can be viewed at www.nzmuseums.co.nz

NZMuseums was designed by Vernon Systems and McGovern Online in partnership with National Services Te Paerangi (NSTP), a team within Te Papa that helps museums enhance their services. NSTP assisted museums with the initial cataloguing, and from December 2008 onwards contributors will be able to update object and museum information through Vernon Systems' new web-based collection management system, eHive. The NZMuseums site also includes news stories, a regular blog on museum issues, events and collections.

The term 'museum' in New Zealand covers museums, art galleries, whare taonga, tribal museums, cultural centres, historic places, science centres, interpretive and exhibition centres.



Bowl of tobacco pipe, carved by a member of the Poole family on active service in the Middle East in 1918, now in the collection of the Raglan and District Museum showcased on the NZMuseums site.

Photo: courtesy of Raglan and District Museum Inc.

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Dinosaurs Gallery, Australian Museum, Sydney 2008

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MUSEUM BUILDING FAÇADE INSPIRED BY CONTENTS

A shimmering façade that hints at the iridescent colours of some insects' wings is a striking feature of the Australian Museum's new Collections & Research building, located beside the Museum's existing sandstone building on Sydney's William Street.

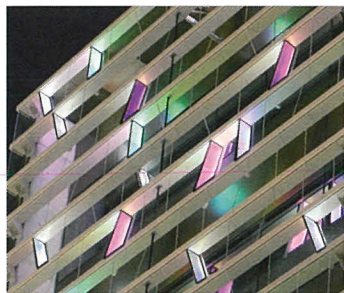
The building, officially opened on 19 November 2008, will be accessible to the public in a special open day in May 2009. Built at a cost of \$32 million dollars with funds from the New South Wales government, the new building will house the zoology collections, staff and research laboratories.

In daylight hours 50 coloured glass panels reflect a range of hues, depending on the angle from which the building is viewed – just like the shimmering surface of many insects' wings.

Designed by architect Richard Johnson of Johnson Pilton Walker, with the façade lighting the work of Senior Lighting Designer Emrah Baki Ulas, the new building conforms to the Museum's green philosophy. The feature lights will be switched on from sundown to 10 pm each day only, using edge lighting of the glass panels with one fluorescent fitting, rather than spot or floodlighting.

Inside the building are 5000 square metres of space providing world-class collection storage, laboratories and areas for taxonomic and ecological research into the Museum's enormous and significant collections.

The public are invited to compete to give a nickname to the new building. For information on the competition go to www.australianmuseum.net.au/visiting/whatson/ and see 'Special Events'.



Façade lights of the new Research & Collections building, Australian Museum, Sydney.

Photo: Carl Bento © Australian Museum

QUEENSLAND MUSEUM CLAIMS BLUE WHALE FOR ITS COLLECTION

A blue whale that died after being stranded on the north Queensland coast has been claimed for the Queensland Museum's collection.

The juvenile male was stranded in October at the Australian Institute of Marine Science at Cape Cleveland, south of Townsville, and died soon afterwards. Queensland Museum scientists took flesh samples and plan to reduce the whale to its skeleton, which will eventually hang in the Museum.

Senior Curator of Vertebrates at the Queensland Museum, Steve Van Dyck, said that the blue whale, weighing close to 100 tonnes, will be the first complete specimen of this species in the collection, and 'Although it is disappointing to have one of these endangered animals found dead, this rare find is a highly significant contribution to the state collection'. (*Canberra Times*, 21 October 2008)

IMMIGRATION MUSEUM WINS MELBOURNE AWARD

The Immigration Museum in Victoria has been awarded the 2008 Melbourne Award for its contribution to Victorian communities through the Community Connections program.

The Melbourne Awards recognise individuals and organisations that have made a significant contribution to the social health, economic success and environmental sustainability of the community.

Established in 1998, the Immigration Museum's Community Connections program sees culturally and linguistically diverse communities partnering with the museum to create exhibitions and festivals that explore and document stories and experiences of immigration and cultural diversity in both the City of Melbourne and Victoria as a whole.

The program engages more than 15,000 people from diverse communities each year, with six Community Connections events held annually. Each event is created and produced in partnership with specific communities whose cherished practices, culture, traditions, history and heritage are celebrated and commemorated through the festival or exhibition.

The most recent Community Connections events include the exhibition, *Waters of Tuvalu: A Nation at Risk*, which examines the impact of rising sea levels and climate change on the Pacific islands of Tuvalu and the resulting migration. This incredibly topical exhibition explores how Tuvaluans living in Melbourne are struggling with the idea that their nation and heritage will cease to exist altogether.

Showing the diversity of the program in engaging with the community, the next item on the Community Connections calendar was the Cambodian Festival, held on Sunday 14 September. The festival featured traditional Cambodian food, music and dance performances, family activities and a historical perspective on Cambodian migration.

'I am very proud of the way in which the program promotes respect for, and an understanding of, diversity and difference to a broad audience throughout Melbourne. The award further establishes the national and international reputation of the Immigration Museum as a significant and innovative cultural tourism venue in the City of Melbourne,' said Padmini Sebastian, Manager, Immigration Museum.

Immigration Museum, 400 Flinders St, Melbourne. For more details phone 13 11 02 or visit museumvictoria.com.au/immigration_museum.

Freya Purnell is regional editor of *Museums Australia Magazine*



Dancers at the Immigration Museum's Cambodian Festival.

Photo: Ben Healle

Photo courtesy of Museum Victoria

Collections Australia Network

www.collectionsaustralia.net

Collections Australia Network (CAN) is the web portal for the Australian heritage collections sector, providing a significant range of support and services to professional and volunteer workers involved with public access collecting institutions. An initiative of the Cultural Ministers Council (CMC), CAN was produced with a vision to make the most of the opportunities the web offers in the ongoing need for museums to engage with their visitors and each other.

Digital technology generates greater opportunities for museums and museum workers. However, not all museums have the staff, resources or support they need to develop a website that will host their collections. With this in mind, CAN is focused on the particular needs of the smaller and more isolated museums across Australia. Museums that become CAN Partners receive practical support when putting their collections online via the CAN portal, or when promoting their collections and upcoming events. For those CAN Partners that are under-resourced, advice provided on how to best present their artefacts and information online, and suggestions on strategy and the planning of their online presence prove invaluable.

An online collection is immediately accessible and meets the challenge all museums face - of being consistently relevant in a virtual world. When museums permanently display their collections - including archived objects, manuscripts, photographs, letters and more - they meet the needs of the community that has come to expect virtual access to public institutions. CAN offers a range of different ways to display collections online, and was designed in such a way that each museum could highlight the individuality of their collection.

CAN is managed by media specialist Joy Suliman who offers advice to museums when assessing the effectiveness of their current web presence. Joy explains that it is not enough to have your details on the web: each museum needs to ensure that it is discoverable and accessible to its potential audience. Joy has put together a list of suggested techniques for assessing the effectiveness of a museum's current web presence.

Joy regularly holds seminars across Australia in a program called CAN Outreach to provide further support to remote museums. Through the Outreach program Joy demonstrates how CAN supports the ongoing efforts of all museums to engage with their respective communities and to actively communicate with them. By taking such an active role in working with museum staff to discuss the challenges faced by remote museums, CAN understands the relevant needs of isolated museums and is able to follow up with the practical support these museums need to engage with all museums, museum professionals and their visitors nationally.

A broad range of topics was covered by Joy and invited speakers at the recent CAN Outreach seminar held in Perth. Emerging Technologies Specialist Kathryn Greenhill from Murdoch University Library discussed the importance of keeping up with emerging technologies and how this can be achieved. Another speaker, Greg Wallace, Cultural and Digital Collections Planning Consultant, presented a talk on establishing and sustaining digital collections, identifying issues, seeing through myths and overcoming challenges. Greg drew upon perspectives gained with projects carried out in central and northern Australia.

The current series of 'Collections and the Web' has been presented in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth and is scheduled for Melbourne 24 November 2008 for the benefit of regional Victorian museums.

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Collections Australia Network

CAN is not only relevant for the services it offers to remote or small museums. Museum professionals nationwide have embraced CAN for the broad range of services it offers, including the hosting of their individual collections online, promotion of news and events, employment opportunities within the sector, and the opportunity to communicate with peers via the CAN-talk discussion list.

CAN has a large audience within the museum sector, with people working in cultural collections, researchers and students being the largest audience, and CAN-talk is an open email list used by museum professionals to engage and collaborate nationwide with other professionals and with their broader communities.

CAN-talk has been used by curators to ask for assistance in identifying objects, and for advice on best practice. It has become a discussion forum for issues and theory relating to the Australian Collections Sector. This discourse strengthens the relationships of professionals within the museum community. Knowledge is shared and the relevance of a collection is enhanced by its accessibility alone.

Another CAN list, CAN-jobs, was recently used by the Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation to advertise the position of a Curator for the Hospital's art program. The reason for choosing CAN to advertise this position was the fact that it is sector specific and reaches museum professionals nationwide. The response to the advertisement was described as 'prolific'. When asked for further feedback from her experience, Arts Curator Roxanne Fea replied:

'I find CAN to be an invaluable resource in a variety of ways; not only do you have instant access to professional development and career opportunities across Australia and beyond, but CAN also allows active and unhindered discourse with cross-sector colleagues - allowing

cross-fertilisation of ideas, sharing of resources and as such providing a sense of community amongst a widely dispersed sector. I also frequently access the resources and strategic developments online. Currently for me there is no other forum which provides so many benefits for cultural workers in Australia.'

Roxanne Fea, Arts Curator, SCHF, NSW.

Archived objects and information that have been inaccessible in the past can be found simply and quickly on CAN. Housing collections under the one site means valuable resources and information typically found in different museums across Australia are more readily accessible. CAN accommodates the need for museums to continually evolve, to collaborate, and to sustain the interest of their visitors and their contemporaries in the public sphere.

Joy Suliman, Manager, Collections Australia Network (CAN)

LINKS TO CAN CAN-PARTNER:

www.collectionsaustralia.net/site/whypartner

Can-talk:

<http://lists.collectionsaustralia.net/mailman/listinfo/can-talk>

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Exhibition

FERTILE SOIL - 50 YEARS OF THE CITY OF FREMANTLE ART COLLECTION

The 50th anniversary of the City of Fremantle Art Collection in 2008 is an opportunity to celebrate a local government art collection which has its roots deeply embedded in the community in which it has grown. Both diverse and complex, with significance beyond the sum of its individual works, Fremantle's Collection has been encouraged to mature and to draw inspiration from the fertile arts culture of the city.

The City of Fremantle Art Collection is the largest local government art collection in Western Australia. It contains over 1200 pieces: a significant if not representative collection of Western Australian art after 1973, a group of fine historical works and an extraordinary mix of paintings, prints, photographs and ceramics by Fremantle makers and about Fremantle subjects. It boasts an excellent holding of Australian prints: substantial in quality and depth and representative of traditional and contemporary printmakers.

The City of Fremantle Art Collection is soon to turn 50 and marks this significant milestone by presenting an exhibition, *Fertile Soil: 50 Years of the City of Fremantle Art Collection*, and Collection book, both launched at the Fremantle Arts Centre in October 2008 and scheduled to tour Western Australian regional galleries in 2009-10. From the seeds of the original donation of 41 paintings by Sir Claude Hotchin in 1958, Fremantle's Art Collection has grown from the program of the Fremantle Arts Centre, which has been the focus for visual arts in the port city since 1973. The Arts Centre is pivotal to the story of



Bevan Honey, in progress 1998
charcoal & estapol on board, 86 x 122 cm
no.984

© courtesy of the artist

Fremantle's Art Collection, in creating the impetus to establish a repository for the winning prints from the Fremantle Print Award and works acquired through the ongoing acquisition program.

Fertile Soil highlights the work of 22 Western Australian practitioners who have lived and worked in Fremantle and made an important contribution to the visual arts culture of the city. It contains examples of contemporary Western Australian art spanning three decades, framing

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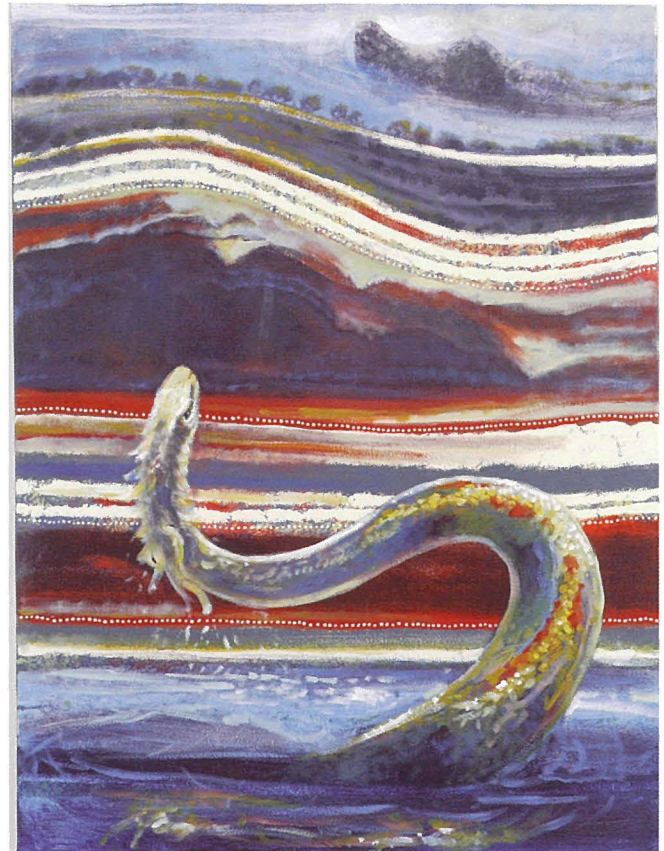
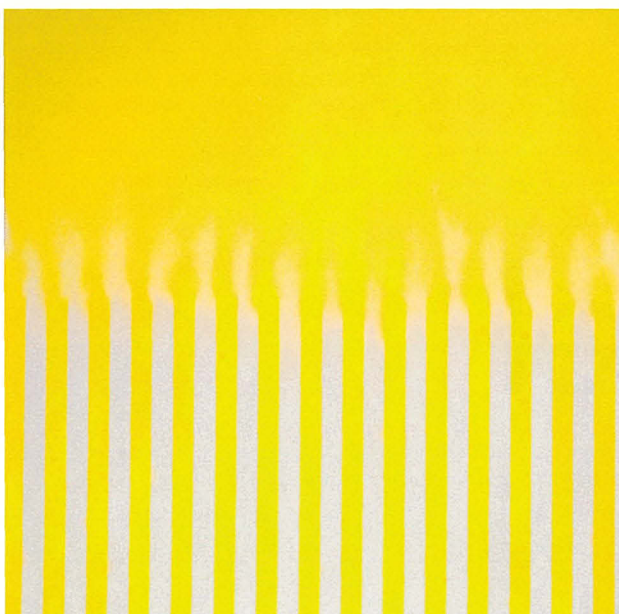
Exhibition



Kathleen (Kate) O'Connor, Self portrait II with hat c1925
oil paint on card on masonite, 60 x 49.5 cm
no.147

© courtesy of the Kathleen O'Connor advisory committee

a synthesis of place, its makers and cultural milieu synonymous with the 'city of artists'. The exhibition features a painting by Nyoongar artist Shane Pickett that tells a story of the struggle between fresh and salt water at the mouth of the Swan River; fine porcelain ceramics by Sandra Black and Pippin Drysdale; and photography by Brad Rimmer and Christine Gosfield. Prints are featured prominently too, recognising the Collection's focus and significance nationally, with prints by Susanna Castleden, Mary Moore and Jánis Nedéla. Recent acquisitions are included which employ dye and print processes occupying the world of assemblage and fashion, such as Holly Story's dyed and stencilled blankets installation *Harvest* (2007); and fashion designer Megan Salmon's *Partiri top* (2007) that reconstructs the printed *Desert Design* textiles of Aboriginal artist Jimmy Pike.



Shane Pickett, Waagle and Yondock Story 2004
acrylic paint on canvas, 120 x 90 cm, no.951

© courtesy of the artist

The exhibition is accompanied by an electronic audio exhibition guide. This easy-to-use guide will be available to exhibition visitors of all ages at each host venue, enabling access to the voice of the artists speaking about their arts practice and exhibited work.

Presented alongside *Fertile Soil* at the Fremantle Arts Centre is an exhibition of new work, completed while in residence at the Fremantle Arts Centre, by Melbourne-based artist Elvis Richardson. Best known for her interpretation of found and anonymous photographs, Richardson reveals the memory and personality of the untitled photographic work by Christine Gosfield, a portrait of Fremantle's community, produced in reaction to the events of 9/11.

Fertile Soil: 50 Years of the City of Fremantle Art Collection is supported by Art on the Move, the National Exhibitions Touring Structure for Western Australia Inc. through the State Exhibition Development and Touring Funds. *Fertile Soil*, the illustrated book is published by Fremantle Press.

Exhibiting artists are: Marcus Beilby, Sandra Black, Susanna Castleden, Pippin Drysdale, George Haynes, Bevan Honey, Christine Gosfield, Jeremy Kirwan-Ward, Theo Koning, Bela Kotai, Eveline Kotai, Brian McKay, Mary Moore, Jánis Nedéla, Kathleen O'Connor, Shane Pickett, Trevor Richards, Brad Rimmer, Megan Salmon, Helen Smith, Holly Story and Jurek Wybraniec.

Andre Lipscombe, Curator, City of Fremantle Art Collection

Helen Smith, Yellow linear puff 2006
oil paint on canvas, 150 x 150 cms, no.1182

© courtesy of the artist

Out and About

THE CENTRE CULTUREL TJIBAOU - TEN YEARS ON

Situated on a beautiful promontory on the outskirts of Noumea, the Centre Culturel Tjibaou (CCT) is given two pages in Mark Irving's *1001 Buildings You Must See Before You Die* (A Quintessence Book, 2007) and described in my *Lonely Planet Guide* as the premier tourist attraction in Noumea. This short piece intends to bring attention not only to the inspired design of the Centre but to touch on some of the problematic features that Kylie Message wrote of in her comprehensive essay of 2006 and which others have also remarked upon.

Designed by Renzo Piano of Centre Georges Pompidou fame, 'The Tjibaou' is dedicated to celebrating Indigenous Kanak culture and its place within the Pacific region. When it opened in 1998, it also had the sub-text of declaring New Caledonia as a progressive socio-political and economically buoyant entity which in turn would illustrate the nationalistic pride and social modernity of France itself. Piano's building and its integration with the natural surroundings is indeed worth experiencing; not least for a museum and cultural centre designed specifically for a South Pacific location.

Comprising a complex of ten vertical structures based on the form of opened-out Kanak chief's houses (known as 'grand case'), these are linked together by a central walkway (the 'grand allée') with views and sometimes seamless access to the outside. These wood and steel structures with their internal white walled spaces are further grouped conceptually as villages with specific functions. For instance, Village 1 is devoted to displaying works from the permanent collection of about 800 objects, including those produced locally and from New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Australia. I recognised several works that had featured in the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (1996), including *Le nous malade* by Nouméa's René Boutin. I was also reminded of the taro bed planted in Brisbane with audio component for that APT, by Kanak artist Denise Tiavouane and titled *Les Taros qui pleurent*. The flourishing taro crop in the grounds of the Tjibaou (the 'Kanak Pathway') gained a symbolic gravity when I recalled her installation. In light of the incipient violence of Boutin's sculpture made of bones, and the taro plantation, I question whether Diane Losche, in her nevertheless thought-provoking 2007 essay on the tendency to erase violent pasts in museum displays and the discourses around them, had over-emphasized the point with New Caledonia's Tjibaou. For above all, visitors can not help but be struck by the Centre's affirmation of Kanak culture. Therefore the question surely is: to what degree does one dwell on the past, and alternatively, celebrate the present and future?



Centre Culturel Tjibaou with taro garden, September 2008

The collection at the Centre (both historical and contemporary) is only by Indigenous peoples and those of mixed race; an unequivocally clear decision by Director Emmanuel Kasaherou in consultation with his Kanak advisors. While urban-based and Central Desert Aboriginal artists are represented, it is the Torres Strait Islander works that to my mind fit this location most comfortably. However, in the adjacent small curved space known as 'Case Jinu', six large contemporary totemic sculptures (votive poles) carved from wood (some coloured with ochres) are perfectly in sync with each other. Here an artist each from New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Irian Jaya, Vanuatu and Arnhem Land lend a powerful spiritual dimension to the Centre Tjibaou.

Appealing to visitors familiar with postmodern plurality of artistic expression and new technologies is evident in *salles Komwi* and



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Out and About

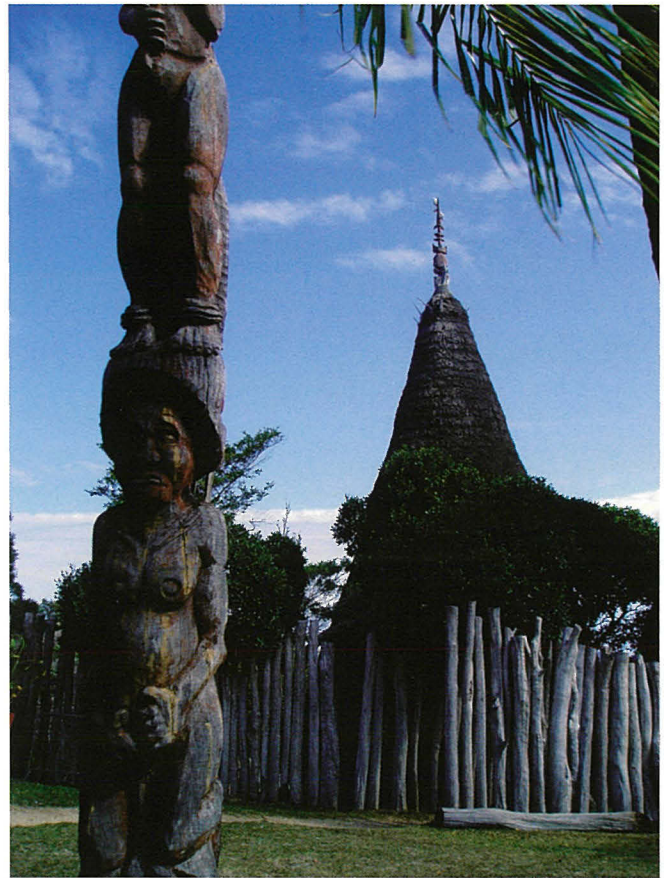
Kavitarā (named after Kanak leaders slain in their bid for the country's independence from the French). During my visit these exhibition spaces accommodated the touring show *Terres du Monde: Latitudes (Latitudes: Lands of the World)*, part of the annual *Latitudes* initiative from Paris which since its inception in late 2002 seeks to promote contemporary art in French territories. It was here that Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser represented Australia with a characteristically edgy installation; and Lisa Reihana from Auckland provided an impressive photographic and video work from her *Digital Marae* series. Both exhibits showed a resistance to ethnographic stereotyping and possessed a political dimension.

This brings me to the inevitable point of tension occurring between Centre Tjibaou's central mandate to champion Kanak peoples and ensure customary longevity, and what it is that visitors expect. I assumed that the *Latitudes* exhibition (despite its necessarily modest scale) would appeal to locals and outside spectators alike, yet during the three hours I spent at the Tjibaou accompanied by a friend from Paris, there were very few fellow-spectators at the complex. While the building, collections, temporary exhibitions and extensive grounds are what visitors primarily expect to see, they will be disappointed by the lack of verve that a living culture naturally evinces.

For although there is an outreach program to remote Kanak communities and a program on-site of dance and music ('Festival Femmes Funk' was due to be held at the end of September 2008), the day-to-day presence of the Centre seems disappointingly unacknowledged. It suggests, moreover, that this enterprise is more than ever a monument to Jean-Marie Tjibaou himself, the freedom fighter who lost his life in 1989. In fact, there is an over lifesize, socio-realist statue of Tjibaou set on a hill above the complex. Incongruously pompous, this bronze statue jars with the anti-monumental stance of Piano's architecture and surrounding design of the Centre's grounds. Here the 'Kanak Pathway' takes one on a rhythmic trail around plants for sustenance (such as taro, yam, bananas and sugar cane) and those with medicinal purposes, with at its fringes the splendid mangroves. What has been neglected during the past decade, however, is the replacement of less robust species that have withered. Confusingly, the out-door information panels have not been updated.

There also appears to be only a token engagement with young visitors (I saw few children, except for one school group experiencing one of the four thatched tribal houses in the Centre's grounds). This was in marked contrast with Noumea's downtown Musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie (Museum of New Caledonia MNC) where the rich displays of Pacific culture were accompanied by cartoon-like storyboards with comfy stools to perch on. Here I watched not only French and Japanese and Australasian visitors engrossed in the displays (designed in the 1980s), but also Kanak indigenes with their offspring who were reading the relatively new 'parcours BD' picture books on subjects such as 'Comment le kava arriva à Samoa'.

The MNC is located next door to the post office and not far from the central bus terminus. It is New Caledonia's oldest heritage institution, and has occupied its present building since 1970. It is surrounded by a lawn planted with coconut trees and when I passed the building by local bus over the course of several days, I noted that there were always a number of local Kanaks relaxing or waiting for friends outside. This was in marked contrast to the 'destination Tjibaou' experience, where Renzo Piano's building stands as one of the greatest architectural



Carved Kanak sculpture with 'Great House' beyond, Centre Culturel Tjibaou.

Photos: Anne Kirker

achievements of the current postcolonial era but which sadly does not, through its displays and buildings and on the eight hectares of surrounding land, readily attract a steady stream of Kanak peoples and their near neighbours. A hugely symbolic building, the Tjibaou Cultural Centre ten years on is still a monument to Jean-Marie Tjibaou, the leader of Kanak independence whose vision (before his untimely death) was to lead the government of Kanaky. Perhaps, it is merely a matter of time when the collection is significantly augmented, and when the public programs are integrated with them, that the man will take a step back and, as with the Pompidou in Paris, Piano's building will be perceived and used differently as a positive living heritage. Although the Tjibaou has its outreach program and popular entertainment at the Centre itself, the question nevertheless remains - for whom is it that Piano's masterwork principally stands?

Anne Kirker is a member of the *Museums Australia Magazine* Editorial Standing Committee

*A fully referenced version of this article is available on MAM On-line on the *Museums Australia* website.*

Reviews

Bones of the Ancestors: The Ambum Stone: From the New Guinea Highlands to the Antiquities Market to Australia. By Brian Egloff. Altamira Press, Lanham MD, 2008.

ISBN: 97 80759111592 (cloth)

The body of accounts of nefarious export of ancient artworks to western collectors and even museums is, unfortunately, substantial. This new addition to the genre brings the story right into Australia. The tale is not just an account of cultural loss and commodification, but also of a dense context. Brian Egloff depicts it from many points of view: the findings of artefact archaeology; the ancient and modern history of Papua and New Guinea; the contesting values of indigenous people, collectors, curators and academics; museum practice in the first and third worlds; and the dilemma of who owns cultural property.

In the end, he concludes that the focus, the Ambum Stone, is now best off in the care of the National Gallery of Australia, though not without qualifications which reflect darkly on the antiquities market and its players, and on the small efforts of governments to safeguard the heritage of humanity.

The Ambum Stone is an exquisite stone figure, about 20 cm tall, almost indescribable in words. Its caption on the NGA website says 'Pre-historic zoomorphic figure... possibly representing the embryo of a long-beaked echidna'. The words fail to express the little animal's profoundly peaceful air, balanced on her enlarged, birth-giving genitals and gently cradling her pregnant belly.

The original purpose of the figure is unknown. Dating suggests it may be 3500 years old, and adopted thousands of years later into the highland Enga people's use as an increase spirit, buried in a traditional garden site. Hence its local description, *samting bilong tumbuna*, a possession of the ancestors. It is one of about six known figures, and hard to place in a specific stream of culture, other than to speak of the incredibly ancient agricultural society of the central highlands of New Guinea.

The biography of the Ambum Stone since it came out of the earth starts only 43 years ago - Ambum is the valley it had inhabited. Egloff tracked the full story at the turn of the 21st century, in the light of experience as an archaeologist in PNG in the 1960s, as a curator at the PNG Public Museum in the 1970s, and as an academic in cultural heritage management in the 1980s-90s.

The Stone came to scholarly notice in 1965, when it was briefly described in a journal, along with a high quality photograph, supplied by its owner, a London dealer with interests in promoting PNG arts. A curator at the Museum of Primitive Art in New York wrote it up in 1974. The dealer had offered the Stone for sale to the PNG National Museum in the early 1970s, where it was rejected as having no proof of legitimate export; Egloff was, at the time, an officer in the enforcement of the PNG National Cultural Property (Preservation) Act 1965, and one can see this book and its search as expiation for not following it up at the time.

Meanwhile, the nascent Australian National Gallery approached the dealer on the basis on the first article, enquiring about buying the Stone, to be told, 'Offers will be considered in excess of £50,000.' (p.132) The then-ANG sought the advice of the writer of the second article, who replied, 'the object is intensely desirable, but the price is indecent, and I am very apprehensive of buying it...'. (p.133) Seeking

to prod along the sale, the dealer later wrote, apropos the recent acquisition of *Blue Poles*, 'if the available funds are better spent on a recently dead Modern artist, then perhaps you have a point [to resist the price]' (p.134). At this juncture in 1975, the ANG contacted the PNG Museum, offering to step back if PNG was interested in acquiring the Stone. Overlooking its own national cultural property law and the 1970 UNESCO Convention, the PNG Museum replied that they appreciated being asked, and concluded that the ANG should go ahead. Eventually, the Ambum Stone was purchased for \$US115,000, its price having risen with time.

The Stone took a prominent place in the newly-opened ANG in 1982. Appreciated for its exquisite form, it faded out of archaeological notice until an American published her work with the Enga in 1998. She noted that the Enga liked to have the 'bones of the ancestors' among them, but that such stones were mischievous, and hence not missed when Christianity became influential. Egloff now turned seriously to tracking the Ambum Stone's provenance.

That story drew on old PNG hands, archaeological contacts, the original dealer, the original finders, and much resistance by the NGA. I recount the full sale above to show that the Gallery acted pretty ethically in murky circumstances, and to wonder why it took persistent Freedom of Information demands to uncover the details. The antiquities market will remain murky if professional museums will not be frank about their actions.

That is why *Bones of the Ancestors* is an important book. It is also a rich read about Australia's nearest neighbour, and its journey from prehistory into the post-colonial world. Egloff himself is a fey character, as his friends know, but a truth-seeker, and the book is an important monument to truth.

Linda Young teaches heritage and museum studies at Deakin University, Melbourne.

Footprints: The Journey of Lucy and Percy Pepper, An Aboriginal family's struggle for survival. By Simon Flagg & Sebastian Gurciullo, National Archives of Australia and Public Record Office Victoria, 2008.

The first settlers blazed a trail through Victoria in the late 1830s, introducing many foreign customs, including the practice of colonisation, to Aboriginal people for the first time. It was to have a devastating impact on everyday life, particularly as traditional lands were lost and family ties threatened by new kinds of administrative control. A special agency known as the Board for the Protection of Aborigines was set up to govern the local population, who were subject to decisions made by the Board on their behalf. Numerous records that remain in our state and national archives are the legacy of this time, when Aboriginal people put many a pen to paper to seek permission from government officials to carry out tasks that are generally taken for granted in a free society.

These records now take on new meaning for those who are tracing their family history. Dealing with the search for lost loved ones and a sense of belonging is the stuff of everyday work for organisations like Stolen Generations Victoria, who have generously provided the funding for *Footprints: The Journey of Lucy and Percy Pepper*. Working in collaboration, the National Archives of Australia and Public Record Office Victoria have provided a pathway through what is a considerable paper trail relating to the Peppers. Although this is just

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one family's story, it represents many as it tellingly illuminates the on-going struggles faced in merely keeping their family healthy, happy and most importantly, together. It also demonstrates the richness of material available to others who may be undertaking their own family history research, and goes one step further in providing tips on how to access these kinds of records.

Without trying to force a historical narrative onto the work, the coordinating authors, Simon Flagg and Sebastian Gurciullo, have written a short introduction to each chapter providing context to the letters for a contemporary audience. The letters convey different perspectives on events in history that many Australians may not be familiar with, such as Percy Pepper's experiences as a First World War soldier for a nation that denied him equal citizenship rights on return.

At times the letters are difficult to read, on emotional grounds. Most heart-breaking is the way that the Board enforced an arbitrary racial classification scheme that went against the grain of community acceptance at the time. It sought to divide, as only 'full blood' Aboriginal people were eligible to live on missions and reserves with extended family. People like the Peppers were deemed 'too white', subsequently condemning them to 'not quite fitting in' to either world. Sadly, Lucy and Percy Pepper repeatedly sign off on their letters with the following reminder, 'P.S: I am a Aboriginal half caste earning my own living'. Rita Watkins, grand-daughter of Lucy and Percy Pepper, contributes to the closing chapter, confirming the identity that is her birthright. 'I am sure that both grandparents would be happy and proud that most of their family is still involved in Aboriginal affairs issues and

aspirations - not as 'half-castes', but as GunaiKurnai Aboriginal people from Gippsland.'

Renae Mason

Sydney Biennale 2008, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 18 June - 7 September 2008

It isn't that the Sydney Biennale of 2008 is presented in such prestigious and historical institutions that make this an event not to be missed. Nor is it the calibre of artists that are being exhibited, it is the banner under which these exhibits are staged that makes this Biennale so pertinent. *Revolutions - Forms That Turn* has paved the way for artistic director Caroline Christov-Bakargiev to include such varied and impressive work ranging from the kinetic sculptures of Atsuko Tanaka to the détourned film 'The Society of the Spectacle' of revolutionary avant-gardist Guy Debord in such a cohesive manner.

Revolutions - Forms That Turn is a theme easily interpreted for Romanian duo Dan and Lia Perjovschi. The pair was born in Sibiu, Romania in 1961 which provided a context in which they grew up under the turbulent reign of communist Nicolae Ceaucescu. This can be understood to have developed the duo's cultural awareness and led to them creating artworks with undeniable social insight during the bloody and tumultuous Romanian Revolution in 1989. This insight can be seen throughout all the pair's works which comment on anything from current events to the state of the artistic organism and their work at, or rather, on the Art Gallery of NSW is no different.



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Grappling everything from cultural revolution to the absurdities of capitalism to the theoretical approaches to art, the pair seek to point out the farce in their simplistic cartoons. Scribed in white chalk all over the facade of the Gallery of NSW and on the glass windows in the interior are the artists' stylistically infantilised works that, through stark and often basic dualisms, allow the audience a moment of quiet introspection. This leads to retrospection and provides the audience with the support and framework to chuckle at the mistakes of the past, whilst keeping them in mind so as to prevent them becoming features of the present and future.

The works are a refreshing retreat from the often intense representations found within the Art Gallery of NSW's walls. The works seek to break the mould of the traditional gallery exhibition and subvert the typical way an artwork is viewed. Instead of a work being viewed within the gallery's structure, the Perjovschi's works become part of the gallery's structure, thus undermining the artistic institution's cultural hierarchy. The Romanian duo's placement of works in the empty sandstone pockets once reserved for brass reliefs depicting the great ancient artistic periods give the audience cause to compare and contrast the artistic practices of the past to the contemporary artistic environment.

Christov-Bakargiev's bold move to include the Romanian artists alongside such names as Duchamp and Man Ray is one that has paid off immensely. Employing all interpretations of the theme, the artistic director has made no exceptions in pulling together such an impressive array of local and international artists. She has successfully included artworks from countless different periods and boundless theoretical backgrounds without contriving or destabilising the ideals that *Revolutions - Forms That Turn* embeds.

Nick Benson

Ethnicities and Global Multiculture: Pants for an Octopus. By Jan Nederveen Pieterse, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Maryland, United States, 2007. 243 pages ISBN-13 9780742540637 ISBN-10 0742540634

In *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture, Pants for an Octopus*, Jan Nederveen Pieterse presents eight chapters based on previously published materials and conference presentations from 1993 to 2006, examining the intersections of culture, multiethnicity, social capital, cosmopolitanism and globalisation. Each has been revised and collected in this edition which takes both long and broad views of global multiculturalism to 'open up the debate and make the discussion of multiculturalism truly global'.

Pieterse examines both western and non western perspectives across literature, social sciences, economics, history and politics, and attempts to decentre both the west and the present through the use of a comparative historical approach and non-western literature. Central to his thesis is a deconstruction of the notion of 'ethnic', which he posits as a concept fundamentally embedded with Eurocentric distinctions of 'other'. To counter such ideas, Pieterse argues on the one hand for a less generalising approach to questions of identity, diversity and the complexities of social relations, and the other hand for a much broader brush when dealing with ethnicity and global cultural change.

The chapters on ethnicity and nation explore the constructions of ethnic identity and nationhood, described as the 'negotiations and fabrications' necessary to construct myths of national origins. Pieterse

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skilfully unravels these and problematises presentist notions of pervasive ethnic division and conflict in the age of globalisation. Much of his argument is against the conflation of race, culture and language and the falsifying effect of equating ethnolinguistic categories (created by modern research) with ethnic groups and presumptions about cultural continuity.

The chapter on social capital and migration continues to challenge presentist perceptions of multiculturalism, examining in particular the perceptions of multiculturalism either as a contemporary 'problem' or a post-war or postcolonial triumph of modern diplomacy. In contrast, Pieterse cites millennia of intercultural transactions, global trade and cultural diasporas.

Chapter 4 examines the impacts on multiculturalism of intersections of cultural power with class, race, gender, religion, regional identities and a range of other factors. The fifth chapter returns to typologies of ethnicity examined in the first two chapters, and expands the thesis to critically examine the field of ethnic studies. This is one of the most interesting chapters, successfully peeling away multiple layers of presumption and Eurocentric thought to decentre Western academic perspectives.

Chapter 6 addresses and problematises the politics of representation in the particular sphere of the public museum. There is little here that has not already been debated widely among museum professionals and culturalists. Unfortunately Pieterse includes, as the merest postscript to the discussion, the relationship between museums as a potential site for a deconstructed discourse around nationalisms, ethnicity and

cultural dominance and the market forces that provide for the existence of such places. In Chapter 7, Pieterse attempts to recontextualise and recentre Islam as a major impetus for globalisation, cosmopolitanism and modernity, challenging the presentist view of globalisation as being peculiar to our own times. Having examined multiethnicity across cultural domains and in the 'longue durée', Pieterse uses the final chapter to distinguish contemporary multiculturalism in the age of globalisation from the multiculturalism of the past, emphasising the porosity of contemporary transnational culture. In what should be a closing argument of sorts to give coherence to the whole, Pieterse's argument here runs somewhat counter to that of many other chapters.

On the whole, *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture* is a stimulating and engaging analysis, and a good introduction to multiple discourses on multiethnicity, multiculturalism and globalisation. Pieterse's style is very readable and challenges the reader to further philosophical exploration. However, it is perhaps more disjointed than it need be, and from time to time Pieterse lapses into generalising (against his own advice), making presumptions and offering tenuous evidence for his theses. For those who regularly traverse the territory of contested cultures, multiethnicity and globalisation this text may not add significantly to contemporary discourse. However, those relatively new to these ideas will find this book thought-provoking and will, by the conclusion, have plenty of cause for further exploration of this broad discourse.

Colleen Fitzgerald is Acting Manager of School Visits at the National Museum of Australia.



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Reviews

The Hobbit Trap: money, fame, science and the discovery of a 'new species'. By Maciej Henneberg & John Schofield, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, SA, 2008. ISBN: 978186254 7919 (pbk)

The discovery of the Hobbit, a supposed extinct human-like species named *Homo floresiensis*, shook up modern audiences' view of how much we know of our world and our human ancestral story. For some scientists observing the discovery, the naming of the Hobbit as a new species has also raised questions about how rigorous the current international scientific system is. Maciej Henneberg, a Polish-Australian palaeoanthropologist (specialist in prehistoric humans), has teamed with journalist John Schofield to write his personal account of the past four years of scientific debate over *Homo floresiensis*. In doing so, they also critically examine the current systems of scientific training and research, and chart the influences that have borne upon Henneberg's own development as a critical thinker on human origins.

Henneberg has been close to the debate on the Hobbit from the announcement in October 2004 of its discovery on the Indonesian island of Flores. The book outlines his early suspicions that the Hobbit skeletal remains were not of a new species, but of a human with microcephaly (a medical condition causing short stature and reduced brain size). Henneberg and other scientists who shared a similar concern reviewed the evidence in an attempt to prove their point. The opposing camp of *Homo floresiensis* proponents conducted analyses to validate their view that the Hobbit was a new species, not a diseased human. Henneberg and Schofield recount the findings of each side and the scientific and personal blows that were exchanged. This insiders' account of the controversy will be novel for most readers - the media has avoided much of this contention in its reporting on the Hobbit remains.

Henneberg and Schofield speculate on the underlying cause of the poor science they see as having contributed to the premature naming of the Hobbit as a separate species. This discussion touches on supposed flaws in the system of training scientists, the wider pressure on scientists to continually publish new findings in order to secure research funding, and governance of universities. The authors provide significant insights here, pinpointing areas for reform of which we as a science-consuming public should be aware.

This book is structured around first-person monologues by Henneberg, interspersed with narrative and commentary presumably composed by both authors. This is slightly informal, but allows room for Henneberg's scientific background, experiences, and scientific philosophy to be described. The book is also informal in that no referencing system is used to cite the articles for key findings that are mentioned in the text. Formal referencing, *de rigueur* for any serious scientific discussion, would have enhanced the rigorousness of this work.

The argument for and against the status of the Hobbit as a separate species of human is a complex one. Whilst favouring one side, this book makes it clear that the final answer is yet to emerge. It is to be valued as a peep-hole into the wrangling within a scientific community over the reality behind a remarkable discovery. Most pertinent are its reflections on the problems facing the wider scientific community in delivering truth through its research.

Robert Mason

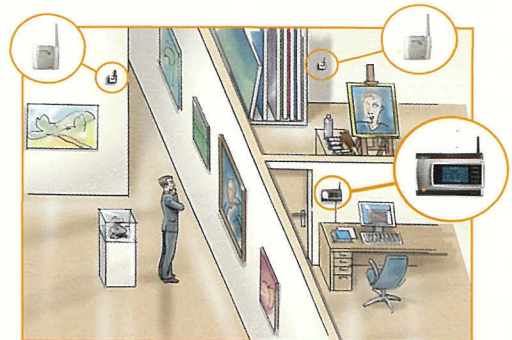


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And another thing . . .

CELEBRATING A MUSEUM BENEFACTOR

Charles Nicholson: The Man and His Museum, 1808-2008, an exhibition celebrating the life and work of the man whose donation inaugurated the collection of Sydney University's Nicholson Museum, is on display there until late 2009. The museum, tucked just inside the southern entrance to the University's Gothic Revival Quadrangle, holds a collection of 30,000 pieces - the largest collection of antiquities in the Southern Hemisphere.

Sir Charles Nicholson played a vital role in the early cultural life of this country as one of colonial Australia's great collectors of art and antiquities. He was also the co-founder of Australia's first University, the University of Sydney. As Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales he was, with Henry Douglass and William Wentworth, the driving force behind its establishment, and was both its Vice-Provost (Vice-Chancellor) from 1851 to 1854, and later Provost (Chancellor) from 1854 to 1862.

The Nicholson Museum was born in 1860 when he donated his entire collection of close to 400 treasured antiquities to the University, including a 3500-year-old statue of Horemheb, general of Tutankhamen's army.

Michael Turner, the Nicholson Museum's senior curator, said that Sir Charles led an extraordinary life. 'He was orphaned as a child in England and was brought up by an aunt. He came to New South Wales as a 25-year-old to practice medicine and two years later his uncle died leaving Nicholson his entire fortune. He was soon a wealthy landowner and pastoralist but was also one of Australia's first philanthropists. He put his money to very good use.'

Documents, letters and archaeological objects, mostly collected on Sir Charles's travels, tell his life story in the exhibition. It also reveals his passions, including his fascination with spiritualism, popular during the Victorian era.

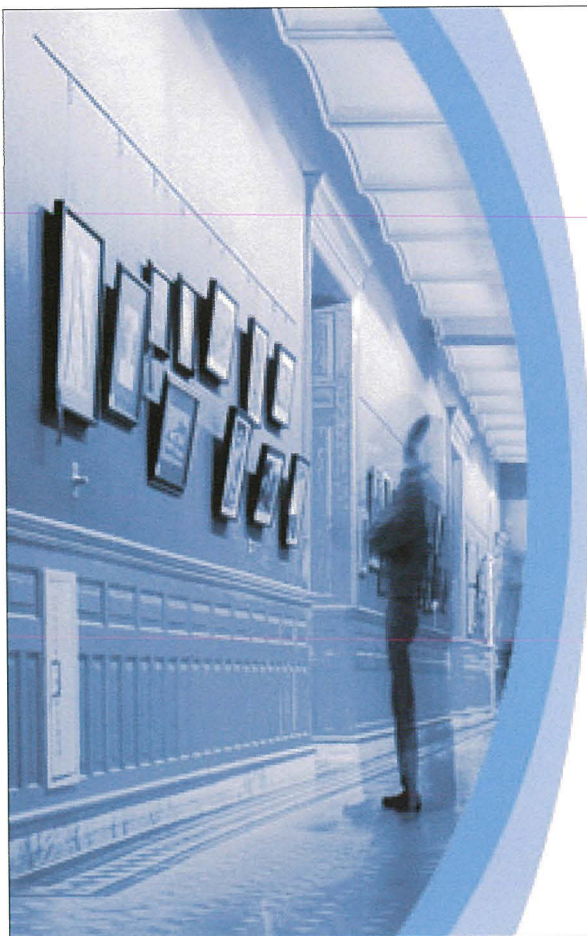
The museum is open Monday to Friday, from 10 am to 4.30 pm and Sundays from noon to 4 pm. Ph: (02) 9351 2812. Admission is free and all are welcome. *Charles Nicholson: The Man and His Museum* continues into 2009, but please note that the Nicholson Museum will close for renovations from 15 December 2008 to 15 February 2009.



Henry Phillips

**Sir Charles Nicholson
as Chancellor of the
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