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Cover photograph: Detail of work by Patrick Olodoodi, Papunya Tula Artists. Photo: Tim Acker.

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**

From the President

Message from the President

After a short break in 2008, I am pleased that the annual rhythm of Museums Australia's National Conferences will be restored. The venue this year for the Work in Progress conference is the dynamic regional city of Newcastle, from 17-20 May.

The Conference Organising Committee, with assistance from MANO, is organising a Trade Show as well as the usual amenities and special events expected at the National Conference. MA's National Council, in line with recommendations from the 2007 AGM, has acted to ensure long-range plans are in place for future conferences. MA Victoria and MA Western Australia are preparing programs in Melbourne and Perth. In May my two terms as President of the National Council will conclude. 2009 is our biennial election year and we need to elect a new Council. I would like to draw your urgent attention to the notices that have been sent out by e-Bulletin providing information on the nominations process. The closing date for nominations is 23 February 2009 and further information can be found on the MA website.

I encourage all members to consider how they may contribute to, influence and participate in the future work of the national association. Some other colleagues on Council will also be stepping down and I look forward to thanking them and recognising their valued contributions in the next issue of the magazine.

Registration forms and program details will have reached you with this magazine. Do take up this invitation to register and enjoy a very rich program of distinguished speakers, parallel sessions, group meetings, and network gatherings. There will again be an innovative Regional and Remote Training Program.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank The Hon. Peter Garrett, Minister for the Arts, and The Hon Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, for their generous assistance this year. It will ensure a greater presence of both Indigenous speakers and Indigenous attendees, and others from Remote and Regional areas. In all, there is a range of stimulating professional speakers and enjoyable social events being prepared for you by the National Conference Committee right now in Newcastle.

I encourage you to register for *Work in Progress*, and look forward to welcoming you there in May.

Patricia Sabine, President

Message from the National Director

In 2008 the National Office organised three linked events (in February, May and September 2008) around the Futures Forum project. The Futures Forum work is ongoing, but has changed somewhat as the external environment has changed. It was clear by August last year that the timing and direction of all government activity was changing sharply as the global economic crisis worsened.

The momentum of the Futures Forum work has meanwhile yielded ideas, collaboration and actions that are ongoing in the work of the national association. These activities encompass all parts of the six-theme framework of the Futures Forum project.

To give just one example, there has been intense work involving Council, the National Office and our colleagues nationally in pursuing a direct interface with government agencies dedicated to the task of producing national education curricular reform. A team involving our experienced museum educators is maintaining presence and influence in the framing of recommendations the government will draw upon, ensuring that museums and their collections are understood as primary learning resources for the education sector.

Further update on how detailed aspects of the Futures Forum work are advancing will be available later. I simply report here that there has been a changed focus on timing of one outcome. The target now is to have the final FF Museums Framework Report ready for handover to the federal Minister (Hon. Peter Garrett) just prior to the National Conference.

We continue to monitor the constantly changing impact of global events on government attention and planning. However the National Office will also ensure that we continue to gather a picture of the value of the museums sector to our nation and its vastly distributed communities, and of the role that museums play in contributing to communities' sense of history and heritage.

This is a year in which natural disasters (inundation of land and communities in Queensland followed by the devastating fires in Victoria) have provided the most tragic focus on the importance of the social and cultural bonds that form our society. We are drawn together at such times into an enveloping consciousness of our precious communities, and of the roles museums play in assisting them to protect and carry forward their history, memory and achievements in the national story of Australia's heritage as a nation.

Bernice Murphy, National Director

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Dinosaurs Gallery, Australian Museum, Sydney 2008

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WORKING SPACES 2 FOR VOLUNTEER MUSEUMS

For a second year in a row Museums Australia Lachlan Chapter (NSW) organised a weekend of workshops for museum volunteers in early November 2008.

Working Spaces 2 was held at St Clement's Conference Centre at Galong, NSW, with one session held on site at the Murrumburrah Museum. The weekend was a great success and many focused and enthusiastic volunteers from over 30 different museums participated enthusiastically in hands-on workshops, guided by the presenters.

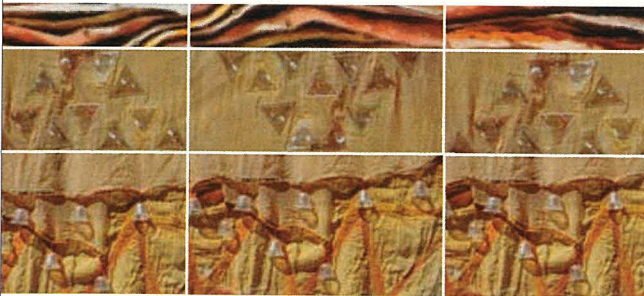
Pip McNaught from the National Museum of Australia worked with co-ordinator Glen Johns to organise presenters for the sessions which included: *Curate a temporary exhibition*, *We've got a disaster plan*, *Winning Volunteers and Friends*, and *Significance, Provenance, Interpretation*. Maisey Stapleton from Museums and Galleries NSW

delivered the keynote address, 'Is there a future for volunteer museums in New South Wales', focusing on the issue of sustainability. 'Sustainability', Maisey said, 'will rely on our relationship to community', and volunteers needed to advocate for their museums and their capacity to contribute to local identity.



St Clement's Conference Centre, Galong, NSW, the venue for Working Spaces 2.

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Pots on display in Murrumburrah Museum, NSW.

Photos: Roslyn Russell

Exhibition

QUEST FOR HANDS-ON LEARNING

A space dilemma for Scienceworks turned into a fantastic opportunity to showcase some of Museum Victoria's collection material in the new exhibition, *Earth Quest: Outer Space to Inner Earth*.

The *Earth Quest* exhibition was developed by Questacon - The National Science and Technology Centre, Canberra, and included 10 modules of more than 30 interactive exhibits. However, as *Earth Quest* only took up around a third of Scienceworks' incoming exhibition area, Scienceworks and Museum Victoria staff sat down for some serious brainstorming.

The result is an expanded exhibition that explores aspects of Earth and its environment such as astronomy, geology, geography environmental science and biology.

One of the highlights of the exhibition is a section on meteorites, featuring Cranbourne Meteorite Number 13, a 4.5 billion-year-old meteorite which was discovered by students from Clyde Primary School in August 2008, and donated to Museum Victoria. This section also features another meteorite, Number 4, which weighs 680 kilos, and several specimens from the mineralogy collection.

Other exhibits added from the Museum Victoria collection are two dinosaur digs, which have proven extremely popular with both children and adults, and a 3D geological floor-map of Victoria.

Because 2009 is the International Year of Astronomy, it was also appropriate to add a section to the exhibition focusing on the stars. It features six banners from an exhibition called *From Earth to the Universe*, with supporting graphic panels. With sustainability concerns front of mind, when *Earth Quest* moves on after April, these banners will be reused at the Melbourne Planetarium.

According to Wendy Duffy, project officer, exhibitions at Scienceworks, a challenge was interweaving items from the Museum Victoria collection, which due to their fragile nature need to be protected, with the other highly interactive, hands-on exhibits from the original *Earth Quest* exhibition.

One of the ways this was achieved was through the *Earth Quest Experiment Zone*, a recently introduced component of the Scienceworks public program, which offers free 40-minute science experiment sessions for school children and others, such as a workshop called 'Earth Investigation', which encourages kids to become 'mineral detectives', and refer to the eight mineralogy specimens in the showcase nearby.

'We trialled the Experiment Zone back in June with another exhibition, and we are keen to get that happening more often, to offer that hands-on science with children being able to come in with a presenter going through the program with them, and letting them experiment. This was a challenge for us but it was a really good opportunity to get that Experiment Zone happening, it was something a bit different, and it's just a great science experience for the public,' Duffy says.

Earth Quest - From Outer Space to Inner Earth is on display at Scienceworks, 2 Booker St, Spotswood, Victoria until April 2009. For more information visit www.museumvictoria.com.au/Scienceworks or call 03 9392 4800.

Freya Purnell is Regional Editor for *Museums Australia Magazine*



Photo: Courtesy of Museum Victoria

Circus at the museum

THE EVOLUTION OF SOMETHING BIG: THE WALKING WHALE CIRCUS

As you walk through the black curtain into the cavernous, high ceilinged space, you feel like you are under the Big Top rather than in Melbourne Museum's Touring Hall. Tiered seating gives the 420 audience members a clear view of the action in the ring below as our MC Walking Whale enters with a flourish, complete with gold top hat and sequined tails. She introduces us to Fish, Lizard and Bird who enact the evolutionary stories of these animals, compacting millions of years into 25 minutes of awe-inspiring circus acts set to contemporary music. Whoever thought natural history could be this much fun?

The Walking Whale Circus is an innovative model of Circus in Education, the fruit of a creative partnership between Melbourne Museum and the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA) now in its third year. The circus is performed three times each day in January as part of the Museum's School Holiday Program. Designed for 3-10 year olds, the performance, directed by Matt Wilson, has been created to complement the Darwin to DNA exhibition at the Museum, and, showcase the talents of second year circus arts students.

The all-singing, all-dancing cast don brightly coloured animal outfits and a foam whale suit to tell the surprising and humorous story of evolution. The Melbourne Museum's Public Programs Officer, Bernard Caleo explains that 'most people don't know that whales were once land creatures, and the circus illustrates their transition into water creatures in an entertaining and informative way'.

During each solo performance from the prehistoric ensemble, we are treated to impressive displays of strength, grace and balance as the performers leap, walk up poles, spin and swing with ease and confidence. Despite being created for children, the Circus cleverly adopts the conventions of cabaret and music theatre, along with their imaginative costumes and evocative set design, to ensure that the adults accompanying their 'little mammals' in the audience are entertained and engaged. I found myself wishing it wasn't over so soon, and humming the catchy tune for the rest of the day.

Director and Founding CEO of NICA Pamela Creed, fondly recalls how much children loved the inaugural show, *Backyard Bug Circus*, featuring dung beetles singing hysterical songs about pushing piles of poo. *The Bee Circus*, a visually stunning and highly successful show that attracted 30,000 visitors over four weeks, followed in 2008. Margaret Griffith, Manager of Public Programs at Melbourne Museum, forged the partnership with NICA in 2006. She is a strong believer in the benefits to the Museum, and the community, of this unique approach. Caleo adds that 'it is a big investment in money and staff time, but meets the Museum's objectives perfectly'. Staff are supportive, providing feedback during development stages and seeing the show when time permits.

Caleo is one of the ten Museum staff involved in developing the show, working alongside the Education team. He says that the 'physicality of circus provides the perfect means by which to tell stories about creatures that swim, leap and fly. Theatrical performance is a way for people to connect emotionally with very complex information.' Tapping

into a ready-made family market, the show turns the scientific principle of evolution into a story that children can see, hear and participate in, explaining how animals change over time.

Kate Priddle is the Producer of the show and Agent of CircaNICA, the entrepreneurial arm of the National Institute of Circus Arts, whose mission it is to create work opportunities for both the students and graduates. She explains that the collaboration between NICA and the Museum is beneficial for the Institute, as each year the show attracts audiences that perhaps wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity of seeing circus performances quickly engage with the imaginative and physical realm.

For the students the opportunity of performing professionally is valuable work experience. Casts of four performers alternate every two days so that they can deliver the show over 30 days while keeping the levels of energy and

excitement amazingly high. The students use humour and their acting skills as well as their superbly executed acrobatic stunts to engage the sometimes-limited attention spans of pre-school and primary school aged children. For practical reasons the only performer with a microphone invisibly tucked away under her padded suit is ringmaster Whale, who between acts captivates the children by getting them to clap, crawl, fly and swim in their seats in order to 'help' the on-stage characters evolve.

Audience numbers attest to the show's enormous popularity and success. The three performances each day are almost always sold out. Audiences are attracted by the colourful signage at the Museum's Carlton entrance and brochures at the Museum Victoria's other campuses (Scienceworks, Melbourne Planetarium, the Immigration Museum) as well as targeted press and television advertising.

Creed feels that 'circus is an effective teaching tool for young children, as they quickly engage with the physical realm. The messages in the show are reinforced by the exhibition in the Museum and vice-versa.' While the Circus is not a touring show, Kate Priddle hopes that the concept can be re-worked for different audiences, including older school children. She is also keen to establish relationships with other cultural organisations, educational institutions and within the corporate sector to find ways for the magic of circus and the physical performing arts to reach different and unexpected new audiences.

To find out more:

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/MelbourneMuseum/>

To contact Kate Priddle; kpriddle@swin.edu.au | 03 9214 6975



Photos: Rodney Start Courtesy of Museum Victoria.

Circus at the museum

Sweat, tears & facepaint

Maria Rizzo ventured backstage to meet the cast. Their responses revealed their passion and commitment to the art form and appreciation of what it will be like to work full time as a Circus performer in, for example, the world famous Cirque Du Soleil that has employed a number of NICA graduates. The members of Cast B I spoke with all agreed that the show is tough, physically and mentally, and gives them the confidence to know they can sustain the high-energy performance expected by the Wiggles demographic. Here are some of their other comments.

It's lots of fun.

I've gained physical and mental stamina.

Pays better than other casual jobs we would be doing over the Uni summer holidays.

Good transitional step between study and full-time work.

When we have a nice crowd, the kids feed off the energy we're putting in and throw it right back at us, and that's a great feeling.

Maria Rizzo is a freelance arts writer and marketer living in Melbourne.



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Tails of the city

PASSION FOR PETS

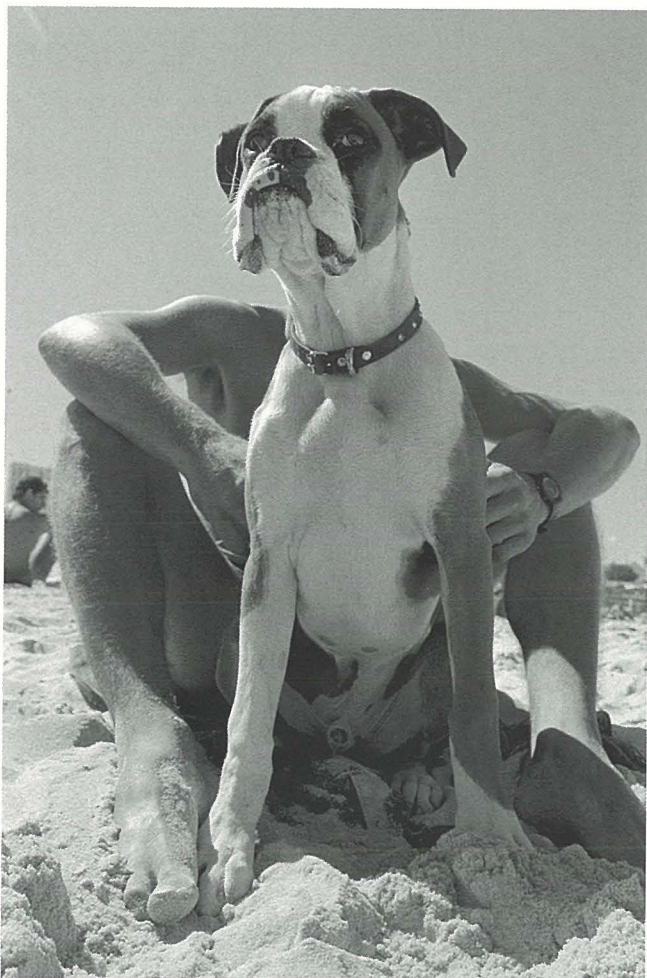
In Australia two out of three households live with an animal companion, so it is perhaps surprising that *Tails of the City*, on show at the Museum of Sydney, is the first major exhibition to explore the bond between pets and owners.

While in New South Wales, there are 800,000 cats, more than a million dogs and even more birds and fish are kept as pets, there are also plenty of unusual pets – such as alpacas, ferrets and pythons.

Curator Geoff Marsh says while *Tails of the City* was originally envisioned as a contemporary exhibition – and a series of 12 bold, colourful contemporary portraits of Sydneysiders and their pets is one of the highlights of the show – ‘the more I started scratching away at the surface, the more I realised that would be a lost opportunity, and there was a far richer story to tell’.

The exhibition explores Australia’s love affair with pets, starting right back with the First Fleet, when Governor Arthur Phillip arrived with his two favourite greyhounds. One of the key elements of the exhibition is a collection of more than 60 historical black and white photographs gathered from private and public collections, taken between the 1880s and last year.

Marsh says the process of finding these photographs was a tricky one, as ‘pets’ as a keywords was not generally attached to items in photographic indexes and databases.



Man Dog, Bondi Beach 1994 Marco Bok©



Jacqueline & Lily the Atherton Tablelands jungle python in her apartment, Redfern.

Photograph by Natalie McComas

‘I had to be more creative about doing searches to find those animals, because very rarely would people write, ‘a family and their pet’. So there was a lot of talking to people who knew those collections well, and some serious digging,’ Marsh says.

When viewed collectively, the photographs also demonstrate how the presence of a beloved pet often imparts a more relaxed and content look to people who may otherwise come across as formal or stiff.

The progression or evolution of Australians’ relationship with pets is best demonstrated in the exhibition by dogs, Marsh says.

‘Dogs are the most visible of our pets, they’re the ones that cause grief and inflame people and get into strife, and they have done ever since they put paw on the shores of Australia. As soon as they got here they were in trouble – with early government orders made about their behaviour, and then the *Dog Act*, a massive tome signed by Governor Darling which we have on display in the show. There are echoes in today’s *Animal Companion Act* 1998 from that 1830s *Dog Act*.’

Even if you think some of today’s pet accoutrements are silly, they are certainly not a new invention – and *Tails of the City* features some of their historical equivalents.

‘We have on display a pair of little leather shoes, made by the early conservationist Myles Dunphy in the 1930s for his dog, to enable the dog to go out bushwalking with him. It was not only to protect his dog’s feet in the bush, but also to stop the dog transporting seeds and other foreign matter into pristine bush. Outside this case, there are modern day equivalents of these very funky sneakers for dogs,’ Marsh says.

Reflecting its broad appeal of the exhibition is a lively program of public events, featuring information sessions for pet owners, a session on the history of cats, an animal cartoon drawing workshop and an after-hours performance by band Dog Trumpet, featuring Peter O’Doherty and Reg Mombassa.

***Tails of the City: Sydney’s Passion for Pets* is at the Museum of Sydney until 22 March 2008. For more information, visit www.hht.net.au or call 02 9251 5988.**

Freya Purnell



Contemporary Touring Initiative

A wide range of Australian collecting institutions and other organisations can apply for funding to develop and tour contemporary Australian visual arts and craft exhibitions.

The program guidelines have recently been broadened and we encourage eligible institutions and organisations to apply for funding.

Closing date: 25 March 2009

for projects commencing on or after 1 August 2009.

The **revised** program guidelines and application form can be obtained from: www.arts.gov.au/visions
 Email: visions.australia@environment.gov.au
 Phone: 02 6275 9519

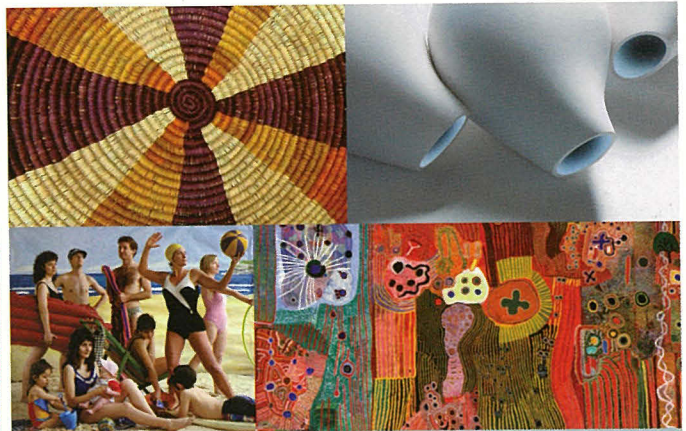
The Contemporary Touring Initiative aims to:

- encourage wider audience access to contemporary Australian visual arts and craft;
- promote contemporary Australian visual arts and craft through quality publications, education and public programs and fora held as part of the touring exhibition; and
- encourage curatorial partnerships and collaboration between funded organisations and collecting institutions.



Australian Government
Visual Arts and Craft Strategy
Visions of Australia
Contemporary Touring Initiative

The Contemporary Touring Initiative is managed by the Australian Government's Visions of Australia Program.



Visions of Australia

A national touring exhibitions program making high quality cultural exhibitions accessible to more Australians.

Closing dates for funding applications:

1 April 2009

for projects commencing on or after 1 September 2009

1 September 2009

for projects commencing on or after 1 February 2010.

Program guidelines and applications forms can be obtained from www.arts.gov.au/visions
 Email: visions.australia@environment.gov.au
 Phone: 02 6275 9517

Funding is available to assist eligible organisations to develop and tour exhibitions of Australian Cultural Material across Australia.

'Australian Cultural Material' is material relevant to Australian culture due to its historical, scientific, artistic or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander significance which:

- has a predominantly Australian theme; or
- is by / features predominantly Australian artists; or
- is from a collection held by an Australian organisation.



Australian Government
Visions of Australia

The Visions of Australia program is administered by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

Acknowledgements (clockwise from top left):
 Maringka Baker *Anmangunga 2006* Synthetic polymer paint on canvas 136.5 x 202.5 cm. Courtesy of Art Gallery of South Australia. Featured in Culture Warriors: National Indigenous Art Triennial developed and toured by the National Gallery of Australia. © Maringka Baker | Mavis Ganambarr *Basket 2006* (detail) Pandanus fibre, natural dyes, fibre string 48 x 38.2 cm (diameter). Photo: Peter Eve | Belinda Winkler *Swell* Slipcast ceramic vessels, dimensions variable. Photo: Phil Kuruvita | The Ngurrara Canvas painted by Ngurrara artists and claimants coordinated by Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency, May 1997, 10 x 8 m | Anne Zahalka *The Bathers 1989* type C photograph 74 x 90 cm

www.arts.gov.au/visions

Exhibition

CANNING STOCK ROUTE PROJECT

'That Canning Stock Route, they been only put 'em lately... I say only yesterday. Before this, blackfella country. Soakwater, jila, jumu, rockhole. Now it's Canning Stock Route, for anybody to use. Before, it was these two men: Dreamtime story.' *Mangkaja artist Ngarralja Tommy May*

The Canning Stock Route cuts a swathe across nearly 2000 kilometres of the Gibson, Great Sandy and Little Sandy deserts in Western Australia. This century-old landmark, constructed 'only yesterday' in Aboriginal terms, dramatically transformed the lives of many people, bringing about the complex meeting of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous cultures in the Western Desert and acting as a vector for the movement of family groups across vast distances into new areas.

The Stock Route has influenced the personal histories and creative journeys of some of Australia's most senior and respected artists. Rover Thomas, Eubena Nampitjin, Jan Billycan, Helicopter Tjungurrayi, Spider Snell and Patrick Olodoodi Tjungurrayi all grew up in the country around Canning's cattle-droving highway; a country inscribed with a pre-existing history, densely layered and meaningful, of Jukurrpa and creation. The experience of this shared history and collective knowledge about culture and country is the inspiration behind the Canning Stock Route Project.

'I grew up at Kinyu (Well 35, ancestral dingo site). Kinyu is the one that grew me up.' *Warlayirti artist, Eubena Nampitjin*

Based on a groundbreaking alliance between nine remote art centres and communities, and brokered by Perth-based cultural organisation FORM, the Project brings together senior and emerging artists and custodians for land in a contemporary celebration of culture, art, and history, little known to most Australians. A pioneering, multi-faceted contemporary arts and cultural initiative, the Project maps the richness and complexity of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous experiences from first contact on the Stock Route to the present, seen from the perspective of Aboriginal artists and their countrymen.

'The white man history has been told and it's today in the book. But our history is not there properly. That's one way to tell 'em. We've got to tell 'em through our paintings. They might see it through there.'

Tjukurba Gallery artist Clifford Brooks

Described by the National Museum of Australia as 'a national treasure', the Canning Stock Route Project Collection is an extraordinary body of work, which includes paintings, contemporary cultural objects and ceremonial material. Many of these works were produced by the 60 or so artists who travelled along the Canning Stock Route on a six-week return to country trip in July and August of 2007; additional works have been produced over the last 14 months in a series of community workshops held across the region in partnership with art centres. Around 80 of these collective works, supported by multimedia, oral history, genealogical, cultural and historical material, will be curated into a world-class exhibition. The show will be launched at the National Museum of Australia (NMA) in 2010, and will tour to Australia's major cultural institutions. At its culmination, the Project's massive archive of source material will be returned to the communities, while the exhibition Collection itself passes into the safekeeping of its new owner, the National Museum of Australia.

The Canning Stock Route Project is as much about forging pathways of economic empowerment and enterprise as it is about artistic

outcomes. A central aim of the Project is to create ongoing leadership and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people through avenues that are adaptive, responsive and culturally appropriate. The Project is pioneering two professional development programs, which are incubating leadership and offering atypical career opportunities for six young Indigenous people from remote area communities. Veering away from the more conventional trades and services training options, these programs – one for emerging curators, one for emerging multimedia practitioners – offer skills that will generate increased capacity-building in businesses which already return impressive economic, cultural and social benefits to communities.

Three curators and three filmmakers/photographers are being mentored on the Project. In developing and documenting a major touring exhibition, they are gaining skills that will become increasingly valuable to remote area art enterprises; including the ability to plan and design exhibitions, produce public program material and communicate ideas in multiple formats to diverse audiences.

'As the Project's Emerging Curator I'm one of three young professionals learning about the Aboriginal arts industry. I get to help tell the story of the Canning Stock Route, which tells the history from an Aboriginal worldview... My role is to help tell the stories of Alfred Canning back in 1907 but more importantly enable audiences to our exhibition learn about who all these artists are today.'

Emerging curator Louise Mengil



Louise and fellow mentorees Hayley Atkins and Murungkurr Terry Murray bring a rich cultural perspective and experience to the exhibition's development. All three are familiar with the concept of mentoring; they have been guided in their upbringings and in Law by family members and cultural elders from their own communities.

Murungkurr's father Peter Skipper and grandfather Jimmy Pike were both artists and leaders who greatly inspired him, not only as painters but in the way they lived their lives:

'I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for them. It's the song-lines and dance movement of family that is really important. That we are connected, and how we, as a culture, come together, and how we respect each other in our different ways.'

Emerging curator Murungkurr Terry Murray

Each of the curators is aware that sharing stories and culture is critical to the wellbeing of future generations; and that in time they may themselves become mentors to others.

'In my work, I try to always think about passing on the knowledge to the next generation of family. I've got three kids. Putting my footsteps

Exhibition



in my grandfathers', I think about how they lived: being strong, connected to their land.'

Emerging curator Murungkurr Terry Murray

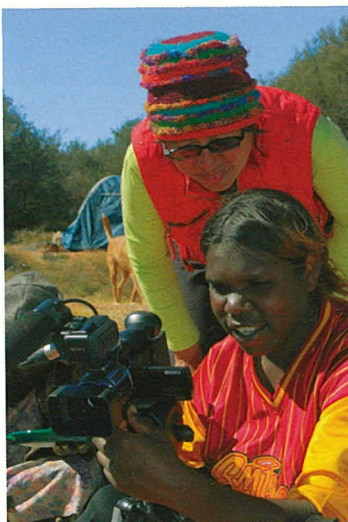
The emerging curators are brought together for week-long, structured sessions to work on exhibition development. During these intensive meetings they interact closely with the extended Project team to research and select the works, define its thematic and structural context, and develop an in-depth understanding of what goes into making a show of this scale and complexity.

For Hayley Atkins, the project has crystallised a desire to share her knowledge with the communities of her country, for the benefit of all:

'I'm working at this job to be a role model here for the young mob in Newman. Young people here are getting lost. Aboriginal people like to be shown by Aboriginal people. Not many people know about art and history...I want to work with all six communities - so they know about the Canning Stock Route. So they know where their families come from, where their grandfathers and grandmothers come from. Keep our history and Martu culture strong.'

Emerging curator Hayley Atkins

The emerging curators and filmmakers are quick to acknowledge a two-way relationship. They see the Project's mentorship program as one which broadens their knowledge and skills base, and offers them a practical application both in their careers and within their home communities.



'My work is fun: I learn loads of different stuff and take pictures of the old people. Always learning, watching them paint.'

Emerging filmmaker and photographer, Morika Biljabu

For emerging multimedia practitioner Clint Dixon, the Project has opened his eyes to seeing 'there's a whole new world out there waiting for each and every one of us to experience. At the end of all I have achieved I would like to pass my knowledge

to younger Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who would like to be a part of the media world.'

Already, some of these young Indigenous professionals are beginning to experience the success of opportunities arising out of the Canning Stock Route Project. Emerging filmmaker and photographer Morika Biljabu has been nominated for the 2009 International Pictet Photography Award; and in Canberra on a recent professional development session, the emerging curators and multimedia practitioners met with Federal Arts Minister, Peter Garrett.

Since 2006, the Canning Stock Route Project and its six talented young emerging professionals have charted an ambitious trajectory. The Project articulates an important moment in the contemporary art history of this region, which is expressed in the powerful interaction between the last of the bush-born people and emerging generations.

About the emerging professionals:

Hayley Atkins works for Martumili Artists, which represents six communities in the Pilbara and Western Desert, and is a painter in her own right. Louise Mengil, a 24 year-old mother of two, works at Waringarri Aboriginal Art Centre in Kununurra, and is studying for a degree in accountancy. Murungkurr Terry Murray is an Executive member of the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture and Karrayili Adult Education Centres, and was previously associated with Mangkaja Arts in Fitzroy Crossing; he is himself an artist.

Clint Dixon is a Trainee Director at Goolarri Media Enterprises in Broome; his film *Mudman* was recently screened as part of the Beijing Olympics. Morika Biljabu is employed by Martumili Artists, and is based in Punmu Community; a collection of her images was recently published in the Weekend Australian Magazine. Kenneth 'KJ' Martin is an Audio Visual Project Officer at the Kimberley Language Resource Centre in Halls Creek; he has been creating his own film projects since the birth of his first child, and has his own show on Halls Creek local radio.

The participating art centres and communities of the Canning Stock Route Project are:

- Papunya Tula Artists, Kiwirrkurra
- Warlayirti Artists, Balgo
- Yulparija Artists, Bidyadanga
- Mangkaja Arts, Fitzroy Crossing
- Martumili Artists, Newman/Parngurr/Punmu/Jigalong
- Tjukurba Gallery, Wiluna
- Ngurra Artists, Wangkajunga
- Kayili Artists, Patjarr
- Paruku IPA, Mulan

FORM is deeply grateful to the Project's principal partners, BHP Billiton Iron Ore, Lotterywest and the Indigenous Land Corporation, and also to the National Museum of Australia for its support

Mags Webster and Monique La Fontaine



PHOTOS: TIM ACKER

Rosalie Gascoigne

ROSALIE GASCOIGNE: A RETROSPECTIVE

'For me, the bottom line in art is history. It depends on how much you have inside yourself, as to how much you can put into a work of art... I'm showing what I believe to be interesting and beautiful.'

Rosalie Gascoigne, *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 1997

The National Gallery of Victoria is presenting a major retrospective of the work of one of Australia's most accomplished contemporary artists, Rosalie Gascoigne (1917-1999).

This exhibition is the first major survey of Gascoigne's work to be seen in Melbourne.

Rosalie Gascoigne presents over 80 works ranging from the box-like assemblages of her early career such as *The Colonel's lady* through to the large-scale installations and works constructed from retro-reflective road signs including *Checkerboard* and *Sweet Sorrow*, providing a comprehensive view of what the show's curator, Kelly Gellatly, describes as an 'extraordinarily productive yet relatively brief career'.

Rosalie Gascoigne was born in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1917. She immigrated to Australia in 1943 where she married astronomer Ben Gascoigne. While she did not undertake any formal art training,

Gascoigne studied ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arranging, when Sydney-based master Norman Sparnon began to teach a class in Canberra in 1962. She excelled in her ikebana studies, and later credited it with teaching her about line and form, which was to become central to her development as an artist.

Gascoigne's collecting also began during the time of her interest in ikebana. She started gathering farm machinery components around Mount Stromlo, where she lived with her family between 1943 and 1960, that she initially used in ikebana arrangements. From 1968, she began to create small sculptural works, and from 1972, shifted her attention from rusted iron and welded constructions to other materials, such as weathered wood and cattle bones, found on trips to the country.

Kelly Gellatly, curator, contemporary art, NGV, says Rosalie Gascoigne had an amazing ability to find beauty in ordinary things such as soft drink crates and retro-reflective signage.

'This major exhibition highlights Gascoigne's endless capacity for invention and her almost magical ability to create beautiful and singularly poetic works from humble, discarded materials. It also investigates the artist's ability to draw creative inspiration from the everyday; her intrinsic response to both her chosen materials and the Australian landscape, and her unique ability to evocatively capture and convey the essence of nature and its transitory effects', Gellatly says.

'Each work is a reflection of Gascoigne's innate knowledge of the country in which she travelled and fossicked over a period of some 50 years.'

Public recognition as an artist came to Rosalie Gascoigne relatively late in life, when she first exhibited her work in 1974, at the age of

57, in a solo exhibition at the Macquarie Galleries in Canberra.

In an article published in the NGV *Gallery* magazine, 'Rosalie Gascoigne: Poetry in the everyday', Gellatly wrote, 'The quirky transformation of found materials in the artist's work that greeted visitors to this first exhibition had few, if any, parallels in contemporary Australian art at this time.'

She went on to quickly establish a reputation as one of Australia's foremost contemporary artists, exhibiting extensively both in Australia and overseas.

'Gascoigne's box constructions played a significant role in her creative output of the late 1970s and early 1980s, but at the same time she was also creating sculptural

pieces that extended beyond the formal constraints of the box; works that similarly capitalised on her collecting activities by using masses of material to reference the Australian landscape in an increasingly open-ended and evocative manner,' Gellatly wrote.

In 1982, Gascoigne became the first female artist to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale. She exhibited numerous times at the Sydney Biennale and in 1994 was honoured with an Order of Australia for her services to the arts.

Gascoigne continued her work right up until her death in October 1999, that year completing major works from her remaining stockpile of Schweppes soft-drink crates, *Blond paddocks*, retro-reflective road signs, *Metropolis*, and form board, *Earth*.

Frances Lindsay, deputy director, NGV, says this important retrospective is a tribute to an exceptional artist.



Rosalie Gascoigne

'Rosalie Gascoigne captured the poetry of the Australian landscape like no other artist of her time. We are thrilled to be holding the first Melbourne retrospective of her work,' says Lindsay.

The public program events developed for *Rosalie Gascoigne* include a selection of films, talks and an evening Art Chat on 5 March, featuring Gellatly, art historian Mary Eagle, and Martin Gascoigne, Rosalie Gascoigne's son, in conversation about the artist's life and art.

Rosalie Gascoigne is on display at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia until 15 March 2009. For further information visit www.ngv.vic.gov.au.

Rosalie Gascoigne
Born New Zealand 1917
Arrived Australia 1943
Died 1999



ABOVE: Rosalie Gascoigne
born New Zealand 1917, arrived Australia 1943, died 1999
The Colonel's lady 1976
wood, metal, collage, found objects
39.1 x 59.7 x 8.8 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased, 1976 (76.583)
© Rosalie Gascoigne Estate administered by VISCOPY, Australia

LEFT: Rosalie Gascoigne
born New Zealand 1917, arrived Australia 1943, died 1999
Pub 1974
weathered wood, wool, hand-coloured gelatin silver photograph,
enamelled metal, wallpaper, iron
54.5 x 50.0 x 15.0 cm
Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston
Purchased, 1976 (2001:FS:29)
© Rosalie Gascoigne Estate administered by VISCOPY, Australia

RIGHT: Rosalie Gascoigne
born New Zealand 1917, arrived Australia 1943, died 1999
Checkerboard 1990
reflective synthetic polymer film on wood
123.0 x 102.0 cm
Private collection, Canberra
© Rosalie Gascoigne Estate administered by VISCOPY, Australia



Textile museum

BHUTAN TEXTILE MUSEUM

Textiles set the small country of Bhutan apart from the rest of the world. The Bhutanese have developed a unique weaving style and a discernible eye for colour. While the Tibetans wove carpets, Bhutanese chose clothing as a way of expressing themselves.

Textiles play an important role in the history and culture of Bhutan and the Bhutanese consider textiles their highest form of artistic expression.

In June 2001, the Textile Museum was opened in Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. At the opening, Her Majesty the Queen, Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck honoured all Bhutanese weavers and textile artists who, over the centuries, have kept alive such an important part of the cultural heritage.

The Director of the Museum, Singye Dorji, said:

The Textile Museum is committed to furthering the understanding of Bhutan's achievements in the textile arts.

As a museum it is the national centre to collect, document, preserve and display Bhutan's textile heritage. It is dedicated to fostering and promoting the living textile arts through the specific focus on historic and contemporary textile traditions.

The Museum is guided by international standards of collection, conservation, documentation, display and programming and will operate according to the standards of excellence established by the Department of Culture and its selected committee, chaired by Her Majesty the Queen, who is also the Patron.

The Museum began without a collection. The Royal Family lent and donated many pieces worn by members of the Wangchuck dynasty. In addition, the Director and the Museum's Patron put out the call for people to donate textiles from their homes and were inundated.

The Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts assisted with technical support and advice. Since 2003 the Friends of Bhutan's Culture (Washington, USA) has assisted with study grants for staff, conservation and storage, sponsorship and securing important textile pieces to add to the collection.

The Museum is a two-storey timber building. When we visited, an exhibition titled *Power Dressing: celebrating 100 years of Monarchy* was on display. On the ground floor, costumes of guardian deities in their most ferocious forms depicted their spiritual powers. *Chhams* (dances) are usually performed during *tshechus* (festivals) and were composed mainly to convey religious messages to the people. During the mask dances, the dancers invoke and represent the

deities of the tantric teaching and through their power and blessings, misfortunes are removed.

The costumes were displayed on soft mannequins which were posed and which conveyed the powers of the dancers. Large photographs showed them in action.

Upstairs, The Royal Collection was on display, paying tribute to the monarchs past and present.

Bhutanese royalty commissioned many of the finest textiles and patronised many crafts. Woven with the finest materials and using the highest technical skills, the collection represents some of the finest weaves, embroidery and appliqué in Bhutan's textile history.

This special exhibition commemorated the centennial celebrations of the Monarchy and was on show when the fourth king was crowned in November 2008. It showcased many Bhutanese religious and historically significant textiles.

Traditionally, textiles were a clue to a person's status and wealth. The more *ghos* or *kiras* (men's and women's garments) one owned the greater one's status. Cloth circulated throughout society like currency and taxes could be paid with textiles. Gifts to the king were always in the form of textiles and, in repayment for loyal services, the king would also give highly valued heirloom pieces to his servants. It was customary to make a gift of textile pieces to the presiding lama at the death of a family member. Cloth was a medium that linked villagers to church and state. The fabrics used as taxes, and given as gifts, were those used in daily life.

The Textile Museum has assisted Bhutanese to renew their pride in their culture and recognise the importance of textiles and to acknowledge the role women play in the textile arts.

Meredith Hinchliffe is an arts writer in Canberra.



Dzhong in Bhutan dressed for the coronation.

Photo courtesy of Robert Fletcher, Active Travel

Out and about

BABYLON: MYTH AND REALITY AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The story of the Tower of Babel, the origins of the phrase, 'the writing on the wall', artistic representations and allegorical understandings of 'Babylon' across historical periods, races and religions, along with the results of archaeological excavation of the ancient city and modern scholarship, are all explored in this comprehensive exhibition, on show at the British Museum until 15 March 2009.

The principal historical focus is on the period of the life of one of Babylon's greatest kings, Nebuchadnezzar (605-562BC). The exhibition brings together exquisite glazed brick panels from the city's monumental Ishtar Gate and clay cuneiform tablets, including one that describes the dimensions of the ziggurat (step pyramid) that was the inspiration for the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel. Ancient Babylon gave the world the 60-part division of the minute and the hour, astronomy and astrology, and concepts in mathematics still used today.

The importance of Babylon - the physical place and its place in the world's imagination - is also explored through works of art. Some depict such dramatic myths as the fall of the Tower of Babel described in Genesis, as men tried to build a tower to Heaven, only to be struck by a 'confusion of tongues', as an enraged Deity endowed them all with different languages. The commonly heard phrase, 'the writing on the wall', also comes from Babylon. Several works of art in the exhibition depict the moment described in the Old Testament Book of Daniel when King Belshazzar, feasting with his court, sees words appear in flames on the wall predicting his imminent downfall to the Persian King Cyrus, who was even then in the process of invading the city.

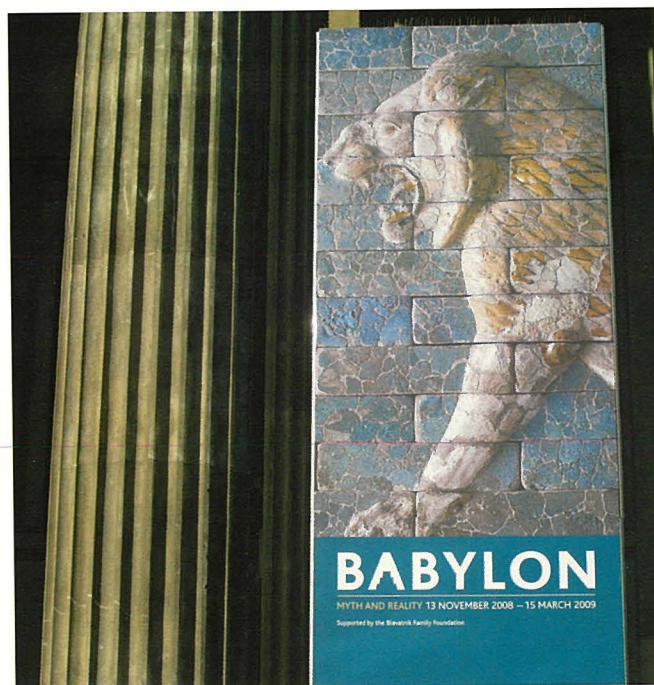
The final section of the exhibition brings the viewer sharply into recent history, in a discussion of Saddam Hussein's propagandist uses of the city's history and imagery; and concludes with revelations of damage caused to the site of the ancient city during the United States occupation of Iraq in 2003, when an air base was built close by.

Babylon: Myth and Reality combines objects from the British Museum's collection with loans from Paris and Berlin. It follows related exhibitions in those cities organised by the Réunion des musées nationaux and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.



Lucas van Valkenborch *The Tower of Babel* 1595

© Mittelrhein-Museum Koblenz.



Banner for *Babylon: Myth and Reality* outside the British Museum.

Photo: Roslyn Russell



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Review

Jen Cruse, *The Comb: Its History and Development*, Robert Hale, London, 2007
 ISBN 978-0-7090-8137-1. Available from DLS Australia (Tel: 03 9587 5044, Fax: 03 9587 5088, email: shaun@dlsbooks.com)


How often are museum curators confronted with an object about which there is insufficient information to make a firm judgment? Maybe an item has been offered as a donation, and a curator has to assess its significance and its appropriateness to the collection? Or maybe the item is in the collection already, but more information is needed to describe and interpret it accurately? Many curators over the years have looked for definitive guides to specific object types to allow them to locate items such as these within a broader context, and to give them the information they need to begin to make decisions about them.

Jen Cruse's lavish book, *The Comb: Its History and Development*, provides such a definitive guide to one object type - what at first glance might appear to be a humble and utilitarian but essential aid to grooming, the comb. Cruse's book, with its many photographs of a dazzling array of comb types - from simple forms to complex and highly crafted designs - will make its readers think again about this everyday item that nestles in their handbags and pockets, and rests on wash basins and dressing tables. Claimed as 'the first major study in the English language to deal with the subject of combs and hairpins

from around the world', *The Comb* examines its subject across nine chapters: History; Combs and Pins for Grooming and Dressing; Combs from Other Cultures; Combs for Special Purposes; Combs in Unusual Places; The Craft of Combmaking; The Business of Combs; Materials; and Aids for the Collector.

The need to disentangle, smooth and adorn the hair has existed across time and cultures. Cruse speculates that the earliest version of a comb may have been a shell, the Venus Comb Murex (*Murex Pecten*), used to groom the hair of prehistoric people; and that the comb 'may well be the oldest form of personal accessory'. (14) While the National Museum in Aleppo, Syria, holds a comb of animal bone said to date from c.8000 BC, Cruse believes that we are on more firmly documented ground with combs from pre-dynastic Egypt, where burial sites dating from 4000-3500 BC hold not only bone and ivory hair combs but ivory hairpins as well. (15)

Combs have also been worn and used in a variety of ways across cultures. Most readers will be familiar with the elaborate comb used with a Spanish mantilla; less familiar are some of the elaborately crafted combs used in non-European cultures. Cruse's book is particularly strong in its coverage of comb manufacture and use in Native North American cultures, including Inuit; in South and Central America; in Africa and the Middle East; India and Sri Lanka; South-East Asia; China, Mongolia, Korea and Japan; and Oceania. Museums with mixed



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Review



Jamaican tortoiseshell case comb, produced at Port Royal between 1671 and 1692, from the back cover of *The Comb: Its History and Development*.

collections of items assembled as a result of colonial-era trade and administration or missionary activity could find the answers to some questions about combs in their collections in this book.

Cruse also deals with the manufacture of combs: the craftsmen who made (and make) them, and their workshops; geographical locations where the combmaking trade has been carried on; the tools and machines used; the marketing of combs, trademarks, hallmarks and

logos of the famous comb makers; and the associations of combmaking craftsmen, the guilds of combmakers in medieval England and Europe. Materials from which combs have been and are made include wood, bone and antler, hoof and other derivatives, horn, baleen, ivory, tortoiseshell, and metal and plastics, including celluloid.

Decoration, both simple and highly elaborated, has been applied to combs, using a wide range of often precious materials: amber, cameos, coral, garnet, gold, jade, jet and substitute jet, mother-of-pearl, paste stones, pearls and pinchbeck (substitute gold), rolled gold, spun glass, turquoise, Vauxhall glass and vulcanite. Highly skilled techniques have also been used to create this decoration: cut-steel, Damascene and Toledo work, filigree, and piqué (embellishing a surface with inlaid gold, silver or mother-of-pearl to create geometric patterns).

Such materials and techniques have created a multitude of objects of great beauty as well as utility. *The Comb*, as well as containing information on every possible aspect of its subject, is also a visual delight, showcasing breathtakingly beautiful miniature works of art in comb form.

Less glamorous but no less necessary uses of the comb are not omitted. There is a section on combs for use on domestic animals, and an entry on a comb that parents of school-aged children may have had to use at various times - the nit or fine-toothed comb. Infants' and dolls' combs are also included, and there is a section on Combs for Special Purposes: liturgical combs, military and seamen's combs, and combs as love tokens.

Reading *The Comb* can spark a train of thought about other object types that could benefit from this level of intensive analysis and explanation within the covers of one book. Jen Cruse has given to those who collect and preserve material culture a fine compendium of information and imagery about one object type that will be useful for curators of costume, decorative arts and social history for years to come.

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

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.

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News from the national capital

DEGAS BRINGS SOME 'OOH-LA-LA' TO THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

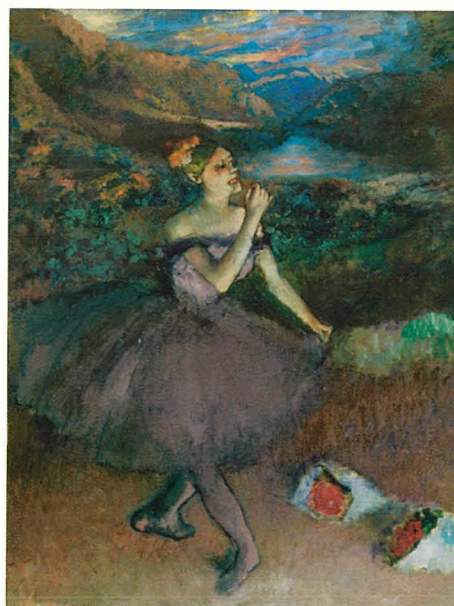
Canberrans and visitors to the nation's capital have until 22 March to savour the art of French artist Edgar Degas (1834-1917), in Australia's first ever exhibition of his works, *Degas: master of French art*, at the National Gallery of Australia.

The National Gallery has developed this major exhibition of Degas' works, the culmination of over three years' work by Jane Kinsman, one of the Gallery's senior curators of international art. There are more than 120 paintings, drawings, sculptures, prints, monotypes and photographs from 45 collections around the world, including eight works on paper by Degas from the NGA's own collection.

An innovator in his depiction of scenes of Parisian life, Degas had his favourite subjects: his iconic works relate to the ballet and the racetrack. He also takes viewers behind the scenes at the opera and café-concerts, into brothels, and makes them the observers of the everyday tasks of life, such as women bathing and laundresses at work.

'Degas was one of the great artists of "modern life". He became increasingly innovative in his composition and execution. The exhibition is an exploration of Degas' world as much as it is a display of his talent. His diverse subjects will appeal to a broad audience,' Kinsman said.

The exhibition is accompanied by a lively public programs series that has already seen some unusual 'takes' on the work of this revered artist.



Edgar Degas,
France 1834-1917

Dancer with bouquets
(*Danseuse aux bouquets*)

c. 1895-1900

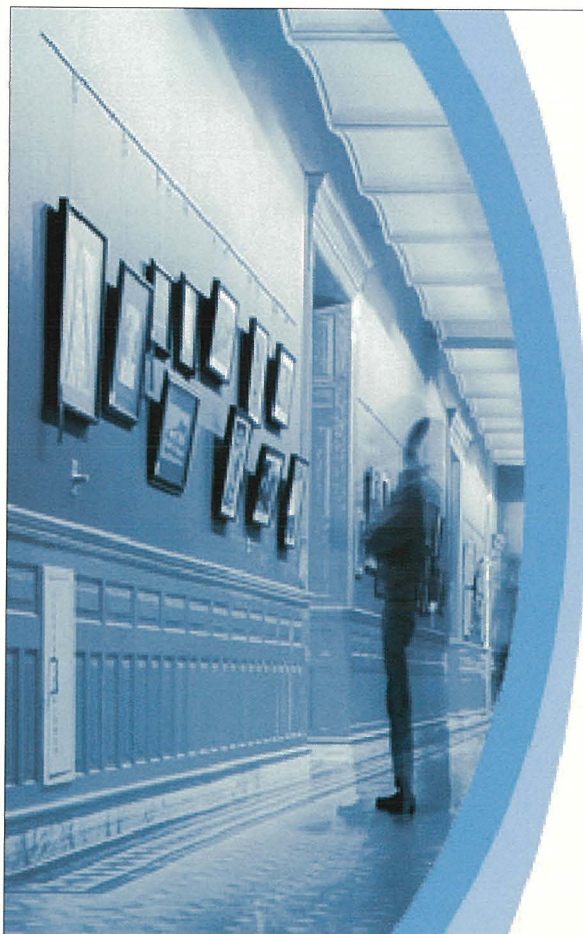
oil on canvas,
180.0x151.0 cm

Chrysler Museum of Art,
Norfolk

Gift of Walter P Chrysler Jr
in memory of Della Viola
Forker Chrysler

Satirist H. G. Nelson, for example, entertained a large crowd on a hot February Saturday with his analysis of Degas' art from the perspective of the artist's dedicated attention to the posteriors of people and horses. And the best selling item in the special shop that accompanies the exhibition is, it is reported, frilly French knickers. This exhibition has indeed brought a little 'ooh-la-la' to Canberra.

Tickets can be purchased online at nga.gov.au/degas or ticketek.com.au



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News from the national capital

AUSTRALIAN JOURNEYS - NEW PERMANENT GALLERY OPENS AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

Australian Journeys, the National Museum of Australia's first new permanent gallery since 2001, was opened officially by The Hon. Peter Garrett, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, on 29 January. The gallery explores Australia's interconnections with the world, beginning in the period before European settlement in Australia and continuing through to the 21st century.

It features 42 separate exhibits, including a 19th century merino wool dress from the *Springfield* collection, a musical instrument called a dan tre made by a Vietnamese prisoner of war, Rolf Harris's wobbleboard, convict tokens, and Staffordshire figurines depicting Captain Cook and 19th century Irish political agitator William Smith O'Brien, who was imprisoned at Port Arthur, Tasmania.

The gallery displays more than 750 objects, and a rich array of words and images, multimedia, and sensory experiences.

The revolving *Circa* theatre has also been refurbished. Visitors can take their own journeys through history from deep time to contemporary Australia. *Circa* features many of the objects on show in *Australian Journeys* and the Museum's other galleries.

Major Thomas Rutledge, a New South Wales grazier who served in World War I with Australia's 7th Light Horse infantry, wore these boots while on active service. They are now on display, along with his wartime swag, in the *Australian Journeys* gallery.



This merino wool dress, dating from around 1885, is a highlight of the National Museum's collection of historic costumes from the *Springfield* property near Goulburn, New South Wales. For visitors to *Australian Journeys*, it illustrates the way in which fine merino wool from Australian properties such as *Springfield* made its way to the mills of northern England to be manufactured into high quality cloth, then shipped back to Australia as fashionable garments. This dress bears the label, 'David Jones Sydney and London'.

Photos: George Serras, National Museum of Australia

... And the National Portrait Gallery reopens in the Parliamentary triangle

The National Portrait Gallery (NPG) reopened in new purpose-built premises in December, the most significant building to be constructed in the Parliamentary triangle for two decades.

The elegant building, designed by architect Richard Johnson of the Sydney firm Johnson Pilton Walker, contains space for over 450 portraits in airy galleries lit by natural light. The foyer spaces make creative use of Australian timbers to produce a warm and welcoming ambience for visitors.

The NPG began life in its new home with two exhibitions, *Open Air: Portraits in the Landscape*, curated by its Director, Andrew Sayers, with Dr Sarah Engeldow and Wally Caruana; and *My Favourite Australian*, a collaborative project with the ABC, with assistance from the Australia Council for the Arts and the Nelson Meers Foundation.

Specially commissioned works are also on display here for the first time, including David Rosetsky's multimedia portrait of Cate Blanchett; a video portrait of former professional surfer Layne Beachley by Petrina Hicks; and Deborah Paauwe's portrait of Sass and Bide. Sportspeople are also featured: cyclists Cadell Evans and Stuart O'Grady by Matthys Gerber; and Scott Redford's new portrait of motorcyclist Casey Stoner. And of course the NPG's favourites are all back on display as well.





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