museumsaustralia

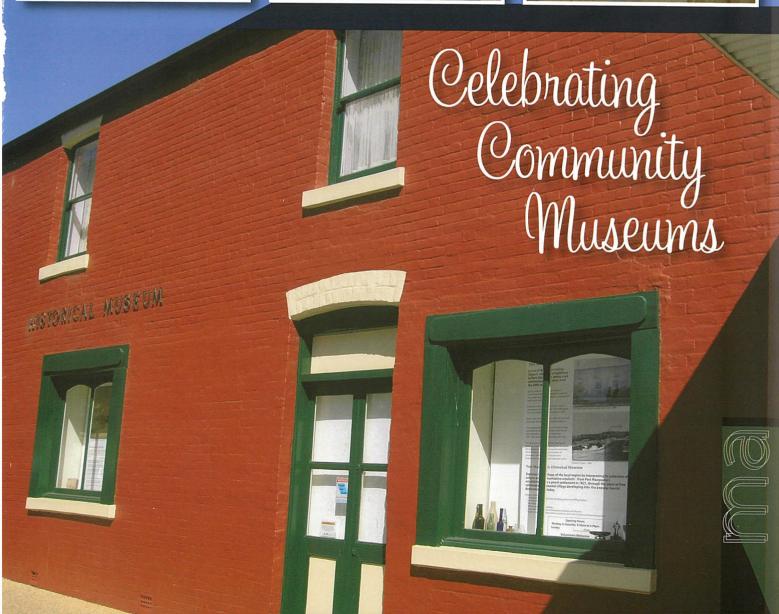
AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES ISSUES . NEWS . VIEWS

MAY 2009









designcraft

A leading Australian exhibition fitout company and manufacturers of quality exhibition furniture

Our clientele includes some of Australia's most prestigious art galleries, archives, libraries, museums and public buildings

THE MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY PROFESSIONALS







The complete exhibition fitout for the Australian War Memorial exhibition 'Conflicts 1945 to Today'.

Distributors in Australia and New Zealand for:

Nether ield

· Netherfield Museum and Gallery Showcase Systems



• Panelock Gallery Display Wall Systems



· UV, Temp, RH and Shock Data and Radio Logging

Contact us to discuss your requirements: Designcraft Furniture Pty Ltd 8 Tralee Street Hume ACT 2620

T 02 6290 4900 F 02 6260 2979

E phillip.quartly@designcraft.net.au

www.designcraft.net.au

museumsaustralia MAGAZINE

May 2009

Museums Australia Magazine PO Box 266, Civic Square **ACT 2608**



Editorial: (02) 6273 2437 Advertising: (02) 6273 2437 Subscriptions: (02) 6273 2437 Fax: (02) 6273 2451 editor@museumsaustralia.org.au

www.museumsaustralia.org.au Roslyn Russel Design: Big Island Graphics Blue Star Print

Museums Australia Magazine is published quarterly and on-line on the website of Museums Australia, and is a major link with members of

Museums Australia Magazine is a forum for news,

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

Museums Australia Magazine reserves the right to edit, abridge, alter or reject any material.

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the publisher or editor.

Formerly Museum National.

Publication of an advertisement does not imply endorsement by Museums Australia, its affiliates or employees

Print Post Publication No: ISSN 1038-1694

© Museums Australia and individual authors

No part of this magazine may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher.

CONTENTS

NEWS	3
PRESIDENT'S FAREWELL	4
FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR	5
BLUE SHIELD AUSTRALIA	6
SIGNIFICANCE 2.0	7
CULTURE & CONTINUITY	8
IT'S NOT ALL BLACK AND WHITE	10
JANE AUSTEN-ERA FASHION AT NGV	12
OUT AND ABOUT: VENICE BIENNALE	13
BOTANICAL ART	14
BOOK NEWS: CONSERVATION	16
REVIEW	17
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ASTRONOMY	18

COVER PHOTOGRAPH:

Cover photographs: Main image: Port Macquarie Historical Museum. Top, left to right: bottles from former pharmacy, Murrumburrah Museum, NSW; whaling trypot, Port Macquarie Historical Museum, NSW; shires signs, Murrumburrah Museum,

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

News

ABC RADIO NATIONAL REGIONAL MUSEUMS AWARDS TO FOCUS ON VOLUNTEER-RUN MUSEUMS

ABC Radio National, with support and advice from Museums Australia, is again presenting the Regional Museums Award for the second year running. This year the focus is on volunteer-run museums, to honour 'the extraordinary work of the volunteers' who help to preserve the history of our community and nation by giving their time to help their local museum. From International Museums Day, 18 May 2009, ABC Radio National will celebrate museums with a week of themed programming and the announcement of the winner of the 2009 Regional Museums Award.



HAWKESBURY REGIONAL MUSEUM IN RUNNING FOR CULTURAL AWARD

Prue Charlton of Hawkesbury Regional Museum writes:

'Our museum has been nominated for a Local Government Cultural Award (Cultural Infrastructure). Winning an award would not only be good for morale, it would be very helpful in promoting the museum and in securing financial and in-kind support. There's nothing quite like that 'award-winning...' tag!'

COMMUNITY HERITAGE GRANTS

The National Library is calling for applications for the 2009 Community Heritage Grants. Grants of up to \$15,000 are available to community groups around the country to help preserve and manage locally held, nationally significant cultural heritage collections for future generations.

Community organisations such as historical societies, museums, public libraries, archives, Indigenous and migrant community groups which provide public access to their cultural heritage collections are eligible to apply.

A wide range of projects may qualify for grants, including: significance assessments; preservation needs assessments; conservation and preservation activities and collection management training.

Applications close on 5 June 2009.

For further information, please visit http://www.nla.gov.au/chg or phone the CHG Coordinator on 02 6262 1147 or email chg@nla.gov.au

RAISE YOUR VOICE FOR PUBLIC GALLERIES IN TOWNSVILLE

RAISE YOUR VOICE: Fourth National Public Galleries Summit, presented by Museum and Gallery Services Queensland, and hosted by the Townsville City Council and Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, is the latest in a series of national summits for Australian and New Zealand public gallery professionals. Leading Australian and International keynote speakers and colleagues will gather in Townsville, north Queensland, from 9–11 September 2009. Registration for the Summit is now open, with Earlybird registration available until 31 July 2009.

A number of bursary programs to assist delegates to attend the Summit are on offer. The first of these programs, supported by the Australia Council, is now open. Public gallery professionals throughout Australia are eligible to apply. Applications to Round 1 of this bursary program must be received by 1 June 2009. Round 2 will close on 1 July 2009.

For information about RAISE YOUR VOICE: Fourth National Public Galleries Summit, including Summit Registration and bursary application forms, visit www.magsq.com.au. For more information and enquiries regarding the Summit contact Museum and Gallery Services Queensland on T: 07 3215 0820, or email Judy Kean, Summit Coordinator, E: judy.kean@magsq.com.au



The Strand, Magnetic Island, Townsville

Photo courtesy of Judy Kean

President's farewell

In the opening chapter of his 2005 book *The Collapse of Globalism and the Re-invention of the World,* the distinguished Canadian philosopher and author John Ralston Saul writes:

... we are transiting one of those moments that separate more driven or coherent eras. It is like being in a vacuum, one filled with dense disorder and contradictory tendencies. Think of it as (one of) those moments in fast moving sports like soccer or hockey, when a team loses its momentum and there is furious disordered activity until one side finds the pattern and the energy to give it control.

These moments tend to begin with denial on all sides. The confusion frightens those who thought they were setting the direction. And it disappoints those who criticised that direction. There is nothing decisive or noble about the situation. The options are not clear. Yet a period of uncertainty is also one of choice and therefore of opportunity ...

... To believe in the possibility of change is something very precise. It means that we believe in the reality of choice. That there are choices. That we have the power to choose in the hope of altering society for the greater good.

The conviction that citizens have such power lies at the heart of the idea of civilisation as a shared project ... And the more people are confident that there are real choices ... the more they want to become involved in their society.

The early 1990s was such a period of uncertainty and it was at the 1993 CAMA conference in Hobart that the 400+ delegates voted to form Museums Australia. This was the coming together of CAMA, AAMA and MEAA (major organisations representing workers in museums and galleries) to strengthen the sector.

This amalgamation was designed to give the museum sector a sizeable community voice with which to address the issues common to all and a voice that would be loud enough to be listened to by governments of all persuasions. Communicating across and inside the new organisation was vital and in the beginning this was largely through the annual conferences and the association's magazine, *Museum National*. Today the website and email dominate but then the internet was only beginning to emerge, the fax machine (what's that, I hear someone say) ruled the office, and people spoke to one another across hard wires or mobile phones the size of a small brick.

Now some 15 years on, we, Museums Australia and Australia's museum sector, find ourselves on the edge of yet another revolution/interregnum. It has been engendered by changed and changing climates, communication technologies, global financial viability, and the need to urgently implement sustainability programs inside our own institutions. For Museums Australia to survive this particular cycle and as for many of our institutional members also, it will be necessary to change our behaviours and review our aspirations. We may feel buffeted off-course by decisions and events apparently beyond our control, but we have the opportunity to face the new realities and pool our combined skills, experience and forward-thinking intelligence to use them productively.

The theme of this year's conference *Work in Progress* could not be more apt and with it the opportunity for delegates to come together to address issues of common concern and interest. For example; the 2006 conference was the starting point for the recently launched National Standards for Museums; the 2007 conference helped to draw the attention of non-science based members to the role of natural history collections; attracted a larger attendance from art galleries, and with Australian keynote speakers and the 80 parallel papers

demonstrated the energy and intellectual capacity of our own; and the 2008 Futures Forums findings have helped to formulate sector-wide positions that could be forwarded on in response to the various Commonwealth government reviews currently underway.

But part of the *work in progress* for Museums Australia National and the National Council itself has been to address the fall in revenue from static memberships, slowing down of sponsorship and reductions in government funding. This means of course making decisions about how best to employ the members' limited funds in a context of rising prices. One of those tough decisions has been around how to keep funding the magazine. Advertising/sponsor revenue has substantially covered the cost of the magazine's design and printing. Membership monies have paid for editorial and other work required.

The Editor for more than eight years, Ros Russell, and MA's Editorial Standing Committee have devoted passion, energy and imagination to producing a quarterly magazine that stimulates ideas, reports events, reviews the current literature and gives opportunity for opinions to be voiced and debated. With great regret Council has agreed that in order to manage the broader finances of MA, the editorial work will have to come in-house to be covered by the staff at the National Office. I am sure that you, as readers, will join me and the Council to publicly thank Ros Russell and her team of assistants for their excellent and timely work in keeping the *Museums Australia Magazine* circulating across the country. I would also like to thank the Editorial Standing Committees under the chairmanship of Margaret Birtley and Ian McShane for their continued overview and support over the years. The magazine will continue to be published this year whilst the new Council and President deal with how its future might evolve.

This is also my opportunity to say farewell as President, after my statutory but personally rewarding four years. I will leave the Association in the very capable and experienced hands of Dr Darryl McIntyre, recently appointed CEO of the National Film and Sound Archive. Thank you to all the members, both individual and institutional, who have supported the association, to the Members of Council for volunteering their time, energy and money to work for MA, to the staff of the National Office, all 2.2 FTE's of them, and especially to Bernice Murphy as National Director for carrying a very extraordinary load with grace, fortitude and a fierce intellectual energy. Thanks also to the present and future Conference committees who have taken on the challenge of bringing us together around the nation, for in the end ... *United we stand...*

My last thanks must to Steve Gower AO Director, Nola Anderson ADNC and my staff at the Australian War Memorial for supporting me in this role over the last four years; without their support and the direct involvement in the association of many other senior members of our profession, such as Craddock Morton, Director, National Museum of Australia and Patrick Greene, Museum Victoria, the association would be the lesser.

To give John Ralston Saul the final word:

Perhaps we are living at the beginnings of a major re-balancing in which other cultures, with more complex ideas of what makes up a society, are coming to the fore. And those of us in the West will just have to learn to keep up and understand what makes such a major change positive for us.

Patricia Sabine

*John Ralston Saul, The Collapse of Globalism and the Reinvention of the World (Viking Penguin Australia 2005) 4, 278

MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE

Thanks

FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

This is my final issue as Managing Editor of *Museums Australia Magazine*. I would like to thank all those who have made my work the pleasure it has been over the more than eight years that I have occupied the editorial position.

First of all, I would like to thank the two chairs of the Editorial Standing Committee with whom I have worked - Margaret Birtley and Ian McShane - for their consistent guidance and support. All members of the Editorial Standing Committee are also owed my heartfelt thanks, as are all the Reviews Editors - Linda Young, Peter Haynes and Angelina Russo. MA Presidents Carol Scott and Patricia Sabine have also been very supportive of the magazine, as have Executive Officers Meredith Hinchliffe and John Cross, and National Director Bernice Murphy. And the support of Debbie Milsom throughout the whole eight years of my tenure as Managing Editor, and more recently as Advertising Manager as well, has been constant and unwavering. I would also like to thank Freya Purnell, who has had the task, as Regional Editor, of producing articles that reflect the diverse nature of our membership, and its geographical spread.

I would also like to thank the graphic designers whose work has made *Museums Australia Magazine* a pleasure to look at as well as to read. First of all the team at GRiD Communications, led by Kathy Griffiths and including Tania Grabow and Liam Camilleri; and more recently Kim Tatnell of Big Island Graphics.

And above all, I would like to thank all those who cannot be named here, but without whom this magazine would not exist - the contributors who have brought ideas and visions about articles, and experiences they wanted to share with their fellow MA members. To each and every one of you who has contributed to what was formerly *Museum National*, and is now *Museums Australia Magazine*, I thank you and hope that you will continue to contribute into the future.

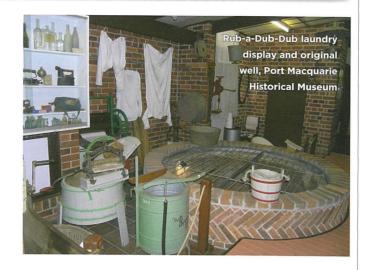
I would also like to thank all those who have advertised in the magazine over the last eight years, whether in a single advertisement or through a consistent presence in every issue. The advertisements in the magazine are a vital service to our members, as they provide the only national reference point for goods and services available to the museum sector.

Roslyn Russell

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY MUSEUMS

Our cover for this issue is a tribute to community museums. A passion for a community – be it a locality, or a community of faith or other area of interest – is a key reason why people collect objects relating to that community and set up museums to celebrate its history and heritage.

Many of those who work in community museums are volunteers. Without the commitment shown by volunteers, a vital part of our national story would remain untold. Community collections are part of the Distributed National Collection that represents the memory of the nation. Community museums shoulder an enormous load when they take on the custodianship of collections, and the task of interpreting them to a wider audience.



Award and grant programs such as the ABC Radio National Regional Museum Awards and the Community Heritage Grants program outlined on page 3 recognise the value of the work of volunteer-run museums. Publications such as *Significance 2.0* (page 7) are designed to help museums to take better care of their collections. I hope that community museums will take advantage of all these means of assisting them to achieve their goals in preserving their community's heritage.

Roslyn Russell, Managing Editor

Dedicated to the preservation and presentation of cultural heritage in all its diversity

- Art Crating and Storage Solutions
- Custom Object Supports
- Exhibition Display and Design



9/11 Urban Street
Braeside, Victoria 3195
T+61 03 9588 0436
F+61 03 9588 0437
pod@podservices.com.au
www.podservices.com.au

10

Blue Shield Australia

MAYDAY! MAYDAY! MAYDAY!

During the month of May Blue Shield Australia is encouraging archives, galleries, libraries, museums, cultural heritage sites and organisations across the country to participate in MayDay – a national campaign for the protection of cultural heritage from disaster.



Blue Shield Australia

MayDay aims to raise awareness about disaster preparedness and to encourage people to perform at least one disaster-preparedness task each May. There are many types of emergencies that we can be better prepared for, from the potential impact of faulty electrical wiring in the building next door, to bushfires, cyclones or even internal or external floods.

The MayDay concept originated with the Society of American Archivists (SAA) in 2006.

MayDay Australia 2009

We encourage you to promote MayDay to your colleagues by posting the MayDay 2009 flier on notice boards in your organisation, and by discussing what you will do to mark MayDay on 1 May 2009, and throughout the month of May.

In 2009 we are making a Media Kit available to help you promote your selected MayDay 2009 activity. Obtain this Kit by sending a request to: blueshield@collectionscouncil.com.au. Be sure to send a copy of any articles you prepare to this email address too, so that Blue Shield Australia can help with promotion. We would also like to hear about the 'lessons learnt' from disasters that have affected your organization. Photographs are very welcome!

In the wake of Victorian bushfires and Queensland floods, we are advising cultural heritage practitioners to consider the level of protection offered by storage facilities this year – and plan to build safer repositories for the future.

What should I do?

The flier is available at the following webpage: http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/Portals/0/MayDay%202009%20on%20BS A%20flier.pdf.

Then it's just a matter of acting upon one or more of the suggested activities. Here are some of the suggestions from this year's flier:

- Get to know your local firefighters and police, and invite them to tour your organisation and give you pointers on safety and preparedness.
- Identify the three biggest risks to your collection or heritage site.
- Find a 'partner' heritage organisation to work with in case of a disaster. A model for collaboration is DIS-ACT: http://www.anbg. gov.au/disact/

What is the Blue Shield?

The Blue Shield is the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross. It is the symbol specified in the 1954 Hague Convention for marking cultural sites to give them protection from attack in the event of armed conflict. It is also the name of an international committee set up in 1996 to work to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by wars and natural disasters.

Blue Shield Committees around the globe comprise four international cultural heritage 'pillar' bodies -

International Council on Archives (ICA);

International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS);

International Council of Museums (ICOM); and

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

In Australia, these pillar bodies are represented respectively as follows: Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA); Australia ICOMOS; ICOM Australia; Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA).

For more information contact Veronica Bullock, Development Officer, Collections Council of Australia, at blueshield@collectionscouncil. com.au, or call (08) 8207 7287.

New....
Read-only Logins
Improved
Security

Collections
MOSAIC

New....
Access
Controls
on
Records

New....
Numerous
Multimedia for
Objects <u>and</u> Subjects

Improved....
More Space for Data

Version

Improved....
Easier to use

Many Improvements and New Features

Improved...
Accessibility
Features

Improved....
Efficient Search
Defaults

Improved....
Configuration
Control

10

New.... Export Formats New.... Reference Links to Library

New.... Tabular Views

Order now:

email us now V10@ISTechnology.com.au
Or call Sally-Anne on 08 95923149
Or Visit our web site
www.ISTechnology.com.au

Significance 2.0

Online at http://significance. collectionscouncil.com.au in May

The Collections Council of Australia Ltd is pleased to announce that Significance 2.0 - a guide to assessing the significance of collections by Roslyn Russell and Kylie Winkworth will be made available free online in May 2009.

Significance 2.0 is a second, revised edition of the attractive and well received publication entitled (significance) – a guide to assessing the significance of cultural heritage objects and collections (2001), still available at the Collections Australia Network (CAN): http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/sector_info_item/5.

In this second edition you will find that the core of the significance method remains unchanged. It still hinges on the preparation of a well-researched 'statement of significance' which references a set of primary and comparative criteria. This consistent method should aid all those conducting or receiving significance assessments to 'speak a common language'. Greater prominence is given to the assessment method as the key process for expressing significance, and the significance assessment steps have been refined.

Often it isn't possible to conduct significance assessments item-by-item. Significance 2.0 responds to that concern by including more collection and 'cross-collection' examples and guidance. There is also a greater diversity of case studies, and this is illustrated in an introductory feature entitled 'Distributed collections and significance'. There's a focus on cultural and scientific collections through the cases of the popular outlaw Ned Kelly and the extinct native Australian mammal, the Thylacine. These highlight a range of item and collection types held across archives, galleries, libraries and museums, with examples underscoring the value of a common language and method for communicating the meaning and importance of all collections.

The features on 'Context' and 'Provenance' show how it is crucial to consider these factors before determining which primary criteria are most relevant to an item or collection under significance assessment, and why provenance is also an important 'comparative criterion'. The 'Principles for good practice with significance' feature is a useful complement to Part 6, which presents many applications of significance assessment, from fundraising to conservation, and surveys to online access.

Also included in this edition are new criteria for the assessment of items of national significance, to better support the Community Heritage Grants Program and the Commonwealth *Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986*, as well as helpful diagrams, an index, and an extensive glossary.

The Significance 2.0 project has developed over two years and has involved the collections sector in consultations. A cornerstone of these consultations is the ongoing Significance 2.0 Workshop webpage, where comments could be submitted on any aspect of the subject: http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/Default.aspx?tabid=562.

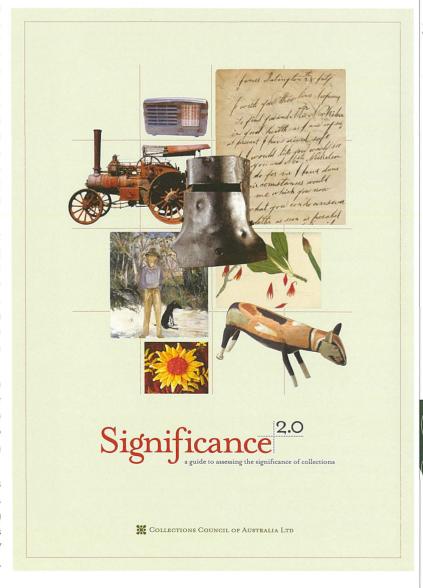
Sector Advocate, Mr Ian Cook, ensured that the diverse voices of archives, galleries, libraries and museums were heard throughout the project.

The Project Team (Ms Sue Nattrass (Chair), Ms Russell, Ms Winkworth, Mr Cook and Ms Veronica Bullock (Project Manager)) is grateful to all those who contributed thoughts to the project – we believe that the final product has benefited from these sector-wide consultations.

We plan for Significance 2.0 to grow online in coming years, as more people learn about the method and upload new and different cases of its application. We also plan to develop an e-learning module, to make it easier for people to step through the significance assessment process.

Sign up to the Collections Council's e-bulletin to be sure that you receive significance news: http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/e-bulletin.aspx, or visit CAN for sample statements of significance: http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/sector_info_item/75.

Veronica Bullock
Project Manager
Collections Council of Australia



Exhibition: culture & continuity

Culture and Continuity: Journey Through Judaism is a newly opened permanent exhibition at the Sydney Jewish Museum. It shows the rich heritage of Jewish history, religion and culture alongside Australian Jewish history and the history of Sydney's Jewish community in particular.

The Sydney Jewish Museum is one of Sydney's pre-eminent cultural institutions. More than 30,000 people visit the Museum each year, 13,500 of whom are schoolchildren. The Museum, funded by philanthropist and Holocaust survivor, the late John Saunders AO, opened in 1992.

The Museum is housed within the Maccabean Hall, opened by General Sir John Monash in 1923. The Maccabean Hall served to commemorate Jewish soldiers who lost their lives in the First World War. It became a vibrant centre of Jewish communal and cultural life, where meetings, debates, dances and religious services took place. In 1965 the Maccabean Hall became the 'NSW Jewish War Memorial Community Centre'. In its current incarnation, the building is the Sydney Jewish Museum.

After seventeen years of operation, the Museum was in need of renewal. The ground floor had been central in teaching about Jewish life, traditions and culture as well as helping visitors to understand Australian Jewish history, but needed fresh interpretation and refurbishment. This was particularly true of the Australian Jewish history section, as research in this area had increased exponentially in the years that have elapsed since the Museum's founding.

Culture and Continuity: Journey Through Judaism

Culture and Continuity is designed around a large Star of David, refinished with Jerusalem stone; a poignant symbol of Jewish civilisation. The exhibition took eighteen months to complete and was made possible through a grant given specifically for the project from the estate of the late Mrs Ernestine Frieheiter, a survivor of the

The exhibition addresses two broad questions:

Who are the Jews? and Who are the Jews in Australia?

A myriad of information needs to be conveyed to the visitor to answer these questions adequately. Graphics, artefacts, text and technology were all employed to this end. With so much to tell, every space, detail and word was explored by the exhibition team which included curators Avril Alba and Shannon Maguire, Associate Professor Suzanne Rutland, Group GSA, X2 Design led by Jisuk Han and CDP Media led by Gary Warner.

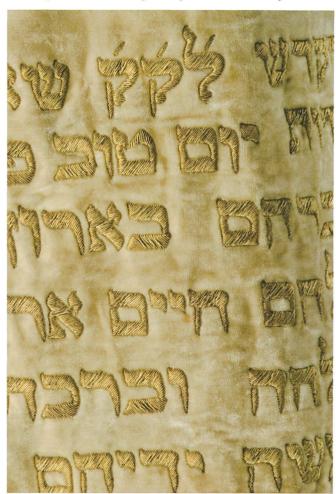
The space is split into two main themes: Judaism and Australian Jewish History, with a timeline wrapping around the exhibition to orientate the visitor to the breadth and depth of Jewish history.

The timeline begins with Creation and runs to the present. It is divided into five main periods: Biblical (traditional beliefs), Ancient Israel (settlement in the land and first and second temple periods), Diaspora, Modernity, and the post Second World War period. At four critical points the timeline breaks into a 'feature pillar' comprising an audiovisual display and a significant object which allow the visitor to delve deeper into a given subject area or historical period.

To answer who are the Jews one must know about Judaism - not an easy thing to capture in an exhibition. As Avril Alba explains: 'Judaism is a religion, but it's also a culture. It's a culture, but it's also a civilization. It's a belief system but it's also a way of life.' While the timeline shows this historically, the displays attempt to answer this thematically through the exhibits - God, Torah, Israel.

Culture and Continuity illustrates the diversity of Jewish religious expressions as well as their development over time. Focus is placed on the Sydney Jewish community, with images and objects from the local community taking precedence. Postcards printed in the early twentieth century and woodblock prints reminiscent of shtetl (Jewish village) life complement modern Sydney photographs, highlighting points of continuity and change in Jewish life over time and place.

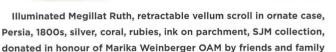
The Australian Jewish history section begins with the arrival of Jewish convicts on the First Fleet. It was a slow start for the community, as most of the Jewish convicts were not well versed in their religion. It wasn't until many years after arrival when faced with their mortality that the first Jewish organisation was organised, the *Chevra Kadishah* (Burial Society). At the entry to the section is a tombstone from the first Jewish burial ground, and a map of the Devonshire Street cemetery from 1844 showing its original location. A lively recreation



(detail) *Torah* mantle in the Ashkenazi decorative tradition, Champagne, France, c1880, velvet, gilt metal thread, donated by Alfred Buxton

Exhibition: culture & continuity





of George Street in the 1840s and its host Moses Joseph, a convict rags-to riches-story, recounts what life was like in the colony and the challenges involved in setting up the community.

It's fascinating how such a vibrant Jewish community developed so far from the religious centres in Europe, and how such a small portion of the population has had such a significant impact. The exhibition then continues to explore the various waves of Jewish migration to Australia. Following the early convicts and free settlers there were five significant 'waves' that have shaped the current community. Internal and external factors contributed to each one, the first being the discovery of gold in Australia; then Eastern Europeans fleeing pogroms; pre- and post-Second World War refugees; followed by the Russian, South African and Israeli migrations of more recent years.

The 'Australian Successes' section highlights the significant contribution that Jewish individuals have made to the wider Australia community. For many Jews, the chance to live in a free and democratic society that allowed them to excel has been a blessing. Two such pre-eminent Australians, Major-General Paul Cullen and Archibald Prize-winning artist, Judy Cassab, are two such fascinating individuals whose stories are profiled in this section.

Departing from the Museum's main Holocaust focus and diverting so many resources toward the project understandably caused some consternation. However, in illustrating the rich and varied history of Jewish civilisation, the exhibition underscores the Sydney Jewish Museum's message of Holocaust awareness and remembrance by providing insight into what was lost in the Nazi period, and celebrating the resilience and renewal of individual and communal Jewish life by those who survived.

Shannon Maguire, Curator, Culture and Continuity: Journey Through Judaism



Yartzeit book for Miksane Lamberger, Hungary, 1933, ink on paper, donated by Catherine Gluck



(detail) Tik (Torah case) in the Sephardic decorative tradition, India, early 1900s, silver, on loan from the Sephardi Synagogue, Sydney

IT'S NOT ALL BLACK AND WHITE: THE SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH STORY

The Sydney Jewish Museum documents some of the diversity of Australian Jewry, and this latest exhibition deals with the South African Jewish community. After several decades, this is a sizeable and significant component of Sydney's community, not only in numbers – it also contains many influential individuals who have contributed meaningfully to Jewish communal life and the broader community.

Between the late 1970s and 2006, an estimated million Whites left South Africa. 47,000 were Jews, amounting to around 40 per cent of the Jewish community. The 2006 census enumerated 104,000 persons who were born in South Africa, of whom approximately 15,000 are Jewish, who now live here, a number that increases every year.

Despite being a cohesive community, we set out to show that these Jewish immigrants are not easily viewed as a monolithic entity - and so It's not all Black and White: The South African Jewish Story came to be.

'It was very difficult to make Australian friends. When the South Africans kept to one another – we shared the same difficulties and were able to help one another – we were accused of having a ghetto-like mentality, and sticking to our own. There was a lot of sweat, tears and loneliness when we came, and similarly for many of our friends. It may not have been physically hard, but emotionally and psychologically it affected many of us and took many years for us to settle.' Cherry Shneider, 1979 émigré

Interviews, stories, photographs and memorabilia tell this story in

a colourful way, embracing the ambivalence that many others have toward this migrant group. The impact of their emigration, the loss of their identity, the massive internal adjustment, the psychological and even financial hardships for many, are often negated or simply not taken seriously because South African Jews are generally seen as a privileged, educated and moneyed people.

We never compared our lives or told Australians how we used to do something there or how much we missed the place (which we did not). To a large extent our migration was a big adventure – we never left south Africa reluctantly – we did so out of free choice and a desire to live in a calmer, happier place than the Johannesburg of the late 1970s and early 1980s. We never read the local south African papers seeking justification for our move.' Michael Shur, 1980 émigré

It's not all Black and White gives a glimpse into diverse South African Jewish life from its beginnings around the 1840s, the development and success of the community and the events that led to the migration over the last seven decades. The voices of former South Africans, now living in Sydney, give expression to a wide range of views and experiences on settling in and assimilation and their lives since in their new homeland. Jewish life in South Africa is characterised by a strong sense of community and an enduring connection with Israel. Jewish responses to apartheid are revealed as complex and multifaceted, and motivations for emigration are seen to be similarly diverse.

The Nationalist Party's rise to power triggered initial migration, and subsequent migration occurred in waves triggered by traumatic events such as the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 and the 1976 Soweto Uprising. For only some, the fear of living under a Black government following the first democratic elections in 1994 precipitated migration, but for others, it was the need to escape the increasing crime and violence, witnessed by many first hand, rather than abstractly.



MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE

Some of the issues that curators Barbara Linz (1981 émigré) and Roslyn Sugarman (2000 émigré) addressed was how to craft an exhibition that was not too contentious, not too historically focused, not too light on information, or too heavy, and do this in a space that is inherently quite small and bland. They, and their consultant team, wanted to create a mood that incorporates both the beauty and the cruelty of life in apartheid South Africa, the multiple layers of life there, and to tease out those layers, allowing the exhibition to appeal to more than just the Jewish community, and South Africans.

Pervasive stereotypes are challenged, deconstructed, and embraced. The exhibition panel which points with an arrow to the direction of viewing with a statement 'You *must* go this way' is a tongue-in-cheek reference to South Africans using styles of language that are often misinterpreted in Australia as being authoritative or dictatorial. Many are in fact Anglicisations of Afrikaans usages.

'Although we spoke the same language as Australians, there were many differences. I never seemed to get served in shops because I was always asked, 'You're right?' Thinking how polite, I would reply, 'I'm fine thanks.' I eventually twigged I was being asked to be served. I learned that you don't say, 'You must' to an Australian, and that 'See you later' means good-bye.' Joy Bloch, 1978 émigré

The curators tried to give a feeling for the power of seduction of the South African landscape and communities, the sights, sounds and smells that are all very different to Australia. Then the next layer is added, the fear, discrimination and the ugliness that must be shut out. However, many engaged with this next layer, and the exhibition explores this aspect in some exceptional stories of courage and humility.

Quotes from the oral histories undertaken and the stories that were received are used as commentary throughout the exhibition – poignant memories of what these people enjoyed about living in South Africa, their decision to come to Australia and the benefits of coming here.

For South Africans, the seemingly similar lifestyle, climate and language



make Australia an attractive destination. Most have integrated into Australian society with relative ease and many have made a meaningful contribution. This exhibition is their story.

Roslyn Sugarman, John Saunders Curator, Sydney Jewish Museum Exhibition at the Sydney Jewish Museum On view during 2009



ABOVE: Sam Linz with nanny

LEFT: For Europeans Only

FAR LEFT: Ilan Buchman Christmas Postcard, side a



PERSUASION: FASHION IN THE AGE OF JANE AUSTEN

Any reader of Jane Austen will know that the clothes her characters wore, particularly the women, were of no small importance. And during Austen's lifetime (1775-1817), there were dramatic changes in fashion, reflecting the social impacts of a series of major historic events.

An intriguing new exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), *Persuasion: Fashion in the Age of Jane Austen*, surveys the period 1770 to 1830, and features a collection of over seventy items of fashion, prints and drawings, decorative arts and paintings.

NGV curator, international fashion and textiles, Roger Leong, says, 'Austen's witty and perceptive comments about fashion mirrored the complex relationships within English society during her lifetime, especially between different classes and men and women.'

With Austen's life coinciding with major historic events, including the Revolution in France, the American War of Independence, the Industrial Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, Leong says, 'The era witnessed radical changes in the way people dressed. The variations

ENGLAND

Dress c. 1816 (detail)

cotton muslin, metal

145.0 cm (centre back); 80.0 cm (sleeve length)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

The Schofield Collection

Purchased with the assistance of a special grant from the

Government of Victoria, 1974

of the waistline, upwards from the natural waist and then back again, were a distinctive characteristic of the time, one of the most dynamic periods in fashion.'

For instance, in 1775, women of fashion dressed in voluminous, formal silk robes, with the female form constricted and exaggerated with boned corsetry and hoops. By the time Austen had written *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), women's clothes had been simplified into a Grecian form with high-waisted Empire line gowns of sheer white muslin that fell close to the body's natural contours, unbound by corsetry. This shifted during the period when Austen completed her later novels such as *Emma* (1816) and *Persuasion* (1818), towards more decorative dress, and then in the years following her death, full-bodied silk fabrics and a more defined hourglass silhouette were back in vogue.

In keeping with Austen's focus on her leading ladies, the exhibition will focus on English women's dress from the early nineteenth century, with the majority of the pieces drawn from the NGV collection.

Persuasion: Fashion in the Age of Jane Austen is on display in the Myer Fashion and Textiles Gallery at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne, from 22 May to 8 November 2009. For more information visit ngv.vic.gov.au.



ENGLAND

Dress (Round gown) c. 1802 (back view)

block-printed cotton, cotton lining

(a) 139.0 cm (centre back); 69.0 cm (sleeve length) (dress);

(b) 77.5 x 3.7 cm (belt)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

The Schofield Collection

Purchased with the assistance of a special grant from the

Government of Victoria, 1974

Out and about

BEYOND BUILDING: LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2008

The first International Architecture Exhibition in Venice, part of the Biennale, was established in 1980. It was set up in the Arsenale's Corderie, the first time this historical structure has been used as an exhibition space. The Biennale now comprises an international curated exhibition and national pavilions, as well as associated events along the canals and in other buildings on the island.

The main Biennale exhibitions are held at two main venues, Padiglione Italia in the Giardini, and Arsenale. Architects showing in the national pavilions at Giardini are selected by their national organisation, including the Australian Institute of Architects, while those in Arsenale's international exhibition are chosen by the director.

The 11th Architecture Biennale Venice, titled 'Out there: architecture beyond building', and directed by Aaron Betsky, was held from September to November 2008. Betsky's program explained:

Concentrating on experiments, visions and concrete criticism, this Biennale resurrects an architecture of the imagination ... What then is an architecture beyond building? We look to architecture to provide shelter, but also to make us at home in the confusion of the modern world and to perhaps even offer concrete alternatives to the structures we are forced to inhabit, but over which we have no control... [Buildings] should be the product of a desire to create a clear relationship between ourselves, the world around us and our fellow human beings...

Over two days last September my husband and I enjoyed the Biennale at both venues. There were twenty-three installations set up in the Arsenale, while the national pavilions and the experimental work of many international firms were arrayed in the generous shade of the Giardini. First stop was the Belgian Pavilion, '1907... After the Party', designed by David van Severen, who interpreted the Biennale theme by cladding a building with a high steel wall, leaving an empty interior with floors covered with confetti.

The main themes of most exhibitions strongly favoured ecosystems and reviving urban areas. The Russian and the Japanese Pavilions explored nature/architecture each in their own distinctive and highly appealing way. The Japanese Pavilion, surrounded by exquisite plant-filled glasshouses, was called 'Extreme Nature: Landscape of Ambiguous Spaces', and was a joint project by the architect Junya Ishigami and the botanist Hideaki Ohba. The pavilion's interior was an empty creampainted space, but the walls were covered in fine pencil drawings of utopian buildings made of natural elements: forests, trees, plants, lakes and mountains. By contrast, in a dark room in the Russian Pavilion, we walked through a forest of stripped birch poles, illuminated by glowing photographs of the progressive construction of two 'buildings', one made of trees and grass and the other of hay, straw and timber, set in quintessentially Russian landscapes, and depicted in all seasons.

One of the most enjoyable and genuinely national exhibitions was located in the vivid yellow-painted Australia Pavilion. 'Abundance' showcased 242 works from 180 architectural practices in the form of witty, beautiful and whimsical scaled-down models perched on aluminium poles.

The second stage of our Biennale survey was to Arsenale. This great historical shippard is a memorable visit in its own right, bringing home, as not even the Grand Canal's palazzi do, the greatness of Venice as a maritime power. The industrial buildings held their own as venues



TOP: Greg Lynn Form, 'Recycled Toys Furniture'. RIGHT: Australian Pavilion exhibits.





for the ambitious, large-scale, and sometimes surreal installations of the Biennale. The gigantic scale and power of these ancient buildings provided the perfect locale for powerful set pieces by world-renowned individual architects, as well as for lavish and exuberant national displays such as the Italian 'room'. Monumental showpieces included Zaha Hadid's sinuous 'Lotus', and Frank Gehry's massive timber structure, looming in the semi-dark like a fortress.

At the other extreme, when we walked through to the very end of Arsenale, we discovered, in the abandoned margins and bushy overgrowth, a characteristically Nordic exhibition that was a garden cleared and planted in the woods.

Given a 'People's Choice', we would have affirmed the awards of the Golden Lion for best national participation (at Giardini), that went to Poland's Pavilion with the 'Hotel Polonia - The afterlife of buildings' by Grzegorz Piatek and Jarosław Trybus, and also the Golden Lion for best installation project, awarded to Greg Lynn Form (USA) for his 'Recycled Toys Furniture'.

These were amongst the most effective displays (in our opinion) that used images or even, dare I say it, structures, to convey the architect's intent – as was done in the Australia Pavilion. Many exhibitions demanded a compendious reading, and the language was often abstruse or academic. The power and persuasiveness of models, images and objects in this Biennale was a lesson for anyone mounting an exhibition.

Dr Susan Marsden is a professional historian and writer.

MAY 200

Exhibition review

ASCENDANT AND DESCENDANT: LIFE TO EXTINCTION IN ART

An exhibition by the Botanic Gardens Trust's 2008 Artist in Residence, Emma Robertson in February 2009 explored endangered plant species and their seeds.

With a passion for botanical illustration, Robertson was inspired by the film *An Inconvenient Truth* to draw attention to what is at risk of being lost in our environment – not just the beauty of endangered plants, but also their unique, diverse and irreplaceable contribution to the Earth.

The exhibition, Ascendant and Descendant, drew on the range of plants in Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens, as well as some of its special collections and the research Robertson did in the area of endangered plants.



Among the sources of inspiration for Robertson were the Spirit Collection, with plants in spirit jars, fossils and old glass slide mounts, a meeting with staff at the Seedbank at Mount Annan Botanic Garden, extensive research in the Royal Botanic Gardens library, and an orientation tour of the National Herbarium of NSW, where more than 1.1 million plant specimens are stored.

Robertson says she found the specimens of Bennett's Seaweed particularly fascinating. While it once grew in Sydney Harbour, it is now extinct, with the last reference to its existence in 1886. However, ten specimens are pressed in paper and stored in the Herbarium. This plant was featured in one of the works in the exhibition, 'The shape of loss', and Robertson also drew a related species which is also now on the endangered list.

'For me, you can tell a sadder story about something we have lost, but you can also tell a story about something that we may lose, and draw attention to its beauty,' Robertson says.

Another plant featured in the exhibition was the *Eucalyptus copulans*, which Robertson also came across during her research. During her visit to the Seedbank at Mount Annan Botanic Garden, she saw a wonderful photograph pinned up on the wall over the plant sorting table.

It was the *Eucalyptus copulans*, which they had thought was extinct, then they found these two trees at Wentworth Falls [in the NSW Blue Mountains]. It was the first tree they managed to close the cycle on they got the seeds, they generated some new plant seedlings, and one of them is planted at the Royal Botanic Gardens in the Endangered Species garden, and the other is at Mount Tomah Botanic Garden, and they've also replanted *Eucalyptus copulans* back out into the bush. So when I went into the gardens, I sought out that tree in particular, and that was featured in three of the drawings in the exhibition,' Robertson says.

Botanic Gardens Trust executive director Dr Tim Entwistle says Robertson's work brings a fresh and revealing perspective to endangered plants as well as the so-called 'living fossils' – plants that have changed little over millions of years.

Because Robertson focuses on endangered plant species and frequently depicts the seeds of these plants in her work, the exhibition is also aligned with a joint initiative between the Botanic Gardens Trust in Sydney and Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, London, as part of the Millennium Seedbank project, which aims to store ten per cent of the world's flora in seedbanks by 2010.

Robertson says the passion and energy generated by the people she met and stories she heard during her residency will sustain her work for a long time.

'When you hear the staff tell the stories of the plants to [school groups], you realise they are desperately trying to pass it on to the next generation, to communicate that if we don't care for our environment now, we are lost and so are the plants. It was very inspirational.'

Emma Robertson, Botanic Gardens Trust 2008 Artist in Residence with Dawson Ougham, Botanic Gardens Trust Senior Horticulturalist, who showed Emma one of the two living specimens of the *Eucalyptus copulans* which was presumed extinct, but two live specimens are now known after their discovery in the wild at Wentworth Falls in 2006. Dawson commented that species this critically endangered are sometimes referred to as the 'living dead'. Our challenge is to ensure their survival for generations to come, and to reverse this status while we still can.

Exhibition review



Emma Robertson, Botanic Gardens Trust 2008 Artist in Residence with Professor Alan Millar. Principal Research Scientist at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney who identified Bennett's Seaweed. Vanvoorstia bennettiana, as now extinct. Surveys in Sydney Harbour have failed to show any trace of this exquisite seaweed since its last collection in 1886. At that time it was considered abundant.

Robertson was a recent prize winner in the International Biennial of Drawing, and three of her artworks were subsequently selected for the exhibition at the International Currents Gallery in Chicago. While some of the works in the exhibition have been sold, Robertson plans to enter some of the pieces in competitions such as the Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize.

Ascendant and Descendant was on exhibition at the Red Box Gallery at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney. A link to some of the works in Ascendant and Descendant is available at www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/ about_us/careers_and_jobs/artist_in_residence_program.

Freya Purnell is Regional Editor for Museums Australia Magazine

Emma Robertson, Botanic Gardens Trust 2008 Artist in Residence with one of her paintings from the Ascendant and Descendant exhibition of the Mount Spurgeon Black Pine - described as a 'living fossil', this plant has survived through time over hundreds of millions of years, often virtually unchanged, weathering the shifting of continents and previous periods of climate change. That some of these amazing Australian Living Fossils are now themselves endangered, such as the Mount Spurgeon Black Pine, the Ribbonwood and the Nightcap Oak, should give us cause to consider our actions and the impact they may have on the Living Fossils' future survival over the next million years on earth.



WHAT DO WE DO?

ADS Solutions is a highly experienced. specialist exhibition manufacturing company, that realises display concepts in:

museums and visitor centres. exhibitions and premium retail fit-outs.

Display can be one of the most effective forms of communications media, for the majority of organizations, the implementation phase can be confronting and challenging.

We understand these challenges.



ADS Solutions

2/25 Havelock Road

Bayswater Victoria, Australia 3153 Telephone: +61 3 9729 4033

Fax: +61 3 9738 2699

Email: info@adssolutions.com.au

Designer: Freeman Ryan Design

MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA MAGAZI

Book news

CONSERVATION

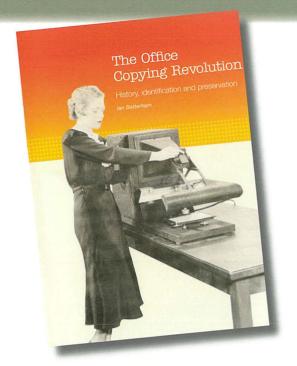
lan Batterham *The Office Copying Revolution. History, identification and preservation. A manual for conservators, archivist, librarians and forensic document examiners.* National Archives of Australia. ISBN 978-1-920807-63-4. Canberra, 2008. A\$59.95.

lan Batterham, a conservator at the National Archives of Australia, has written a fascinating book on the history of office copying. With 193 images, many of them sourced from the National Archives' own collection, the work takes a global view of the subject.

Australia has contributed nothing of significance to the copying process but has been quick to adopt new processes from overseas. The typewriter, which first appeared in its nascent form in 1714, and was mass produced after 1870, was the first innovation in office copying, especially when carbon paper was invented to facilitate the process. The typewriter also created masters and stencils that could be used in mass duplicating.

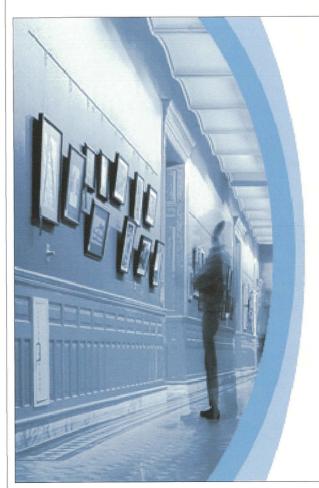
Photocopying followed on the heels of the invention of photography in the 1840s. Commercial machines - the Photostat and the Rectigraph - appeared on the market in 1909. A bewildering variety of copying methods is described and illustrated in the book, along with photographs of the relevant machines.

The book is directed towards conservators and others who need to identify the copying process used in originals. It also suggests preservation methods tailored to suit the way in which these originals were produced. The work is truly encyclopedic and will be



of use to conservators around the world. It is also valuable for those interested in the history of office technology. The book is an example of the wonderful practical scholarship that can be produced from the resources available in the National Archives.

Michael Jones is a Canberra writer and researcher



Powerful, easy to use cataloguing software

For museums, galleries and historical societies

Maxus Collections for Museums

Collection management software for objects, images, books and other printed items

Maxus ArtWorks

Catalogue your art collection quickly and easily

Contact Maxus for free trial software or further information



PO Box 727 South Melbourne, Victoria 3205 Phone (03) 9646 1988 Email maxus@maxus.net.au Web www.maxus.net.au

Review

Anthony Austin, Jessica Coates, Hannah Donnelly and Brian Fitzgerald: *Blog, Podcast, Vodcast and Wiki Copyright Guide for Australia* (Brisbane, Faculty of Law, Queensland University of Technology, 2009)

Available at http://cci.edu.au/content/blog-podcast-vocast-and-wiki-copyright-guide-australia

Simes, Laura: A Users Guide to the Flexible Dealing Provision for Libraries, Educational Institutions and Cultural Institutions (Kingston ACT, Australian Libraries Copyright Committee and the Australian Digital Alliance, 2008)

Available at http://www.digital.org.au/alcc/resources/documents/FlexibleDealingHandbookfinal.pdf

Three developments in technology, law and institutional practice make these guides highly relevant to museums and galleries. The first, most obviously flagged by the first publication's title, is the rise and diversification of Web 2.0 or interactive media technologies, and the new social, business and educational contexts in which they are used. Second is the increasing engagement of museums with web-based communication, not simply to promote collections and programs, but to harvest knowledge that resides in the wider community of interest. Third is the revision of Australian copyright law to encompass digital technologies and content and reflect Australia's international treaty obligations.

It is axiomatic that the internet has created a host of possibilities for public cultural institutions to enhance access to collections and programs. But to this point, uses of institutional websites have mostly been elaborations of a centralised, authoritative museum paradigm, supplemented by a visitor-focused approach to program information.

New media tools and interest in user-generated content pose fundamental challenges to this mode of engagement. A pioneering (and now much-cited) project which places collection material into an open source environment is the Powerhouse Museum's upload of the Tyrrell photographic collection on Flickr. Other institutions are following this lead. Such initiatives not only bring a wider audience to the material; they encourage creative engagement with material through re-use, and assist the feedback and flow on of new information on collections.

However, a range of factors has influenced a generally cautious approach by institutions to such use of collections and program material in the web environment. These include lack of copyright knowledge, limited documentation, risk aversion, and institutional inertia. Such factors can give rise to a skewing of digitised material made available from public cultural institutions, towards collections that are either out of copyright, fully documented, or free of any perceived risk of infringement. Copyright, as activists such as Lawrence Lessig have long argued, should aim to balance the rights and interests of creators, and the public interests served by access to and use of information. Regrettably, though, the recent history of copyright has been marked by the attempts of rights agencies and media industry lobbyists to extend copyright horizons, restrict technological capabilities, and make examples of sometimes hapless infringers. While this stance is most observed in the USA, it extends globally through free trade negotiations

The Austin et al guide aims to inform creators and users of new media of the copyright issues relevant to these platforms, and provide strategies to prevent or minimise the legal risks that copyright poses in this environment. The guide has four sections. The first two outline the context, with a description of new digital communication technologies, and an overview of copyright legislation. The second two – using copyrighted material, and getting permission – are practice oriented. The bias of the publication, then, is towards encouraging the informed, active and creative uses of new media. In this light, the guide contains a section on open content licences, such as Creative Commons, designed to facilitate the distribution and re-use of material in digital formats. The guide has ample references to case law and publications for readers who wish to explore topics in greater depth.

The Simes guide deals more specifically with the implications of Section 200AB of the Copyright Amendment Act 2006. Australian copyright law does not have the flexibility of a general 'fair use' provision as in the United States legislation. Instead, S200AB authorises the use of copyright material for 'socially beneficial purposes'. What does this mean? For cultural institutions, the guide suggests that S200AB will assist with format-shifting (e.g. for archival preservation), the use of orphan works (where copyright holders cannot be identified or located), digitisation, and the adaptation of works for educational or access purposes. This publication has a useful 'step-through' approach that will assist users to understand what material is covered, and when and how S200AB provisions can be used. The publication includes a number of user scenarios drawn from the real-life experiences of cultural and educational institutions.

Both guides will assist institutions to adopt a more confident approach to Australian copyright legislation and its application in the digital environment – to understand how this environment shapes the use of creative works by museums, and how it assists museums to define and assert their rights. Both publications are clearly written and easily followed by non-specialists. Smaller institutions without in-house resources in this field will find them especially valuable.

lan McShane Institute for Social Research Swinburne Institute of Technology

> 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 Ilustrations and full references. For an even fuller story, check out MAM On-line.



CELEBRATING THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ASTRONOMY

SHARED SKY

A new exhibition, *Shared Sky*, at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) explores Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives on the night sky over Australia.

Coinciding with the International Year of Astronomy, *Shared Sky* is cocurated by the Prints and Drawings and Indigenous Art departments and includes approximately 50 prints, drawings, photographs and indigenous works.

NGV Director Dr Gerard Vaughan says the exhibition presents 'the observation and creative interpretations of the sky above Australia, reflecting our almost primal fascination with the night sky, from ritual and mythology to the science of astronomy'.

Blending the empirical and the mystical, *Shared Sky* explores a number of aspects of our relationship with the sky, such as the interconnectedness of the Earth, Moon and Sun, investigations of the sky to advance astronomical and geological knowledge, tracking progress through time and the seasons, using the sky as a canvas for the re-telling of narratives, and reaching an understanding of our place in the world and the universe beyond.

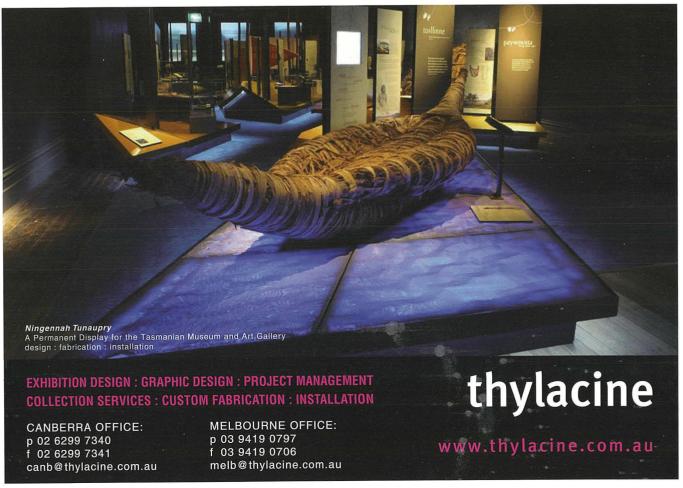
Reflecting the breadth of the topic, the works in the exhibition are by both international and Australian artists, scientists and astronomers, over a period ranging from 1515 to 2007. While *Shared Sky* predominantly features works drawn from the NGV collection, some were borrowed from institutions such as Museum Victoria, the Bendigo Art Gallery and the Astronomical Society of Victoria.

Among the highlights of the exhibition are two large-scale linocuts by Torres Strait artists Dennis Nona and Alick Tipoti, which draw on the sculptural tradition of the Torres Strait, and reveal constellations imbued with Ancestral presence.

An installation of *Banumbirr* (Morning Star poles) from the Northern Territory introduces the Indigenous creation stories associated with the Earth, Sun and Moon.

These poles are decorated with string, feathers, seed pods and earth pigments, and used in a Morning Star ceremony performed a year after the death of a relative to ensure that their spirit is guided through countries of different Dhuwa clans to its final resting place of Burralku. The pole symbolises the pandanus tree, while the string attached is used by the spirit of the deceased to help them climb. The feathers represent rays of light from the planet Venus, while the seed pods are food for the spirit's journey.

From the scientific perspective, key works in the exhibition include Albrecht Durer's *Celestial map of the southern sky* 1515 and John Bevis's *Uranographica Britannica* c1750, both illustrative charts that visualise the link between European mythology and early scientific knowledge.



One of the contemporary works in the exhibition is a graphite drawing of the Andromeda Galaxy by Melbourne-based artist Cassandra Laing, called *Fortune teller (It will all end in stars)*, created just a few months before she died.

The education program associated with the exhibition covers aspects such as the evolution of astronomy; readings of the Seven Sisters star cluster, also known as the Pleiades asterism, and how different Indigenous groups across Australia have different narratives about this cluster; and the Southern Cross as a significant asterism or constellation.

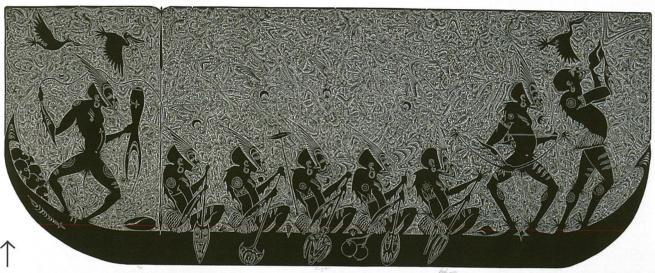
Through the interweaving of diverse material, Shared Sky highlights

how there is space for a multitude of views on the sky to co-exist, even when the lands below became contested upon Europeans' arrival in Australia.

Shared Sky is on display at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Federation Square, Melbourne to 2 August 2009. For more information on exhibition opening times and special events, visit www.ngv.vic.gov.au.

For information on other exhibitions, celebrations and special events to be held in conjunction with the International Year of Astronomy, visit www.astronomy2009.org.au.

Freya Purnell is a Sydney writer and editor



Alick Tipoti

Kala lagaw ya born 1975 Zugubal 2006 linocut, ed. 9/35

81.0 x 199.7 cm irreg. (block) 106.5 x 220.0 cm irreg. (sheet) printed by Theo Tremblay; published by Australian Art Print Network National Gallery of Victoria. Melbourne

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2008 © Alick Tipoti courtesy The Australian Print Network

Dennis Nona

Kala lagaw ya born 1973 Baidam – Shark constellation 2006

linocut, artist's proof

printed by Theo Tremblay, published by Australian Art Print Network 94.8 \times 242.0 cm (block); 109.6 \times 256.0 cm (sheet)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented by Woolloongabba Art Gallery, 2007

© Dennis Nona courtesy The Australian Print Network

