

Vol 18(1) – September 2009

# Museums Australia *Magazine*

National Conference  
**Indigenous resurgence**  
Educational futures  
**Contesting significance**  
Repatriation from Seattle  
**Gulf States museums**  
ICOM in session (Paris)  
**Monet in the Orangerie**  
Korean museums 100th





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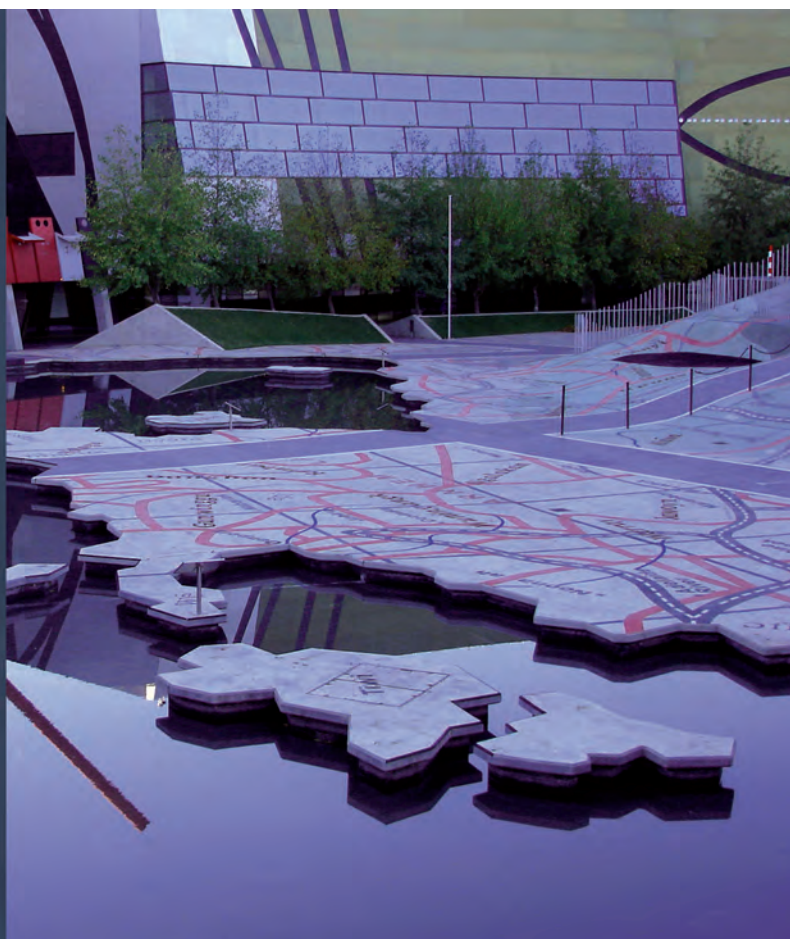
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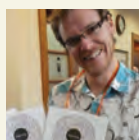
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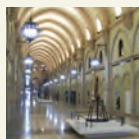
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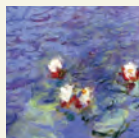
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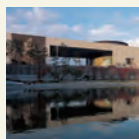
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# Facing current challenges



**Dr Darryl McIntyre**

As the incoming National President of Museums Australia [MA], I first extend an expansive vote of thanks to Patricia Sabine for her leadership of the national association and sustained work as President from 2005 to 2009. In addition, I thank the former members of Council for their diverse contributions, and acknowledge the dedicated work of all the state and territory branches and MA's Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and National Networks.

At the core of all the remarkable effort stretching across the country is the National Office, which not only works closely with the state and territory branches and networks but also prepares numerous high-quality submissions to government reviews and inquiries, as well as working closely with other kindred bodies such as ICOM Australia.

I returned to Australia in November 2008 to take up my appointment as Chief Executive Officer of the National Film and Sound Archive, in Canberra, which became a statutory authority in July 2008. Previously I worked at the Museum of London in the UK, as Deputy Director from November 2003 to November 2008.

London presented many challenges: the major redevelopment of half of the Museum of London, for which funding had to be found from non-government sources; working in a museum culture reminiscent of the 1980s; and also working with many local government and independent museums on learning, collection development and social inclusion issues. London, a city of almost 8 million people, is vibrantly multicultural. It has over 250 local museums and more than 300 different, culturally diverse communities.

Australian museums now face many challenges as we traverse the current economic recession. It is of considerable concern that the Western Australian Government has decided to close museums, galleries and libraries one day a week, and to close the Fremantle History Museum entirely. I have written to the Western Australian Minister for the Arts to express our deep concerns – especially as more people visit cultural institutions during recessions – but as yet there has been no response.

The imposition of efficiency dividends continues at the federal and state/territory levels, and those savings have to be found from institutional operating expenses (which impacts upon programs and audiences). Of concern also is whether local government and community-based museums will be threatened with closure as a result of reduced budgets and grants. These dispersed local museums play a vital role in preserving and interpreting their community's heritage and cultural identities.

In September MA is convening a museums sectoral meeting in Melbourne, to discuss issues of common cause and seek a common ground in responding to a number of government reviews, policy developments and program initiatives. Ideally the museums sector must have a stronger voice on these issues in its



<http://manexus.ning.com>

**The new maNexus site is already gathering members, with alerts posted and conversations happening.**

submissions to governments and in discussions with the federal Minister. We will provide a report on the outcome of these discussions via the MA website and other communication channels, as well as on key decisions from the next Council meeting.

This gives me the opportunity to alert all members and colleagues to a dynamic new development: the launch on 7 September 2009 of an active discussion- and information-sharing site as an adjunct to MA's national communications strategy and boosting of sectoral support.

The new *maNexus* site (<http://manexus.ning.com>) is already gathering members, with alerts posted and conversations happening. Individual National Networks /SIGs are already creating their own tailored membership groups inside this portal. Above all, this new facility is already serving as an interconnecting hub for all MA National Networks and SIGs – as well as welcoming other colleagues of common cause and interest to be involved in the exciting work of the museums sector nationally. The *maNexus* site will also have an ongoing link to the *Museum 3.0* site – which has gathered a more international membership, as well as interconnecting many of our colleagues in Australia around innovative developments and 'the future of museums'. The two sites will create good synergies and mutually enrich colleagues across the sector at large.

I hope that during the course of the coming year I will have opportunities to meet with the state and territory branches, and members and leaders in the national networks, to discuss issues of concern and our future strategic directions. ■

## Welcome events and new MA institutional member



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:  
Patricia Sabine, welcomes delegates and invites Minister Peter Garrett to open the 2009 MA National Conference.

Aerial view of Fort Scratchley

Conference delegates enjoy a reception at the Newcastle Region Art Gallery

Bill Hopkins, President Fort Scratchley Historical Society and Len Young, former Curator, Fort Scratchley

Gallery Director, Mr Ron Ramsay, addresses guests at Newcastle Region Art Gallery.

### Fort Scratchley

Fort Scratchley has been sitting in a prime defensive position at the mouth to Newcastle Harbour since the mid-19th Century. It is now also a prime museum site, dedicated to Australian military personnel, with some of the best views of the city of Newcastle and a local museum that has set itself the mission of becoming 'one of the best on the Eastern seaboard'.

The fort's one occasion of action was in 1942, when its six-inch guns traded shots with a large Japanese submarine. The fort continued its service until it was finally abandoned by the Australian Army as a working facility in the 1970s. It then fell into neglect and became almost derelict.

In recent years a concerted effort by locals, led by Bill Hopkins, secured considerable federal funding for restoration of the complex, enabling the fort's eventual dedication as a memorial to all Australian service personnel. Restoration of the fort began in earnest in 2008, and the firing of the re-installed big guns was resumed in 2009, when the fort was ready to be transferred to Newcastle City Council's care, control and management. More recently, work has been undertaken on the museum aspects of the fort, with curatorial work led by Bill Graham. The library has been relaunched by Susan McDonald, and is intended within approximately a year to provide a dedicated research facility supporting the Fort's historical and commemorative mission.

Large crowds were on hand to celebrate the 2009 re-launch of Fort Scratchley, marked by a grand firing of the guns and inauguration of regular guided tours of the tunnels. Spectacularly sited, Fort Scratchley is now an important part of Newcastle's cultural attractions for locals and tourists.

**MA President, Patricia Sabine, in thanking the host party for the tour and evening welcome event at Fort Scratchley, offered an honorary institutional membership to the museum for a year. □**

### Newcastle Region Art Gallery Reception

Newcastle Region Art Gallery generously provided an evening event for Conference delegates after the first day's program. Visitors were welcomed by the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Councillor John Tate, and afterwards addressed by Gallery Director, Mr Ron Ramsay (pictured). An initiative that enabled visitors to perceive the breadth of the Newcastle Gallery's holdings (colonial times to contemporary) was enjoyed by visitors, who were able to socialise within an area graced by a generous installation of art works brought from storage. □



Opening Address Monday 18 May 2009, Newcastle City Hall

# Capturing and sharing our identity



Opening of the MA National Conference in Newcastle City Hall on International Museum Day, 18 May 2009.

## Minister the Hon. Peter Garrett AM MP, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts<sup>1</sup>

As a regular visitor to this part of the coast, I can think of no better town than Newcastle to host this year's conference – it's a dynamic and vibrant city, with unique a culture that reflects its coastal location, indigenous and industrial heritage.

In particular I want to acknowledge our Indigenous delegates, as well as those from regional and remote areas of Australia.

Many of these delegates have been able to make the journey thanks to the Indigenous, regional and remote bursaries provided by the Australian Government – something this Government is very proud to support.

I note this year's conference program covers a diverse range of topics ranging from the national curriculum – which I will touch on later – to the challenge of digitisation, the importance of Indigenous heritage and the critical need to build audiences and increase access to our valuable collections, especially in regional areas.

In the *Declaration of the Value of Museums to Education* [February 2009] the broad scope of institutions that Museums encompass, and the remit of these institutions, was eloquently expressed.

It is this scope and the central role museums can and do play to deepen our understanding of our heritage that Australians need to hear more of, and I hope too, to hear of

the potential partnership roles that can be delivered to further the reach and impact of the work that you do.

Our national collecting institutions play a vital role in capturing and sharing our identity, as well providing spaces where we can reflect on who we are as a people.

The fact is that the arts and culture sector is a key economic driver in this country: cultural industries are worth approximately \$32 billion or 3.5% of Australia's GDP and support around 474,000 jobs in 102,000 enterprises. And in 2007 the International Visitor Survey found that half (51%) of all overseas visitors attended at least one cultural attraction while in Australia.

It is worth recognising that this conference, apart from being the largest annual event of the museums sector, also provides a key training and development opportunity for those Australians working and volunteering in smaller country towns and rural areas; places where we need to support job creation.

Critically, the conference expands opportunities for innovative skills-boosting and job development provided by key specialist staff from national and state institutions.

I want to place on record my very strong support and appreciation for these valuable initiatives.

I note that the first conference session this morning includes a discussion on the National Curriculum to be delivered by Professor Barry McGaw, Chair of the National Curriculum Board.

I have for some time been emphasising the importance of an arts-rich education for Australian school children and was pleased to be invited, on behalf of all arts ministers, to address the Ministerial Council [on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in Adelaide].

In that presentation I highlighted the key issues – creativity, lateral thinking, innovation and cultural understanding – that are vitally important skills for new and emerging industries in the 21st century, and it is my strong conviction that to access an arts-rich education will strengthen the capacity of Australian students to develop these skills.

Consequently arts education will be included in the second phase of curriculum development, alongside geography and languages.

The development by the Museums Australia National Education Network of its *Declaration on the Value of Museums to Education* I expect will produce a thorough and engaging discussion on the important contribution of museums to learning.

I wish you well for this conference.

I can see the program is packed with papers and events that reflect what a diverse and active sector you really are and how deeply you can reach into your local communities.

I consider this outreach role to be absolutely critical and encourage new ideas, innovative approaches and new partnerships that I know will emerge from this gathering, and which are so important to tell the story of the riches and skills that make up our museums – a 'work in progress' that you will undertake with relish.

I wish you a successful conference and I look forward to receiving a report on your deliberations and working closely with you in the future. ■

1. The text printed here is excerpted from Minister Garrett's full remarks. The complete text of the Minister's opening address can be accessed on the Minister's website at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/garrett/2009/sp20090518.html>

**...cultural industries are worth approximately \$32 billion or 3.5% of Australia's GDP and support around 474,000 jobs in 102,000 enterprises**

# ABC Radio National Awards



RIGHT: Jenny Fraser (*cyberTribe*) receiving the ABC's 2009 Indigenous Cultural Centre Award from the Hon. Peter Garrett (Minister for the Arts) and Phil Ashley-Brown (Manager, ABC Local Radio, Newcastle)

ABOVE: Detail of the certificate.



## Indigenous Cultural Centre/Keeping Place Winner: *cyberTribe*

*cyberTribe*, a unique online Indigenous art gallery, was selected for the ABC Radio National *Indigenous Cultural Centre/Keeping Place Award* in 2009, for creating a unique place for Indigenous artists to create and exhibit new media work as well as more traditional forms.

Although *cyberTribe* is an online gallery, it also provides a mixture of online and physical gallery space for exhibitions, and promotes relationships and community understanding between elders, artists, curators, writers, anthropologists, academic staff and students (at tertiary and secondary level), IT professionals, employers, community interest groups and others interested in the development and promotion of Indigenous arts.

Jenny Fraser, *cyberTribe*'s principal driver and energy source, is herself an Indigenous artist and provides the following statement of the gallery's collective purpose:

*cyberTribe has a focus as an online gallery, but where possible, we also try to use 'real life' gallery spaces.*

*This can work well when we create an event and build a sense of community around a particular project or exhibition. We can then use the Internet for its broader communication potential, since it is usually the best promotional tool. Even if we have an exhibition in a 'real' gallery space – for example, in Brisbane – audiences will often not be able to travel physically to that site. However if we show what is happening online, presenting the actual works virtually, together with photos of the opening celebration/ceremony, this can be a good indication of the work. It is also historically*

*important to document works. So the space is part-archive, part-gallery, part-museum, part-publisher.*<sup>[1]</sup>

Museums Australia Director, Bernice Murphy, commented in the ABC RN website announcement: 'The award to *cyberTribe* reminds us all that Indigenous creativity needs to be supported in the most up-to-date forms – even in 'regional cyberspace' – as well as out back where communities are keeping fires of tradition and continuity burning strong.'<sup>[2]</sup> ■

## ABC Radio National 'Marvellous Regional Museums' Awards 2009

Jane Connors, Manager ABC Radio National, commented on the success of the 2009 *Regional Museum Awards*, on the ABC's website in May: 'Australia's regional museums have once again shown us the importance of their place in their communities – both in keeping our history alive and helping us to think about the future. The 2009 Awards have highlighted the diversity of the collections in the care of regional museums and the extraordinary work these, mainly volunteer-run, organisations do to ensure their continued existence.'<sup>[3]</sup>

Museums Australia was again proud to support this ABC initiative for a second year – in 2009 concentrating on the smallest of the regional museums sector, targeting museums largely run by volunteers. Timing worked perfectly on this occasion, through advancing the date of announcing the awards to coincide with International Museum Day (18 May).

Less than an hour after announcement of the winners by Fran Kelly on the ABC's 'Breakfast' program, the Awards were made formally at the National Conference in Newcastle. Trophies and certificates were presented jointly by Arts Minister the Hon. Peter Garrett and ABC Radio National's Local Radio Manager in Newcastle, Phil Ashley-Brown, immediately after the Minister's Conference launch. ■

***cyberTribe* will feature in a forthcoming edition of ABC Radio National's Indigenous arts program, 'Away!'**

1. See website of *cyberTribe* at: <http://www.geocities.com/cybertribeoz/>  
 2. From ABC website announcing and archiving the 2009 awards: [abc.net.au/rn/museums](http://abc.net.au/rn/museums).  
 3. ABC website, as above.



# ABC 'Marvellous Regional Museum' 2009



PHOTO: GAVIN FRY

## National Winner 2009: North Stradbroke Island Historical Museum

North Stradbroke Island Historical Museum (NSIHM) tells the island's story to a permanent community of 3,000 residents and a year-round population of holiday-makers. North Stradbroke Island (known as 'Straddie') is a large sand island some 38 kilometres long and about an hour from Brisbane by ferry.

NSIHM is a social history museum, including a strong Indigenous history. While a small museum and largely dependent on a volunteer base in its own community, the NSIHM has a clear focus and astute sense of purpose, including recording social history in a variety of formats as well as creative projects and artist interventions. The museum was assessed by ABC Radio National judges in 2009 (chaired by Jane Connors and Bernice Murphy) to have the best overall performance across the range of criteria stated:

*It has a range of permanent displays, well supplemented by temporary exhibitions.*

*Its members are active in regional development issues and in developing heritage projects of interest to the community, visitors and schools. It actively collects objects, photographs, video and oral histories, including Indigenous histories, which have been used in its publications; it is also developing a website around its Heritage Trail.*

*The museum is the location for many local events, and has a thoughtful volunteer recruitment program. Among its treasures it holds a stretcher from the Australian Hospital Ship Centaur, which was torpedoed by the Japanese Navy near the Island in 1943, and the Oodgeroo Collection, which was deposited in 2008 by the family of the late Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal people.<sup>[4]</sup>*

As a follow-up to receiving ABC Radio National's 2009 Regional Museums Award on International Museum Day, 18 May 2009 – presented at the opening

of the National Conference in Newcastle – the ABC RN 'Life Matters' team travelled from Sydney to North Stradbroke Island at the end of August, to prepare a program for national broadcast on Friday 4 September. It was a community event, with the Minjerribah Moorgumpin Elders in Council, Dunwich State School Prep and Year 7s and community members, all being both part of the program and audience.

For a small community, this was a rare and important opportunity to reach a large mainstream audience across Australia. As reported by NSIHM staff: 'We greatly enjoyed the Life Matters visit and attention of the host, Richard Aede, and his team.'

NSIHM volunteers and staff also reflected afterwards on how much the technical aspects of supporting a radio program, prepared for a distant nation-wide audience, presented issues not usually faced by the museum.

It was a challenge for a small, closely interconnected local community: to respond to the 'disembodied voice' medium of radio and still be fully inclusive of their key founding members and Indigenous elders; to encompass all viewpoints that are normally signalled in the direct interface with audiences locally, or with tourists and guests physically visiting the museum on North Stradbroke Island.

However a visit by a national broadcast team is a rare event for a small regional museum and its local members off the coast of Queensland. As dedicated staff member Elisabeth Gondwe affirmed: 'North Stradbroke Island Historical Museum is delighted and proud to have received the ABC Radio National 'Marvellous Museums' Award in 2009.

It was a great honour for our museum and our community.' ■



ABOVE LEFT: Elisabeth Gondwe, Petrina Walker & Talisah Edwards (North Stradbroke Island Historical Society) with ABC Radio National 2009 Regional Museums Award.

TOP: North Stradbroke Island Historical Museum, live audience gathered for ABC RN 'Life Matters' program, broadcast nationally on 4 September 2009.

MIDDLE: Richard Aede (ABC 'LifeMatters') visiting North Stradbroke Island Historical Museum, Maree Goebel interviewed.

BOTTOM: ABC Promo – Love your local museum?

4. From ABC website announcing and archiving the 2009 awards: abc.net.au/rn/museums.

# Indigenous participants welcomed to Awabakal Country



**2009 Indigenous participation was the largest of any MA National Conference**

ABOVE: Indigenous lunch – with welcome by representatives and Elders of Awabakal Country.

TOP RIGHT: Lorraine Fitzpatrick and Aunty Maureen Dodd (Gascoyne Aboriginal Heritage and Cultural Centre Carnarvon, WA)

RIGHT: Lee Darroch, Vicki Couzens and Amanda Reynolds, joint presentation on Possum Skin cloakmaking.

FAR RIGHT: James Wilson-Miller  
PHOTOS ANNIE Q MEDLEY

## Possum skin cloak revival in Victoria

Lee Darroch is an arts worker focusing on cultural revival with the support of her Yorta Yorta Elders. She works across the thirty-seven Victorian Aboriginal communities teaching arts, culture, traditional crafts and arts business skills.

With the support of curator and writer Amanda Reynolds, and together with Vicki Couzens, Treahna Hamm and Maree Clarke, Lee has initiated a major cultural revival in the practice of making possum skin cloaks across the South-east of Australia. This work is growing as cloak-making spreads and more Aboriginal people are included in this skills-revival and cultural resurgence.

Reference: Amanda Reynolds, Debra Couzens, Vicki Couzens, Lee Darroch, Treahna Hamm, *Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak: the Tooloyn Koortakay Collection in the National Museum of Australia* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, October 2005).

## James Wilson-Miller speaks about the Myall Creek Massacre, NSW

On 10 June 1838 a group of white settlers murdered 28 Aboriginal men, women and children near Myall Creek Station in northern New South Wales.

Seven of the killers were tried and hanged.

The infamous Myall Creek Massacre now serves as both a harrowing reminder of Australia's colonial violence towards Aboriginal people and of modern-day reconciliation.

Source: <http://www.20.sbs.com.au/podcasting/index.php?action=feeddetails&feedid=65&page=6>

James Wilson-Miller is the Section Head and Curator of Koori History and Culture, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, and a PhD student in the SELF Research Centre. He is a Koori historian and author of the book *Koori: A will to win*. He holds a Centenary of Federation Medal for contributions to Aboriginal issues.



## Indigenous presenters and participants at MA Conference



Indigenous presenters, participants and Elders in the Newcastle City Hall, MA National Conference 2009.

**HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO RUN THE FINAL** plenary session of the Conference was a great honour. It gave Amanda, Vicki and I the opportunity to hold a ceremony which entailed wearing a possum skin cloak ceremonially, singing in language (Keeray Wurrung language of the Guditjmarra people) and speaking in language to acknowledge the local Awabakal people as the traditional owners of Country, and to thank the conference organisers. We also had the chance to give a brief overview of the milestones over the past ten years of the possum skin cloak journey, with many of the images of the different projects along the way.

Lee Darroch, Gragin/ Raymond Island, Victoria

**THE INDIGENOUS SESSIONS HELD ON SUNDAY WERE** very informative and gave me the opportunity to hear Auntie Maureen Dodd from Carnarvon tell her Story. The Indigenous luncheon was a talking point for delegates. I had the opportunity to talk over lunch with other delegates and to establish even more networks. Overall my attendance at the conference was very much appreciated and I have come back with new ideas and concepts that will find a place within my work area.

Amanda Kelly, Wollotuka Resource Centre, School of Aboriginal Studies, Newcastle University

**THE MAIN HIGHLIGHT OF THE CONFERENCE WAS** winning the ABC's 'Marvellous Museums Award' for the best small regional museum in Australia in 2009, presented to us by Peter Garrett, former Midnight Oil member. The award was unexpected but a great surprise.

Petrina Walker and Talisah Edwards, North Stradbroke Island Historical Society Museum

**I FOUND THAT MY ATTENDANCE AT THE CONFERENCE** provided me with many opportunities to further my knowledge and networking possibilities. The scope of the papers presented provided much food for thought and sent me home with many new ideas and approaches for the curatorial and educative work and Indigenous links I have at the Kodja Place.

Rosemary Cussons, Manager of the Kodja Place, Kojonup, WA (winner of the 2008 ABC Radio National Marvellous Museums Award)

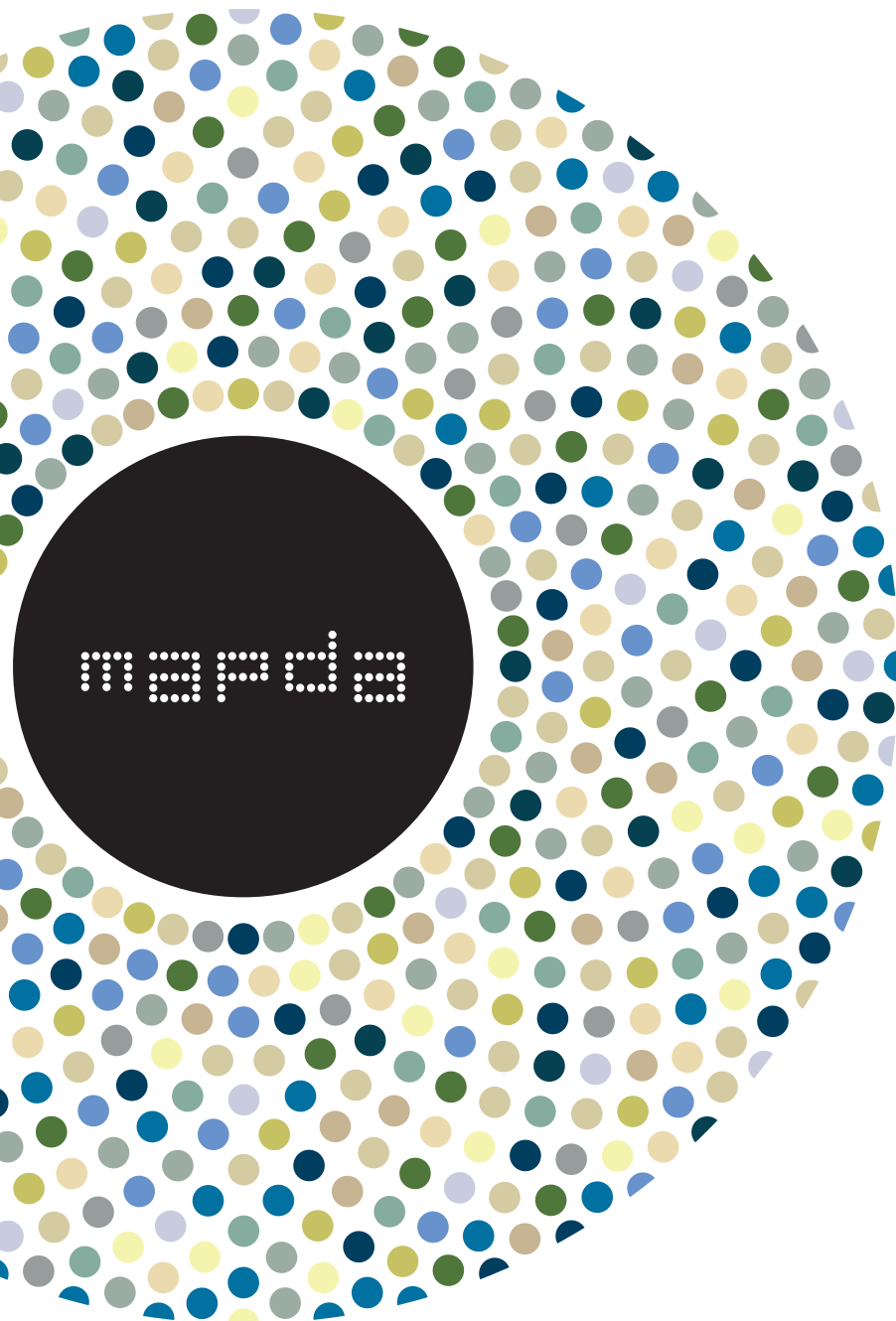
**I SUPPOSE THE SCARY THING FOR ME WAS THE FACT** that things are working well for a lot of people in terms of technological and statistical conversations, and I feel embarrassed that conversations along those lines are not where my community is at, at this time in history, for us to become and feel more inclusive, our conversations need to be at or near the same level as our peers in the museum industry.

Roy Gray, Menmuny Museum Yarrabah, North Queensland

**IT WAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO TALK AND COLLABORATE** with other museum workers on different issues that arise within museums. It was also an opportunity for me to catch up with other Indigenous people who work within museums. This particular conference was the second conference I have been to in my 18 years of service as an Education officer. It was wonderful to see so many museum workers recognise and pay respect to the Indigenous people of their local area. In order to improve in our work places and programs we must always keep in contact with our communities and Elders and have their respect as well.

Cheryl Connors-Young, Indigenous Programs Learning Services Manager, Australian Museum, Sydney

# Excellence in design



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## Jude Savage

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After a two-year break since the previous MAPDA event held during the Canberra National Conference in 2007, it was wonderful to see such support for the Museums Australia 2009 Multimedia and Publications Design Awards (MAPDA) in May this year.

MAPDA 2009 involved a total of 406 entries. This year there was a good mix of entries from regional and metropolitan museums and galleries. However there were notable absentees from some major institutions – which the MAPDA Committee will be targeting to enlist for the event in 2010.

The Award ceremony, always much anticipated, was this year uplifted by the historic setting of the Newcastle City Hall, as host venue for the MA National Conference. This gave the event a sense of heightened occasion, with most institutional representatives needing to make dramatic leaps up to the stage level to collect their Award certificates.

Missing two long-standing MAPDA Committee colleagues (Ian Watts, a member in Melbourne since the Awards' inception in 1992; and Elliott Murray, unable to join us from Brisbane) it was left to Suzie Campbell and me – with the invaluable local support of Julie Baird from the Newcastle Museum – to ensure that all winners were marshalled and honoured with prepared category certificates. Outgoing MA President, Patricia Sabine, again did a wonderful job announcing the various award-winners, adding her own insights into the design elements on show.

In 2007, when hosting the MAPDA Awards event for the Canberra National Conference, the National Portrait Gallery had decided not to enter on its own behalf. However the NPG, buoyed by the success of its opening year in its new building, was back with a vengeance in 2009. The NPG collected multiple awards – the major exhibition catalogue, *Reveries: Photography and Mortality*, in fact carried off the 'Best in Show' award. Designed by Brett Wiencke, of Art Direction Creative, who had worked closely with the curator, Helen Ennis, the judges commented:

*It is a book of substance, a catalogue to be treasured; the designer understood the tone of the content, [with] a sensitive understanding and marrying of text and visual content.*

The 'Judges' Special Award' – for 'pure creativity' – also went to the National Portrait Gallery: for the poster produced for the *Headspace 8: Student Portraiture Exhibition*.

Each year the judging days involve a lively interaction of diverse industry specialists.

They regard the judging process as a wonderful





L-R: MAPDA Award winners  
 Michael Parry (ACMI, Melbourne)  
 Julie Stinson  
 (Historic Houses Trust, NSW)  
 Andrew Sayers (Director of  
 the National Portrait Gallery,  
 Canberra), and Jude Savage  
 Sarah Low (Bundanon Trust)  
 & Niki Mortimor (Australian  
 National Maritime Museum)  
 Robin Hirst (Museums Victoria)

**Crucial issues are not simply about design and navigation, but how a website engages viewers, enticing exploration of the site**

opportunity to survey what is happening across a broad field, to exchange differing perspectives, and most of all to be inspired by the vibrancy of the cultural industry's activities.

The National Portrait Gallery hosted the judging day for paper-based publications in early April, drawing for judges on Nat Williams from the National Library of Australia, Yvonne Kennedy from the National Archives of Australia, Rick Cochrane from Blue Star Print and designer Ian Wingrove from Rhodes Wingrove.

However, a 'first' this year occurred around the multimedia and website judging. Instead of a face-to-face meeting, a teleconference was convened drawing

together judges Caitlin Malcolm (National Gallery of Victoria) in Melbourne, designer Brendan O'Donnell (Art Direction Creative) in Canberra, and Dean Stevenson (Interactive Controls) in Sydney.

All had to do a lot of homework individually, viewing a range of websites, making ratings and formulating recommendations. My job from Perth in that meeting was to keep discussions on track while allowing enough substantial debate telephonically to achieve final awards in each category.

As in previous years, the judges refrained from making awards in some categories, reinforcing the ethos that these awards are to honour *excellence in design*. In review, there was a plea from judges for museums and galleries to really look hard at what is being commissioned and achieved in regard to design.

The judges were also concerned by the number of publications printed offshore. They specifically wanted to urge directors of national institutions to consider mandating that as many publications as possible are printed in Australia. The judges realise that the printing industry is a labour-intensive enterprise (and this has cost implications – not least because higher wages are maintained in Australia in the face of cheap labour available abroad).

However, the quality of design is high in Australia, and it directly conveys ideas and impulses that are part of Australian cultural development. One take-away message of the MAPDA awards is the energy and integrity of Australian design, and how important it is to maintain the on-shore viability of the printing

and production industries in Australia that support our designers.

The most contentious category this year proved to be the 'corporate' entries, with the judges divided in their views and decision-making. There was considerable discussion, for instance, about the purpose and outcome of an annual report: debates about content versus design; questions as to whether an annual report has a stand-up life of its own, once produced, and may be judged against other design products; queries as to whether such a report may present differently from other products or corporate identity produced by the same institution.

It was argued that the design awards could not impose judgments about the *motivation* of a publication – reaching beyond what could be appraised in the *outcome*; the exercise of appraisal by judges could only apply to the quality of final design evident – since it was impossible to know the original brief.

Concerning the website entries: there was much debate around what constitutes a well designed site. Discussion affirmed that crucial issues are not simply about design and navigation, but how a website engages viewers, enticing exploration of the site. Some sites almost negate the need to visit an exhibition but, on the other hand, serve a great educational value and purpose for remote and regional web visitors who are unable to visit source-institutions physically. Often the MAPDA judges, as browsers, were intrigued by an entry initially, then disappointed when a site proved too text-heavy or took too long to load. In other cases, the visuals were great but the ability to translate or interpret crucial subject-matter successfully let a site down in the end.

As always, MAPDA is indebted to Interactive Controls and the Blue Star Print Group as sponsors – for their continuing and loyal support of this event. MAPDA also relies heavily on the efforts of a voluntary committee.

I could not have carried out my tasks as Chair of MAPDA without the talents of my colleagues Ian Watts, Elliott Murray, and Suzie Campbell. We are all intensely grateful for the support of our respective institutions: City Museum at Old Treasury in Melbourne; Queensland Art Gallery and its Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane; the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra; and the Art Gallery of Western Australia. All institutions have generously allowed Committee members time to work on the awards and much appreciation is due to each of them. ■

Jude Savage chaired the MAPDA Committee in 2009; she is Registrar of Collections, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth. Information on the MAPDA Awards, the 2009 announcement of winners and other details can be found on the MA website: [www.museumsaustralia.org.au](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au)

## Dynamic challenges for museum education



PHOTOGRAPHED BY GEORGE SERRAS NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

### David Arnold

The advent of the new national curriculum for Australian schools has given museums and cultural institutions generally an unprecedented opportunity to become even more relevant to school education than their mission has always supported historically.

This is not the first time that national curricula have been on the agenda in Australia. We have been making some progress towards this goal since 1989. However a decisive national political will this time – continuing across the Howard Coalition and Rudd Labor governments in succession – guarantees more far-reaching changes in curricular design across all states and territories than Australia has experienced for generations.

Over the next few years, we are likely to witness the realisation of *national* courses in all key learning areas, starting with Mathematics, English, Science and History in 2011. The Arts, Geography and Languages Other Than English areas will follow shortly after, with work to begin on these subjects later in 2009.

The Education National Network of Museums Australia (MA), together with staff in the MA National Office, have since mid-2008 been dedicated to ensuring that our museums are engaged with this national education-sector process and play an active role in the national curriculum endeavour.

It was strongly believed from the start that museum education has much to offer the development of a

national school curriculum.

The MA National Conference in May 2009, in Newcastle, represented an excellent opportunity to inform museum and gallery colleagues broadly about the evolving national curriculum and its relevance to museums.

It was therefore extremely pleasing that Professor Barry McGaw, Chair of the National Curriculum Board – now called the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) – accepted the Organising Committee's invitation to be a keynote speaker at the 2009 conference. Professor McGaw's attendance not only enabled those present to hear first-hand about the rationale for an Australian national curriculum, including its broad scope and planning sequence, but also consolidated the excellent relationships between MA and ACARA.

During his address (which Conference opener, Minister Peter Garrett, stayed to hear) Professor McGaw discussed international comparisons between countries in terms of their educational achievement levels, outlined the increasing challenge for Australia's education system, and canvassed how the development of a 'world's best practice' Australian national curriculum might contribute to enhancing Australia's broader educational dividend in the years to come. Later he embraced the place and role that learning institutions such as museums could provide in both the development of the new curriculum and in meeting many of the outcomes that will be required of schools in several

BELOW: The ACARA website  
<http://www.acara.edu.au/default.asp>





of the key learning areas such as History, the Sciences and The Arts.

During an afternoon workshop following his plenary keynote address, Prof. McGaw challenged museum educators to continue to develop close relations with ACARA and seek to be active players in supporting this critical initiative.

Prior to the MA Conference, the Education National Network had created a key position-statement that expressed the value of museums to the national curriculum. This document was submitted to ACARA along with the Network's detailed responses to both the History and the Sciences curriculum framework papers - the precursors to the detailed curriculum documents that are currently being developed.

The Education National Network's *Declaration of the Value of Museums to Education*<sup>1</sup> will be of interest to all museum professionals, since it sets out how museums – as key places of learning – can help to address many of the goals of the new curriculum.

In his Conference Opening address in the morning, Minister Garrett referred specifically to the *Declaration* document and congratulated museums on their involvement with the national curriculum. He described it as a clear statement of aims and intentions, and encouraged museums to continue to bring their particular educational expertise to the national curriculum tasks ahead.

Earlier this year, I was fortunate to be selected as an advisor for the national History curriculum, and consequently have been able to provide feedback on progressive drafts of that curriculum document. In this process my 'museums hat' has also been on, and I have suggested ways in which museums – with their rich primary collections, exhibitions and means to assist Australians in understanding history – can be explicitly referenced as resource institutions in these drafts.

The national curriculum is a work in progress. However it is satisfying to have an explicit opportunity to influence the development of this curriculum and advance the important goals of museum education as described in the MA Education Network's *Declaration* document. Further opportunities may arise for museum educators to play a similar role in the future – especially in the development of learning areas such as the Arts.

For museum educators, the MA conference in Newcastle was not focussed on the national curriculum exclusively. Other excellent workshops were conducted on a variety of topics and themes that are of importance to museum education.

On day one, sessions delivered to a healthy number of delegates covered such diverse areas as engaging children under 5; new types of education programming using visual and graphic media; and continuing and enhancing successful major education programs such as the Ultimo Science Festival.

On day two, we heard about the Pittsburgh Children's Museum with its 'town square' programs for children; opportunities for responding to the digital literacy challenge through devising education programs that

exploit digital technologies as learning tools; and the place of *discovery spaces* for children in museums.

On day 3, presenters considered how museums can help schools establish self-curated exhibitions in their classrooms; how museums are working with The Learning Federation to provide digital resources for schools; and how puppetry can bring learning alive in a museum context.

The variety of conference sessions indicated in this varied list goes some way to demonstrating how and why museum educators and public programs officers are 'making a difference' in museums. The Education National Network was delighted that the Newcastle conference afforded this level of workshop support for its members. We can only benefit from this type of exposure to best-practice museum education.

The years ahead are important for museum educators and for museums generally. The new national curriculum affords us a unique opportunity to become even more relevant to Australian schools. Such relevance is not simply to be found in delivering useful content to support key learning area outcomes; museum relevance will be secured and extended through the provision of learning experiences that can decisively enhance a variety of skills developments articulated in curriculum documents.

Teachers will be looking to museums and galleries to provide their students with programs and resources that prepare them to be effective citizens in the 21st century. It is our task to be ready to work in partnership with schools and education bodies to help teachers and their students achieve the requirements of the new national courses.

There are exciting years ahead for museum education. The Education National Network is ready to ensure that museums play a crucial role in this nationwide effort under way.

If you would like to make contact about museum education-related matters, please indicate your interest by just sending an email – [d.arnold@nma.gov.au](mailto:d.arnold@nma.gov.au). If you are not already a member of the National Education Network but would like to stay in touch with the national curriculum initiative and other key education issues in the coming months, please consider joining our activities and national engagement. We will be sending regular email newsletters to our members. We are also in the process of updating our education online facility, which will enable members and colleagues to exchange ideas more diversely in future. ■

David Arnold is President of Museums Australia's *Education National Network*, and Manager of Education at the National Museum of Australia

## The new national curriculum affords us a unique opportunity to become even more relevant to Australian schools

1. Museums Australia's Declaration of the Value of Museums to Education, February 2009, is available for download on MA's website: [www.museumsofaustralia.org.au](http://www.museumsofaustralia.org.au)



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# Rescuing the Eureka Flag



## Ron Radford

The Eureka flag was in a ruinous state when I began as director of the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery. It was in desperate need of treatment, but at least it had already been professionally cleaned.

Textile conservation was scarcely recognised as a specialised field at that time in Australia. Trained personnel were not readily available to deal with a flag that had seen active duty in an uprising, from which pieces had been snipped as mementos and its remains further ravaged by neglect. Some conservation money was made available through Victorian state government and Ballarat City Council sources.

I could then arrange for the setting-up of the restoration work, and the sewing and mounting of the large flag. We had to close the upstairs front gallery, the James Oddie gallery, so that conservation could be carried out during much of 1973. It was quite a task to have the flag restored and mounted on the wall of the stairwell gallery, behind a huge piece of glass and protective curtains, in time for the annual Eureka Stockade commemorations in early December.

Val D'Angri, a great local seamstress, managed the actual sewing required to reassemble the flag into a better condition, its backing on special net and other remedial treatments. We were able to gain advice and careful instructions for this work from afar, from the textiles department of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

The flag was finally mounted and unveiled by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam on Eureka Day, 3 December 1973 – the day after the first anniversary of his coming to power.

I recall that when I suggested to my committee that Gough Whitlam unveil the flag, there was much apprehension among my large and elderly board of trustees over the political associations likely to be mobilised by the Prime Minister's launch of the event.

I regarded the flag then, as now, as a work of art – or rather a great work of Australian craft. It was a beautiful and original design. The actual colours of the woollen flag – the deep indigo background and the buff-coloured cross – are so much more aesthetically resonant than the harsher bright blue-and-white version now used crudely to carry the Southern Cross design.

The original design was brilliant. The colours chosen were subtle and the craftsmanship of the women who finally sewed the flag in 1854 was immaculate. This is one of the reasons the flag survived despite its vandalism through samples being cut from it over many decades, both before the flag entered the Gallery in 1895 and after that time. (Some relic cuttings of the flag were subsequently returned to the Gallery.)

The flag is now prominently displayed in a special Eureka room, which was part of the subsequent extension to the gallery, with other works of art relating to the event. ■

Ron Radford is Director of the National Gallery of Australia. After a first professional posting at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, he was appointed Director of the then-named Ballarat Fine Art Gallery in 1973, taking responsibility for an important collection of Australia art amassed over almost a century in Victoria's oldest regional gallery, founded in 1884.

# What mattered then, what matters now



## Andrew Simpson

It was the centrepiece of an oath of allegiance, a symbol that has been adopted at various times by groups on the left, and right, of the political spectrum in Australia. It has been mythologised as representing the struggle of free men against oppressive tyranny, labour against the ruling and privileged class, and individual free enterprise against intrusive government regulation. It has been eulogised as representing the birthplace of Australian democracy<sup>[1]</sup> and even an expression of multicultural republicanism. It is a piece of cloth associated with one of the two armed rebellions in Australia's European history and dates from 1854 on the Victorian goldfields.

The Eureka Flag, the linked stars of the Southern Cross on a dark blue background, is an iconic and instantly recognisable Australian symbol. It is surely the most recognisable 'Canadian-designed'<sup>[2]</sup> Australian image. The original, once an anti-authoritarian rallying point for rebellious and entrepreneurial miners, is now a bedraggled textile in a dimly-lit museum alcove, mounted on a wall facing some very comfortable seating.

What mattered then still matters now, yet the original and current contexts are poles apart. What was once a focal point for a coordinated group insurrection that was swiftly dispatched by government-sanctioned violence is now a focus for quiet, individual contemplation.

There is plenty to contemplate, represented in a period of history that saw the development of great wealth for individuals, and for government via taxation. This period transformed colonial Australia. The results can be seen in the quality of the cultural facilities throughout the Victorian goldfields today, from spectacular art galleries to well-maintained heritage buildings. The lure of the goldfields attracted people from all over the world. At the time the rush was only a hint of globalisation, but destined to grow exponentially in the future. Australia has a significant history of endeavour in the area of mining entrepreneurship.

The Eureka Flag is one of millions of objects held within the Australian museums sector. Museums may be described as three-dimensional encyclopaedias of knowledge or supermarkets for the mind. They hold significant objects. These include rare and exotic items from nature and, like the Flag, 'made objects' that represent to a modest degree a fulcrum of the grand sweep of human narrative.

1 The Eureka Stockade Centre in Ballarat uses the slogan 'the birthplace of Australian democracy'; there was also a similar title used by Anne Sunter for her 2002 PhD thesis that examines many of the contested interpretations of the Eureka story – see References (below).

2 The flag was probably designed by a Canadian, Captain Charles Ross, and made by three women, including Anastasia Withers and Anne Duke, wives of diggers working on the goldfields. [http://www.eureka-flag.com/past\\_views.php](http://www.eureka-flag.com/past_views.php) (accessed 20.7.08).

3 While the term 'museum' is used by a wide variety of public and private organisations, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) is a global organisation of museum professionals that provides an agreed definition of the term museum and prescribes ethical standards that such organisations should meet. (See <http://icom.museum/>.)

4 Heritage Collections Council: Significance: A guide to assessing the significance of cultural heritage objects and collections, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Commonwealth of Australia, 2001. The Heritage Collections Council was a joint initiative of the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments in partnership





ABOVE: C.A. Doudiet, *Swearing allegiance to the 'Southern Cross', 1854 (he was on the spot)*

LEFT: C.A. Doudiet, *Gravel Pits, 1854*

But who decides what is significant? Are there significant items that don't make it into museum collections? Is our understanding of the human condition the poorer because of such absence?

Museums are responsible for holding objects in public trust for perpetuity. They don't have endless resources for the warehousing of everything with only a meagre tincture of importance. Things that are only bit players in the story of human endeavour cannot all be granted the reverence associated with a museum accession number.

Accessioning an object into a museum collection involves a commitment of long-term resources. It will claim storage space and the technical expertise to secure its passage through time with minimal material changes. There will be the occasional appearance in a display case, an image on a website and a mention in a research or general publication. Museums are not simply warehouses. They must provide access to, and interpretation of, objects in order to be considered trustworthy and valued public institutions.<sup>[3]</sup>

*Significance* as a concept is a slippery beast. The well-titled garden of objective scholarship quickly sprouts numerous subjective weeds when this question is considered. In what context is an object significant? To which individuals, or communities, is an object significant?

The curatorial leaders of the museums sector were first guided in a comprehensive approach to significance assessment by the Heritage Collections Council, which arose in the 1990s. This body spearheaded a collective effort by the museums sector to address the 'national' interconnections of many different collections held throughout states and territories across Australia.<sup>[4]</sup>

The historic, aesthetic, scientific and social attributes

of an object are the four aspects requiring consideration in any significance assessment. However our understanding of science, history, aesthetics and social context is constantly changing. Today's miscellany and ephemera can become tomorrow's objects of awe and reverence.

The Eureka Flag is a good illustration of the shifting sands of significance.<sup>[5]</sup> The first thing noticeable about the Flag is that bits are missing. It looks as though numerous little chunks have been cut from it as souvenirs. In fact, enterprising early individuals considered it significant enough to want to own a piece. Samples were claimed – before the rising collective significance of the remaining cloth prompted an end to this assault on the object's integrity. Serious sanctions would confront anyone attempting to sample the fabled cloth today.

Turning to its interpretation: the written word, even in a very small font, about the Flag, Stockade and associated events would literally cover hectares. Perhaps this is an objective physical, rather than metaphysical, measure of significance. The main reason the literature is so expansive is because the Eureka episode in history has been contested with almost as many interpretations as interpreters.<sup>[6]</sup>

The significance of the Flag extends well beyond the community of historians who vigorously contest the history. It is etched into the national consciousness and, as such, many would argue that the original object should be in a national institution.<sup>[7]</sup> Perhaps the geographic region over which an object is 'known' is another objective measure of significance. But the Flag has remained in Ballarat since it was first made. Originally in private hands, it is now a permanent feature on the walls of the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery. This in itself suggests that the object's significance may reside principally in its handicraft or design rather than its social history.

Despite its national recognition there is no denying the significance of the Eureka Flag to its community of origin. Ballarat hosts Australia's most successful outdoor heritage theme park, Sovereign Hill – associated principally with the history of the Victorian goldfields. It occupies the time and energy of numerous enthusiastic local volunteers, is visited by a phenomenal number of national and international tourists and turns over a considerable amount of revenue each year. It is part of the economically significant heritage industry, and Ballarat benefits more than most other towns in regional Australia as a result.

The central narrative of the Eureka Stockade was once part of Sovereign Hill's live interpretation on the December 3 anniversary. This involved many of the locals – some with distant family connections to the original event – re-enacting the government troopers storming the stockade and swiftly ending the miners' rebellion. In the museum world these historic re-enactments are stock-in-trade live interpretations, or 'art imitating life' scenarios.

It was gradually noticed that after each re-enactment there were a few bloody noses and the occasional

with the museums sector that arose in the 1990s. It was later replaced by the Collections Council of Australia. The first edition of *Significance* can be accessed on line at: [http://sector.amol.org.au/\\_data/page/61/significance\\_complete.pdf](http://sector.amol.org.au/_data/page/61/significance_complete.pdf).

A second (revised) edition, *Significance 2.0*, was published by the Collections Council of Australia in 2009 and can be accessed from the CCA's website at <http://significance.collectionscouncil.com.au/>.

5 Much has been written on the changing views about the significance of the events surrounding the flag and stockade. There are many excellent discussions of these issues – for example, Anne Sunter's (2003) 'Contested memories of Eureka'.

6 Peter Hiscock (in 1999) described the difficulties in the following way: 'In Ballarat, an attempt to write anything about the Eureka Rebellion is akin to scratching an ant's nest. Once disturbed, a horde of local historians emerge to bite one another's bottoms. There are many experts.' (Peter Hiscock, 'Look into my eyes – read my lips... – see References).

7 There is a perennial debate within the museum community as to whether objects of significance are better off in large state or national institutions (which are allegedly better resourced) or retained in their community of origin, where they may be neglected in the collection of an impoverished volunteer-run historical society. Some of these arguments have been discussed by Schulz (2003).

## Contesting significance

RIGHT: Lambing Flat Riot 1861, Might versus Right, S.T. Gill, c.1862 – 1863. SLNSW

FAR RIGHT: Chinese in Lambing Flat riots, December 1860, NA.



broken bone.<sup>[8]</sup> The injuries were above the statistical average that one might expect from the theatrical recreation of past violent events, despite the large number of participants and their passionate engagement in the recreation of events at the Stockade. There were no deaths – unlike the original event; nevertheless the practice was discontinued after organisers realised that some local participants were possibly using the live interpretation to settle old scores.<sup>[9]</sup>

Perhaps they were arguing over significance. What mattered then obviously still mattered to the participants. It seems that even re-enactments of contested history are also contested. The Eureka re-enactment had become an example of 'life imitating art imitating life'. Today the historical event is evoked in a light and sound show (entitled 'Blood on the Southern Cross'), removing the disagreeable and quarrelsome human element.

Even without live interpretation, the significance of Sovereign Hill in the heritage industry is illustrated by its annual turnover of over 20 million dollars.<sup>[10]</sup> By any account this enterprise is very successful among heritage industry practitioners. It is interesting to consider some of the reasons for their success.

It is compulsory for visitors to be involved on site. School groups that visit and stay overnight are expected to dress in period costume. Outside of school hours they therefore become street urchins of the era, scamp-ering about the township amongst the other paying guests. Employees are involved at street level as well. For example, the woman dressed in 1850s finery that you may meet shopping at a Sovereign Hill store may well be a senior accountant with the organisation.<sup>[11]</sup>

Another impressive aspect is how thoroughly Sovereign Hill has investigated and exploited its potential market. Like all 19<sup>th</sup> century Australian goldfields, the Chinese made up a significant proportion of those seeking rewards for working the earth. Sovereign Hill management discovered through research that most of those on the Ballarat goldfields came from a small number of provinces in China. Marketing was targeted accordingly and specific tours developed and delivered only in Mandarin. This target-group now makes up a considerable percentage of the visitors.<sup>[12]</sup>

While Sovereign Hill is obviously a polished and

well-organised operation, the heritage industry is a tough one and its own history is littered with failures. For example, 'Old Sydney Town' was a fairly recent casualty. While the venture ran for some 28 years,<sup>[13]</sup> it was nevertheless not sustainable – despite the location within a heavily populated region and so close to the nation's major tourist intake valve. Like Sovereign Hill, Old Sydney Town had enthusiastic volunteers recreating early Sydney, complete with convict floggings and associated confrontational colonial street shenanigans. What it lacked, however, was a narrative interpreted as central to the birth of Australian democracy, or an iconic object that drew people together within a collective ideal – or at least towards a set of shared values. Could the difference between the two organisations represent the gulf between heritage and nostalgia? If so, then sadly for Old Sydney Town, nostalgia is no longer what it used to be.

While a heritage industry venture depends on a certain level of collective nostalgia, to survive in the longer-term powerful narratives, identifiable events and, if possible, iconic imagery are needed. Sovereign Hill has the advantages of a tight ten-year goldfield focus (1851–1861), neatly encompassing the Eureka fracas.

It was a time when people were seeking collective representation of their interests and there were many meetings on many goldfields. Flags were often used as rallying points, but only the Eureka Flag is widely known. There is another flag dating from 1861, in a small historical society museum in the 'cherry capital of Australia', the New South Wales township of Young. Keen volunteers run the Lambing Flat Folk Museum; however it does not attract hundreds of thousands of visitors or have a multi-million-dollar turnover.

The flag on show in the museum was once used to rally thousands of miners. Known as the 'Roll Up' Flag or Banner, the design incorporates symbols reminiscent of the Southern Cross in the central region, with the words 'No Chinese' on the perimeter. This flag acted as a rallying point for white miners to attack Chinese mining camps on Lambing Flats during 1861.<sup>[14]</sup>

The Roll Up Flag is an early material manifestation of xenophobia, a symbol of white racism. It represents fear of non-Anglo-Celtic cultures and a resentment of sharing wealth-producing opportunities that many would argue still resonates today in some sections of

8 Peter Hiscock, the former Director of Sovereign Hill, stated (1999) that there were a number of unanticipated injuries sustained by participants. He elaborated on this point while hosting a visit to Sovereign Hill by Museums Australia members in 2004, in association with the organisation's national conference.

9 Peter Hiscock has indicated that there were many other more pressing reasons for abandoning the live re-enactments of the Eureka Stockade, including the immense logistics of the production.

10 Total revenue from operating activities in the 2006–2007 financial year was reported as \$20,480,458 – see 06/07 Sovereign Hill financial report, at: <http://www.sovereignhill.com.au/uploads/Financial%20Report%2006-07.pdf>.

11 This actually occurred during a visit by Macquarie University Museum Studies students in 2007 – the subsequent discussions first indicating to us the financial scope of Sovereign Hill's operations.

12 This point was made in presentations to visiting groups of Museum Studies students from Macquarie University – on a number of occasions during regular visits (2004 to 2007) – by Roger Trudgeon (Curator of the Gold Museum at Sovereign Hill).

13 Old Sydney Town was opened by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam on Australia Day, 26 January 1975. It closed in 2003. (Claire O'Rourke, 'Farewell to Old Sydney Town', Sydney Morning Herald, 24 January 2003.) <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/01/24/1042911552312.html>.

14 This flag is pictured and discussed on the Migration Heritage Centre's 'Objects through time' website: <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/objectsthroughtime/objects/lambingflatsbanner/>. While the object is clearly of great interest to historians, there is in fact minimal broad public knowledge of it. The Young Historical Society spent many years unsuccessfully seeking government funding to carry out essential conservation work to stop deterioration of the fabric. This was only recently secured (according to discussions with volunteers at the Lambing Flats Folk Museum). The flag was conserved and rehoused in a new display case some time between our (Macquarie University Museum Studies) visits in 2006 and 2007.





the Australian body politic. While there were many anti-Chinese riots in our European history, Lambing Flats was probably the worst. Australia has a significant history of mis-deeds and sanctions in the area of xenophobia, as evidenced in the federal *Immigration Restriction Act of 1901* and other manifestations of the 'White Australia Policy'.

In an assessment of significance, the Roll Up Banner is the equivalent of the Eureka Flag in terms of social and historic attributes; moreover the aesthetic qualities are similar. However there are no re-evocations of the Lambing Flat riots, nor any heritage industry enterprise constructing visitor experiences and massive money-spinning ventures around this object.

It seems much more palatable for Australians to be known as a nation of individuals who heroically struggled against unjust oppressors, rather than a nation of individuals who beat up others because they were different or perceived as a threat to economic prosperity.

Selected aspects of what mattered then, still matter now. ■

Andrew Simpson is Director, Museum Studies Program, at Macquarie University, New South Wales.



ABOVE/LEFT: Roll-Up Banner  
Lambing Flat Folk Museum  
Young NSW.

BELOW LEFT: Lambing Flat miners'  
camp c.1860s SLNSW

SOURCE CREDIT:  
Roll-Up Banner  
*Statement of Significance 2006*  
S.Thompson  
NSW Migration Heritage Centre  
Powerhouse Museum  
[www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au](http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au)

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# Contextualising an icon



Eugene von Guérard,  
*Old Ballarat as it was  
in the summer of 1853-54,*  
1884

## Gordon Morrison

The Flag of the Southern Cross, otherwise known as the Eureka Flag, has been intimately bound up with the history of the Art Gallery of Ballarat since the 1890s, when the family of Trooper King – who had cut it down at the stockade – was persuaded by the first Secretary and President of the Gallery to place it on long-term deposit in the institution.

The diverse ways the flag has been treated since the 1890s reflect substantially evolving museological standards as much as they convey changing attitudes to Australia's history. If a 1912 visitor to the Ballarat Fine Art Public Art Gallery (as it then was) had asked respectfully for a souvenir of the Eureka flag, there is every likelihood that the 'keeper' would have snipped a postage-stamp-size piece as a reward for interest. This process had actually begun as far back as December 3 1854, the day the flag was brought as a trophy into the government camp after the defeat of the diggers.

Between 1920 and the mid-1940s, few people believed that the relic held in the Gallery was the real thing. Popular opinion expected that the flag should resemble the image that had been printed on the front cover of the first edition of Raffaello Carboni's account, *The Eureka Stockade*, published in 1855. Ironically, if the flag had been considered a genuine article in the early 1930s, it would probably would have been handed over to the local historical society as an item of historical rather than artistic significance – and its future protection been much less secure.

Nevertheless the flag was occasionally pressed into service as testimony to historical events. In 1947, when Chips Rafferty was in Ballarat to absorb a 'sense of place' before taking the part of Peter Lalor in the film of the Eureka Stockade, the famous actor was allowed to hold the flag in his hands. The Gallery has a file photograph that records the event.

The rich story of this iconic object's complex history – how the flag was later rehabilitated as a genuine relic; and the eventual recognition of its true condition as a 150-year-old large piece of fragile cloth – has been related elsewhere.

There is a crucial question for its host institution today: What does the flag mean in terms of its permanent display in the Art Gallery of Ballarat? Since the early 1970s the object has been professionally conserved and placed on permanent display. This in itself presents a number of challenges. Light levels have to be substantially reduced for an old, coloured textile to be displayed on a long-term basis. This is achieved using fibre-optic technology; however even 'state of the art' techniques employed in the latest phase

of the display's construction (of 2001–2002) may still be open to review and revision.

The Art Gallery of Ballarat has also devotedly built up a collection of imagery that not only records and contextualises the early history of the Eureka troubles but also explores artists' responses to both the legend and image of the flag during the last 150 years. This forms an important sub-category of the Gallery's collecting policy and now encompasses a rich corpus of works: for example, Charles Doudiet's unique co-eval watercolour drawings of both the Flag at Bakery Hill and the Stockade; Marc de Jong's Eureka Flags rendered in Indigenous colours of black, red and gold; or the 1954 series of commemorative woodcuts produced by social realist artists such as Noel Counihan and Maurie Carter.

From a practical, everyday perspective, displaying a large, 150-year-old flag of immense social, political and almost 'spiritual' significance carries with it a unique set of challenges. Some of these are made more complex by the fact that there is an ongoing issue about whether the Gallery itself – built as it is on the site of the government camp of the 1850s – is the most appropriate symbolic 'home' for the flag. Quite a number of people visit the Gallery today for no other reason than to see the Flag. For some visitors the flag has come to symbolise particular, even exclusive, concepts – whether of 'white supremacy' for some, or of the rights of particular trade unions for others.

As the Gallery's director, it can be a little demoralising at times, knowing how wonderful and varied the Ballarat collection is as a whole, to have to respond to visitor responses stated as: 'We're not interested in your gallery. We just want to see the Flag!'. This can be reminiscent of director Daryl Lindsay at the National Gallery of Victoria decades ago, troubled that visitors only wanted to see Phar Lap. ■

Gordon Morrison is Director of the Art Gallery of Ballarat



## A voluntary Indigenous repatriation from a US museum

# Secret-sacred object returned

Michael Pickering

On Monday 29 June 2009, Pamela McClusky (Curator of African and Oceanic Art at the Seattle Art Museum in Washington State, USA) officially handed over an Australian Indigenous secret-sacred object to Craddock Morton, Director of the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.

The low-key formality of the occasion, marked by the signing of a receipt of delivery, underlay a highly significant event. This was the first time that an American museum or collecting institution had initiated the return of such an object on the basis that – as Mary-Ann Jordan, the Seattle Art Museum's Interim Director stated – 'We have a deep respect for Aboriginal heritage and understand the importance of this object to the culture that created it. We are proud to return it to its rightful home.'

The object in question was a stone *tjuringa*, an object used in ceremony and of a form generically described as:

*... commonly elongated rectangular pieces ... [of stone or wood]... flat or slightly convex, and rounded and perhaps tapered at the ends. They range in size from several centimetres to several metres... The more usual means of decoration is the incision of various patterns: frequently concentric circles, spirals, U-figures, parallel and curved lines, stylised animal tracks and anthropomorphic figures. They may also be painted with ochre and/or have patterns in down affixed.*<sup>[1]</sup>

*Tjuringa* are secret-sacred objects. That is, they are traditionally subject to restrictions as to contact and viewing. They are not to be viewed by women, children or uninitiated men. Within mainstream Australian museums, the display of such objects is no longer practised – out of respect for the powerful Aboriginal protocols and belief surrounding these important items of cultural heritage.

The return from Seattle of such an important object followed three years of engagement between the National Museum of Australia (NMA) and the Seattle Art Museum (SAM). In May 2006 the NMA was first contacted by the Seattle Art Museum seeking advice about the object, which had been in the museum's collections since 1971 but had never been on public view. It had been acquired in 1970 through a Melbourne-based art dealer. The SAM was interested in the possibility of repatriation and sought information about appropriate processes for such a return to be accomplished. At this early stage, the repatriation was still speculative; the SAM Board of Trustees had yet to be



Craddock Morton, Director of the National Museum of Australia, Canberra with Pamela McClusky, Curator of African and Oceanic Art at the Seattle Art Museum, Washington State.

convinced that repatriation was appropriate.

The National Museum of Australia provided advice as to the cultural context of *tjuringa*, Australian museum sector principles regarding the care and management of secret-sacred objects, the processes followed in Australia for return of such objects, NMA policies and protocols concerning repatriation, plus details of Australian government and Indigenous agencies that would be able to assist and advise on appropriate processes.

Eventually armed with the detailed information provided by the NMA, Pamela McClusky, prepared a case for the deaccessioning and return of the *tjuringa* to go before the SAM's Board of Trustees. The initial presentation was not successful, with some trustees being reticent.

Repatriation was a topical and controversial issue in United States museums and galleries at the time, and a cautionary attitude to such questions prevailed. The SAM trustees

sought more information about the cultural significance of *tjuringa* as well as requiring reassurance as to the level of discretion required, should the object be returned. This is not an unusual response amongst overseas institutions. There is a common fear among many museums internationally that a repatriation event might attract negative publicity – for example, when such acts of restitution might simply attract abuse to an institution for having collected such objects in the first place.

Australia's National Museum subsequently provided more detailed information and rationale to assist the SAM in preparing a case for representation to its board. It should be noted that the SAM staff and executive continued to be supportive of the repatriation proposal. The SAM considered that repatriation was in accordance with both advancing ethical awareness among museums and recent policy statements adopted by the

## A voluntary Indigenous repatriation from a US museum

Association of American Art Museum Directors (AAMD). It was at the level of *trustees* that strongest concerns about repatriation continued to remain. Again, this situation has also been reflected in Australian museums' advances concerning repatriation over many years.<sup>[2]</sup> The discussion over the object in the Seattle Art Museum was again deferred for some time.

One interesting aspect of the situation surrounding the SAM deliberation was that under the United States Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA),<sup>[3]</sup> the onus is on a *claimant* to provide detailed testimony as to a specific object's importance. In Australia, however, this is not a pre-requisite. The significance of *tjuringa* to Indigenous people, for instance, is well established. Furthermore, even when an object may have poor *provenance* and no traditional custodian can be readily identified, there is still a presumption of such an Indigenous object's eligibility for repatriation.

In short, while Australian museums' collective policy commitment in support of repatriation of Indigenous heritage has been evolving proactively since the early 1990s (without the spur of a national legislative requirement, as in the United States) the testing process in Australia is not as rigorous as that specified under the US legislation. In the Seattle case, this meant that detailed testimony as to the debated object's significance to a particular indigenous (or 'native') group was not available to the degree sought under American law. To respond to this difference in national legislative environments, the NMA supplied further argument that, within Australia, *tjuringa* are immediately recognisable as restricted secret-sacred objects, and that this had been so well established and accepted that no further proof of significance was required from an applicant.

Meanwhile the fate of the particular *tjuringa* under consideration lay in abeyance in the Seattle Art Museum. It was not until a year later, in April 2007, that the object again came up for consideration. During this period, meanwhile, the SAM had committed itself to expansion, which would include a gallery of Aboriginal Art. The SAM director urged reactivation of the repatriation effort concerning the *tjuringa*, especially recognising the inappropriateness of this object for inclusion in any planned displays of Aboriginal Art in the future development.

An element of the next presentation of the *tjuringa* for possible deaccession by the SAM board was planned to include a direct phone link-up between Seattle and the National Museum in Canberra, to enable the SAM's

## Repatriation is not simply about the physical return of an object; it involves the inherent return of cultural authority over that object

trustees to pose questions directly to the NMA. Accordingly, at 4.00 am Canberra local time on 20th of April 2007, Michael Pickering in Canberra and Pamela McClusky in Seattle joined forces in providing direct answers to any continuing queries by the Seattle Art Museum's trustees. Several hours later, at 7.30 am in Canberra, Michael Pickering again received a call from Pamela McClusky, advising that 'The Trustees have voted unanimously to approve the return.'

Following this positive outcome, procedures could begin for formal deaccessioning (by the US museum from its collection register) and preparation for the *tjuringa*'s return to Australia. As an unprovenanced object (with its original owners not clearly known), this meant under Australian provisions that the object would be returned to the National Museum of Australia as safe keeper in the first instance. In June 2009, the object, securely packed in a sealed crate, the *tjuringa* arrived and was formally received by Craddock Morton as Director of the National Museum. The event attracted considerable national and international media attention. It was very much a 'good news' story.

And what happens next?

The story of the *tjuringa*'s journey 'home' is not yet complete. The NMA will carry out consultations with Central Australian Aboriginal elders to determine the future disposition of the returned object. There are many options possible. These include: that it remains at the National Museum of Australia; that it be returned to a designated holding institution in the Northern Territory; or that it be returned directly to an identified Aboriginal elder or group of elders.

Some of these options envisage the object's remaining in a store for some time – therefore how does such an outcome differ from being detained in Seattle?

Repatriation is a complex process and has diverse outcomes. Sometimes it is not possible for items to be fully repatriated to a source community, or descendant community elders, until such information can be securely established (especially to the satisfaction of the Indigenous people concerned) and acted upon.

However, eventually, wherever an object may be held in an interim stage of a restitution journey, its care and management will still be better guided by advice and instructions from Indigenous people in Australia than could possibly be the case if it remained outside the country until full details of origin

are known.

Repatriation is not simply about the physical return of an object; it involves the inherent return of *cultural authority* over that object. As Bob Hicks, an independent on-line commentator, has noted in respect of the Seattle return:

*... the object isn't quite home yet, wherever 'home' might be:*

*The National Museum of Australia will store the object temporarily while consultations proceed regarding its final repatriation.*

*It'll be fascinating to see where this object finally lands. Except that maybe it's none of our business and we won't find out.*

**And maybe that's alright!**<sup>[4]</sup> ☐

Dr Michael Pickering, an anthropologist, is Head of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program & Repatriation Program, National Museum of Australia.

1 Horton, D. (Ed) 1994 The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia. Aboriginal Studies Press. Pp 1080

2 See Lagan, Bernard 2006 Black Ban. In The Bulletin May 16, 2006:39 for an Australian example. This article recounts the refusal of the NMA Council to accept a painting by noted Aboriginal Artist Queenie McKenzie, into the National Historical Collection because a Council member disagreed with the version of the historical events that the painting, entitled 'Mistake Creek Massacre', referred to.

3 <http://www.nps.gov/history/nagpra/>

4 Hicks, Bob 2009 Repatriating art: SAM gives something sacred back In Art Scatter: a Portland-centric arts and culture blog <http://www.artscatter.com/general/repatriating-art-sam-gives-something-sacred-back/> Accessed 21 August 2009



Current Gulf States projects

# Internationalism and cross-cultural exchange

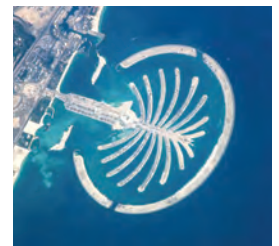


IMAGE: NASA

**Annette Welkamp**

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For a country established only in 1971, with a local population of merely around 923,000,<sup>[1]</sup> the United Arab Emirates has quite a number of museums. Museums large and small offer many opportunities to access a cultural heritage that extends back at least 50,000 years. Moreover the number is steadily increasing as ambitious new ‘destination museums’ are being developed across the region.

The much-heralded *Islamic Art Museum* in Doha, Qatar, opened last November and attracted world attention. Designed by I.M.Pei, it set a very high standard of design and presentation as a benchmark for museums still under development. A small sample of other current major projects in the region includes the *Bahrain Monument*, nearing completion; *Muhammad the Messenger Museum*, still in the planning stages in Dubai; and in Abu Dhabi, the much anticipated

*Museum of Bedouin Culture* and the developments in the Saadiyat Cultural District.

Individual emirates and countries in the Gulf are increasingly recognising the value to their own communities, as well as to potential visitors, of enabling an increasing access to the history and culture of the region. At the *Global Art Forum* conference in March 2009 (an event associated with *Art Dubai*), His Excellency Dr Zaki Nusseibeh, Deputy Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Authority, stressed the importance of these and other cultural programs currently being developed. He posited that they will be valuable organs for providing information on Arabic and Islamic culture in ways that are accessible to the West, and that this will generate more fluent cultural conversations and promote greater understanding and tolerance.<sup>[2]</sup> The Gulf region sees itself as taking on a leadership role in this cross-cultural agenda internationally, and the results are impressive.

The current wave of international projects of this

ABOVE LEFT: Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar: Atrium with a grand view out to the waters of The Gulf

TOP: Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar: The grand pathway leading from Al-Corniche to the front entrance

BOTTOM: Palm Jameirah, the largest man-made island in the world.

1 Expatriates currently number around 4 million. See: <http://www.uaeinteract.com/>  
 2 *Global Art Forum*, 19 March 2009, Dubai; session: ‘Cultural diplomacy from the perspective of the Arab world: a constructive conversation with the west’.

## Sharjah Museum District



RIGHT: Sharjah Archaeology Museum, UAE

TOP: The ground floor atrium at the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilisation highlights the building's former function as a souk.

MIDDLE: Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilisation, UAE: the very beautiful Ka'ba door cover, known as sitara from Makkah

BOTTOM: Sharjah Calligraphy Museum, UAE



kind might suggest that an interest in museums is a very new phenomenon – and merely an adjunct to the breathtaking agenda of new developments in the region. However there is strong evidence of a well-established commitment to museums.

Sharjah, the third largest emirate (although it occupies only 3.3% of it) is generally a little less hectic than its western neighbour, Dubai, which is just thirty minutes drive down the road. However Sharjah has had a firm heritage and museum strategy in place for quite some time. Its Department of Culture and Information was founded in 1981, spearheading the commitment to establish a true cultural hub in the region. One key to this ambition is undoubtedly the ruler, His Highness Dr. Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed al Qassimi, whose PhD in agriculture is augmented by another in history. He has published widely on the history of the region, in both Arabic and English, and it is clear that such patronage ensures that the place of heritage and local culture is recognised and celebrated.

Seventeen museums are managed under the umbrella of the Sharjah Museums Authority, which includes a number of house museums as well as individual institutions focused on archaeology, natural history, calligraphy, history, science, art, maritime heritage, a discovery centre, and an aquarium. Many of these museums are clustered in the district downtown known as the *Heritage Area*, in amongst theatres, the old souk, cafés and study centres.

The jewel in the crown of this precinct is undoubtedly the *Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilisation*. It is a large and somewhat overwhelming museum, since it presents such a comprehensive collection of material.

However a visitor's persistence is well rewarded.

The ground floor galleries focus on contextualising Islam and its practice, as well as presenting a thoroughly enjoyable exploration of scientific discoveries under Islam. On the upper level, the decorative arts collection is presented chronologically, in four period galleries, with objects displayed according to comprehensive sub-themes that explore a great diversity of periods, styles, dates, events, locations, concepts and people.

The displays are crisp, accessible and clearly presented. They compare favourably with major decorative arts museums world-wide; the collection is large and diverse, and there are many important pieces. For westerners, in particular, this museum provides a key orientation to the complexities of the Middle East, Islam and Arabic cultures in the way that H.E. Zaki Nusseibeh has articulated. Furthermore, in view of the limited access that western visitors otherwise have to the local population, the role of such museums becomes an even more critical vehicle of furthering cross-cultural understanding.

The *Islamic Art Museum*, in Doha, is a very beautiful and impressive museum. As one anticipates in the Gulf, no expense has been spared. Pei's monumental structure pays homage to Islamic architectural and design traditions. In contrast to the severe lines and austerity of the outside of the building, the interior is richly decorated, embellished in dramatic gestures of patterns and forms. The exhibition galleries were designed by Pei's erstwhile collaborator, Jean-Michel Wilmotte, and the effect is pure theatre, creating a powerful visiting experience. However despite all this beauty and power,





the museum is also a little unsettling

This is an entirely new museum, so the collection is still being put together, but growing at a rapid pace. The combination of abundant financial resources and engagement with a world-wide market has created an exceptionally fine collection in a short time. However the lack of interpretation in this museum is disappointing.

The approach to display favours either a dominant theme for each gallery – such as *pattern, the figure, science, the written word* – or a focus on a specified period. In each space there is a single introductory text panel, of two or three brief paragraphs. While this is generally informative and well written, the objects are accompanied by small labels detailing nothing more than catalogue details.

Such a formalist, indeed minimal, approach to interpretation means that the objects displayed can only really be appreciated as aesthetic, albeit marvellous, exemplars; however this detaches them from the realm of discursive ideas, and robs them of connections to important fields such as history and science. Perhaps the present scarcity of interpretation will be overcome in the future, as the museum and its staff settle in and apply more resources to communication with their audiences.

On a more conceptual level, *The Islamic Art Museum* seems to function as a western museum of eastern art. It can in some ways be identified as providing a twist on Orientalism: whereby an eastern view, constructed 'from within', is nevertheless moulded largely for an international (westernised) audience visiting Doha.

However this dilemma may be an unavoidable

effect of the desire to foster dialogue *between* cultures through museums that are designed mainly for an international audience – at least initially. The *Doha Islamic Art Museum* is therefore primarily focussing on cross-cultural bridge-building in its founding phase, which is still a work in progress.

However, in terms of contemporary art, the local situation is far from passive. An unexpected feature of visiting the Gulf's cultural facilities is the very active contemporary art scene in the region.

For example *Art Dubai*, mentioned earlier, is an annual contemporary art fair; it is but one component of *Contemporabilia*, which is a joint initiative of a number of previously independently organised cultural events (in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah and Doha).

*Art Dubai* has grown into a constellation of local events. It now includes a major art prize; an international book fair; the *Global Art Forum*; newly arrived Sotheby's art auctions; the Al Bastakiya fringe art festival; and the *Sharjah Biennale*. Held every two years, the Biennale in Sharjah is notable above all for its now well-established history of commitment; it has been presented for the last eighteen years.

The longevity of the Sharjah Biennale is remarkable when one considers the climate in which it would have been launched at its inception, almost two decades ago, when the Gulf was markedly more isolated. For new visitors to Sharjah, the Biennale today offers a fine opportunity to explore the city, since individual works are dispersed and not always easily found. Biennale artworks are often situated in buildings that look indistinguishable from others in a neighbourhood, or are placed outside and between them. This heightens the sense of venture which underpins contemporary art itself, and also provides a truly memorable way of exploring a city that international visitors most likely do not know. Walks through the city precinct affirm a vivid sense of how contemporary art can contribute and add value to a city's evolving character as well as ancient heritage.

While the above events are now part of the wider world's international calendar, and they have encouraged increased visitation to the region, the local community in the Gulf region is more slowly learning to engage with them.

In a recent interview, the art museum curator Zekryat Matouk commented that despite being the emirate with the most museums, most of Sharjah's own residents do not know much about local museums. 'Our biggest difficulty, ironically, is some of our own local people. People of my parent's age, for example, are not from a museum-going generation.'<sup>3</sup> A major challenge facing the sector therefore is to develop a cultural climate that is relevant and appealing to the local populations (both indigenous and expatriate), whilst still pursuing an adventurous international agenda.

One potential area for development is in public programs, which are still not particularly extensive in the Gulf. Accompanying any major exhibition, there might only be one or two lectures and a couple of children's events during its entire lifespan. Programs



LEFT: Art Dubai: Entrance to the Global Art Forum marquee, with the Burj al-Arab hotel in the background

TOP: Al Bastakiya Art Fair, Dubai: courtyard of house 79/1 where *The Best of Saatchi Online's Middle Eastern Artists* exhibition was presented

BOTTOM: Students with their teacher discussing a work by Anish Kapoor at the Lisson gallery stand at Art Dubai

<sup>3</sup> 'Canvas: Art and culture from the Middle East and Arab world', *Bastion of Culture. Sharjah Art Museum*, vol.5, issue 1, p.115.

## Current Gulf States projects



**RIGHT:** Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar: The Doha skyline is visible through the arcades of the western courtyard that separates the Education Wing from the main building.

**ABOVE:** Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar: Visitors in the eastern courtyard.



related to other general themes seem to be equally limited. It will be interesting to see if this is an area of the museums' work that will expand in the future, or if alternative models of public engagement are pursued, which resonate more strongly with local cultural practices.

Increasing the engagement with and access to cultural experiences is currently a key objective of the Dubai government. Scott Desmarais, Director of Strategy and Performance at the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority, describes some of the initiatives his team is working on.<sup>[4]</sup> These involve both marketing what is actually being undertaken more effectively and improving levels of education and access in these areas. Currently Dubai's cultural efforts are still laying the foundations, focussing on the development of overall policies and strategies for the heritage, culture and arts sector; on preparing frameworks for the various agencies; and on facilitating the implementation of more customer-focused policies.

The agenda also includes supporting and developing

Emirati artists and cultural professionals. One of the challenges is that heritage, art history and art practice are currently not taught in schools. Therefore there is a strong push towards developing the school curricula to enhance awareness in these areas.

Finally, there is a focus on developing and promoting Dubai's heritage, culture and arts calendar, which includes events such as Art Dubai. The cultural policy is now more firmly ensconced within the overall Dubai Strategic Plan developed by and for the Emirates government, which outlines the state's objectives very clearly.

Surprisingly, the global economic slowdown is partly welcomed in the cultural planning arena in Dubai because it enables local planners and delivery bodies to slow down a bit, to survey the landscape and reconsider the future, rather than be under constant pressure to build and expand. ■

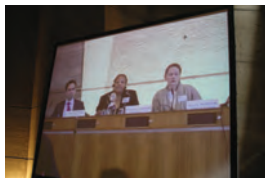
**Annette Welkamp** is a Middle-Eastern archaeologist and director of Cultural Connotations, based in Melbourne.

4 Personal conversation at Art Dubai, 19 March 2009.



## ICOM meetings, Paris, 8–11 June 2009

## 2009 ICOM General Assembly



**RIGHT:** ICOM Advisory Committee, Executive Council & General Assembly: June 2009, Paris (ICOM's 'gathering of the clans' internationally)

**TOP:** Argentina and Angola Chairpersons in conversation, ICOM Advisory Committee meeting, Paris.

**BOTTOM:** ICOM Director-General (Julien Anfruns), President (Alissandra Cummins) and Treasurer (Nancy Hushion) report to delegates at ICOM General Assembly, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, 9 June 2009.



COM President, Alissandra Cummins, presented an overview of the organisation since the arrival of the new Director General, Julien Anfruns (recruited from the Louvre's strategic development and finance department), in October 2008.

Julien Anfruns reported on the renewal of ICOM, its Committees, Affiliated Organisations, Regional Alliances and programs – through reorganisation undertaken in the previous eight months under his executive leadership.

Julien Anfruns outlined new ICOM initiatives that would be undertaken medium-term (through to the triennial General Conference and election of a new Executive Council in Shanghai, November 2010) and longer-term (pursuing the ongoing momentum of ICOM's Strategic Plan evolved in recent years). A particular focus of Julien Anfruns' address highlighted the updating of systems and communications throughout ICOM's Secretariat, to connect it more reflexively to a Web 2.0 environment globally and enable better interconnection and discussion throughout all ICOM networks world-wide.

#### Hot topic debate:

#### 'What is the global economic crisis changing for museums?'

In addition to general business for the various meetings of ICOM bodies, an intense topical debate was presented on the first day, addressing the global financial crisis and teasing out the future for museums.

The session was chaired by **Alan Riding** (long-time New York Times correspondent for Europe). Alan Riding framed current challenges of the GFC as paradoxically causing museums to feel threatened by withdrawal of vital funding by sponsors and governments (staff cut-backs; programs contracted and exhibitions postponed) at the same time as higher performance-expectations have been raised by governments viewing museums as major 'instruments of tourism and social amenity'. **Jacques Attali** (author and President of PlanetNet Finance, France) and **James Chung** (forecaster and President of Reach Advisors, USA) presented detailed analyses of the current situation globally, and framed both the severe constraints and new options for museums' attention in an environment of far-reaching social as well as economic transition.

### ICOM 2010 & ICOM 2013 General Conferences & General Assemblies

A major decision of the June 2009 ICOM gatherings in Paris was the location of the triennial General Conference of ICOM after *ICOM 2010 Shanghai* (November 2010). Following intense voting on competing proposals from 'Milan' and 'Moscow', the **2013 ICOM General Conference** was awarded by clear majority to **Rio de Janeiro**, in Brazil.

#### Snapshot of ICOM



Created in 1946, ICOM is a non-governmental organisation, headquartered in Paris. ICOM maintains formal relations with UNESCO, carries out part of UNESCO's program for

museums, and has a consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council.

As a non-profit organisation, ICOM is financed primarily through its membership and support from various governmental and other bodies. Based in Paris, the ICOM Headquarters houses both the ICOM Secretariat and the UNESCO-ICOM Museum Information Centre.

#### At a glance

- 27,000 museum professionals of all disciplines, working in 155 countries
- 115 National Committees
- 30 International Committees
- 17 Affiliated Organisations
- 7 Regional Alliances of geographic regions
- 4 Standing Committees

See <http://icom.museum/> for more information about the various committees and affiliated organisations.



## Monet at the reopened Orangerie Museum



### Bernice Murphy

A generous French tradition for many years, during the annual cycle of ICOM meetings in Paris in early June, has been that one of the principal Paris museums hosts an evening function for ICOM Chairs/Presidents visiting the capital at this time. This is both an important social interaction for visiting ICOM colleagues and a rotating opportunity to sample one of the myriad fine museums in Paris under the Direction des Musées de France (Directorate of French Museums, or DMF), a department of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication.

The Orangerie is a small partner building to the Jeu de Paume (formerly the royal tennis court) in the Tuileries Gardens – both ancillary structures in the suite of buildings (including the Louvre Museum) that were formerly part of the monarchical precinct and seat of royal power in the capital. Today they are enjoyed by the populace at large in the centre of Paris. The similarly oblong Jeu de Paume was restored some years ago,

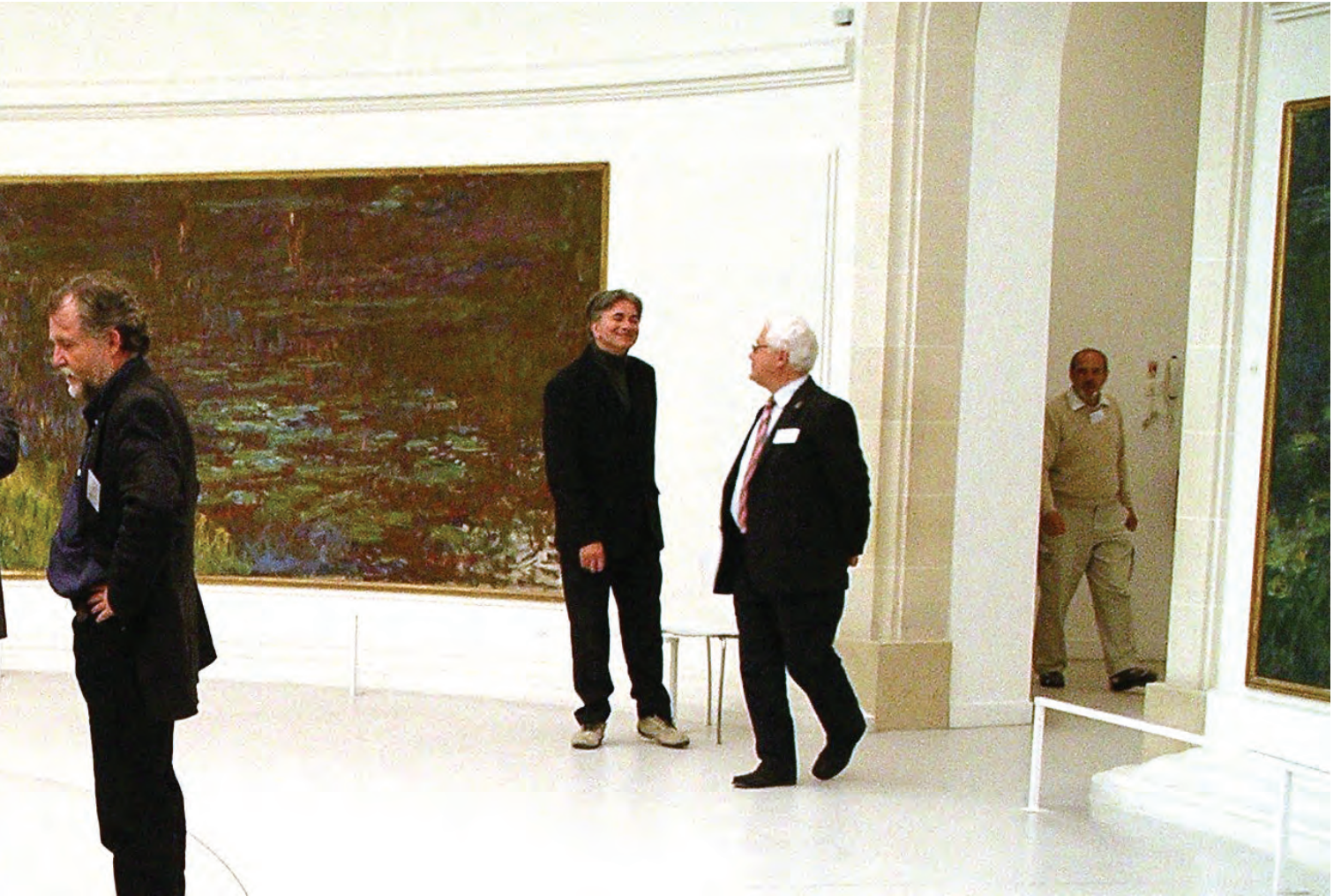
and instituted as a new state institution dedicated to changing exhibitions of modern and contemporary art.

The Orangerie received the makeover attention of the Ministry of Culture more recently (in a restoration and rebuilding project that stretched from 2000-2006). It was reopened in beautifully restored and expanded form, with new sub-basement galleries housing gifted French paintings, in May 2006.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, has meanwhile recently reinstalled all three of its monumental waterlily paintings by Monet, with related works that reveal their gestation. Commenting on the return of these admired works after eight years' absence in MoMA's main displays, Roberta Smith (of the New York Times) teased out their 'dragon-fly' movements of eye and mind across the huge surfaces of reworked colour:

[These paintings] were worked on, again and again, with many others, during the last dozen years of Monet's long life, when the final phase of his innovative Impressionistic style opened the path to abstract painting after World War II. At his death in 1926, at 86, they remained in his studios at Giverny ... near his elaborate





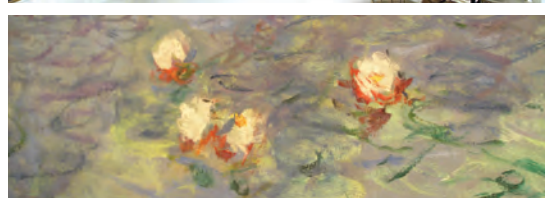
PHOTOS: BERNICE MURPHY

*aquatic gardens, their radical nature perplexing and even repulsing some of his most dedicated admirers.*

*Were they unfinished? Did the frequent lack of signature signify a final ambivalence about their worthiness? Did their blurry, edgeless forms and sometimes clumsy paint handling simply reflect Monet's eye problems?*

*Hardly. Over his last years Monet had assiduously negotiated an agreement with the French state to accept a large group of them as a gift to the nation, to be displayed in specially constructed galleries (with curved walls) in the Orangerie in Paris. The main liaison in this transaction was his dear friend Georges Clemenceau, prime minister of France, 1906-9 and 1917-20. <sup>[1]</sup>*

Bernice Murphy (Chair of ICOM's Ethics Committee) represented ICOM Australia at the ICOM General Assembly and Advisory Committee Meetings in June 2009, in place of ICOM Australia Chairperson, Craddock Morton (Director, National Museum of Australia). Her travel was self-financed, on leave from Museums Australia, as honorary service to ICOM.



**ABOVE:** The Orangerie Museum, with Monet's two huge cycles of late Water Lilies (the Nymphéas Murals)

**LEFT:** Inspired by his water garden in Giverny, Monet began a series of around 300 paintings in 1895 which he continued until he died in 1926 (gifting two huge cycles, with themes of evening and morning, to the French state for special installation in purpose-built circular rooms in the former royal Orangerie building – now the Musée de l'Orangerie).

**BELOW LEFT:** Nymphéas detail

<sup>1</sup> Roberta Smith, 'Serenade in Blue', New York Times, 11 September 2009: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/11/arts/design/11monet.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/11/arts/design/11monet.html?_r=1)>



# Museum precincts, museum ethics and public trust



RIGHT AND BELOW: National Museum of Korea, Seoul  
 BOTTOM: Yongsan Park 'precinct'



PHOTOS: NATIONAL MUSEUM OF KOREA

## Bernice Murphy

To celebrate the centenary of the founding of public museums in Korea – when Emperor Sunjong opened up the Imperial Household Museum, in 1909, towards the closing of the Joseon Dynasty – the Korean Museum Association, in partnership with ICOM-Korea, staged its 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference, in Seoul.

Entitled *Retrospect and New Vision*, the conference embraced several themes that have emerged through the Korean museums sector's expansion and 'internationalisation' in recent years. In September 2004, Korean museums hosted the ICOM General Conference in Seoul. The impact of preparing programs and cultural events on the organisational scale required for a triennial ICOM Conference and Assembly (traditionally opened by the head of state) usually stimulates initiatives and creates a deep and lasting impact on the host country's museums sector. Korea was no exception. In recent years, the Korea museums sector has

been more consciously engaged with neighbouring colleagues in the Asia-Pacific region, and pursuing distinctive initiatives and a more affirmatively international awareness than was discernible to the outside world in earlier decades. One notable achievement has been Korea's commitment to focus on 'Museums and Intangible Heritage' – as was the theme Korea established for the *ICOM 2004* conference and gathering of the international museums community in Seoul.<sup>[1]</sup>

Over the last ten years, Korea has 'set up a system for protecting and communicating the importance of the intangible cultural heritage, and Korea's work has directly contributed to the success of UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, (2003)'.<sup>[2]</sup> As a follow-up to the ICOM Conference in Seoul, the National Folk Museum of Korea has established the International Journal of Intangible Heritage, an annual refereed academic and professional English language journal, of which the fourth issue has been published in 2009.<sup>[3]</sup> □

1 The theme for ICOM '98 in Melbourne, it may be recalled, was Museums and Cultural Diversity – which had a considerable impact on ICOM's Committees throughout the 1990s, when Australia's developmental planning to host ICOM was at its height, under an Organising Committee of museum directors and business sponsors chaired by the late Hon. John Button. The plenary papers from that ICOM '98 Conference in Australia have been digitised and will soon be uploaded on the ICOM-Australia website for general reference and record.

2 See ICOM website: <[http://icom.museum/intangible\\_heritage\\_ICME.html](http://icom.museum/intangible_heritage_ICME.html)>

3 See the Journal's website for information at: <<http://www.ijih.org>>



## ‘Retrospect and New Vision’ in Korea



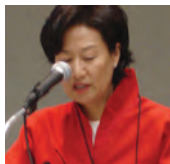
Roundtable discussion on final day of Conference FROM LEFT: LI Wenru, Marsha Simmel, Bernice Murphy, Dr Teiichi Sato & other international guests, moderated by ICOM Korea President, Choe Chong-pils.



CHOE Chong-pils  
(Chair ICOM-Korea)



BAE Kidong  
(Pres. Korean Museums Assoc.)



CHANG IN-kyung  
(President ICOM-ASPAC)



CHOE Kwang-shik  
(Dir. Nat. Mus. Korea)



KIM Byung-Mo  
(ICOM Life Member)

The May 2009 centennial celebrations and international conference took place in the National Museum of Korea, in Seoul, in the huge building (almost 50,000 sq metres) in which the museum re-opened in Yongsan Family Park in 2005.

This site – formerly a garrison area and golf-course for the US military in Seoul since the Korean War, and painfully symbolic of more than a century of foreign occupation by Chinese, Japanese and American troops – provided one of the underlying themes of the Korean conference. Koreans have regained a vast (2.7 million square metres) area of public parkland in central Seoul, larger than Hyde Park in London. Yongsan Park encloses streams, waterfalls and birdlife, and is axially centred near the Han River, with orientation points towards four distant mountains framing the city quadrilaterally.

In a dense city of 10 million people, where post-War development relentlessly consumed available space and ignored public amenities, this site repurchased since the 1990s by the City of Seoul is profoundly important to national pride.

Meanwhile international moves in museum consciousness from a single-building focus to the development of a *museums precinct* is an immensely topical concept for Korea to examine. Many speakers from Korea (including architects, museum professionals and government administrators) gave papers on the future of the large, reclaimed Yongsan Park area – with a shifting focus from a *heritage-protected national parkland* concept (excluding invasive buildings and preserving the untrammelled space of ‘nature’) to the needs of urban communities for an enriched texture of multi-purpose facilities, as the expected accompaniment to heightened cultural experience and an undercarriage of economic sustainability.

International guest-speakers brought special experience of the ‘precinctual’ clustering of museums in other parts of the world. Project presentations were made by David Fleming, Director, National Museums Liverpool; and Michael Govan, CEO/Director, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which has undergone a comprehensive expansion in recent years, bringing LACMA back to a positive relationship with the Page Museum (of natural history) and the remarkable La Brea Tar Pits preserving mammals from pre-history at its back door (disdained for decades as a mere tourist attraction, divorced from the uplift of art). Wenru Li, Vice-Director of the Palace Museum of the Forbidden City, in Beijing, brought this

rapidly refurbishing complex and fulcrum of China’s imperial past into focus within the ‘museums precinct’ discussion; and further presentations augmented the topic from Japan (notably by Dr. Teiichi Sato, Director of the Tokyo National Museum).

Another strand of the 2009 Korean museums conference pressed beyond buildings and facilities to the question of the *civic values* underpinning high-performance expectations of museums today. Commissioned papers, including excellent contributions from Korean colleagues, focused on ethics, public trust and the public stewardship values necessary for a strong museums sector. Guest speakers from the US and Australia had also been invited to give plenary addresses and workshops on these themes: Marsha Semmel, Deputy Director for Museums, within the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Washington, gave a plenary paper on Museums and Public Trust; and Bernice Murphy, Chair of the Ethics Committee of ICOM, Paris (and National Director, Museums Australia) gave an overview of ICOM’s history as a world body since 1946, marked by its growing concern with ethics since 1970, and its benchmarking *Code of Ethics for Museums*, evolved in the 1980s.

The Korean museums sector has achieved an economical and adroit move to advance the ethical standing and policy-sanctions surrounding museums, and this is a lesson for other countries. Korea is framing a governmental regulation – ‘somewhere between the status of a professional code of ethics and a national law’ (as noted in a workshop presentation by Kim Jongsok, of the National Museum). This will have the Korean government requiring that all institutions seeking recognition and status as *museums* in Korea must uphold the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*. This is an admirably simple move, with the potential of far-reaching positive influence but without the entanglement of legislative drafting.

There are lessons here for Australian cultural policy, and the regulative governmental support desired to underpin our museums’ commitment to the stewardship of public trust. ■

Bernice Murphy undertook travel to Korea while on leave from Museums Australia, as part of honorary work for ICOM internationally. Travel assistance from the Korea Foundation is gratefully acknowledged, along with the hospitality of ICOM Korea and the Korean Museum Association.



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