

*The magazine of Museums Australia Inc.*

# MUSEUM NATIONAL

VOL 3 • NO 1  
JUNE 94

LOCAL AND REGIONAL MUSEUMS



# EDITOR'S DESK

Welcome readers, *Museum National* is now eight editions old having commenced in March 1992. In 1993 it went through design and content changes and now in 1994, following amalgamation, it is time to reassess its format and content. Help us by spending a few minutes to complete our *Museum National* survey and return it to our office by 30 June.

## In this issue

This issue's theme concerns local museums and galleries, and provides an opportunity to focus on issues surrounding local and regional museums. Our writers are drawn from across Australia and the diversity of topics reflects the incredible range of issues and interests embraced by museums across Australia.

Enclosed with this issue are a number of brochures and information of importance to our readers.

**Call for Nominations** — the first National Council elections are approaching and Museums Australia is seeking nominations for candidates for the office, and ordinary members, 6 ordinary members must be nominated by Special Interest Groups currently in formation around Australia. Nominations must be received at our National Office by 12 August.

**1994 Conference and Annual Meeting Fremantle, Perth 10-13 November** — the brochure of the conference is included in this magazine. At last count, six overseas guests had accepted the invitation to attend. These speakers come from South Africa, Denmark, Berlin, New Zealand and North America. Together with the wonderful weather in Fremantle and a chance to meet or renew contact with your colleagues from around Australia, this year's conference is shaping up to be a highlight of the year.

**Publication Awards** — the Annual Museum Publication Awards has established itself now as part of the annual museum calendar. Although this year's awards are the 1st Annual Awards for Museums Australia, it is the

third time we have organised a display of the best of the years published product from museums around Australia. Three things have changes this year: we have made the categories fairer, being below and above an annual budget of \$300,000; the closing date is earlier — September; and finally, alas, we have had to raise the entrance fee to cover our costs. Plan your submissions now!

As I write this editorial a number of key recent events have occurred which will have ongoing impact on Museums Australia. The Visual Arts/Crafts Board of the Australia Council have made an ongoing commitment to us by refunding the Professional Development program for a further three years and subject to our current submission, will make a three year commitment to the annual administration program ensuring the continued support for the contemporary Visual Arts and Crafts.

The first round of the 'Visions of Australia' national touring program has been announced. Disappointingly, grants in this instance have been made primarily to existing touring organisations and major institutions. It appears the allocations don't match the rhetoric of the original program brief. If opportunities for 'new players' are to be created more developmental support is required and Museums Australia, with branches across Australia, is keen to provide opportunities to train and equip smaller museums for participation in this national touring program. We just need the resources.

## Renew your membership now!

By now all members of the former AMAA, MEAA and AMAA are due to renew their membership. Museums Australia is providing a real incentive for you to do so now. Until July 29 if you join or renew your membership you enter the draw for a wonderful prize worth over \$5000 — a return trip to attend the Western Museums Conference in Hawaii — Living Cultures, Living Traditions, with

free registration and free accommodation.

In addition if you get two or more colleagues to join Museums Australia you will get three months free membership.

## Our next issue

Our September issue of *Museum National*, 'Taking it to the Streets', will look at how museums and art museums are involving their communities. The recently launched, *Museums. An Argument With Their Own Society*, raises the question 'Is there still a museum in Australia whose controllers any longer believe its sole function is to preserve artefacts and present static displays of objects? . . . Museums, galleries, and libraries are reaching out to Australians far beyond their own particular location, organising lectures, publishing books, making films and videos, even becoming involved in theatrical and dance events in an attempt to engage the critical attention of more Australians.'

We will be analysing the philosophies and rationale behind some of these current practices and debates, looking at specific projects, and examining what is being reflected about our society and our institutions through such projects.

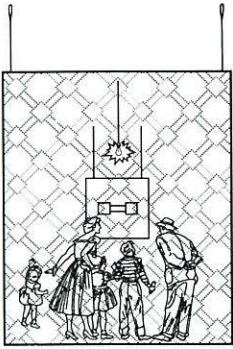
Deadline for copy is 29 July. If you are interested in contributing to this issue, please contact Linda Richardson, Managing Editor, now!

**Greg Marginson**  
Editor

## ERRATUM

*Museum National* Volume 2. No. 4 'Mum Stayed Home: Women in the 50s' was designed by Julie O'Dean and not Julie O'Dear as listed in our last issue.

The Australian Exhibitions Touring Agency's (AETA's) Exhibition Development Fund is for contemporary art exhibition proposals only.



Front cover

Title: detail, *A Person Looks At A Work Of Art/someone looks at something...*

Medium: *A Person Looks At A Work Of Art/someone looks at something...*

CULTURAL CONSUMPTION PRODUCTION

Date: — 1989 —

Artist: Peter Tyndall

Collection: Geelong Art Gallery (winner of the Scotchmans Hill Vineyard Art Prize, 1989)

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# COMMUNITY MUSEUMS ENDANGERED

## Who Pays for the Past?

*By Sally Anne Hasluck*

*This is an updated extract from a paper given at the 1992 CAMA Conference*

'Who owns the past?', 'Who pays for the past?' The questions are intertwined. The first has been explored in a book of essays edited by Isabel McBryde, so I will deal with 'Who pays?'(1) The answer is obvious — you and I do. In a democracy, taxes and local rates are collected and used for the public good as politicians collectively decide. But I believe community museums in this country do not receive a fair deal.

Why haven't community museums learnt to lobby politicians, especially at the local level, the level of government closest to the people? During an intensive study of museums and local government about three years ago, I concluded that both the museum profession and local government bodies had failed to provide adequate support to those interested in making the past available to the community. Without wishing to transfer funds from the large, state museums, I recall a phrase of Kenneth R. Hopkins, 'It takes a lot of green stuff to fill a

government and non-government institutions'.(3) This unique strength, to my knowledge, has not been sufficiently recognised. The collective national view of culture has for the past twenty years filtered downwards from the federal level. The creation of the Australia Council has marginalised museums because the Council's philosophy and grants system pays scant regard to heritage issues and the work of museums.

The funding system and ideology has been copied, more or less, by the states and the deprivation has continued. State branches of the former Museums Association of Australia (now Museums Australia Inc.) sought funding from state governments and so became separated from the mainstream arts and cultural power base. The Arts do not embrace non-art museums. This restricted viewpoint is evident in the National Local Government statistics for 1991: \$5.6 million spent on recurrent funding for regional art museums against \$2.5 million for regional museums (with less than fifteen staff). It has been in the interests of other arms of culture to keep non-art museums out of the funding system. Local government has been encouraged to employ



SOUTHLAND MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY, INVERCARGILL, NEW ZEALAND — THE ORIGINAL BUILDING OF 1941 WAS BUILT AS A MEMORIAL TO THE 1940 CENTENNIAL OF NEW ZEALAND AND WAS FUNDED BY THE COMMUNITY, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY.

dinosaur. How many chattering squirrels could live on the lettuce intake of a dinosaur?'(2)

The Australia Council's 1991 Local Government and Arts Task Force report stated that 'Local Government's unique strength vis-a-vis other forms of government is its knowledge and regard for the local identity, needs, services and potential. Armed in this way Local Government provides a formidable representative for the local community in its dealings with other spheres of

community arts officers, and now heritage officers are popular. Why are museums' interests not to the fore? Statistically, they appear within 'OTHER' categories in local government expenditure, and as the 'AND' phrase within official documents. Museums are treated as an afterthought instead of the embodiment of culture and heritage for the community.

The Australia Council's 1991 report also states that 'Although local government is the level closest to the

people, its composition of elected representatives may not reflect the range of views and interests in the community. This can be heightened when there is neither an arts/cultural policy nor the appropriate planning process.'

For rural and small urban authorities who have been nurtured on the sports, roads and drains philosophy, cultural planning and policy is a leap into the unknown. Changes are evident in the current collection of statistics, and with publications. The Australia Council's 1991 study *Local Government's Role in Arts and Cultural Development* is indicative. Despite the fact that it says local government manages sixty local and regional museums around the country and there are over one thousand local and regional museums supported by councils, museums only receive a mention under 'OTHER' in Cultural Expenditure.

The report gives a useful insight into strategies used by local government to realise potential cultural benefits. These are grouped under the heading 'Protecting Cultural Heritage' and include: maintenance and display of collections of historic photographs, artworks, costumes or domestic items; undertaking and publishing oral histories; provision and maintenance of heritage buildings; employment of heritage experts; and declaration of heritage areas.

Here is the opportunity for museums to press for recognition and funding as they undertake all of these functions on behalf of local government. Two statements in the conclusion of the report provide the basis upon which to build: a) that local and community-based groups represent the starting point of the energy and activity within an area. . . , b) the role of local government in the arts and cultural development is pivotal at the local level. . . The climate to consolidate this trend could not be better, given the context of public administration reforms occurring in Australia.

The down side for museums is the concluding line. . .

Conference in 1991 and the published papers provide interesting perspectives.(4) Louella McCarthy's paper states the case for local history and the involvement of museums with local government. She says that a community that suffers from cultural amnesia will not grow and develop, which is an argument I have been using for many years. Museums know the value of the past, local government fears the price of the past.

Community museums do not realise they are an endangered species. Their survival is dependent upon local government redressing the imbalance caused by all cultural funding being for the arts. These museums have little funding and employ few permanent full-time professional staff. They struggle against great odds and yet they are the backbone of Australian history collections. Museums do need to look to their own internal management, standards and practices and make themselves more accessible to the broader community. But when will Museums Australia meet museums' need for support, and when will local government use its 'unique powers and formidable representation of the local community' on behalf of museums?

In her contributing paper to the Cultural Planning Conference in 1991, Anne Brake states that 'It must be remembered that many of Australia's historical societies did not establish themselves as museums, their communities did it for them, and without their untiring and devoted work, much of Australia's cultural heritage would have been lost'.

If our material culture has been preserved for all Australians and it is owned in a moral sense by the communities, and it is these same communities that pay the rates for local government to spend, why aren't the museums and their communities using the ballot box to gain monetary support and recognition for museums? Fear of a loss of independence, lack of knowledge of local government procedures, fear of city professionals being



FIFTY YEARS LATER, A MAJOR REDEVELOPMENT, AS PART OF THE 105TH YEAR CELEBRATIONS, WAS FUNDED THROUGH A LOTTERY SUBSIDY. IT HAS BECOME A SHOWCASE FOR THE COUNTRY WITH ITS DYNAMIC PYRAMID SHAPE, DIVERSE COLLECTIONS, THE LIVE TUATARA, AND THE 'ROARING FORTIES' DISPLAY.

'An increasing number of councils are viewing the arts as an integral part of a community's social fabric.' Community museums are not mentioned in this context. They should be an integral part of a community's social fabric, as a representation of its inner self. Local government has been slow to realise the potential power of the museum in the community, often choosing to support fashionable art rather than authentic artefacts.

The Australia Council held a Cultural Planning

employed, lack of time and energy to enter the political debate are probably all relevant. Maybe the first two could be eradicated if local government had a cultural policy within which the museum could negotiate a better relationship. The *Better Government Agreement* 1992, between the State Government and the Municipal Association in WA fails to mention museums under Arts or Culture as a function of local government.(5) The State Task Force for Museums Policy WA 1992 report,

*Museums Into the Twenty-First Century* fails to address the immediate need for the introduction of policies and an injection of funding by local government.(6)

In 1991, I received an Anzac Fellowship and my subsequent research in New Zealand drew attention to the fear of museums losing control of collections and loss of independence following the local government amalgamation process.(7) I concluded in my report that museums that had not been part of the administrative structure of local government before the reforms took place were not considered, in the sense of being included, in the reform process. This meant that they lost monetary support from the new structures. I also concluded that there is not one correct management structure or financial arrangement applicable to every council. The most effective positions had been well argued, defined, drawn up in agreements and reflected in policy pronouncements so that the museum and the local authority have a common purpose.

In New Zealand, a report by a consultative committee set up by the Councils and Museums of Napier and Hastings in 1988 echoes my belief that 'Museums, Art Galleries and Archives are as essential as roads and sewerage systems. The very basic need for communities to interpret their past in order to understand their present and their fascination with the creative acts of their fellow beings has meant that any mature community in any part of the world today develops institutions that can satisfy these needs. . . They cost money to sustain but they are an essential investment in the health of the community. . . Accepting that cultural institutions have an important place in our communities, the question should be asked: why should local bodies fund their museums and their art galleries? Put simply: a) Because they will not continue to exist, let alone succeed, if they do not; b) Because the community wants and needs them, and expects local bodies to fund them.'(8) Other points follow but these two are particularly true. This report has led to commitment in 1994 by the Hastings District Council to progressively increase their operational grant over the next three years.

In Britain, The Museums and Galleries Commission 1991 report, *Local Authorities & Museums*, besides being a very thorough document from the museum perspective, makes a series of recommendations to government.(9) The document also reminds us that the majority of the present local authority museums in Britain were once independent community or private museums, and that all the present independent museums rely heavily upon local authority funds.

Policy making within museums and government is a necessary prerequisite for funding. New Zealand has developed cultural policies, but Australia has yet to formulate cultural policies for the three tiers of government. Canada has developed an enviable array of documentation to support community museums within the framework of cultural policy applicable to local government.

Who pays for the past? Australians do, but we have to know its value, and be prepared to meet the price. Is Museums Australia going to encourage cultural policies to enable a funding relationship between local government and museums to evolve? If not, there will be further deterioration of our material culture and of museums as institutions established for the public benefit. Do we as members have to fight from the trenches and demand that museums be taken notice of and resist their relegation to the category of 'OTHER' within our culture or will we, as an association of museums, fight to guarantee the survival of Australia's community museums?

Sally Anne Hasluck,  
Museum Consultant

### Footnote:

There has been no recorded progress for community museums following the Australian reports mentioned. Further national and local government statistics are not available. The Australia Council 1992/93 *Museum Survey* will be released soon. They have, however, continued research into museums resulting in: *Art Galleries — Who Goes. A study of visitors to three Australian Art Galleries with international comparisons, 1991* and the recently launched *The Reluctant Museum Visitor, a Study of Non-Goers to History Museums and Art Galleries*.

### References:

- (1) McBryde, I. 1985, *Who Owns the Past?* London, Oxford University Press.
- (2) Hopkins, Kenneth. 1981, 'Let's Chatter in the Trees', in *Twentieth Century Popular Culture in Museums and Libraries*, Schroueder, Fred, E. H. (ed), Bowling Green University Popular Press, Ohio.
- (3) Local Government and Arts Task Force, 1991, *Local Government's Role in Arts and Cultural Development*, Australia Council, Sydney.
- (4) Engineering Information Transfer Pty Ltd, 1991, *The Cultural Planning Conference*, EIT Pty Ltd, Melbourne
- (5) Municipal Association of WA, 1992, *Better Government Agreement*, Perth, WA.
- (6) State Task Force for Museums Policy in Western Australia, 1992, *MUSEUMS, Into the Twenty-First Century*, Department for the Arts, Perth, WA.
- (7) Hasluck, S. A. 1991, *Anzac Fellowship Report, Museums and Local Government in New Zealand*, Hasluck & Claremont, WA.
- (8) Consultative Committee, 1988, *Report — Future Role of Hawke's Bay and the Hastings' Cultural Centre*, Napier City Council, (unpublished).
- (9) Museums & Galleries Commission, 1991, *Local Authorities and Museums*, HMSO, London.

Russell Beck, director of the Southland Museum and Art Gallery, is a guest speaker in the Regional Section of Museums Australia's conference in Perth in November, for the session 'The Advantages of Isolation!'

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## BACK TO THE SOURCE

# Participation, Partnerships and Pragmatism

By Alison French

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Local and regional museums are often seen as worlds apart from the larger state and national institutions. In the bid for funding and status, their collections and those who are paid or who volunteer to administer them often become marginalised. But while these smaller institutions do indeed have particular needs and particular links with their local communities and regions, they are also partners in the custodianship of Australia's national cultural heritage. Like larger institutions they are responsible for researching, documenting, maintaining, interpreting and displaying this heritage. Perceived differences often focus on the size of the collections and the buildings that house them, rather than the significance or meanings the objects might have to the community, whether that community is national or local. Current initiatives recognise the need for joint custody and national cooperation in presenting Australia's cultural heritage.

The final report for the Heritage Collections Working Group to the Cultural Minister's Council — *Heritage Collections in Australia, a plan for a new Partnership* (1), developed the conceptual framework for a distributed

national collection (2), and 'generated increased awareness within the museum sector of the need for greater national cooperation in managing the Nation's movable heritage'. The Report's recommendations recognised that improving Australians' access to and understanding of their cultural heritage is as important as securing the preservation of these collections. Touring exhibitions can be a means of achieving these objectives and should not be solely the prerogative of national, state and territory institutions.

Museums collect material that is either drawn from, or foreign to, their immediate community; presenting this material to different audiences can be a catalyst for discovery. The range of meanings for objects or images may contract or expand in the context of new configurations in different spaces for audiences of different cultural or regional backgrounds.

The 'known' can become the 'unknown' when a specialist collection is exposed to non-specialist audiences. Exposure to audiences with different backgrounds and specialisations may generate new meanings and the 'known' becomes known in different



'THE "UNKNOWN" BECOMES THE "KNOWN" WHEN PARTNERSHIPS UNDERPIN PROJECTS TO TOUR MATERIAL BACK TO ITS SOURCE. . . ' CHILDREN AT THE BUNGALOW 'HALF-CASTE' INSTITUTION, ALICE SPRINGS, 1928. FROM THE AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES EXHIBITION 'BETWEEN TWO WORLDS. THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT AND THE REMOVAL OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN OF PART-DESCENT IN THE NT'.

ways. Too often the preconceptions of the specialist trap the object in the confines of a narrow perspective, and the parochialism of community interests can inhibit the discovery of more wide-reaching relevance.

The 'unknown' may become the 'known' when partnerships underpin projects to tour material back to its source, and local research informs conservation, presentation, interpretation and display. As a consequence the exhibition strategy for the collecting institution's own venue is enriched as a result of the tour.

The answers to questions which must be asked when an object tours all derive from an understanding of its material, aesthetic or intellectual integrity. Questions such as 'can it travel and if so, how?', and 'how should it be presented for display when each installation has its

own variables?' are fundamental in this regard. Thus touring exhibitions can provide specific disciplines for object-based research in museums, and be more than exotic 'extras' added to a busy program because of external pressure or misguided attempts to add variety to a bored curator's work experience.

They also provide a discipline for researching the relevance of objects and images to audiences, as we have seen. This is fully effective when receiving venues participate or are partners in the project, but all too often this is not the case.

Museums are often inhibited from initiating partnerships due to 'institutionalism'. It is a phenomenon which has much in common with 'racism', 'ageism' and other mechanisms of stereotyping which polarise complementary opposites into

protagonists, and fails to recognise fundamental commonalities. It can stultify both small and large museums.

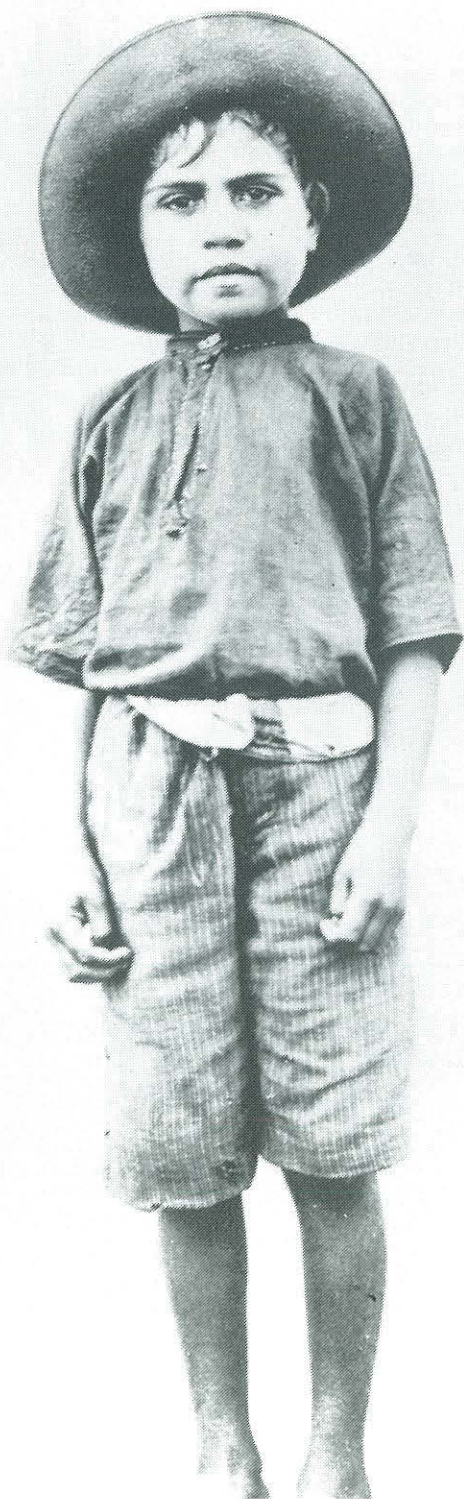
The under-resourced small museum may perpetually lose itself in a constant round of crisis management until it comes to regard this mode of operation as integral to 'the nature of the beast'. The better-resourced large museum may have developed bureaucratic structures which perpetuate themselves rather than their original purpose. Individual specialist staff may burrow further into their respective disciplines and never emerge to see the collaborative ventures in which they are engaged. In both cases the potential for creative interaction is suppressed.(3)

Pragmatics mean that not all receiving venues can be partners, however, opportunities for increased participation occur when potential recipients for touring exhibitions are involved in the early stages of planning, and/or given a very clear indication of the nature of the exhibition and its objectives. When there is sufficient lead time, most venues can market an exhibition to their community and increase target audiences by developing promotional and educational strategies which highlight and complement local relevance and resources.

Where partnerships are appropriate a number of models exist: some lie in the realm of business, others in the arena of personal relations. All rely on a clear understanding of a common purpose, a recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of each partner and the assumptions each brings to the project. Clear articulation of the terms and conditions of the partnership specifying respective duties and responsibilities is crucial. A realistic estimation of the potential duration of the partnership, and the conditions under which it might be dissolved, might well take the form of a 'pre-nuptial' agreement. The 'bankruptcy' of one partner, whether in the form of ideas or resources, will be disastrous for the other if a strategy for managing the consequences has not been envisaged.(4)

Partnerships should naturally emerge

BOY AT THE BUNGALOW 'HALF-CASTE' INSTITUTION, ALICE SPRINGS, C. 1920s. FROM THE AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVE'S EXHIBITION 'BETWEEN TWO WORLDS'.





when the material to be exhibited is integral to the receiving community. A region may not have the resources to collect, maintain and formally document its own heritage, and recognition of the need to do so often comes too late.

A regional institution may focus on contemporary ideas, developments in the recent past and/or isolated samples of its heritage: the impulse to provide an historical framework for the appreciation and understanding of these fragments through a more comprehensive survey may have to recognise that other institutions (often state and national museums) may have already collected key elements. In some instances, this will have raised the public profile of the relevant material and contributed to an increase in market value so that purchase is beyond the resources of the regional organisation. This can also apply to small urban specialist museums.

The concept of the 'distributed national collection' is particularly relevant here. The notion of a wider collective entity, of which each institution is merely a part, goes hand in hand with a key principle stressed by Dr Christopher Anderson (then Curator of Anthropology and now Director of the South Australian Museum) at the 1991 Adelaide CAMA Conference: 'We must stop thinking in terms of ownership of objects and collections. . . With an alternative focus on custodianship and on a multiplicity of rights and interests, access becomes a truly necessary and logical outcome of collecting, not just a hypothetical possibility'.(5)

We may all be partners in the custodianship of the national heritage, whether our institutions are run by volunteers, part-time professionals or two hundred specialists. The institution with the staff of two hundred may have in its custody the heritage of the institution staffed by volunteers. An institution staffed by volunteers may have custody of a collection which has significance for the whole state or nation.

In the first instance, insights into some of the central meanings of the heritage of the smaller institution may best be gained by consultation and collaboration with this institution. The larger organisation may have 'custody of the objects', but the smaller institution may have 'custody of knowledge integral to an understanding of them'. It may also have responsibilities for custody of the objects and ideas which establish their context and chart the continuity of their significance into the future.

A commitment to professional exchanges, loans and touring exhibitions where both parties contribute as partners is a logical recognition of joint custody, and should be seen as a strategy in collection management — the continuing task of researching and documenting works in order to determine the most appropriate means for their maintenance, interpretation and display — as well as forums for refining or reassessing directions for the collection development of the respective institutions.(6)

**Alison French,  
Curator, Araluen Centre**

## References:

- (1) Fleming, W. and O'Brien, J. April 1993, for the Cultural Ministers' Council's Heritage Collections Working Group, *Heritage Collections in Australia — a plan for a new partnership*.
- (2) The Working Group defines the Distributed National Collection as the sum of heritage collections in Australia which are recorded in an

accessible form and which are accessible to users and visitors through exhibition or catalogues, or through other means. It becomes a recognised entity through use of this definition, although its form and content may change over time.

- (3) The contemporary visual arts are serviced by professional touring networks which receive state and federal funding towards infrastructure costs: The Australian Exhibitions Touring Agency (AETA) and the National Exhibition Touring Scheme (NETS). Their government funding does not cover tour costs. Until the non-visual arts networks lobby for a similar infrastructure, or the expansion of the NETS program to incorporate their professional needs, they should work through the state branches of Museums Australia Inc. and their associated special interest groups. In some instances, the NETS program may take on touring concepts from non-visual arts museums when the exhibition concepts cross disciplines and relate to contemporary visual arts issues.
- (4) Simpson, S. 1989, *Museums and Galleries, A Practical Legal Guide*, Redfern Legal Centre Publishing, Sydney.
- (5) Anderson, C. 1991, 'Aboriginal people and museums — restricting access to increase it', *Something for Everyone, Access to Museums, The 1991 Conference of the Council of Australian Museum Associations*, Tonkin, S. (ed), CAMA, pp189-193.
- (6) Useful directories for museums planning partnerships or tours include: Cultural Ministers Council Statistical Advisory Group, 1993, *Museums and Art Museums and Commercial Galleries in Australia*, Canberra; and Museums Australia Inc., 1994, *Australian Art Museums and Public Galleries Directory*, Melbourne.

## Other publications which may assist include:

- Carroll, A. 1991, *Independent Curators, A guide to the Employment of Independent Curators*, AMAA, Melbourne.
- Moore, M. 1993, *Principles and Guidelines for Curating a Touring Exhibition*, NETS(WA), Perth.
- Kelly, S. 1994, *Travelling Exhibitions: A Practical Handbook for Non-State Metropolitan and Regional Galleries and Museums*, NETS (Victoria), Melbourne.

The Australian Archive's Exhibition 'Between Two Worlds. The Commonwealth Government and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Part-Descent in the NT', traces what happened to children who were placed in two Northern Territory 'half-caste' institutions run by the Commonwealth Government: The Bungalow in Alice Springs, and Kahlin Home in Darwin. Oral histories, documents and photographs drawn mainly from the Australian Archives collection form the basis of the exhibition. Former children of the homes and their friends, Aboriginal advisers, and associated organisations established the concept, content, design and terminology for the exhibition. Personnel from the Australian Archives visited Alice Springs during the exhibition's development and liaised with the Araluen Centre from its inception.

The exhibition aims to increase Australian's access to, and understanding of, their heritage and, in particular, give access for those Australians whose lives formed part of the creation of that heritage.

In Darwin, 'Between Two Worlds' will be shown at the NT Museum of Arts and Sciences, then Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute in August. It will then be available to other venues.

## PERSONAL HERITAGE

# The Gift of the Small Museum

*By Linda Young and  
Elaine Lawson*

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'Heritage' is still widely perceived as the relics of great men achieving great events somewhere in the distant past. At two Canberra house museums, Calthorpes' House and Blundells' Cottage, staff and volunteers try hard to break down this image to show that heritage is about every visitor's own life and experience.

In part, this is possible because the physical constraints of each house are such that only small parties of visitors can be shown through at a time. If a large group does arrive we must use strategies to divide and manage the group, but the majority of our visitors arrive in small groups of families and friends.

This enables guides to seize Freeman Tilden's first principle of heritage interpretation: to give the interpretive experience a personal meaning for each visitor.(1) Tilden believed this was the way to capture the hearts and minds of visitors to heritage sites; we see it as a means of extending heritage consciousness into the personal domain where each visitor sees themselves as participants in the ongoing processes of history.

How is it done? How can a mass, repetitive business like the funnelling of visitors through an historic house be refined to a genuinely individual experience?

The answer lies in listening to the visitors themselves. Every good guide knows you get with the strength of your audience and follow it through. We usually begin with a brief introduction about each house and its occupants, ask the visitors whether they are local or from elsewhere, and whether they have visited this particular house before. This establishes the format of the visit, and lets the group know the guide won't be doing all the talking! Once inside, the guide is patient and waits for visitors to identify items, or light levels, or even smells, that strike a chord of interest or memory. A response comes from all but the

most recalcitrant: 'We had one of those', or 'Wouldn't that look great in our house'.

The latter comment is sometimes regrettably reviled by heritage professionals as evidence of snobbish ignorance, but where we know that the items on display were everyday pieces in their time, they often look like valuable antiques to visitors. Yet it has been observed by others that the act of appropriation inherent in saying 'I like that', is a means of establishing a personal relationship with the object.(2) It is a bridge between modern life and taste, and historical necessity and availability, which opens up a field that in academe could be called economic history or cultural anthropology. It shows how easily visitors can cross the threshold to connect themselves with the past.

Thus the cues we pick up as interpreters. 'How did you use it?' or 'Where would you put it?' open up comparisons between modern life and the past. A big, old bed or a long, deep bath seem delightful luxuries until we contemplate sharing the bed, top and tail, with three siblings, or sharing the bathwater in family hierarchy. These cases offer dramatic contrasts between the standards of now and then. Older visitors who have personal experience of the past may recall it with fondness or wryness or wonder that they put up with it. Younger people who fancy the comfort but not the degree of sharing may snort with derision. Either way, our visitors are challenged by memory and imagination to place themselves in the furniture of the past.

'What did your mother think of it?' or 'What would your children say?' are questions which introduce human agency into the frozen moment of the house museum. It is very easy for the complex totality of a conserved or re-created domestic interior to take on an aura of certainty and authority. But we find that when we ask questions about

how humans actually used the kinds of goods on display, we don't always get the conventional response. 'My mother hated curtains', said a sixty year old man visiting Calthorpes' House, (which like many houses of the 1920s is very dark, with its triple layering of blinds and curtains). The visitor's mother chose roller blinds which rolled all the way up to allow light and air to stream in — an attitude towards the sun which we tend to think of as post-WW2 modern but which is a cyclical phenomenon. Light and air were essential elements of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century interiors, but the rooms became gloomier each decade until the pendulum swung briefly back towards the light as part of the reform movement of the early twentieth century. By 1927, filtered light and darker interiors were again the fashion but as revealed by our visitor, not for everyone!

'Was it/would it be better that way?' begins to deconstruct nostalgic myths about the past. People often express a certain proud assertiveness that they grew up with kerosene lamps or ironed their clothes with Mrs Potts irons — now icons of country style. But pushed a step further, they'll tell you the lamps were a pain to clean and the irons exercised your wrists more than you needed. Further musing may bring forth regret for the lifestyle that wasted and wanted not, that took pains with personal presentation. But having recalled the good and the ill of the situation, visitors show that they have a more critical view of the past.

The opportunity for converting nostalgia into comparison and enquiry is far easier in a small museum, with a small collection, than it is in a large institution. In a large museum, guided tours are almost always a one-way delivery of information — from guide to visitor — and where the guide is the 'expert'. In the familiar domestic terrain of a house museum, every

visitor has something to contribute and to be 'expert' about.

Further techniques to engage visitors in direct participation with the past can be developed around the individual. The whole span of human life was lived in both Calthorpes and Blundells, so it's usually possible to partner visitors with someone their age who lived here. That person's tasks in the household make for a rich field of talk about domestic duties, which almost always come down to gender roles. The irregularities and tragedies that happen in all families appear in our stock of residents too: divorce, single parenthood, death by accident, world wars and the Great Depression.

Even the misconceptions of popular beliefs about life in the past are useful interpretive themes. The Limestone Plains were a distant place in the 1840s when the first white settlers appeared, but the town of Queanbeyan had become its social and economic focus by the 1860s. Because Blundells' Cottage looks like a 'pioneer' set piece, there is an assumption that its inhabitants lived at the very margins of civilisation, and that they lived rough. Yet we know that it was a thriving town. There is also an assumption that the National Capital sprang into being in a fully equipped state, and had nothing to do with Queanbeyan. Yet we know the new city was initially dependent upon Queanbeyan for shopping and entertainment. Business links with Queanbeyan remained strong, and Harry Calthorpe operated his business there even though he chose to live in Canberra.

As described so far, our style of interpretation seems one-sided; the interpreter feeds information and challenges the visitor. In practice, we constantly pick up important things ourselves, stimulated or surprised by a visitor's comments. The kitchen in both houses brings a wealth of recipes, remedies and memories — even the youngest children quickly identify the absence of a microwave oven or food processor. This type of feedback can be the impetus for special events which focus on domestic gadgets, or demonstrations of economical recipes actually cooked by Mrs Calthorpe during the Depression years.

The personal approach to heritage interpretation is appropriate for Calthorpes and Blundells. Neither house was the home of important people or the site of famous events, nor are they

outstanding examples of historic architecture or artistic achievement. Instead, they are the stuff of social history in the private sphere of family life. Calthorpes was occupied by a middle-class family from 1927 to 1979; Blundells housed three long-term tenant families of agricultural workers from about 1860 to 1959.

Though we know a lot about each family, it is not our primary purpose to construct them as the subjects of the visit. To us they are important parts of a complex whole. But as both Blundells and Calthorpes are real houses that have been occupied by real people, we accept they will be the focus for some visitors, and we need to be able to respond to their interest.

At Calthorpes' House, the former occupants are still regular visitors and great supporters. We owe it to them and to the integrity of the interpretation to make sure that the minutiae of domestic details are recorded, remembered and right! At the same time, we need to be able to stand back and assess how much of the detail the visitor really wants to know. This tension between objectivity and subjectivity, between particular and general, is lively, healthy and stimulating for guides and visitors alike.

We regard the Calthorpes, the Ginns, the Blundells and the Oldfields as representatives of Australian society in a certain time and place, and we regard the objects in the two houses as interpretive triggers, not as items of intrinsic importance. It is the experience of that time and place that we believe is the objective of our history-construction through interpretation.

Linda Young,  
Lecturer,  
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Elaine Lawson,  
Curator,  
ACT Museums and Galleries Unit

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# A POWERFUL TRANSFORMER

## Gallery Policy-making in a Community Context

By Alice-Ann McRobbie and  
Craig Douglas

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*'The museum environment. . . is a powerful transformer. It converts displays of material wealth and social status into displays of spiritual wealth.'*(1)

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In any gallery situation there are a number of factors which have a bearing on the formulation of collection, exhibition and communications policies. However, not all factors exert equal influence on the process and much depends on the individual gallery's community positioning and circumstances.

Located forty kilometres west of Brisbane, Ipswich is a city wrestling with powerful internal and external dynamics. It is Queensland's oldest provincial city and had limestone quarrying, cotton manufacturing, coal mining, railway workshops, woollen mills, sawmills, power generation, the air force, and pottery and brick manufacture as its early employment focus. Today, the influence of these heavy industries is being replaced by service industries, a factor which is impacting on the city's identity and future vision. Ipswich is a community with enormous pride related to its rich and varied cultural heritage. But it is also a community in crisis with heavy institutionalisation, high youth unemployment, economic debilitation and racial tensions.

The Ipswich Regional Art Gallery has been a focus of the city's art life for fourteen years. But whether it has had any impact on the wider community is a question pivotal to a current review of Gallery policies being conducted by an external consultant/facilitator. Through a community consultative process, this facilitator is reconsidering and, where appropriate, developing new collection and public program (exhibition and communication) policies that reinforce the Gallery's unique place within Ipswich and in the wider south-east Queensland region.

The Gallery is a cultural service of Ipswich City Council. It is a professionally managed public art gallery which operates within Council's corporate plan, and a cultural policy framework recently established by Council and the community. This *Ipswich City and Region Cultural Development Policy* is based on the premise that Council's role in the region's cultural development is complementary to the community's aspirations, and that Council is a facilitator of those aspirations.(2) This document's key policy issues and their subsequent implementation strategies clearly identify the Gallery's integrated role in the cultural infrastructure of the city and region.

Further to these internal policies and plans is the SEQ2001 Project, a joint government and community

planning project designed to develop a framework for managing growth in south-east Queensland. The SEQ2001 study has identified Ipswich as one of the three 'Key Strategic Regional Centres' for future planning and infrastructural attention, reflecting community concerns for environmental management and social, economic and physical development.

The development of new policies for Ipswich Gallery is predicated on the City and Regional Cultural Development Policy, the developed strategies of SEQ2001, and the Gallery's program goal: 'to provide a vigorous and challenging gallery program, which promotes and extends visual arts, craft and design to the Ipswich and wider communities'.(3)

However, no matter how essential these broad frameworks are to the Gallery's planning, they do not provide the specificity of policy approach required for a public art gallery. Therefore, the fundamental role of the facilitator is to blend the 'macro' (the region) with the 'micro' (the Gallery) — to research broad components of the south-east Queensland cultural map and incorporate relevant aspects of this research within the Gallery's procedural framework.

The consultant's mandate was to work with a variety of communities and to illicit responses and suggestions as to what the Gallery collects and shows.

This consultation process was started almost as soon as the *Ipswich City and Region Cultural Development Policy* had been adopted, so as to benefit from the community interest created by the document. The Gallery's existing acquisitions policy, which centres on early twentieth century Queensland watercolours, contemporary Australian works on paper and contemporary Australian ceramics was presented to the community as a basis for discussion, as were the Gallery's established exhibition and communication policies.

Early in the research process a one day consultative workshop was conducted in the Gallery to allow members of the community and arts industry an opportunity to share, contribute and participate in the policy formulation process. By examining the Gallery's history, its collection and current practices, participants were able to gain information on the policy-making process, and to also facilitate changes to the Gallery's mandate, function, concept and structure.

Art galleries collect, record and present the meaning and value we find in life, art, history and community. All gallery collections have things in common: they are made up of objects which refer to selected elements of the physical world, and to which cultural value has been ascribed. These objects come to us from the past (whether completed yesterday or three centuries ago),

and they are assembled with some degree of intention by the curator, gallery director or others who believe that the whole is somehow more than the sum of its parts. The process of object selection is fundamental to any art gallery.

Traditionally, a gallery's collections have also comprised its exhibitions. When considering larger galleries, a major part of their permanent collection could be on display at any one time but always as the result of some form of selection. Cameron (1986) is of the opinion that the gallery as a communication system 'depends on the non-verbal language of objects and observable phenomena'. The collection of objects is often debated as the essence of galleries and what distinguishes them from other culture/leisure institutions. As such, collections are often the major influence on what is communicated via exhibitions.(4)

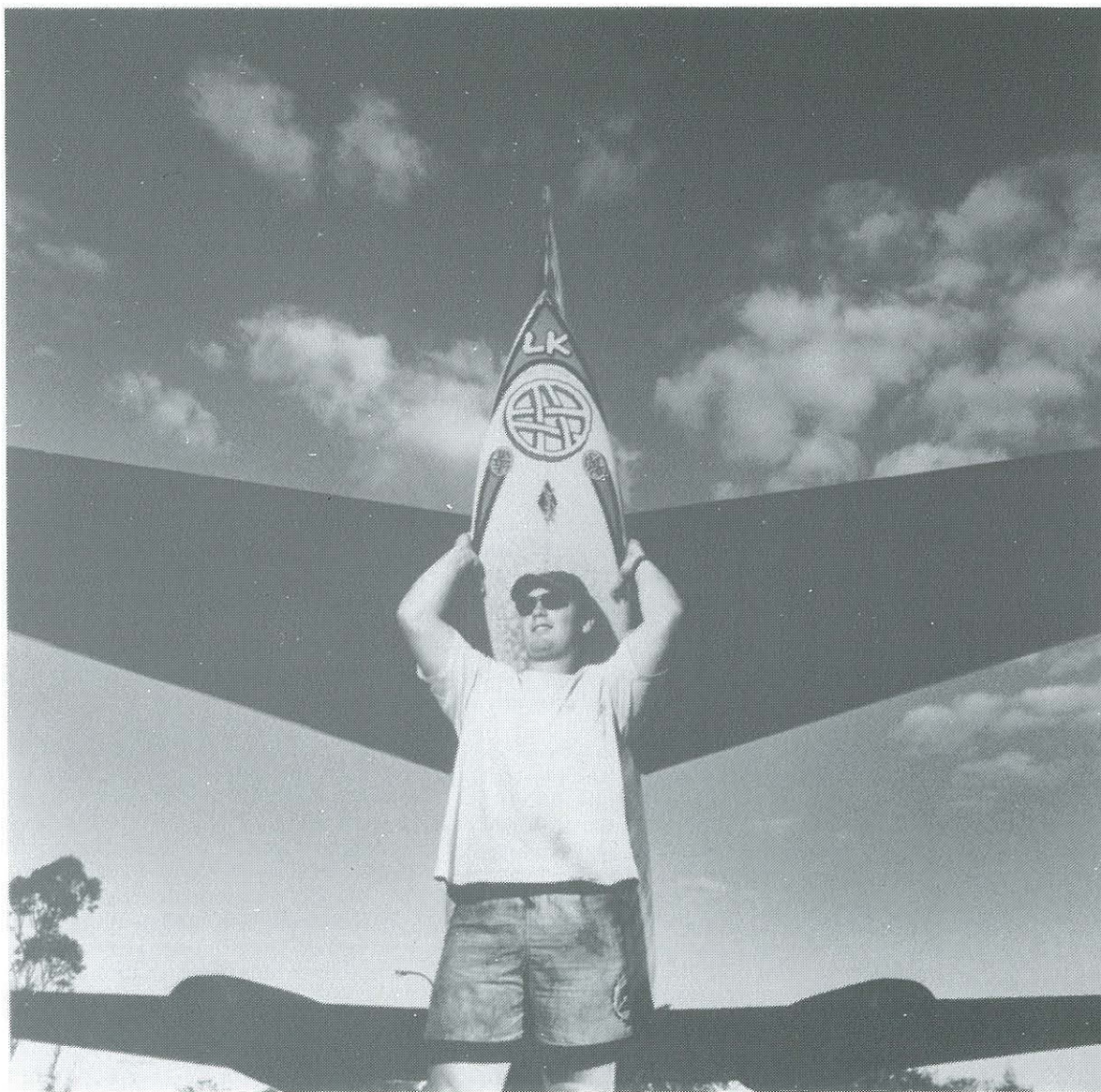
Location, historical accident and past policy makers (in the case of local government-run galleries) have, to a large extent, determined what collections a gallery might have at its disposal. Inclusive policy formulation indicates how this resource might be developed and augmented. Equally, at an industry level each gallery needs to determine its role as a provider of temporary exhibitions with regard to its location, and the policies and activities of other neighbouring and often competing organisations.

Ipswich Regional Art Gallery, as a cultural resource located in a regional city and with a small, relatively disparate collection, is mindful that the current process to reformulate collection and public program policies will not only reinforce its unique role as a regional art gallery, but will further involve the community.

The formulation of policies (whether new or modified) needs to be carefully and systematically coordinated. Those charged with this responsibility should dismiss introspection and consult widely. Ipswich has recognised this imperative, and the policy-

making process it has embarked on will not only reinforce its Gallery's image, but will promote a grand conceptual plan — that is, to transform the Gallery's operations into a clear and relevant conceptual framework for an understanding of, and response to, community and place.

Alice-Anne McRobbie,  
Director,  
Ipswich Regional Art Gallery, and  
Craig Douglas,  
Consultant Policy Facilitator,  
Ipswich Regional Art Gallery and Lecturer in Art  
Theory, Queensland College of Art



DOUG SPOWART, 'PORTRAIT OF AN IPSWICH SURFER' — ADAM BAKER 1993, SILVER GELATIN PRINT, 30 X 30CM, THE CITY OF IPSWICH ART COLLECTION.

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# CULTURAL HERITAGE

## Art, Museums and Local Government

*By Elizabeth Close and Audray Banfield*

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Albury Regional Museum and Albury Regional Art Centre are both administered by Albury City Council. The Art Centre has been part of Council's Community Services Department for many years while the Museum was taken over from Albury and District Historical Society in 1983. This is a relatively unusual situation which presents both advantages and disadvantages to the promotion of arts and cultural heritage in the region. In recent years local government has come to recognise the value of cultural activities within its boundaries. Previously the local library was Council's nod to culture, whereas the present more enlightened times see local government supporting a wide-ranging artistic and cultural community.

### The problems of being regional

Albury is in the NSW part of the border twin city of Albury Wodonga. It has the only museum in the city and it serves both sides of the border and the surrounding region. Albury Regional Museum houses the cultural heritage of all these people and interprets it for locals, school children and tourists. However, in spite of this service it is not perceived by many locals, or by some councillors on both sides of the border, as being anywhere near adequate for this purpose.

Albury Regional Art Centre also serves a two-state region but arguments over its relevance and presentation have a different focus. 'Art' it seems is quite different from, and just possibly more universal than, 'history'. While the locals feel their cultural heritage is not well served by a museum of the sort run by Albury City Council, they accept that the art gallery serves some of their artistic needs. Of course many of these same people rarely if ever set foot in either building, or visit any of the varied travelling exhibitions hosted by each venue. Cultural heritage has become part of cultural tourism and Albury Wodonga is desperately trying to find a focus to cash in on the boom. Pressure is being brought to bear on the staff at both the Museum and Art Centre to fill a perceived void without any recognition of the extraordinary work already being done by dedicated professionals. The inclusion of Albury City Council's General Manager on the NSW Ministry for the Arts Advisory Board may go some way towards changing these perceptions in the future.

As we move towards a service-oriented society, the sense of cultural tourism as an important commodity is growing. While councils want to jump on the bandwagon, there is still a reluctance to accept museums and art galleries as equal tourist attractions with the likes of the Ettamogah Pub, P S Cumberoona, and any half way reasonable theme park. Councils, and not just rural councils, often find it difficult to accept cultural institutions as an essential part of the infrastructure of a

civilised society, or worthy of support for other reasons apart from relieving tourists of a dollar or two.

### Anti-culture mindset

Country museums are very different from their city cousins but this is often not realised by councils or the local people who vote for them. To make matters worse, city-based museums do not seem to have the slightest interest in their smaller country cousins. Council would like to see the region's cultural heritage presented in a bigger, flashier, more 'hands-on' way; showing all aspects of 'the past', and encouraging many bus tours and their attendant tourists. For some extraordinary reason it is expected that this move towards a city-style museum will happen without any monetary input.

There is little clear understanding of the role and importance of museums and galleries and even less understanding of the professional expertise required of their staff. The dissatisfaction of museum professionals working in local government stems from this imperfect understanding which is reflected in job evaluation processes and award restructuring.

Another major factor in the anti-cultural mindset is the capriciousness of elected councillors. Cultural services are the first to suffer in the priorities list if there is just one minor change in a councillor's mind. Such services are regarded as non-essential operations in the minds of elected local government personnel and indeed in the minds of many traditional 'roads, drains and building' senior officers. In Albury, this has resulted in some difficult problems for both museum and gallery. Collection storage has been a concern for a long time. The museum is housed in a nineteenth-century inn with no real on-site storage and a collection which includes a number of huge items of farm machinery. Housing this collection is a frightening task. It is held for the most part in a dusty, muddy, vermin-riddled shed. If the art gallery did not have a good part of its collection out on loan, there would be nowhere to put the items.

Both institutions have had requests in for building expansion and development for many years. The relocation of the museum to a more suitable site is one of the perennial topics of conversation; the additions to the art gallery were proposed at least seven years ago. However, with one wave of the pen both proposals went to the bottom of the priority list to make way for a \$2 million renovation of the convention centre, the cost being more than the proposed combined cultural expenditure. Too bad no-one thought about the attraction cultural facilities would have for the many conference delegates and their partners!

### The good news

The positive aspects of being part of the cultural services

administered by local government must not be forgotten, however. At present, council agencies enjoy sales tax exemption for major purchases and the services of a purchasing department, building services and outdoor staff for heavy work are of great assistance. The services of an accounts and finance department, personnel and computer assistance also give us an infrastructure which a stand-alone institution could not provide without considerable cost.

### For the future

It is important that country museums and art galleries continue to build their connections with local government. Cultural heritage is every bit as important as a service to the community as are roads and child care

services. Museums Australia will need to campaign proactively and aggressively to change the philosophy of many country councils. The vigorous marketing plan being undertaken by the Regional Galleries Association of NSW has received support from the NSW Tourism Commission, NSW Ministry for the Arts and the NRMA. It will be good to see this campaign taken up by Museums Australia because it is only through education that local government attitudes to museum work will change.

Elizabeth Close,  
Director,  
Albury Regional Museum  
Audray Banfield,  
Director,  
Albury Regional Art Centre

# Long-distance, First-hand Knowledge

## Touring exhibitions: evaluating their impact on the regional gallery audience in Western Australia

*By Katherine Wilkinson*

To find out more about regional audiences who view touring art exhibitions, several methods are useful. In this vast state, regional audiences are as different as the climate and terrain. Venue feedback, and reactions from those who live within the community and experience the audience reaction first-hand are crucial. Letters and anecdotal responses are welcome indications, and regional visits are essential. Questionnaires are also appropriate as they provide wide ranging and quantifiable methods of evaluation.

In 1993, as the largest single provider of visual art and craft exhibitions in regional Western Australia, the National Exhibitions Touring Structure for Western Australia (now Art On The Move) presented forty-nine exhibitions in eighteen different locations. The program aims to achieve a balance of quality exhibitions which develop audiences and venues through the effective use of resources. In planning and funding the program all these methods of gaining long-distance, first-hand knowledge are employed.

Since 1986, participating venues have completed Response Sheets detailing the touring exhibition's total attendance figures, plus the composition of special interest and school groups. It also includes an assessment of the exhibition's management and preparation, its value to the community, and details of media exposure.

The next stage of Art On The Move's information gathering process was the 1992/93 Audience Questionnaire, which instead spoke directly to the exhibition visitor. Its aim was to build an audience profile and to gather responses to a specific exhibition experience, 'The Claude Hotchin Art Bequests'. The resulting *Research Report*, the first in a proposed series, provided an evaluation tool to be further developed for use in predominantly regional venues.

The general audience information is also useful to participating member venues and their communities for

exhibition programming, the development of promotion strategies, and lobbying for better facilities and support. Incorporating some specific venue-oriented questions in future questionnaires will further assist these venues to discover or verify their communities' reaction to their facilities, needs and programs.

This particular exhibition, a major historical body of work from a variety of regional and metropolitan collections, was chosen because it represented the conservative end of our program. The exhibition was supported by a greater than normal touring budget from Healthway, the Western Australian Health Promotion Foundation, and we anticipated large audiences, including many first time visitors.

A single page, self-completing questionnaire was available at participating venues in Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Esperance, Kalgoorlie, Narrogin and Perth. The 1177 returned questionnaires form a representative sample of the exhibition's visitors and provided material for the Report, compiled by Reark Research in Perth. It is the first of its kind in Australia to evaluate a large number of audience responses from diverse regional locations.

To build a visitor profile, questions concerning age, gender, location of residence, yearly frequency of gallery visits, and range of art interests were devised. A question about how visitors heard about the exhibition provided information on the effectiveness of the exhibition's promotion. A more specific question on how visitors rated the exhibition was followed by a section for general comment.

Each question offered a choice of responses and these were numerically coded for translation into a quantifiable form. General comments were coded by the frequency with which they reoccurred.

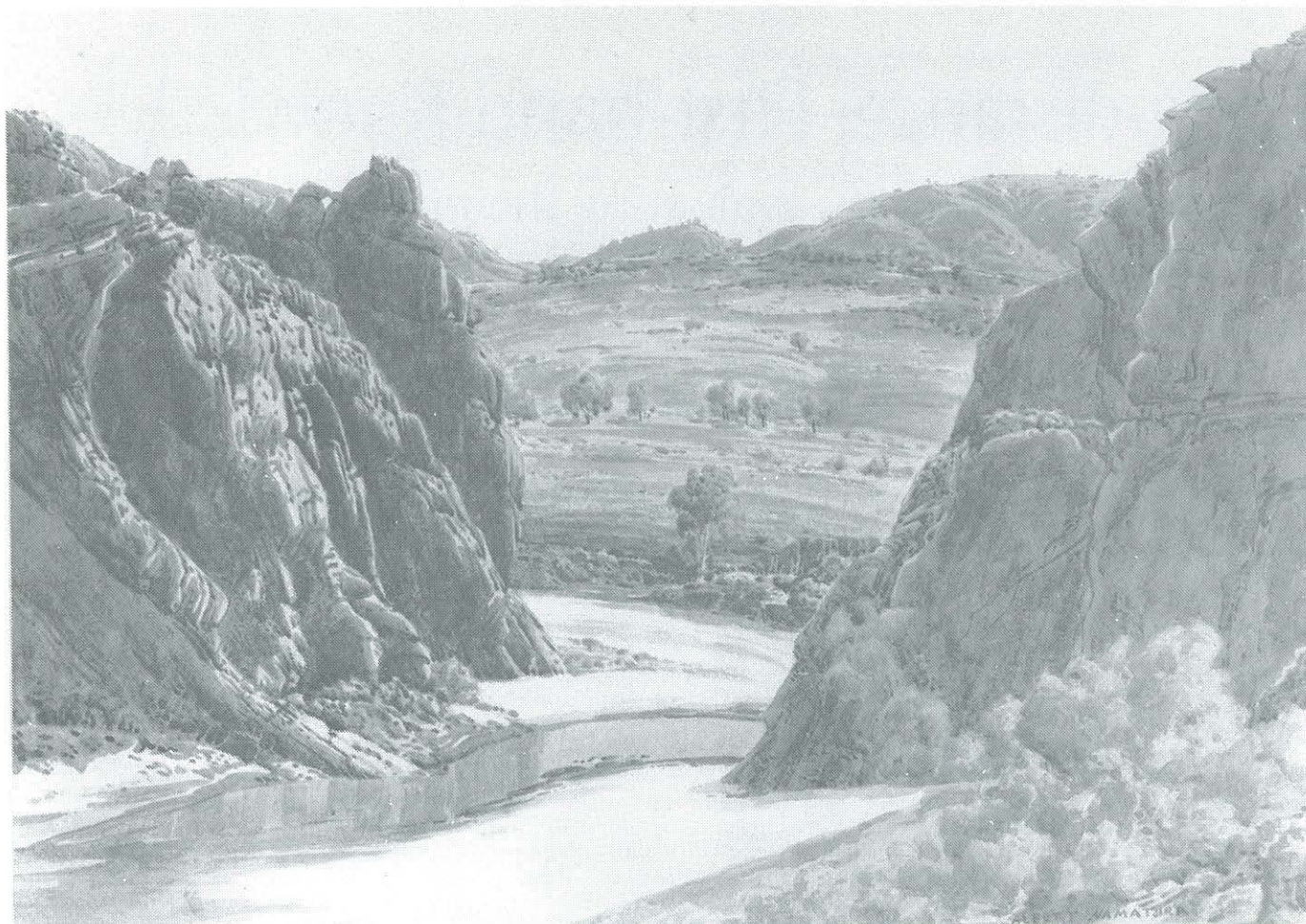
In analysing audience gender, we found that twice as many females as males visited this exhibition at all regional venues. In contrast, the Perth attendance was only 27% more female than male.

Frequency of gallery visits was divided into categories. First-time visitors accounted for up to a third of the total audience, with slightly more men than women in this category. Slightly more women had visited the venue more than six times, however, equal numbers of men and women had made three to six visits. The majority of visitors were over thirty years old; most children visited as part of a school group.

Most exhibition visitors lived in a town, but a higher percentage of visitors from the local region was evident in Geraldton, Albany, and Narrogin. Interstate and overseas tourist visitors were evident at the coastal venues of Bunbury, Geraldton, and Albany. Visitors from a town or local region had generally visited the gallery three to six times and, as expected, many more

exhibitions. Touring an accessible and noteworthy exhibition such as this, within a program which is predominantly contemporary and challenging, assists newer Western Australian venues in their audience development.

Attractive invitations and posters were designed for participating venues, and for the first time a regional television commercial advertised the exhibition. In the responses it was evident that word of mouth, press advertisements and posters were the strongest sources of information. The use of a poster for effective exhibition promotion is sometimes underestimated but based on these findings, Art On The Move will now more actively encourage their inclusion in touring budgets and strategic placement.



ALBERT NAMATJIRA — 'GLEN HELEN GORGE', WATERCOLOUR. ROYAL PERTH HOSPITAL COLLECTION. PHOTO: VICTOR FRANCE. FROM THE 'CLAUDE HOTCHIN ART BEQUESTS'.

local townspeople visited more than six times a year.

In all regional locations painting, craft, and photography were rated as the first three art interests. These were followed by sculpture and prints. Painting appealed universally to all ages and both sexes, with craft appealing to the under eleven and over thirty age groups. Photography appealed more to the twenty to fifty year old, as did prints to a lesser degree. Women registered more interest in viewing craft, and men in photography.

In response to the exhibition experience, we found that in all venues more than 94% of visitors rated the exhibition as excellent or good. It had unanimous appeal throughout the state, and broad appeal amongst younger viewers. More than half of the first time visitors rated the exhibition as excellent, and we can hopefully assume these first time visitors will attend future

The next research questionnaire will accompany the 1994/95 tour of 'Off The Bed, Off The Wall', an exhibition which continues the challenge: What defines contemporary women's work, art and craft? The intention is to extend the number of questions posed which will endeavour to compare visitor expectations with their experience of this contemporary and collectively presented exhibition, to determine the effectiveness of interpretive material, and to discover more about the impact of our touring exhibitions within regional Western Australia.

**Katherine Wilkinson,**  
Executive Director,  
Art On The Move

The *Research Report*, compiled by Rearth Research, will be launched in June. Ed.



## SMUGGLERS AND SAILORS

*Smugglers and Sailors: The Customs History of Australia 1788-1901*, by David Day, published Australian Government Publishing Service, 1992, 528pp, \$59.95

David Day was given the task of writing a history of the Australian Customs Service and its predecessors. *Smugglers and Sailors* is the result.

Day has set out to write a book which is both scholarly and accessible, and his approach is promising. It offers avenues for other broader institutional histories, and some discussion of this in the introduction would have been useful.

Customs is at the centre of government and Day's wider perspective is probably essential in understanding the way in which it functioned in colonial times. However, the book is successful as a scholarly work in that it places customs in the context of an existing view of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Australia, and produces new perspectives by bringing the early development of commerce and shipping into the foreground.

Day examines the dominance of rum in the economy of the infant gaol colony and the struggle between successive governors, civil elites and officers of the NSW Corps. Early governors looked to customs revenue to fund a civil society, and customs regulations were the first assertion of British sovereignty over the Australian continent.

Perhaps Day's largest point relates to the effect of government regulations on Australia's economic relations and view of the world. He argues that, in concert with British colonial policy, customs regulations were responsible for turning colonists away from the sea and to looking to the land for opportunities. The first colonists were faced with a hostile land which resisted their efforts to till its soil and, as sailors, they looked to the oceans. Whaling, sealing and trade in the Pacific were the first economic ventures. Customs regulations which stretched across colonial ports discouraged maritime commerce and, similarly, trade with the region was discouraged and funnelled instead to Britain.

He sees customs revenue as providing the financial basis for the



THE CUSTOMS HOUSE AT WAHGUNYAH ABUTTED THE BRIDGE SPANNING THE MURRAY, WITH ITS PLETHORA OF REGULATIONS AND DUTIES DISRUPTING THE FLOW OF TRADE BETWEEN THE COLONIES. MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES.

Australian colony's independence from the 1850s onwards. The effect of the colonies deriving their revenue from trade, rather than an income or land tax, was to contribute to keeping them apart.

*Smugglers and Sailors* is viewed from the windows of Customs House and, not surprisingly, it is the view of an elite at the centre of government. This history examines how customs functioned but does not reach beyond those with power to show, for example, how landholders saw the rum trade or how immigrants saw racist immigration policies.

However, while Day has aimed to write both a scholarly and popular history which extends the ambit of his story, the overall assessment must be that the book is scholarly rather than popular. It is the first of two volumes and, while the decision to expand it to two volumes will increase its usefulness as a reference work, it will decrease its appeal for casual readers.

Kevin Jones,  
Australian National  
Maritime Museum

## GUIDELINES FOR INTERNSHIPS

By Marianne Wallace-Crabbe, published Art Museums Association of Australia, 1993, \$12.50 members, \$15 non-members.

This timely book is a broad introduction to getting an internship started. It bravely

tackles new ground in what is at present an unfamiliar process in the museum world.

As the publication's handy bibliography shows, the topic has received slight coverage in the museum literature. Marianne Wallace-Crabbe deserves our thanks for drawing this publication together and providing an initial focus for what will hopefully become a normal process of career development in all museums.

*Guidelines for Internships* is handy, readable, well structured and comprehensive in so far as it is possible to cover the idiosyncrasies involved in setting up internships, placements, secondments etc. These are all quite large topics in their own right.

Internships are defined in this publication as 'A continuous period of museum work done under the supervision of a qualified individual. . . , the goal of which is professional development' (one assumes the supervisor is also experienced!); a secondment, on the other hand, is 'A temporary transference from one position to another'; and finally placements 'Are defined by their function being to just complete a certain task'. This specific connection with professional development is the real purpose of an internship and, as such, is not restricted to newcomers to the profession but can be a source of new ideas and strategies for 'old hands'.

What this publication seeks to

achieve, and does so with considerable success, is to lay a broad foundation for the appropriate processes and language used for those intending to get involved with internships. Its chapters address what an internship is and how this is distinguished from other forms of workplace development, how internships work and who is eligible, what the advantages and responsibilities are for the host institution and the intern and finally, to whet one's appetite, there are examples of how internships have actually worked with a number of case studies.

At this time when Australian industry is in the process of restructuring and we are encouraged to be smarter in the workplace, internships are one of the most productive ways for both an institution and the intern to learn new modes of approach and process. *Guidelines for Internships* is not only written as a specific 'how-to' manual but aligns itself within the broader thinking of professional development that is applicable to industry as a whole. Most of its substance is at the theoretical level and consequently its content has far wider application than for art galleries alone.

Daniel McOwan,  
Director,  
City of Hamilton Art Gallery

## REFURBISHMENT OF THE CITY OF UNLEY MUSEUM OF LOCAL HISTORY

**There she was, the Governor of South Australia, Dame Roma Mitchell, launching the newly refurbished City of Unley Museum of Local History. And there we all were applauding her — Friends of the Unley Museum, volunteers, notable members of the community and miscellaneous others.**

That was late in 1993 and the refurbishment of the nineteenth-Century Unley fire station, into which the collection had moved in 1989, had taken a couple of years planning by curator Holly McGowan Jackson.

McGowan Jackson and John Perkins, designer of the refurbishment, took two months to mount the exhibition. Funds for this concise and engaging exhibition, which fits almost

effortlessly into a very small space, came from the Museum Accreditation Grants Program of the South Australian History Trust (\$8,000), Arts and Cultural Development (\$24,000), and the City of Unley (\$1,000) — a well spent \$33,000.

This sum does not include substantial ongoing support from Unley Council. Indeed one of the most notable things about this museum is the support it has received from local council since its inception as a Jubilee 150 project in 1982. It is understood to be the only museum in Australia entirely funded for recurrent costs by a local council.

'Unley Remembered', the new permanent exhibition, is housed in the area that originally garaged the fire truck, a past pleasantly acknowledged in the commissioned mural by Adelaide artist, Rita Hall. Considerable inventiveness has been applied to provide a chronological insight into the changing demographics and economics of the Unley area from white invasion to the present. Combined with attractive design, this provides real points of contact for the visitor. The mounting of a furnished doll's house model of a typical Unley bluestone with its 'floor' affixed to the vertical at eye level uses minimum space and provides the viewer with a birdseye view. The well-placed, well-selected objects are from a range of circumstances to illustrate but not overwhelm. All is enhanced by appropriate old photographs and captions which are well displayed and well written to accommodate different levels of interest and knowledge.

In addition to the 'permanent' exhibition there is a 'temporary' space in the Local Government Room. Once a fire warden's bedroom, this space now houses a beautifully mounted display of decorative domestic plaster work from a longstanding local business, T. W. Ingham and Sons. There is also an access space which has already hosted one exhibition and, though currently home to a miscellany of museum debris, will soon house more frequently changing, locally generated community exhibitions. Other drawbacks are the ongoing, largely volunteer operated oral history project and a slow but steady publishing program, which has seen several books over the last few years documenting the local area.

Attracting over 3,000 visitors per year, most of them locals, this museum seems to have no readily visible toilet signs, disabled access, or visitor seating, however. It has no push button interactives (unless you count the automatically triggered audio tapes) and doesn't have a high profile location. It also has what could be argued as minimal acknowledgment of pre-white 'settlement' of the land on which Unley now rests — a single display case as you walk into the permanent exhibition — arguably the beginning, but also very easy to miss. This nicely displayed, small selection of 'ye olde Aboriginal artefacts' — a spear, a basket, a few leaves — could, perhaps, inappropriately imply a dead culture.

However, what this museum does have makes it special. It has a real sense of connection with its community and is a fine example of clever design and well thought out ideas. Together they make a local history collection come alive, and make the most of limited space to effectively communicate a substantial and important part of the larger story.

Louise Dauth,  
Head, Department of  
Visual Arts and Archaeology,  
Flinders University

## TRANSCULTURAL PAINTING

*Two exhibitions of Australian art have recently toured to Taiwan: 'Identities: Art from Australia', organised by the University of Wollongong, and 'Transcultural Painting', organised by The University of Melbourne Museum of Art in conjunction with Asialink.*

**'Transcultural Painting' features four artists: Tony Clark, Lindy Lee, Linda Marrinon and John Young. All began their exhibiting careers in the 1980s and their artistic inquiries are concerned with aspects of modernism and post-modernism.**

As a group they are united not by similarity of style, but by their use of existing or 'second-hand' images, both as source material and as the content of their art. They comment on, or utilise elements from previous styles, periods, or the work of earlier artists, from both high art and popular culture.

Their work exemplifies the concerns of many contemporary

Australian artists whose knowledge of art has been predicated on study of reproductions of works in overseas collections, and for whom distance from the original source has led to an acute appreciation for images received via reproduction or other forms of mass media. Consequently they are not concerned with art as the expression of an artist's individuality, but with the concept of the work as the embodiment of culture within a given context.

Pertinent to an exhibition conceived for Asia is the fact that two of the artists, Lindy Lee and John Young, are Australians of Chinese descent. John Young was born in Hong Kong in 1956 and moved to Sydney in 1967. Lindy Lee, who has Chinese ancestry, was born in Brisbane in 1954. Their works in 'Transcultural Painting' however, make only oblique reference to their Sino-Australian heritage. John Young's work is concerned with the discourse of modernism within the western tradition. His paintings in this exhibition consist of paired panels with two layers of imagery. The ground is a 'superscanned' image of a seventeenth century tapestry depicting the Jesuits attempting to introduce the Copernican cosmological system into China in the 1600s. The second layer consists of three panels in a grid organisation; the images of which are adapted from reproductions and fit into generic categories — still life, nudes, flower paintings, etc. These categories are relevant to high art, but in Young's case the source of amateur art photography, forgotten artists, or even neglected periods of better known artists, subverts the notion of a privileged history for modernism.

Lindy Lee employs photocopied reproductions of historical European paintings as her starting point. She mechanically copies and recopies chosen images, coats them with ink, paint and wax, and then scrapes back to allow a residue of the image to become visible. Her monochrome works utilise repetition not only as a technique for construction, but as the form of the works themselves with small panels being placed edge to edge to form a grid. Lee's dark



LINDA MARRINON, 'MATADOR', 1990, OIL ON CANVAS, FROM 'TRANSCULTURAL PAINTING'. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, ROSLYN OXLEY 9 GALLERY, SYDNEY, AND TOLARNO GALLERIES, MELBOURNE

images slowly reveal themselves as portraits whose vague familiarity engages the viewer like some half-forgotten memory.

Both Linda Marrinon and Tony Clark have incorporated Asian influences into their work; Clark through an exploration of Orientalism in the guise of 'Chinoiserie'; Marrinon through a fusion of Asian popular culture and comics with the traditions of western painting. Clark is concerned with the history of taste within western painting, and especially with the reception of style when it is at one remove, or more, from the original source. His ensemble paintings in 'Transcultural Paintings' are specifically concerned with the phenomenon of 'Chinoiserie' — art made in the Chinese manner by non-Chinese artists which was fashionable in England in the eighteenth century. Consisting of a central design for an abstract mural painting, flanked by small panels of 'Chinoiserie' landscapes containing architectural fantasies, they draw on the art of a past era to proclaim that history and style are important elements for the present.

Linda Marrinon challenges the hierarchies of art by utilising references from both high art and popular culture, thereby proclaiming that all are equal. Her works reveal a witty reworking of representational modes and categories invoking recognisable cartoon characters (some from contemporary Japanese comics) in the pose of well-known allegorical figures from western painting. While striking an immediate chord with their humour, they nevertheless deal with the serious aspect of how culture is malleable and influenced by changing attitudes in society.

The exhibition's title, 'Transcultural Painting', conveys the interactive process by which artists absorb and transmute influences from a range of sources, including cultures other than their own. Within the framework of post-colonial criticism Australian artists, among others, are stressing the co-existence of cultures while challenging the hierarchical order imposed by the history of modern western art.

Frances Lindsay  
Director,  
The University of Melbourne  
Museum of Art

*'Transcultural Painting' is supported by the Australia-China Council and the Visual Arts Craft Board of the Australia Council. Its tour includes Taiwan, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shanghai and the Ian Potter Gallery, The University of Melbourne in November.*

#### SWEET DAMPER AND GOSSIP

*Sweet Damper and Gossip: Colonial Sightings from the Goulburn and North-East, curated by Paul Fox with Jennifer Phipps, organised by Benalla Art Gallery: Monash University Gallery 17 February–26 March, Benalla Art Gallery 8 April–8 May, Shepparton Art Gallery 17 May–12 June.*

**This exhibition is a rare and adventurous exploration of little-known museum territory — the inner experience of cultural contact between black and white people during the mid-nineteenth century pastoral expansion of the Goulburn River and North-East Victoria.**

For the Europeans there was a

sometimes painful adjustment to foreign climate and soil and the creation of a psychologically necessary sense of place, achieved more through imported landscape conventions than local realities. They did not take possession in the spiritual sense vital to their precursors, and few adjusted their ethics and economics to accommodate the strange customs and needs of the indigenous people. Indeed, gifts of 'sweet damper' (flour laced with arsenic) were used treacherously to remove them.

But some Aborigines, the exhibition argues, fought back mentally. Although disempowered and dispossessed, they were able to challenge and to mock white ascendancy. This was done with a subtlety very rarely understood, and with an infiltration of white manners and customs demonstrated most powerfully here in their use of pen, ink and paper.

I make this point strongly because, for me, the curators' major achievement is almost subliminal. Beneath the surface of what can be read as a traditional exhibition there is a tantalising testing of one's responses. Only when I read the catalogue did I realise that I had failed to penetrate much beyond the customary surface. In that sense the catalogue is absolutely necessary if one is to recognise and reflect upon the full possibilities of the material.

'Sweet Damper and Gossip' is a step forward from Paul Fox's 'Drawing on Nature' exhibition of 1992, where he used the Museum of Victoria's collections to juxtapose Aboriginal and European perceptions. With the support of Jennifer Phipps, and the backing of Pam Gullifer of the Benalla Art Gallery, his approach has been confirmed.

The most obvious difference between this and his earlier exhibition comes from the foray into the 'no-man's-land' created by the institutionalisation of knowledge. Fox and Phipps had the insight and energy to identify and then secure from twelve contributing organisations and several individuals, the extraordinary range of pictures, objects and documents that make this bite. The main selection criterion was thematic integrity, and although many items are in themselves genuinely artistic,

strange or rare, their deeper meaning is always implicit.

There is much familiar material depicting the colonial landscape according to European intentions. We are shown the Europeans conquering the frontier in Cotton's *Sitting Room at Doogalook Station*. And in George Alexander Gilbert's *View on the Goulburn River at Mr Campbell's Station*, a billabong, once a tribal source of food, has become a watering hole for stock and an important element in the artist's composition.

What will be unfamiliar to many, and challenging to most is not just the Aboriginal presence in European depictions, but also the meaning to be placed on it. Henry Godfrey, for example, placed whites and blacks enigmatically in the transformed landscape in front of a squatter's hut. He shows the important Aborigine, Yabbee (dubbed 'Billy Hamilton' by the squatter William Hamilton) in tribal dress with his lubra in the presence of three white men. What are they doing? Two of the whites flanking Yabbee are holding spears. Are they disarming him, or merely placing him in the station landscape to affirm European ascendancy?

Aboriginal depictions of the frontier are equally enigmatic. The most striking work is by Yakaduna (alias Tommy McCrae) whose skills earned him patrons whom he used to avoid missions and to retain his freedom and his children. Despite the need to please he seems to have given his patrons only what he wanted them to see. More than that, in one of the highlights of the exhibition he uses their medium of pen and ink to mimic them. As Fox and Phipps comment on his *Squatters of the Old Time*, 'by observing the posturing and idiosyncrasies of frontier gentlemen, he turns the Europeans into objects and pokes fun at them'. Such mimicry was carried into life, and Yakaduna's art, to quote again from the catalogue, subverted European ascendancy 'by telling how an Aborigine perceived Aboriginal-European contact. Furthermore, to paint a European (William Buckley, the convict escapee) engaged in Aboriginal customs, when the artist is endeavouring to prevent his children being taken away from him and sent to missions to be civilised, is an act of defiance.'

With these images and the powerful contemporary works by Gordon Bennett, Leah King-Smith and Imants Tillers, the point is made that the dispossession of the Aborigines was neither triumphal nor civilising. The message is clear: revisiting such a past through a museum experience can be rewarding, even cathartic.

**Professor Weston Bate,  
Chairman,  
Museums Advisory Board  
(Victoria)**

## ADELAIDE INSTALLATIONS

*'Adelaide Installations' (incorporating the 1994 'Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art'), Adelaide Festival, 22 February — 20 March 1994.*

**There were reasons why the Art Gallery of South Australia accepted the invitation to develop and manage the visual arts program for the 1994 Adelaide Festival.**

First there was the opportunity to set the pace within Australia in acknowledging and exploring the parameters of installation practice. There was also the opportunity to bring together Asian and Australian artists in keeping with Christopher Hunt's Festival theme of common time-zones, plus the need to maintain the momentum of the 'Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art', inaugurated in 1990.

The 1994 project was larger than previous Adelaide Biennial exhibitions. Three guest curators were involved: Alison Carroll, Arts Adviser to Asialink, John Barrett-Lennard, independent Perth-based curator and Doreen Mellor, Visual Arts Coordinator from Tandanya, the National Aboriginal Cultural Institute. Forty-three artists were selected to construct twenty-three installations at eighteen indoor and outdoor sites around the city.

Alison Carroll curated 'Beyond the Material World', in which eight artists from North and South-East Asia were linked by their preference for installation work and by metaphysical and spiritual elements of life.

Doreen Mellor curated 'Moving Sands: Forward Momentum' which incorporated the coloured sands of the east coast, men's sand sculpture ceremonies from Arnhem Land, women's ground paintings from the central desert, and rock art

traditions of the Kimberly region. The artists drew upon traditions of ground installations, particularly in the representations of women's activity and art reflected in transformations of cultural frameworks.

The eleven installations in John Barrett-Lennard's 'Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art' were engaged with questions of identity.

'Moving Sands', located at Tandanya existed as a self-contained exhibition. The other two were located at sites across the city and in the Gerard and Goodman building, a massive, derelict bluestone and brick factory whose post-industrial ambience became a powerful visual metaphor for values and perspectives of curators and artists. The close proximity of art works which reflected ancient Asian and Aboriginal installations, and others expressing contemporary artists' adaptations unearthed a number of 'correspondences', such as the links between Australian sand sculptures, more recent stone and sand sculptures and Zen Buddhist derived works.

An undoubted appeal of the project was the occupation of alternative spaces. Added to the sense of adventure created by these spaces was the sense of theatre created by actual performances and the interaction demanded of viewers in engaging with some of the works.

'Adelaide Installations' was the first installation project of this scale or cultural parameters in Australia, and was a major undertaking for the Art Gallery of South Australia. A project coordinator was appointed a year ahead of the scheduled opening and full-time production and special events/sponsorship coordinators joined the team in late 1993. Installers (all local artists) were employed to coordinate production at various sites with help from volunteers. Participating galleries provided infrastructure support.

In terms of resourcing, the lesson was, look to your budgets but look even closer at your staffing levels. Given the technical nature of production, additional work could not always be undertaken by volunteers and invariably involved sub-contractors. The small number of people managing the total project on a day-to-day basis placed

significant pressure on the management team. This was compounded by the need to coordinate planning with the Adelaide Festival, to produce a catalogue, to respond to the production requirements of each artist, to be attentive to sponsors and to coordinate the movements of all visiting artists once they reached Adelaide. The project also relied heavily on Art Gallery infrastructure support.

Communication with artists in other countries and negotiating financial and project arrangements, sometimes through a third party, made project management more complex. Some artists were unable to assess their sites at first hand until the installation period two to three weeks prior to the Festival, which created some production problems.

This was also a period of adjustment and last-minute negotiations as artists began to translate ideas into works and developed new ideas as the installations took form. Project managers were constantly aware that this was not a 'sent by crate' exhibition.

Time stalked the project. The curators were appointed in late 1992 and then began the process of travel, negotiation and selection. Ideally, an extra year would have provided more realistic time-lines. The artists (with exceptions) visited and selected sites in late 1993 and proposals and budgets were consolidated by the end of 1993 or early 1994. Consequently, a host of issues: in-kind sponsorship, catalogue, contracts, education program, recommissioning of a derelict factory, publicity and construction of the works were on short convergent paths.

That the works made it over the line to appreciative audiences is due to detailed planning, high levels of commitment and goodwill, and the knowledge that this was a risk-taking venture in cultural exchange and contemporary practice worth fighting for.

If there is one simple message for museums venturing into installation projects of this scale it should be: aspire, be flexible, and be prepared to pay the price.

**John Neylon,**  
Education Officer, AGSA  
and art writer for  
*The Adelaide Review*



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**The program is taking place from July, 18 - 29, 1994.**

For further details, please contact:

Mary Orgill  
Mt Eliza Australian  
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Tel: (03) 215 1109 or  
Fax: (03) 215 1166

## Volunteers — the Vital Link

The Great Barrier Reef Aquarium is a joint Commonwealth/State Bicentennial Project. It is the largest living coral reef aquarium in the world, now recognised as a national reef education centre. It acts as the public education arm of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) but receives no government funding. Consequently, twenty-two full-time paid staff and nine part-time staff are supported by one hundred and twenty volunteers. They have contributed 42,000 hours of volunteer time since the program started in 1987.

Volunteering is a two-way process, and a successful volunteer program must meet the aims of the organisation and the personal needs of the individual. Recognising that without volunteer support it would have to reduce its program to a very basic operation, the GBRMPA has made some careful decisions about the management of its volunteer program.

Aquarium volunteers include business people, teachers, government employees, home-makers and students, often completing university level studies in marine biology or an associated discipline. All have a common interest in the reef and in heritage preservation.

One of management's first decisions involved integrating volunteers with paid staff. A fine line exists between exploitation and empowerment: volunteers may be given boring tasks, little training, little information on the overall aims of the organisation, nor trusted with any real responsibility. Alternatively, training and empowerment can, if not adequately managed, lead to conflict with paid staff.

The Aquarium established a discrete structure for the volunteer program with separate aims and objectives. These were, however, linked to organisational aims. Volunteers established their own objectives which include: involving the local community in the Aquarium's role as an education and interpretive facility; providing the Aquarium with assistance in undertaking its activities and programs; and providing volunteers

with useful and rewarding experiences for the development and mutual benefit of themselves and the Aquarium. This encourages volunteers to value their distinct position while still feeling part of a team working to meet organisational goals.

Demarcation has been critical to the program's success. Essential work is done by paid staff while anything that would not otherwise be achieved is done by volunteers. Each has a job description and these are overseen by a paid staff member. Volunteers and participating staff take part in an annual review which helps volunteers take part in decision making and keeps lines of communication open. Some volunteers also sit on sub-committees.

All volunteers completing an initial six-week course become members of the Great Barrier Reef Aquarium Volunteers Association of Townsville, an incorporated body which administers the scheme. It is managed by a Volunteer Management Committee and is responsible for the development and coordination of all volunteer activities and training.

Motivation is essential and in the case of the Great Barrier Reef Aquarium, the place of work is itself a motivating factor. Informal research at the Aquarium has shown that foremost for volunteers is the wish to learn more about the reef. Many want new experiences and the opportunity to become more skilful, knowledgeable, useful and competent. The research data has been useful in updating the volunteer program and ascertaining what volunteers want for themselves and the organisation. The Aquarium encouraged this research to help identify the interests and needs of its volunteers and has, where possible, included relevant training. This has involved computer training, developing marketing and office skills, assisting with maintenance of displays or assisting curatorial staff.

Goal setting is important and the Aquarium assists wherever possible. Volunteers set their own goals and these become part of the annual review process. Both the Aquarium and the volunteers benefit: the Aquarium meets its mandate to involve the community while also receiving invaluable assistance from a talented and enthusiastic volunteer team. Volunteers in turn learn about the reef, have unlimited access to the Aquarium during opening hours and receive a range of other membership-related benefits.

Volunteering for a particular cause can be easy once the motivation is there, but retaining that person over a period of time can be difficult. The Aquarium environment is ever changing and never dull, which helps explain some of the volunteer success. More important, however, has been the careful planning and management of the program and the commitment of all concerned.

Alison Ferry,  
Aquarium Volunteer

*The first National Conference for Volunteers in the Arts, Tourism, Environment and Heritage was held in Townsville last September. Copies of the conference handbook 'Volunteers in Step' are available from the Great Barrier Reef Aquarium Volunteers Association Inc. PO Box 1379, Townsville 4810, Queensland. Ph: (077) 818 886, Fax: (077) 818 713, \$20 p&p.*

### AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

the Federal Government's arts funding and advisory body invites applications for the following programs:

#### Investment ('Earnback') Projects

proposals submitted throughout the year  
Contact Jonathon Thomson, (02) 950 9014

#### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board

General and Visual Arts projects — closing date 15 July  
Contact (02) 950 9047

#### Community, Environment, Art and Design Committee (CEAD)

Project Development and Projects — closing date 15 July, and  
Advocacy, Research and Training — closing date 15 July  
Contact (02) 950 9060

#### Community Cultural Development Board

Ros Bower Memorial Award — closing date 17 June  
Creative Development, Individual Development, Special Priority  
Programs — closing date 1 August  
Contact (02) 950 9060

For booklets, current application forms and further information contact the relevant Board or Committee on the contact number given or toll free on (008) 226 912, or write to Australia Council, PO Box 788, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012

## Any Chance Of You Doing That Today? The Australian Museum's Rapid Response Program

For staff at the Australian Museum a visit from the Rapid Response Project Team can feel a little like a Stalinesque 'knock in the middle of the night'. It is almost invariably accompanied by a request to drop everything and help the project. With Rapid Response the need to meet tight deadlines governs every aspect of the process, often at the expense of tact and diplomacy.

Every museum wants and needs to be relevant to its audience. As part of the Australian Museum's mission '...To be a catalyst in changing public attitudes and actions', it is essential that we deal with important, contemporary issues. By their nature these issues are constantly changing, making them difficult topics for full galleries whose lead time can be at least a year. The Rapid Response Project was initiated in December 1992 as an alternative way of dealing with these issues. Its brief is to stage programs with a lead time of four to eight weeks. To date eight programs have been completed, covering issues such as loss of wetlands, oil spills, Mabo, and GATT.

Program ideas come from Museum staff. Proposals are passed to the Museum's Public Programs Advisory Committee and, following approval, the initiator is drafted onto the project team. In theory, each team member has a defined role, but the need for speed blurs them extensively. These short programs have required innovative planning processes and, even after eight successful exhibitions, they are still evolving. The programs are described as low-budget, but this does not take into account the staff costs in a labour-intensive process.

Rapid Response programs have no dedicated space and have appeared in a variety of Museum spaces. Where

possible, the site is relevant to the subject matter hence, 'Battered Fish', an exhibition about our destructive habit of overfishing, was positioned outside the restaurant; 'Cat Attitude', which dealt with cats' destruction of native wildlife, was released among some of the victims in the Mammals Gallery. Programs run for between one and three months at the Museum, and several have subsequently been staged at other venues.

When dealing with controversial issues, universal praise from audiences is not to be expected or necessarily desired. While there have been some unfavourable reviews and some visitor resistance to various messages, there has been a generally positive response to the Museum dealing with these issues in this way. A strong response indicates we are dealing with subject matter that people care about — over 7,000 visitors took the time to complete a detailed, computer-based questionnaire on cat control, creating in the process the largest ever survey on the subject.

Most recently our scope has expanded to include both interpretive theatre and community involvement, the latter as part of our exhibition, 'Prejudice & Pride — Gay and Lesbian Communities'. In evaluating such community-based exhibitions, the processes of consultation, participation and planning are as important as the finished exhibition. 'Prejudice & Pride' has shown us that this process can be rewarding and stimulating, despite the tyranny of deadline.

At the time of writing the Rapid Response Team is evaluating its operations to help streamline the process for the next program. Australian Museum staff are sleeping a little more easily, but only for the moment. . .

**Mike Field and Janice Howie**  
Rapid Response Project Team

## What's the Point of Saving It? The conservation debate

**Sharing, using, keeping and caring are issues which are central to the future of museums. They affect how museums relate, behave and perform in their communities. They are also fundamental to the conservation debate, a debate which must be read in the context of wider community aspirations.**

Artefacts, objects and events have meanings for people and communities which go beyond the museum. The 'new museum' has a special role in nurturing these 'meanings' in the community, and conservation has an important role to play in this process by facilitating physical access to collections.

Conservation is quintessentially about solving problems. There is no doubt that improving conservation technology is resulting in improved storage, display, and transport facilities, faster processing times, and better technical information.

Australia also has many fine laboratories and conservators. However, the conservation infrastructure which has developed over the past twenty years is under-

utilised due to a lack of funding. The issue of how to use funding to achieve the outcomes and goals for stakeholders is critical, and in this scenario direction and managing the process become more significant. For many, the role of the museum object has become 'surreal' — it has become vested with a potency beyond reality, and such lack of objectivity can hinder collection management and conservation processes.

Our common goal seems to be to keep objects working longer. However, an artefact's value is more than the sum total of the atoms it is constituted from and begs the question 'What are we trying to conserve?' Many conservators seem to be applying one standard to all classes of material. No matter what an item's keeping time or value, the attitude is 'Let's keep it for as long as possible'. Significance has been much discussed but the difficulty with this is, for whom is the item or collection significant? Different people and different communities have different values. Maybe these communities should pay for such processes as storage and conservation.

How long we want to keep the item or collection for might be a better way of approaching the problem. We can then establish some standards for conservation management.

Museums must face the question of how to balance the roles of collector and facilitator so their unique offerings and skills are fully integrated into society. Museum stakeholders must also be continually redefined. Museums are being politicised in a way not experienced before. In the bid for funding this process provides opportunities to position museums closer to mainstream activity: health, education, economic development etc.

The challenge is to establish policies and structures so that what is done has meaning and value. Resources must also be applied at the coal-face so that activity can take place. What is needed in between are national, state and regional strategies so the left hand knows what the right is doing.

Ian Cook,  
Artlab Australia

#### Footnote:

A national conservation policy is fundamental to the development of heritage conservation in Australia, especially that related to the conservation of the

distributed national collection. A recent AICCM workshop explored the development of a conservation policy and strategic programs to manage the distributed national collection.

Participants recognised that a conservation policy is the cornerstone of a national conservation program and confirmed that consultation with cultural policy makers, custodians and associated professions is essential in drafting such a policy.

The AICCM recommended to the Heritage Collections Committee of the Cultural Ministers Council that funds be made available for an adequate consultative drafting process in the development of a policy.

The Committee has since endorsed the drafting of a national conservation policy as part of the National Conservation Program, and a Conservation Working Party has been established to implement the program. Contact Ian Cook, Ph: (08) 207 7520.

The Heritage Collections Committee has announced the appointment of consultants to develop the National Conservation Policy. The consultant team, working under the auspices of the Ian Potter Conservation Centre, The University of Melbourne, comprises Susan Abasa, Eric Archer, Jacqueline McNaughtan, Katherine Millikan, Robyn Sloggett. They can be contacted on (03) 344 7989.

## The Unknown Soldier The Australian War Memorial's regional community project

**In 1993 the Australian War Memorial (AWM) ran a pilot study to determine how regional communities could make use of the Memorial's collections. The Memorial's 'Menin Gate Register' was the starting point for the project.**

The 'Menin Gate Memorial', (in Belgium) lists the names of 40,371 British, 6,994 Canadian, 6,176 Australian, 572 South African and British West Indian, and 421 Indian soldiers who fell during fighting in the Ypres Salient and who have no known graves.

Staff provided nine regional communities across Australia with a list of names of 'missing' soldiers from their region. These communities were then invited to organise special Remembrance Day ceremonies/activities in their own regions to coincide with the entombment of the Unknown Soldier at the Memorial on 11 November 1993, using names from the Memorial's Register as a focus for their activities.

Eight staff from the AWM's Joint Middle Management Development Program liaised with contacts in Albany (WA), Albury, Dubbo and Wagga (NSW), Maffra, Sale and Warracknabeal (Vic), Launceston (Tas), and Goondiwindi (Qld). These contacts were drawn predominantly from the RSL, local councils, professional staff at art galleries, museums, libraries and archives, and local historical associations and community groups.

During the project, each regional centre traced some relatives and/or the local and personal history of their

unknown soldiers. Each community found its own means of relating to the national event and took local ownership of that event.

A survey was undertaken following the project to determine community responses and their interest in future involvement with the Memorial. Some of the more important findings included a desire for AWM staff expertise in regional centres, including visits by AWM staff. Museums particularly valued loans of collection items, staff exchanges, internships and seminars. Financial assistance was not thought to be important and most regional centres said they could raise necessary funds locally.

While events and approaches differed from community to community, there was generally an enthusiastic response which demonstrated a strong community demand for these types of activities. Participating centres spoke of a sense of pride in being asked to participate and this sense of civic pride and competitiveness provided a spur to action. AWM staff found a need to be flexible in approach and to respond to the particular needs of each community. An understanding of community networks was vital to the success of each project as was seeking out individuals or organisations who would act as a general coordinator and information channel.

Anna Gray,  
Curator of Photographs,  
Australian War Memorial



# The Return of the MacGregor Collection

## The role of the museum in meeting community needs through the return of cultural property

The restitution of cultural property has been a vexed question since Polybius, the ancient Greek historian, first questioned the right of victors to plunder conquered cities. More recently, restitution has become a feature of peace treaties and in the latter half of this century, UNESCO has campaigned vigorously against illegal exports of cultural property and for restitution of artefacts to their country or community of origin. These efforts culminated in the UNESCO convention of 1970 which enshrines the rights of countries to protect their cultural property.

In 1986, Australia followed the international lead by proclaiming the *Protection of Movable Heritage Act*. This allows the federal government to control the export of artefacts of heritage significance, and to respond to official requests for the return of objects held in private and institutional collections within Australia. In recent years, the Australian Museum's Trust has returned a number of artefacts to Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Zealand; and the Museum of Victoria has made restitution of Aboriginal remains to local Koorie communities. The Queensland Museum and the National Museum and Art Gallery of PNG stand out, however, because of the scope of the project, and the resolve and goodwill demonstrated by the two museums over the last twenty years.

The 'MacGregor' collection is named after Sir William MacGregor, the first British Governor of Papua (formerly British New Guinea). As Governor, he collected 11,500 items and demonstrated unusual forethought in recording contextual information such as dates, locations, makers, uses and significance of many of the artefacts. The collection was to be held in trust for the people of Papua, illustrating a past which was irretrievably affected by colonisation. Recognising that lack of storage facilities and the tropical climate could destroy the collection, MacGregor negotiated with the fledgling Queensland Museum to house the artefacts, and the first artefacts were sent in October 1892.

They were then divided into an 'official' MacGregor collection and duplicate collections, parts of which were dispersed to the Australian Museum, the Museum of Victoria and the British Museum. These artefacts unfortunately still remain dispersed from the original collection.

Negotiations for the return of the bulk of the items began in earnest in 1970, and by 1974 there was agreement in principle between the Queensland Museum and the PNG National Museum for their return.

In 1980, a further agreement resulted in an unusual resolution: the MacGregor collection would be held in both the PNG and Queensland Museums, with unique items and first choice of multiple items to go to PNG. The share retained by the Queensland Museum would be from residual duplicate items. In the same year, 73 shields were sent back to PNG, the first consignment of over 3,200 artefacts which would eventually be returned.

As part of the agreement, the Queensland Museum conserved, catalogued and photographed all items, and assisted in training conservation and curatorial staff of the PNG National Museum and Art Gallery. Elders from appropriate communities were to be involved in the selection of material but financial constraints worked against this. The near completion of the project was marked formally last October in a ceremony involving representatives of the PNG government and the then Minister for the Arts, Senator Bob McMullan.

A more comprehensive study of the history of the MacGregor collection, its dispersal and return would highlight a number of important issues that cannot be covered here: the role of colonial powers in assuming in perpetuity holding rights over artefacts; the continuing perception of museums by indigenous people as symbols of oppression; and the negotiation of restitution in a post-colonial framework. The Queensland Museum should be acknowledged for the cooperative spirit in which it undertook to return the bulk of the MacGregor collection to its country of origin. However, the question of ultimate restitution is not over, either for the institutions which still hold material from PNG, or for the local communities within PNG who wish to have more direct access to the material evidence of their past.

**Deborah Breen,  
Freelance Writer**



DRUM — TUGERI (MARIND), RAIDERS CAMP, WASSI KUSSA RIVER MOUTH, WESTERN PROVINCE, PNG. FROM THE MACGREGOR COLLECTION.

*(Thanks to Michael Quinnell, Senior Curator, Oceanic Anthropology, Queensland Museum, and Temple Kehoe, Public Relations, Queensland Museum, for background information. DB)*

## ACT

The National Gallery of Australia's recent 'Dressed to Kill: 100 Years of Fashion', attracted nearly 90,000 visitors in its three month showing. The NGA, the 1993 Tourism Award Winner for 'Major Tourist Attraction' has also won two state awards: one for cultural tourism, the other for heritage.

Richard Refshauge is the new Chair of the ACT Cultural Council. Other members are: Evol McLeod and Monica Barone (Deputy Chairs), Lynette Crocker, Bev Hogg, Graham Patrick, John Thompson, Amanda Codd, Clive Scollay, Monica Barone, Jana Cattanch, Dr Amar Galla, Janet Karin OAM, Giles Pickford, John Meyer, Jane Linstead, and Dr Sue-Ann Wallace.

Museums Australia (ACT) interim branch committee comprises Linda Young (President), Barbara Brinton (Vice-President), Simon Forrester (Secretary), Margaret Thompson (Treasurer) Michael Richards and Morgyn Phillips (Editors), and Marg Alexander, David Andre, Glen Dimond, Liam Hanna, Gabrielle Hyslop, Michael Jones, Don McMichael, Helen Nosworthy, Barbara Perry, Trevor Smith, Lola Wilkins as committee members.

*Appointments:* Trevor Smith — Director, Canberra Contemporary Art Space (CCAS); Julia Clark — Curatorial Manager, National Portrait Gallery; changes at the NGA: Kevin Munn — Assistant Director of Marketing & Access, Michael Lloyd — Assistant Director of Collections, Jenny Peachey — Assistant Director of Corporate Services, Dr Sue-Ann Wallace — Head of Education and Cultural Action, Trevor Hoyne — Acting Head of Conservation, Margaret Parkes — Acting Finance Manager, Inge Rumble — Public Affairs Manager, Sylvia Jordan — Membership Manager; Marj Hall — Acting Head of Arts and Special Events, John Stanwell — Manager, Executive Services, DELP.

## New South Wales

Museums Australia Inc. (NSW) reports an increase in 1994

funding from the NSW Ministry for the Arts. The untied grant of \$140,000, plus an increased grant from the NSW Department of Planning means MA(NSW) can bring programs back to a pre-1992 level. The Ministry also gave a Special Project Grant of \$10,000 for Museums Week. *Museum Methods*, a manual for managing small museums, was launched recently.

The Sydney Jewish Museum has recently celebrated its first anniversary, and reports attendance figures of 35,000 during its first year.

The New England Regional Art Museum recently launched its fundraising appeal for a permanent collections' gallery, artists studio, accommodation space, coffee shop, sculpture garden and extended bookshop. The NSW Ministry for the Arts provided an incentive grant of \$250,000, with \$150,000 to be allocated when the fund reaches \$1 million and \$100,000 when it reaches \$1.5 million.

The NSW Museums Advisory Council is reviewing current assistance available to museums in NSW, and exploring alternative initiatives to encourage higher standards of museum practice and greater public access to collections. New opportunities for museum workers, projects which involve indigenous and new migrant communities in presenting and interpreting their cultural material, alternative sources of funding, and new partnerships with local government are also being explored. Recommendations are now before the Minister.

The Australian Museum's new exhibition space on cultural diversity, the Contemporary Australia Space, opened in March. Community groups, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal, and cross-cultural groups are being consulted and encouraged to participate in upcoming programs. The inaugural exhibition focuses on youth issues.

*Appointments:* Fay Nelson — MCA board member; Museums Australia Inc (NSW) — Kate Chidlow — Conservation Outreach Officer, Jasmin Stephens — Program Officer, Lisa Molloy — Administration Officer; Paul Hundley — Curator of the USA Gallery, Australian National

Maritime Museum; Historic Houses Trust NSW — senior staff for Museum of Sydney on the site of First Government House: Dr Peter Emmett — Senior Curator, Sue Hunt — Curator, Jisuk Han and Robert Wirth — Senior Display Planners, Gary Warner — Audio Visual Coordinator, Rebecca Charles — Marketing and Commercial Operations Manager, Robert Varman — Archaeologist.

## Queensland

Arts Queensland is undertaking an assessment of the Queensland community museums sector in the second half of this year, following an assessment of state touring exhibitions networks and agencies.

Queensland Art Gallery has purchased eighteen works for the 'The Kenneth and Yasuko Myer Collection of Contemporary Asian Art'. Works have been purchased from Indonesia, Japan, Malaya, South Korea, Vietnam, the Philippines and China.

'Shell Presents Van Gogh: His sources, genius and influence' closed at the QAG in March having been seen by 138,000 people. 'The Entombed Warriors' remains the Gallery's most popular exhibition with 178,000 visitors, and 'Twentieth Century Masters from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York' is in third place with 127,000. Other QAG blockbusters include: 'Surrealism: Revolution by Night' — 110,300; 'Gold of the Pharaohs' — 99,000; 'Toulouse Lautrec: Prints and Posters from the Bibliotheque Nationale' — 89,000. The QAG now closes at 5pm every day.

Professor Barrie Reynolds, from the Material Culture Unit at James Cook University was principal speaker at the Indonesian seminar on Museum Management for the Future held in Bali in January.

## South Australia

A new task force will help boost the arts and cultural development in South Australia. The Task Force, Chaired by Ross Adler, Managing Director of SANTOS and Chair of the Board of the Art Gallery of

South Australia, will prepare a comprehensive strategic plan for the arts in South Australia in consultation with the community. The fifteen-member task force includes: Malcolm Blaylock, Rob Brookman, Mark Coleman, Keith Conlon, Professor Paul Davies, Marjorie Fitz-Gerald OAM, Janine Haynes, Patricia Lange, Philippa Menses, Winnie Pelz, John Schumann, Keith Smith, Bill Spurr, Viv Szekeres.

The 'African Bronzes of Benin', among the South Australian Museum's rarest and most valuable African items, were displayed recently. The Museum is one of the few institutions in the Southern Hemisphere to hold examples of the Bronzes, which originated from Benin city, capital of the 800-year-old West African Edo Kingdom.

*Appointments:* Philip Jones — Head of Anthropology, SA Museum.

## Tasmania

Arts Tasmania has compiled its first register of private sector arts consultants to work on the Governments Public Art Program. The consultants will work with Arts Tasmania on the selection of artwork for new and refurbished government buildings.

The scheme has been underway for ten years but has not previously involved the private sector at this level. The success of the overall program will be evaluated after its first year of operation, and a further round of consultants will be called in August. Some of the current projects include Lake St Clair National Park Facilities, the new Hobart Magisterial Courts, Queenstown and Rosebery District Hospital, and the Devonport Community and Health Centre.

*Appointments:* David Hansen — Curator, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

## Victoria

Museums Australia (Vic) is discussing the need for a travelling exhibition support program for non-contemporary art with the Victorian Minister for the Arts and Arts Victoria. A detailed submission for funding a study of museum travelling exhibition services in Victoria, with

recommendations for appropriate services, is being prepared.

The branch has also expressed concern to the Minister for the Arts about the composition of the judging panel for the architectural design competition for the new Museum of Victoria. The panel is Chaired by Emeritus Professor of Architecture at the University of Melbourne, Peter McIntyre, with University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Penington as Deputy Chair. Other members are Professor Daryl Le Grew, Richard Searhy, Paul Clarkson, Dick Roennfeldt, and Graham Morris, Director of the MoV. The winner of the architectural competition will be announced in June.

Working parties are currently reviewing MA (Vic) Branch by-laws and developing a business plan for the organisation. A strategy of sustained advocacy and promotion for museums is also being developed.

Bendigo Art Gallery has acquired an 1871 building to house its collection of post-1960 Australian art. The collection includes paintings, prints and crafts, and focuses on artists from the Bendigo region.

Geelong Art Gallery's recent major building program has improved display and storage facilities, provided display space for decorative arts and new staff offices, improved public facilities, and enhanced entrances. The project was financed through a \$600,000 State Government grant, and matched by the Geelong Art Gallery on a dollar for dollar basis. The Federal Government, through the Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories, gave \$200,000, and the City of Greater Geelong contributed \$200,000 — a total of \$1.67 million.

*Appointments:* Bendigo Art Gallery: Sally Mills — Administrative Officer; Helen Attrill — Education Officer; Museums Australia (Vic): Rod Faulkner — Publications Officer, Karen Corrie — Administrator/Programs Officer

## Western Australia

The Crafts Council of WA is developing a craft exhibition

'Women of Asia and the Pacific' for the UN World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing, September 1995. Coordinated by Helen Ross, the project will include works from member countries and be seen by delegates from 184 countries.

'The George Duerden Retrospective' will tour to Bunbury Art Galleries in June, The Goldfields Art Centre in July, the Karratha College in September, and the Vancouver Arts Centre in December. Curated by Frances Thomson, the exhibition is being presented by the Art Gallery of WA, and toured and funded jointly by Art on the Move.

The Department for the Arts, Government of WA and the Australian Bureau of Statistics have released their report of 1991 Census figures *Vital Statistics, Western Australian Cultural Statistics*. Figures show the arts and cultural industries are part of the fastest growing private sector industry group in the state with a 30.1% growth in the number of people employed in the sector over the last two years.

Geraldton Regional Art Gallery has re-opened after a two month closure for a major redesign and refurbishment program, which reflects the Gallery's shift from exhibition driven programming towards educational support and community involvement. The refurbishment was achieved without additional council or state funding and has reduced operating costs. The Gallery re-opened with photography by Max Pam, sculpture from Kate Larby and the George Duerden touring exhibition.

*Appointments:* Christina McGuinness — Public Programs/Education Officer, Crafts Council WA; Annette Davis — part-time Education Officer/Public Programs, Art on the Move (and part-time Curator, Fremantle City Collection); Sarah Miller — Director, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts; Art Gallery of WA: Sarah Murphy — Registrar; Keith Lord — Manager, Accounting and Finance; Wilson Tay, Director, Corporate Services; Peter Grant — Director, Artrage; Frances Thomson — Coordinator, ARX; MA(WA) new board members: Betty O'Rourke, Paola Anselmi, Katherine Wilkinson.

With special thanks to relevant state contacts for providing information for this section. Ed

# Join in

## Museums Australia inc.

### NATIONAL OFFICE

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There has never been a better time to join. You get:

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# win

**JOIN OR RENEW BEFORE JULY 29**

and you enter the draw to win over \$5000 worth of prizes

### FIRST PRIZE

Return ticket to Honolulu to attend the Western Museums Association Conference *Living Cultures, Living Traditions* Sept 21-24. Ticket ex-Melbourne courtesy of Performance Travel and Qantas. Conference registration courtesy of WMA and hotel courtesy of Hawaii Regent at Waikiki.

### SECOND PRIZE

Registration fee for the Museums Australia Inaugural Conference: *Identity, Icons and Artifacts* in Fremantle 10 - 13 November courtesy 1994 Conference Committee

### HELP US TO BUILD THE MEMBERSHIP BETWEEN NOW AND 29 JULY

Every member who introduces two or more new members will have their own membership extended by three months.

CONDITIONS: 1. Competition is open only to individual members of Museums Australia Inc who join or renew membership before 5pm 29th July 1994. 2. Staff members and immediate family are not eligible to enter. 3. Winners will be drawn at Museum of Victoria on Wednesday 3rd August at 5.30 pm. 4. Winners will be notified by mail. 5. Results of the draw will be advertised on *The Australian* on Saturday 6th August. 6. Prizes are not transferable. 7. All prizes not accepted will revert to Museums Australia Inc. Vic Permit No. 94/1582 issued on 24/5/94.

