

The magazine of Museums Australia Inc.

MUSEUM NATIONAL

VOL 4 • NO 1
AUGUST 95

Simeon Kronenberg has been appointed National Director at the national office, taking over from Greg Marginson who has now moved to Canberra. Formerly Program Manager, Professional Development, Simeon has a long-term interest and involvement in the visual arts. He has worked as the inaugural curator of Monash Medical Centre Foundation Fine Art Collection and as a freelance writer and curator. His involvement in the Professional Development Program has engaged him in many areas of museum practice, which has in turn fostered a deep interest in the wider concerns of the museum industry. He will be pursuing these in his new role.

In our Victorian office, Giacomina Pradolini is Executive Officer following Andrew Moritz's move to a new position at the Museum of Victoria. Kirsten Freeman, former Coordinator of the branch's Museum Accreditation Program, is now Project Officer at the Australian Cultural Foundation for Humanities and the Arts; Jasmin Stephens, formerly at the NSW branch, is now Education Officer at the Newcastle Regional Art Gallery.

The Department of Communication and the Arts (DoCA) has committed \$50,000 to Museums Australia's national program 'Protection and Return of Significant Cultural Property to Torres Strait Islander People Giving Priority to the Return of Human Remains to the Rightful Owners'. The funding will allow the appointment of a staff member to support the association's Standing Committee of Museums and Indigenous People.

The association's 1995 membership drive is on track. Membership renewals are coming in fast, however, staff involved in the drive are continuing to target new members.

Plans for Melbourne's 1998 International Council of Museums (ICOM) assembly are also on track. The Commonwealth Government has now committed \$100,000 to the conference with \$30,000 immediately available as a grant-in-aid.

Keynote and major speakers confirmed for our November conference 'Communicating Cultures' include: Nicholas Thomas, Dept of Archaeology and Anthropology (ANU), Professor Ivan Karp, National Endowment for the Humanities (USA), Daniel Sherman, Rice University (USA), Professor Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University (USA), Emmanuel Kasarherou, Agence de Developpement de la Culture (Noumea), Dr Amareswar Galla, Cultural Heritage Management, University of Canberra, and Lori Richardson, National Museum of Australia.

The Performing Arts Special Interest Group is considering developing a directory of performing arts-based collections, collection development policies, travelling exhibitions and the impact of new technologies. Contact Janine Barrand on (03) 9281 8325.

The Visual Arts Special Interest Group has had an excellent response to the call for nominations sent out in the last issue of *Museum National*. The group hopes to meet soon to discuss programs for 1996, and to approve bylaws for national council

to approve.

Museums Australia's national council has established a working party to review the association's corporate plan. The committee hope to have a draft available for delegates at the November conference. A two-day workshop is planned for February. Contact Karen Coote on (02) 320 6207.

In our state offices, the Queensland branch has developed a five-year strategic plan to help guide developments in all levels of the museum sector. DoCA has also committed \$50,000 to the branch to auspice a community-based program 'Information Technology Utilisation by Heritage Organisations in Local Communities'. The project will be based in Mackay with the multimedia publishing unit at Griffith University developing the information technology component.

The NSW branch recently surveyed its individual members to help guide its professional development programs and has also developed detailed performance indicators for its outreach programs. The branch recently hosted a forum on cultural planning which focused on how cultural workers and museums can develop more purposeful approaches to cultural planning. The office is about to relocate (temporarily) to the Gunnery until more permanent accommodation can be found.

The interim committee of Museums Australia's Northern Territory branch held its first meeting in March. Jacqueline Healy is president of the group; Dawn Mendham is the secretary.

Museums Australia (SA) has been lobbying the state's Minister for the Arts, Diana Laidlaw, following her decision to close Old Parliament House. At the time of going to press, the minister has not reversed her decision. Another advocacy issue has been the the University of Adelaide's decision to transfer its Mawson collection to the SA Museum. The branch has also notified the University Museums Review, a national review of university museums, whose report will be circulated soon.

In light of the Commonwealth Government's Visions of Australia program, the Victorian branch has been lobbying Arts Victoria on its support for the museum sector touring exhibitions both intrastate and interstate. The initiative was flagged in the State Government's policy document ARTS 21, and Arts Victoria have now asked the Victorian branch to carry out an investigative study with a grant of \$10,000.

Future meetings of the national council are to be held in Melbourne.

Linda Richardson
Editor

ERRATUM

Our article on the Curatorial Training Workshop Program in the last issue of *Museum National* was missing the following line: Museums Australia's involvement with the network is overseen by a reference group which is directly responsible to Museums Australia's National Council.

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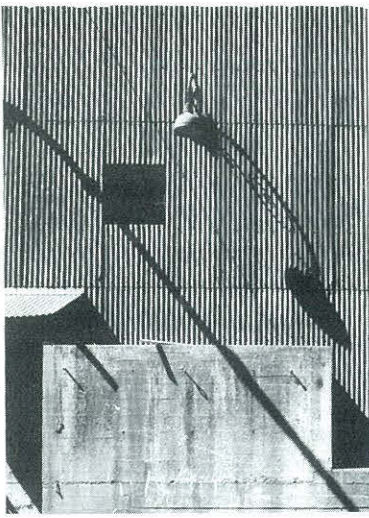
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Front cover

Coal Loading Building, (detail), 1994, from 'The Power Station'. Architectural photographer, Anthony Fretwell, has spent the last year photographing the industrial landscape of the now disused White Bay Power Station in Sydney. An exhibition of works from the project is showing at The Photographers Gallery, Artarmon, Sydney, 10 August - 31 August.



DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND THE ARTS

Museum National aims to present news and opinions and to encourage debate on issues of museum practice within art, history and science museums, including the business of the association as appropriate. It seeks to represent the diverse functions and interests of the many institutions and individuals who comprise Australia's museum community.

Museum National is published quarterly by Museums Australia Inc., and provides a major link between the association and its membership. Policy and content are directed by an editorial committee. Contributions from those involved or interested in museums and galleries are welcome.

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Art: a substitute for political action?

by Peter Timms

In a wide-ranging article in the May issue of *Art Monthly Australia*, Ross Woodrow examined the current propensity to think of art exhibitions as vehicles for social engagement. Woodrow notes four recent exhibitions - 'Don't Leave me this Way: Art in the Age of AIDS' and 'Virtual Reality', both at the National Gallery of Australia, 'Kaboom!', which was shown earlier this year at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art, and 'Australian Perspecta 1995'.

These four, he says, exemplify a trend towards 'an exclusive focus on the instrumental function of art or, more specifically, the assumption that contemporary art has value only if it has an articulate social voice'.

I cannot improve on Woodrow's clever, insightful analysis. I would, however, like to elaborate on some of his themes.

It is, I think, worth asking ourselves a couple of basic questions when we think of putting together art exhibitions whose main aim is to carry some kind of social message. Perhaps the most basic question is what message we want to articulate. That's easy. (It sometimes seems far too easy, perhaps, but I'll come back to that). More difficult and hence less often examined are such questions as who the exhibition is to be directed at, what we expect those people to do with the information we are giving them, whether an art exhibition is an appropriate way to articulate what we want to say (as distinct, say, from a television documentary, a magazine article or a book) and, perhaps most difficult of all, whether anything new and interesting is going to be said about the particular topic at hand.

Many curators will steadfastly maintain that if an exhibition is about the problems faced by contemporary Aborigines or street kids, or about the ravages of Aids or violence against women, then that simply reflects what artists are interested in and cannot be ignored. This is fair enough as far as it goes, but it is disingenuous in that it assumes curators are neutral agents who simply respond objectively to what artists are doing, which is plainly not the case.

There is, after all, plenty of art that curators do ignore, for a whole range of good and bad reasons. Curators make choices about what art will receive attention and what will not and, in so doing, they influence what art gets made. Such exhibitions are, in themselves, social constructions.

This will not be an argument against such exhibitions (nor against the sort of art they contain), although I am quite sure that my own grave doubts

about their effectiveness will become clear. My intention, rather, is to consider some of the questions I think they raise and the remarkably blithe assumptions upon which they are often based. Far too often, exhibitions about social issues are mounted only because the cause they are representing is assumed to be socially worthy which, let's face it, is a pretty flimsy basis for an art exhibition.

Of course, art has always played a role in articulating social concerns, in trying both to reflect and to change popular attitudes to specific issues of the day. Were this not the case, we would hardly be able to use the art of the past as we do to help us understand the societies which produced it. Even that art which seems most removed from the mundane political concerns of the day - late nineteenth-century French symbolism, for example, or German Romanticism or, closer to our own day, colourfield abstraction - can be read intelligently as social document. In that fairly banal sense, all art is a product of its social and political circumstances.

What seems to concern some recent critics, however, is not that art or art exhibitions might be read and understood in this way but that, increasingly, the primary (or even the sole) purpose of art or of its contextualisation in an exhibition is to recommend to the viewer a particular attitude to a particular social situation. So, instead of starting with aesthetics and metaphysics and moving on to ethical, political, religious, psychological or sociological considerations, we treat art essentially as a substitute for political action. What we are discussing, then, is specificity. Or, if you want a less objective term for it, narrowness of focus.

I spell this out because what is at issue here is not the way a work of art might be read by its audience, but the degree to which a particular reading is predetermined by the artist and by the exhibition curator who tries to follow his or her wishes. The problem with exhibitions such as 'Don't Leave Me This Way' or 'Australian Perspecta 1995' or 'Kaboom!', it seems to me, is that aesthetics (in the real meaning of that word) are simply assumed. All art, it is supposed, has that ineffable, special quality that art has, simply by virtue of its being called art and by virtue of its being put into an art exhibition. Once we accept that, we can concentrate on the real business at hand, which is the social or political statements that need to be made.

Hence, increasingly, we demand of works of art

and exhibitions that they 'say' something, and what they say becomes their main justification. So we resort to nonsense phrases such as 'ideas-based art' or 'theory-based art'. (In fact, all art, even the most trivial, is based on ideas of some kind, so the first term is so broad as to be useless. On the other hand, I can think of very little recent art that has much to do with theory, if we take theory to be a systematic reflection on the underlying principles which inform a range of artistic practices).

The use of such vague terminology is really just a way of avoiding the fact that what most of these exhibitions are about is ideology. American writer and critic Denis Donoghue has given us perhaps the best definition of ideology. He says that a theory of art or literature is always ancillary to the works it addresses. 'If it declares itself independent of those works, it becomes something else, an exercise in ideology. Ideologies', says Donoghue, 'assert their independence first by making a problem of their own procedures, and then by using works (of art) chiefly as illustrations of social, political and economic forces at large... An ideology', he adds, 'is a system of ideas,

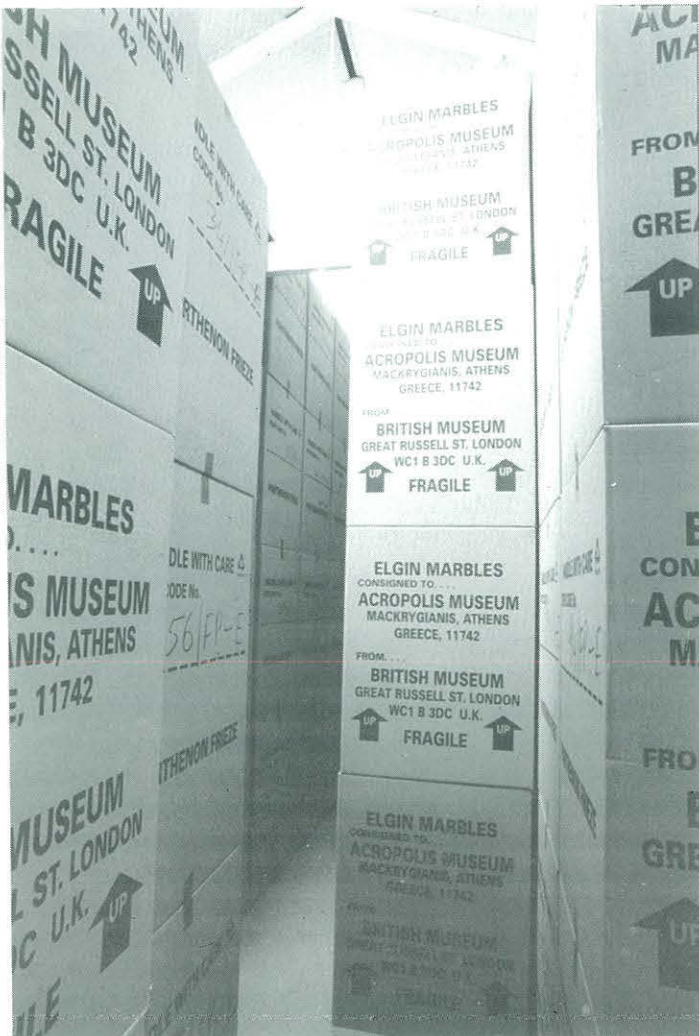
vocabularies and practices deployed as an instrument of power. In the classroom, an ideologist tries to transform students as social subjects and, by so doing, to further the interests of the social group the ideologist represents. Women's Studies, Feminism, Gender Studies, Gay and Lesbian Studies, African-American Studies, Marxist Criticism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, Deconstruction, New Historicism, Cultural Studies, Post-Colonial Studies: the list is incomplete'.

Despite post modernism's advocacy of plurality and a multiplicity of conflicting discourses, Realpolitik, as we ought to know only too well, does not function like that. All social movements which begin by trying to liberate people from ideological structures end up turning into ideologies themselves, with their own rigid structures, their own enforced codes of right and wrong thinking. This is because, ultimately, any identification with a group implies some kind of opposition to another group. Such binary oppositions are the basis of power structures. Endless dissemination looks good in theory, but it is, by definition, a position of weakness. Power and authority lie in centres, upon which ideologies are based. And ultimately, centres of power always prove too attractive to resist, which is why so much of current art criticism (and so much of current art) which is supposedly based on deconstruction theories, is dominated by simple binary oppositional thinking.

In any case, plurality and multiplicity are always pursued selectively. Many years ago I was on a museum committee considering the possibility of a public access gallery. Such a gallery, it was claimed, would give voice to marginalised groups in the community. But what kind of marginalised groups? When I asked what we might do if a neo-Nazi group demanded its place in the exhibition program, the committee hesitated and eventually created a policy which would prevent such a thing happening, although neo-Nazi groups are clearly marginalised. No, the sort of marginalised groups we were interested in are those we like and approve of.

So perhaps we have gone some way towards answering the questions I posed at the beginning of this article. Exhibitions in art galleries and museums which set out to deal with social and political issues are, in fact, usually very particular about those messages which are acceptable, and those which are not. Those which are acceptable are those which are already well and truly part of the ideological landscape. So, for example, an exhibition about Aids makes sense while an art exhibition about diarrhoea or malaria (both of which kill hundreds of times more people than Aids does) just sounds slightly absurd. Similarly, an exhibition about violence against women is acceptable, but one about violence against men is a far more dicey proposition, even though statistically, it is men who, overwhelmingly, are the chief victims of violence. Malaria, diarrhoea, and violence against

Andrew Arnautopoulos, *Consignment*, (installation), 1994, Courtesy Sutton Gallery (Melbourne) and Bellas Gallery (Brisbane).



men are subjects which cannot (at present) be easily constructed ideologically.

And, since in almost every case, the exhibition will be articulating the view of the ideological group or groups which control that particular discourse, we should not expect such shows to say anything new about the subject, nor to approach it from a multiplicity of viewpoints. Where a range of views is allowed, it is generally for the purpose of demonstrating the inadmissibility of those which do not conform to the view that the exhibition is promoting. This is not to say, however, that the exhibition might not be fascinating or beautifully expressed or moving. It is, however, unlikely to surprise us. The ideological exhibition is necessarily constrained by its complicity. It is almost always politically conservative.

Who, then, are these exhibitions intended for? This is a much trickier question, because the truth is that most of the time we don't know. Despite visitor surveys and other research, the audience is usually just assumed. Lurking somewhere in the back of the curator's mind will probably be another simple binary construction, which has the audience comprising, on the one hand, people who are part of the ideological group (or groups) concerned, who will use the exhibition to reconfirm their commitment to the cause, and those outside it who, it is hoped, might be converted. The stated intention will probably be to help people to understand the issue being addressed, but in most cases that means the exhibition organisers hope to persuade people to have more sympathy for the particular view being espoused, which is not really the same thing at all.

Since the ideological landscape has already been pretty well mapped out, can we realistically expect that an art exhibition will change anybody's opinions about a particular social issue? A number of factors intrinsic to art exhibitions will tend to work against this. For one thing, we can be fairly sure in advance about the general tenor of most art exhibitions. It will be flagged by the publicity, the exhibition's title, the images that are used to promote it and the exhibiting history of the venue. The general approach of an exhibition of work by gay artists, for example, or urban Aborigines, can be predicted with some confidence, so if we disapprove of either of those groups we will stay away. I can actually think of one exception to this general rule: a couple of years ago an exhibition entitled 'Aboriginal Art and Spirituality' toured Australian public galleries. This turned out to be about Aboriginal art and Christianity, much to the annoyance of many gallery visitors, who realised only when they visited the show that its title was a bit of a con. Nevertheless, it was a splendid show and may have changed some people's opinions about Christian missions in Central Australia.

But such examples are few and far between. Most

ideological exhibitions are preaching to the converted. It's a cliché, perhaps, but it's true. Even when we do reach a more general audience, the marginalised status of art will blunt the effectiveness of the message. Figures of the royal couple in the nude beside Lake Burley Griffin will cause a little flurry of outrage for a while, but are more likely to harden existing attitudes (on both sides) than to change them. Ultimately, the majority will just put it down to a bunch of loony artists and won't care one way or the other. Artists have no real status in these debates, you see.

But there is perhaps a more fundamental factor militating against art exhibitions being an effective way to promulgate social or political messages. The simple fact is that art rarely proceeds by means of rational argument. (It is interesting to note, in this regard, that many ideological exhibitions rely a great deal on the written word to get their message across. Indeed, works of art themselves are often completely reliant on the written word and, in many cases, words are used as slogans. David McDiarmid's work in the Canberra Aids show comprises slogans and nothing more). Images are more likely to lend themselves to subtle variations of interpretation. Images are elusive (and allusive). Words, on the other hand, are nicely concrete. When you plant a slogan on a square of canvas, you ensure that your message will be received exactly as you intend it to be received, especially if the irony is laid on with a trowel.

Where art can be effective, however, is in reinforcing ideologies that have been systematically argued elsewhere, as I hope all the above will show. This is a perfectly acceptable thing for art to be doing, I suppose, but, as the last hundred years or so ought to demonstrate, it is fraught with political danger. It also seems to me to be a rather limited ambition, given that art can do so much more. If we accept that artists can be no more than a sort of Greek chorus, commenting on and embroidering the main action, then we must accept that art is destined always to have an ancillary and marginalised role in our culture.

As the poet Louis McNeice put it in his preface to *Modern Poetry* in the 1930s (a period, like ours, when ideological pressures were heavy upon artists and poets), 'the poet is a maker, not a retail trader. The writer today should be not so much the mouthpiece of a community (for then he will only tell it what it knows already) as its conscience, its critical faculty, its generous instinct'.

It is when an art exhibition articulates a community's generous instinct that art has the power to move us, to activate our own critical faculties. And this, I believe, is likely when art is least ideological in intent.

Peter Timms
Editor, *Art Monthly Australia*

Mapping the Terrain: Evaluation and Visitor Research in Museums

by Carol Scott

The Powerhouse Museum's recent conference on evaluation and visitor research confirmed that evaluation and visitor research are valuable tools for serving existing audiences and creating new ones, improving exhibitions, programs and services, positioning museums in an increasingly complex marketplace, and communicating the work of museums to sponsors, governments and funding agencies. This is what evaluation and visitor research can do. Achieving optimum outcomes depends on clarifying the terms we use, having realistic expectations of the type of information they can provide, and facing the difficult issues that surround the field.

Definitions

While evaluation and visitor research often use the same methodologies, the two processes have different intentions.

Evaluation asks people to 'judge the worth' of something. In the museum context, the evaluation process is applied to judging the worth of an exhibition, service or program against some criteria.

Research focuses on the identification of visitor trends, patterns and relationships. It is often used to identify audiences and clarify patterns of participation. Reliable identification of a major trend requires a statistically valid sample size, and therefore, research frequently deals with larger samples than evaluation.

Visitor Research

Why undertake visitor research? Accountability is one reason. In an environment dominated by policies of micro-economic reform, public sector funding is allocated on the condition that a museum's programs

can demonstrate use by a large and representative section of the general public.

Allied to this is the requirement for market extension. These exercises help determine whether we can encourage more repeat visits among existing visitors, convert potential audiences to actual visitors, and find the 'hooks' that will sell our product in an increasingly competitive leisure industry.

But there are other reasons that concern equity and access. Museums and galleries are only custodians of cultural heritage. We manage and interpret collections: we don't own them. Ownership resides with the community and while we cannot force members of the community to become museum visitors, everyone has the right to interact with the collections museums hold. Visitor research helps discover if there are groups in the community who are denied access through structural inequalities or through lack of awareness.

Activities include general visitor studies, barrier analyses, target-audience studies, ongoing monitoring of visitor data from sources such as admission and booking systems and visitor counts of exhibitions.

Key considerations concern the kinds of information we expect to receive from each activity and their inherent limitations.

- **General Visitor Studies** can provide a general profile of *existing* audiences: who they are, where they come from, how often and why they visit, what they do during their visit, what degree of satisfaction they experience, and where museum visits fit within a framework of leisure patterns and cultural participation.

A typical program of museum evaluation and visitor research

EVALUATION PROGRAM	VISITOR RESEARCH PROGRAM
1. Exhibition evaluation * front-end * formative * remedial * summative	1. General Visitor studies including barrier analyses
2. Program evaluations for internal purposes	2. Identifying and researching target audiences
3. Program evaluation for purposes of external reporting and accountability	3. Longitudinal statistical collection through * admission systems * schools and tourism booking systems
	4. Counts of visitors to exhibitions

But they have limitations. They are often conducted as exit surveys, limiting the number of questions that can be asked and their format. Surveys are frequently closed-response in format to allow statistical analysis, which also limits the amount of 'qualitative' information received. Also, because they are seeking general trends and patterns, some of the finer distinctions between audience sectors are not comprehensively explored.

Costs usually prohibit their administration in more than one language, which precludes the participation of many visitors with limited English. Profiles, therefore, can be skewed.

- **Barrier Analyses** serve two purposes. A museum's audience consists of its existing audiences and its potential visitors. Barrier analyses seek to identify reasons for low or non-participation and recommend ways of converting these audiences to active visitors. As museums seek to operate within an equal opportunity and access framework, they are identifying **specific target audiences** with low or non-participation and seeking structural solutions to address access issues.

- **Longitudinal Monitoring** are those systems needed to expand, upgrade and check visitor information. For example, museums are utilising admission systems to take postcodes and country codes and maintain a check on this aspect of visitor demographics. Similarly, syllabus changes and the development of new key learning areas are often reflected in school booking patterns.

- **Visitor Counts** are simple exercises that can assist with monitoring patterns of visits to exhibitions: determining the percentage of visitors to a temporary exhibition over a period of time, revealing preferred entrance/exit points to a gallery space, recording gender interest in an exhibition, identifying peak visit times during the day etc.

Evaluation

Key issues in museum evaluation are the distinctions between program evaluation and exhibition evaluation, the need to extend our methodological repertoire, and a role for public participation beyond museum access.

While exhibition evaluation concerns itself with visitor responses to *each stage* of the exhibition development process, program evaluation is more likely to assess the result of a *total* program.

- **Program evaluation** is often used for purposes of accountability and reporting to external agencies. It concerns the efficient use of resources and effectiveness of the results. To accommodate both objectives, program evaluation should include both quantitative and qualitative outcomes.

On the quantitative side we need to know the amount of resources put into a program (effort), and whether the same could have been achieved by different means at less cost (efficiency). On the qualitative side of the equation, we need to determine how close we got to the target (adequacy), and how

well we satisfied needs (effect).

Although program evaluation is often used for external accountability, it is also a tool that can be used for internal organisational purposes because it provides information to assist in decision-making about programs and operations.

- **Exhibition evaluation** has been established as a mechanism to ensure that visitor perceptions, attitudes, interests and knowledge are incorporated into the interpretation of collections. This is a valid objective and helps establish a dialogue between the museum and its public. However, we need to broaden our thinking about the methodologies we use, and clarify and extend our models for including the public in the joint interpretation of cultural heritage.

Methodology:

Museums tend to repeat the tried and true methods: questionnaires, focus groups, tracking and other forms of behavioural observation are the fare of evaluation and visitor research. Ghislaine Lawrence has traced the emergence of museum evaluation from a time when behavioural approaches in research were pre-eminent.⁽¹⁾ In the non-museum world the positivist, empirical and experimental approach of behaviourism was eventually challenged by alternative viewpoints which stressed the inappropriateness of methods modelled on the natural sciences as a basis for studying social phenomena. Subsequently, a range of methods based in symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and ethno-methodology were put forth as more appropriate ways to elicit 'meanings'. However, these widescale changes in research and evaluation methods have not permeated the museum culture to the extent they perhaps should.

While familiar methods are useful in identifying an exhibition's attracting and holding power, we should consider expanding our repertoire of evaluation and visitor research methodologies when determining whether visitors have understood key messages and when establishing visitor profiles. We need to clarify how social meaning gets made in museums and other cultural institutions, we need to identify the direct and indirect outcomes of programs and exhibitions, and acknowledge the whole area of affective and attitudinal outcomes that often resist statistical analysis. The issue is not behavioural versus interactive methods, but rather: Which of an array of methods is the most appropriate to elicit the information we require for the purposes we need?

Participation:

The front-end, formative, remedial, summative model is an extremely useful framework around which to organise visitor input at key points in the exhibition development process. At the front-end stage, it provides exhibition developers with critical information about visitor attitudes, knowledge, like and dislike of a topic. It can offer visitors the opportunity to suggest ideas for exhibitions. At the

formative stage, we can learn whether the design will attract and hold visitors and communicate main messages. At the remedial stage, we gain hard evidence about which sections of the exhibition are working for visitors as intended.

However, visitor input is carefully controlled by the framework. Ultimately, the museum develops the exhibition brief, produces the design and selects from visitor feedback what information to incorporate in the final concept.

This is fine as long as we are clear about the underlying assumptions and limits of this model. Museums engage in exhibition evaluation with visitors for a number of reasons. First, it is a procedural mechanism to check our assumptions against actual visitors' perceptions. This is good market research and helps to sell our product in an increasingly competitive and resource-scarce environment.

Secondly, visitors are not blank slates onto which museums can write messages. Visitors bring meaning to the museum experience and code that experience accordingly. We are often so concerned that visitors *take* away the meanings we intend, that we sometimes forget this. Exhibition evaluation, especially front-end evaluation, is a powerful tool to probe the meanings visitors will *bring* to a given topic.

Thirdly, there is a genuine desire to 'democratise culture', to give the public some participatory role in the interpretation of our joint cultural heritage. This is a worthy objective, however, it can be confusing because, although 'participation' is defined as 'the act of taking part or having a share in an activity or

event', we are not always clear about *how much of a share* the public is going to get in the consultative processes set up by museums. Much of the tension surrounding evaluation and visitor research in museums concerns boundaries: Where does the influence of the museum end and that of the visitor begin?

When visitor input is discussed, there is often real concern about the corresponding change this might entail for the museum: Will the museum become 'market-driven' to the exclusion of its existing collections and mission? Finding a working relationship between mission and market is one of the major issues confronting museums today. A discussion paper produced by the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) is helpful in this regard.(2)

The ROM analysed the mission-market tension and suggested a collaborative or transactional model where museum mission, subject expertise and market interest could be accommodated to produce exhibitions and programs inclusive of both visitor and museum input.

This is a viable approach, but does not address the nature of the relationship between the institution and the public. Current models of participation are often participation-as-consultation, characterised by top-down communication flow, with definite termination points for public involvement and with the primary aim of ensuring the professional is equipped with appropriate information in which to base decision-making.

There are situations where it is increasingly imperative to consider more active community

Museums must consider extending their current models to embrace collaboration and decision-making between the public and the custodians of cultural heritage at levels beyond the consultative stage.

ISSUES/MODELS	Model: Participation as Consultation	Model: Participation as Joint Interpreters of Cultural Heritage
Issue: who initiates the project?	Usually the professional	The community or the professional
Issue: What is the nature of community participation?	Community as informant	Community as collaborator in joint decision-making.
Issue: Where is the expertise located?	Expertise resides with the professional	Expertise is recognised in both the community and the professional.
Issue: How can the information flow be described?	In the majority of cases, from the community to the professional.	All participants generate information and contribute to problem solving and decision making. Therefore, the information flow is between and among the participants.
Issue: What is the extent of the community's involvement?	Usually terminates upon the professional receiving the requisite amount of information. Characterised by limitations to the consultative stage.	Community involvement is on-going and involves levels of participation at all stages of a project: planning, implementation, evaluation. Assumes a role for the community in joint decision-making.

involvement in the development of exhibitions and programs past the consultative stage, and this is now characteristic of much of our exhibition evaluation. Every time an artefact is selected, or a particular interpretation of a topic is chosen, it is a political act with extensive implications. In the areas of cultural diversity the need to involve constituents beyond the consultative stage can be critical: consultation alone can fall short of the mark.

Conclusion

We are at the 'cutting edge' of a new relationship between audiences and museums. The walls are becoming transparent and both parties are beginning to reach through to the other side. If we manage this relationship well, and if we are clear about the issues and the parameters, we will, I think, have a richer and more exciting approach to collection interpretation and a more diverse and active public with whom to share the excitement. Evaluation and visitor research are mechanisms to effect this dialogue and sharing.

Carol Scott

Evaluation Coordinator, Powerhouse Museum

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The Australia Council recently released its sixth annual survey of Australian museums and art museums. Figures do not include statistics for volunteer-run institutions.

Major findings are:

- Attendances at Australia's 283 museums and art museums totalled 16.4 million, a slight decrease on the previous year. This does not include the 2.5 million who visited travelling exhibitions curated by eighteen of the larger institutions.
- A combined total of 2886 temporary exhibitions were mounted by 225 museums and art museums (79%). This proportion has remained roughly the same from year to year, but the number of exhibitions has risen considerably. Just under half of the museums surveyed also mounted a major new thematic display or did a major re-hang of part of their permanent collections.
- Museums and art museums employed the equivalent of 4220 full-time staff, a slight increase on the previous year. This is mainly accounted for by newly opened museums and increasing staff numbers in larger museums, which employed 81% of the total.
- Around 10,000 volunteers were actively involved in museum and art museum programs, an average of 45 per institution. The total number and average number per museum has remained much the same. This does not include how much time volunteers contributed, or the value to museums as a displacement cost for personnel wages.
- Donations of art works and artefacts had an estimated total value of \$26 million for the 155 institutions able to put a value on the donations. The number of institutions receiving such donations increased considerably, as did the total value. Cash support from the private sector also increased.
- Operating expenditure exceeded operating income by approximately \$2 million. Institutions had an estimated operating expenditure of \$322.3 million and capital expenditure of \$31.6 million.

Contact the Australia Council on (02) 950 9000.

Collecting Archives: a challenge to the museum community

by Helen Yoxall

For many years Australian museums and manuscript libraries have cooperated in the acquisition of certain collections: libraries have taken the archival component and museums the object component. Since the 1980s, however, in the interests of contextual interpretation of their collections and the re-assertion of the research role of museums, curators in history and art museums have begun to acquire archives as well as objects. This has caused some disquiet amongst archivists and manuscripts curators and while this disquiet is, in part, simple resentment at new players entering an already competitive field, some of the concerns that archivists have about museums collecting archives need discussion and resolution.

The nature of archives

Archives are those records created or received by an organisation in transacting its business, or by a person or family in conducting their lives. They are preserved because they are evidence of these activities.

Such archival collections vary greatly depending on the business and activities of their creators. They may consist of letters, diaries, scrapbooks, photographs, drawings, minute books, subject files, financial and legal records etc. They may be paper-based or in an electronic format such as video, sound recordings or computer disks and tapes.

Archives provide a primary research resource into a community's life and, as such, they are of considerable value to museums' exhibition, publication and education programs. Those which relate specifically to objects in the museum's collection help place these objects in context and enable more effective interpretation. Business archives, for example, provide information on the design, manufacture, marketing, sale and use of a firm's products which have been acquired as museum objects. Personal papers of artists, designers and craftspeople illuminate the samples of their work held by the museum by providing information on the environment in which they operated: the art market, contemporary criticism, their relationship to patrons and clients, and their personal and family situation.

Archival items may also have value as artefacts in their own right and can have considerable display potential.

Archival concerns

The concerns that archivists have about museums

collecting archives centre on public access and the integrity of collections.

Public access:

With the exception of science museums, the research community has virtually no way of knowing what archival collections museums hold.(1) Unlike libraries and archives, museums do not yet have public catalogues and very few report their archival holdings to the National Library of Australia.(2) Curators may promote some archival holdings through exhibition and specialist publications, but these reach only a limited audience and exploit only those aspects of an archival collection that interest the museum. Archival collections may be used by outside researchers in ways which were never anticipated by the people who acquired them.

Even if a researcher knows a museum holds a particular archival collection, they may be refused access because the collection has been too large and complex to process or there is no-one to assist and supervise the researcher. The service museums offer their public is different to the service offered by libraries and archives. Through exhibitions, publications and educational programs museums cater to a mass audience and are not generally geared to cater to the individual wanting to do in-depth and lengthy archival research. While most museums have a theoretical commitment to public access to their stored collections, in reality it is often difficult for them to find a desk for an archival researcher, far less to offer the sophisticated reference service and copying service that are considered the norm by libraries, archives and their clients.

As well, museum staff are often not versed in issues surrounding public use of archives: copyright clearance, the administration of donor restrictions and the protection of privacy of third parties mentioned in archival material.

Integrity of collections:

The integrity of archival collections can be seriously compromised by selection decisions and, once acquired, by inappropriate treatment and documentation.

Libraries and archives acquire archival material simply to make it available to a heterogeneous

research public for use in its raw state. Museums, on the other hand, collect archives for their own institutional purposes: to support collections or current exhibition, publication and research programs. Archivists believe that appraisal and selection of material based on current subject interests fragments evidence and limits the research value of the material acquired and that left behind. Archivists select too, of course, but their appraisal principles are based on responsibility to the material, the creator of the records, and the research community.

Particularly vulnerable are the records of manufacturing industry. Museums are often interested only in one part of a company's operations such as the development of a product, and will select only graphic archival material such as design drawings, photographs and promotional material. This ignores the value of visually boring records concerning economic, labour or social history.

Another problem is that companies continue to produce records. Manuscript libraries and archival institutions maintain an ongoing relationship with companies by providing storage and access to the company whose records they accept, and regularly accept new deposits of records. Museums appear not to feel this long term commitment and are satisfied with a 'slice' of the company's history.

A particular concern is the way some museums 'dismember' archival collections by placing individual

items into their own artificial files, such as photo or poster files. This disregard for archival principles concerning respect for provenance and original order destroys the links and meaning within a collection.

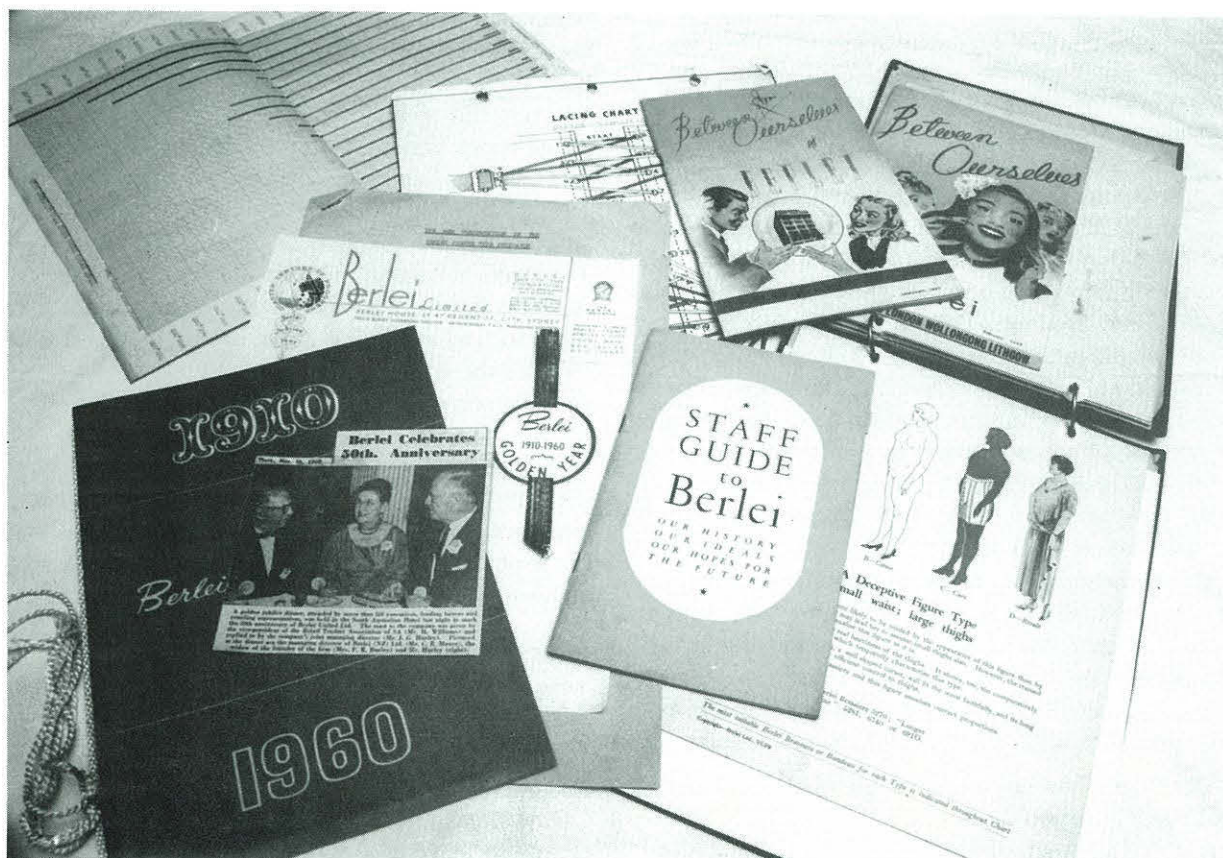
Central to the integrity issue is the fact that within a museum, archives have less status than objects. They are regarded as 'supplementary' or 'support' material and the organic unity of an archival group is not respected like that of objects.

Integrating archival and museum documentation:

In museums, collected archives occupy an ambiguous position somewhere between objects and library material. According to a recent survey of Victorian museums, the size and complexity of archival collections bewilders museum cataloguers. The material is most often set aside as too hard to process or an attempt is made to force it into a museum object documentation system, which focuses on the discrete item and its physical features.⁽³⁾ Far from making an archival collection intellectually accessible, this obscures meaning and reduces the archive to little more than items of stationery.

An archival collection is a body of documentation whose components are organically related by virtue of having been created by an organisation in the course of business or a person in the conduct of their life. An archival document, such as a letter, cannot be understood in isolation. It needs to be seen in

Part of the Berlei Archive (underwear manufacturers) showing the variety of record formats found in archival collections. This archive is a significant primary resource for research into fashion, manufacturing industry and women's studies. (Powerhouse Museum).



context: Who wrote it? In what capacity? To whom? In response to what? Is it a draft or final version? What resulted from its dispatch? These questions are answered by the other documents surrounding the letter (the 'series'). Archivists describe the relationship between records, and they elucidate the context by compiling an administrative history or a biographical note on the records' creator as part of this descriptive process.

An integrated system of museum and archival documentation is possible, but it must be based on the premise that the archival collection is the entity which is accessioned and described, not its individual items.(4) If need dictates and resources allow, description can continue down to the series and item level, but only after the whole has been described: its context, functions and relationships.

Should museums collect archives?

Despite my criticisms, I am not arguing, as some have, that museums should leave archives to the archivists and not collect them at all. On the contrary, there are particular types of archival collections which appear better suited to museums, such as the papers of designers and artists, and the records of manufacturing industries where the museum holds significant examples of their works or products. To split such collections into 'archives' and 'objects' because of our professional perceptions and jealousies damages their integrity and does a disservice to researchers who have to commute between institutions to use the material.

But archives do have very special descriptive and management needs and museums need to improve their understanding of these. Some museums are improving the management of their archives: one has employed a consultant archivist to set up a control system for its acquired archives, others have attempted to train their staff by sending them on short courses. However, large museums with active archival collecting programs must look at the establishment of professional archivist positions.

Need for a dialogue between custodians of archives

Museums hold a significant part of Australia's documentary heritage and they must communicate more effectively with other managers of textual materials: archivists, manuscript curators and librarians. We need to know more of each other's present holdings and future collecting aims. Discussion could lead to more effective strategies for dealing with the mixed collections of archives and objects many of us hold. The preservation of our archival material could be assisted by joint conservation initiatives, and public access could be improved by the development of standards and protocols for the exchange of information.

Already there are encouraging instances of a dialogue between students, practitioners and national

policy makers. The Powerhouse Museum hosts visits of archive students from the University of NSW and museum studies students from the University of Sydney to learn about the management of archives in a museum setting.(5) At the practitioner level, those museums which have more developed archival programs are providing considerable advice to museums establishing their own programs. At the national level, now that the archival and library sectors (the Australian Council of Archives and the Australian Council of Libraries and Information Services) are represented on the Heritage Collections Council, there is opportunity for all archive custodians to discuss what we have in common and where we diverge.

Helen Yoxall
Archivist, Powerhouse Museum

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Gender, Ethnicity and Australian History

by Professor Ann Curthoys

In March, as part of the twentieth anniversary of International Women's Day, the National Maritime Museum hosted a conference 'Redefining the Norm: Gender, Ethnicity and Sexuality in Museums'. In her paper on gender, ethnicity and Australian history, Professor Ann Curthoys raised a number of questions about how to pursue feminist, postcolonial and multicultural questions in those contexts that are most resistant to the asking of such questions. In particular, 'Is equal representation possible in "masculine" institutions such as maritime, war, science and pioneer museums?' This is an abstract of Professor Curthoys' paper.

As an academic historian, I attempt to work through some complex questions of gender, class and ethnicity. Historians who present their narratives in written and other media face questions similar to those asked of history curators in museums: How do you write a gendered political history, when so few politicians were women? How can you write a feminist diplomatic or military history? What do you do about Aboriginal perspectives when writing the history of a suburb in which few Aboriginal people lived during the period you are studying? How do you avoid Anglocentrism when writing a history of English migration to Australia? The spirit is willing, but the imagination, the knowledge and the sources are weak.

History

History is a large and diverse field of practice in this country, with little agreement between historians on how it should be done, and very different practices emerging in different institutions. Recent events have brought history to the forefront of public consciousness, but have also confused us as to its meaning and its purpose. A revolution in public thinking and discourse began in 1992 with the debates on Aboriginal survival and Australia's place in Asia, they continued with Keating's pronouncements later that year commemorating the Second World War events of 1942, and culminated in late 1993 around the Mabo and native title debates. These were intense debates which shifted the place of Aboriginal issues in public discourse for ever.

They revealed the limited and restricted historical understandings many Australians have, especially in relation to invasion, dispossession and colonisation, and the great importance Australians nevertheless place on history. We attempt to define ourselves and our political choices through particular versions of the

past. World War II has been relived and fought over during the last three years because of the possible changes in our political fabric, and the shifting international considerations and relations, particularly Australia's Asian context. The Mabo debate revealed the intensity of public belief in the stories of pioneering, settlement, cultural continuity and rightful occupation of the land, but also afforded public glimpses of the growing alternative world view which stresses invasion, opposition, interaction and transformation. In laying bare the fault lines of our cultural landscape the Mabo debate shifted public discourse about colonial and postcolonial history very considerably.

Many white historians will continue to do Australian history with little or no attention to its colonising character, and many white Australians will continue to seek a comforting historical narrative of pioneering and settlement, achievement, development and growth. But the audience for public history today is quite different from that of even three years ago: I don't think we can go back.

History and Gender

Where do feminist impulses fit in this changing scenario for public history? Great energy has been devoted to researching the position of women in Australian history. The first stirrings began in 1970, and since 1975 major publications relating to this research have been widely available to the public. Within this time, the development of the history of gender has been affected by larger and ongoing theoretical and methodological issues: the growth of social and cultural history, the effects of Marxist, structuralist and post structuralist kinds of history. Debates have concentrated on whether one should look for or reject underlying structures of oppression, the appropriateness and usefulness of the concept of patriarchy, and whether the history of gender can and should explain the operations of gender inequality today. Are we involved in a search for origins, or does a history of gender have some other purpose and justification? Feminist history has become more sophisticated, more theoretically aware, and more conscious of the intertwining of gender with other forms of social division and organisation.

I was recently asked: 'If you are a feminist historian, does that mean you are necessarily talking about gender?' What I tried to explain was that while I couldn't think of ways of actually doing without the

concept of gender, the concept is as much a tool for examining other concepts rather than an end in itself.

From the very beginning feminist historians wanted to challenge the mainstream, but it took time to work out how to turn the tools of feminist analysis back onto those who had always been firmly within traditional histories. From the late 1980s, historians such as Marilyn Lake began to engage in reinterpretations of masculinity, Englishness, Britishness and Australian national identity. Our greater understanding of women's history gave us the tools to reinterpret men, to see them not as the *One* to whom women were the *Other*, but simply as gendered people: men. The concepts developed for describing margins, and for relating those margins to a mainstream, were gradually turned on the mainstream itself.

But it is important not to forget women in the search for gender. In historical situations where most of the actors do appear to have been men, we can attempt to understand just why and how this was so, and focus on the importance of masculinity. We can emphasise the masculine and colonial nature of some of Australians' most enduring ideas about themselves, and so reinterpret ideas about exploration, pioneering and mateship. But we have to ensure that the interest in masculinity is not merely an avenue to return to the comfortable pastures of men's history.

This point was made at a recent conference in Canberra on national dictionaries of biography. A New Zealand speaker argued that it was a matter of deciding at the beginning to have an equal or near equal number of entries on men and women, Maori and Pakeha. Having made those decisions, she argued, we then redefine our criteria for inclusion so that white women are as easily included as white men, and Maori as Pakeha.

This approach is truly radical: we decide to present historical accounts which will relate to and be equally important for men and women, indigenous and non-indigenous, and then we develop our historical criteria accordingly. So, in Australia's case, we don't simply look for those Aboriginal people who were most like Europeans: instead we change our criteria of significance altogether.

It is also important to remember that the traditional concepts of pioneering, settlement, and the establishment of a male democracy have made it hard for us to see white women, or Aboriginal men and women. The problem may, in fact, be in ourselves. A female student

at UTS recently wanted to examine exploration as a masculinist and colonisers' discourse. We agreed she should also examine whether white women were as absent from exploration as the textbooks imply.

She found two things: that even within conventional definitions, there were many more women explorers in nineteenth-century Australia than many would imagine, but that they had simply disappeared from public memory; and that the notion of exploration itself needed rethinking. Recognition of the denial of Aboriginal prior-occupation which is embedded in the very concept of exploration could be used to redefine exploration not as moving through new territory, but moving through territory unknown to the explorer's own social group. So exploration is defined in terms of the coloniser's consciousness and can be applied to twentieth-century bushwalkers and cavers. This develops a history connecting those nineteenth-century traversers of Aboriginal territory looking for new avenues for European settlement and development with twentieth-century recreational walkers and travellers, men and women, seeking to establish a new kind of European connection with the Australian landscape.

So let us not be too easily persuaded that women were actually absent from activities we think they were absent from, and let us also be prepared to continually rework some of the most fundamental concepts in Australian history in the light of feminist and postcolonial questions.

History, Gender and Ethnicity

Some of the most interesting recent work concerns the intersections of gender, sexuality and race. It requires huge efforts in understanding the historical memory and experiences of others. White women and Aboriginal women, for example, have little idea just

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how the other perceives them, with attendant dangers for well-meaning but ignorant feminist scholarship.

Aboriginal and white women live within entirely different historical narratives. For Aboriginal women, the separation by white officials of children from their parents through much of the twentieth century is a crucial story, and one in which the complicity of white women as foster mothers and in other roles figures centrally. Rarely have white women realised how much Aboriginal women see them as part of the problem rather than the solution. For white women, on the other hand, the most compelling narrative is of their own struggles with white men for a sense of equality and bodily integrity, and they, we, attempt to read this story onto Aboriginal women's history. Non-European immigrant women have inserted a third term to this story, disrupting these dualistic meanings, exploring the contradictions of being neither indigenous nor white, occupying the positions of both coloniser and colonised.

There is no easy answer to my original question concerning intractable historical situations, but it does seem that some ingenuity is required. For more recent times, the answer sometimes lies in oral

tradition and oral history. Further back, archaeology can provide some answers, dealing as it does with the everyday material culture of a wide range of people who do not appear in written records. Sometimes there are surprising clues in visual records of various kinds, such as photographs or paintings. In combing through the intractable documentary sources and seizing on every trace, much as a practitioner of ancient or medieval history does, we sometimes find surprising information, such as Kay Daniels did about lesbian relationships among Tasmanian women convicts. Histories of colonisation, gender and sexuality have made us rethink our methods and our sources precisely because we have asked different questions, and have not been satisfied with the readily available answers.

Ann Curthoys
Professor of History, Faculty of Arts
Australian National University

Ann Curthoys is the author of essays and edited collections on aspects of Australian history. She has been involved in the development of Australian women's history and has a long-standing interest in the relationship between universities and museums.

The Tax Incentive for Heritage Conservation is designed to help owners (and crown lease holders) of heritage listed buildings and structures carry out approved conservation work.

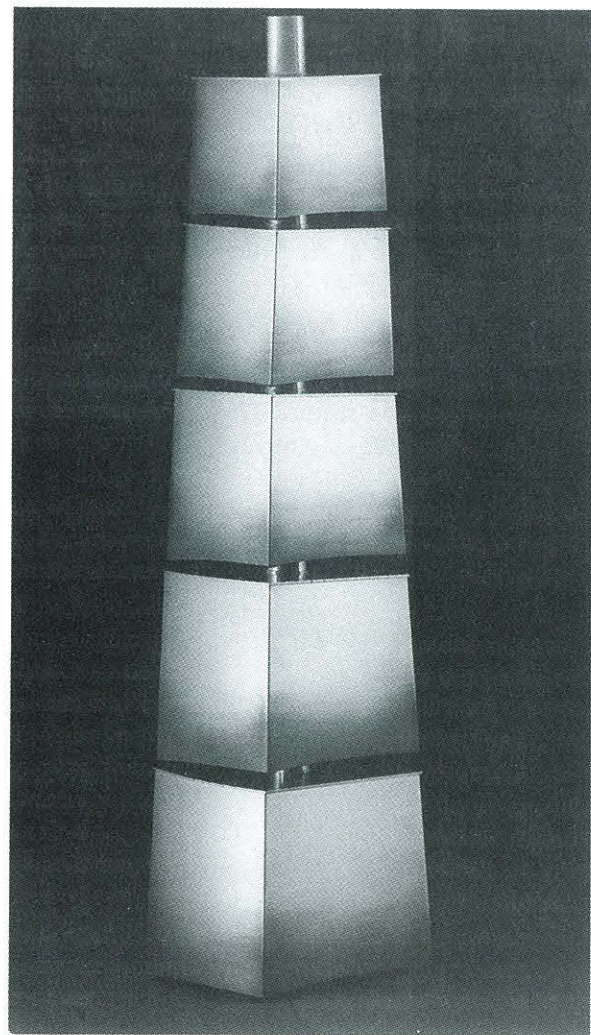
To apply for entry to the scheme, you must be planning to carry out conservation work on a heritage listed building/structure that will cost at least \$5000. Proposed work must comply with the conservation guidelines of the scheme. Successful applicants receive a provisional certificate which is valid for two years, but the approved work must be completed within this time to apply for the final certificate, which will then entitle applicants to claim the tax rebate.

The tax incentive is a rebate of 20 cents in the dollar for expenditure on heritage conservation work that is covered by the final certificate. Heritage conservation work up to the value of \$9.5 million can be approved under the scheme each year. This rebate is provided in subdivision AAD of Division 17 of Part III of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1933*. It is not a deduction.

The protection of Movable Cultural Heritage is provided by the *Commonwealth Act Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986*. It controls the import and export of the most significant aspects of Australia's movable cultural heritage. The *Act* also provides for the return of the cultural property of other nations illegally imported into Australia.

Different classes of objects are defined using different thresholds - mostly time or monetary value. Some Australian protected objects of Aboriginal heritage cannot be granted a permit for export under any circumstances while other Australian protected objects may be exported provided they are issued with a permit. Permits are granted by the Minister for Communications and the Arts acting upon the advice of the National Cultural Heritage Committee and expert examiners.

For information on tax incentives for heritage conservation and movable cultural heritage, contact: the Director, Heritage Protection Section, Dept of Communications and the Arts, GPO Box 2154, Canberra ACT 2601, Ph: (06) 279 1615.



Winner of the 1995 VicHealth National Craft Award.
Mark Edgoose, *Stack I*. Titanium, sterling silver, fine silver,
500 x 120 x 95 cms. Photograph: Fran Malley.

Parading Identities

by Craig Douglas

In the early years of this century, the vestiges of colonialism inherent in Australian museums provided visitors to museums and galleries with a sense of active participation. A type of vicarious tourism was employed in which the collected 'other' culture's objects were viewed and considered from a dominant white middle class position.

Today's postcolonial museums and galleries as often thought by the communities they serve to be places in which identity is articulated. A more searching inquiry would suggest that these cultural institutions are peddlers of illusion; presenters of re-constructed identities. Have museums and galleries moved on to a place, in the latter part of the twentieth century, where they engage their audiences in more than vicarious tourism?

In Susan Stewart's wide-ranging study *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, she traces a 'structure of desire', the impossible task of closing the gap that separates language from the experience it encodes.(1) She explores selected recurrent strategies Westerners have pursued since the Renaissance and describes how collections, mostly in museums, create the illusion of adequate representation of a selected sphere by first grabbing objects out of specific spheres (contexts) to make them stand for, identify, signify or represent whole cultures. A 'boomerang', for example, becomes an ethnographic metonym for Australian Aboriginal culture. Next, she explains how a classification scheme is applied, ordering the object and lodging it into a collection, and in so doing, overriding specific histories associated with the object's existence within its 'original' sphere. Stewart argues that in the modern Western museum 'an illusion of a relation between things takes the place of a social relation'.(2)

Essentially I believe Stewart is correct. The museum strategy of grabbing objects out of specific contexts still persists. 'Illusioned' reality is still being constructed. But contemporary museum and gallery curators now know that these cultural institutions must engage a wider perspective when considering the communities they serve, and subsequently the issues surrounding identity. Individuals and communities have multiple identities that shift according to contexts and points of view.

The Ipswich Regional Art Gallery is: 'a cultural facility engaged in exhibiting, collecting, researching and conserving the visual arts, crafts for the enjoyment and education of the Ipswich community'.(3) What makes this cultural facility special is its ability to engage directly with Ipswich's sense of place, its history, its communities.

The gallery recently mounted two exhibitions 'War Crimes, Starlings, Hockey and Scones: Locating a Context for 14 Paintings', curated by Louise Denoon, and 'Place Product: investigations into the history of ceramic production in the Ipswich area', curated by Susan Ostling. Both exhibitions considered and examined specific individuals and communities within the broader 'multiple identity context' of Ipswich. Both explored and considered Stewart's ideas on specific histories associated with objects. Both referenced, contextualised, revived and re-visited specific Ipswich histories: they championed 'the narrative of collecting', and directly and indirectly cited the fetishism, the systematic, and souvenir aspects of collections and the illusion of representation.

Locating a Context for Fourteen Paintings

The dynamic that occurs between place, history and community is what allows us to speak of a location's individuality - its 'specialness'. This 'specialness' was clearly articulated in 'War Crimes, Starlings, Hockey and Scones', which was a successful attempt to recreate and consider some of the interactions and social nuances that existed around the gallery's 1951 opening and the acquisition of artworks for a civic collection.

On 16 March 1951, the Ipswich Art Gallery was officially opened by Robert Campbell, then director of the Queensland Art Gallery. Formal invitations were sent out and according to *The Queensland Times*, 50 people from the Ipswich community attended. Fourteen paintings, each donated by an individual or organisation, were hung in a room in the town hall. All were by contemporary Australian artists, most of whom came from Queensland. Many of these *establishment* collection paintings depicted scenes from south-east Queensland, the Glasshouse Mountains, Noosa, Flaxton and the Brisbane suburb of Doomben. While many represented the familiar, they were of an idealised Australia, distinctly different from the industrial landscape of the immediate Ipswich region. These formula pictures were of a type similar to those acquired or gifted about the same time to the Queensland Art Gallery, the University of Queensland, the Brisbane City Council and the then technical college.

Following convention at the time, the pictures were framed with the donor's name clearly identified on a metal inscription plaque adhered to the bottom centre of the picture frame, inextricably linking donor to artwork.

Melville Haysome (1900 - 1967), *Devil's Kitchen*, N.C. (undated), oil on canvas, gift of the Ipswich Art Students Society. Courtesy Ipswich Regional Art Gallery.



For example, the mayor's wife, Mrs Merle Finimore, gifted one of the fourteen artworks entitled *Peasant Girl*, by Bessie Gibson. A well known and respected local artist, Gibson was an excellent choice, synonymous with quality and reputation. Merle Finimore, *nee* Stephenson, was from 'a well-to-do' Ipswich family known for its commitment to Ipswich and its development. The selection and presentation of this particular Gibson artwork doubly reinforced these values. Local 1950s viewers of these pictures would not only have appreciated this well considered group of artworks, but also consciously linked the pictures with the donor's place in Ipswich society, his or her taste, generosity and civic pride.

Denoon mounted the fourteen paintings on one of the gallery walls papered with photocopies of the 16 March 1951 edition of *The Queensland Times*: what films were screening, a report of a CWA fete, an article on war crimes, a St Patrick's Day concert and an invasion of starlings were all newsworthy items. They reflect postwar life in Ipswich.

On the opposite wall fourteen corresponding picture frames contained references to the donor of each artwork. This information was acquired during Denoon's interviews with local residents who had known those donors who are now deceased, or in some cases, those donors still living. Framed narrative texts opposite the fourteen pictures allowed the viewer to consider the broader interconnected, sociocultural framework of 1950s Ipswich.

While in March 1951 these fourteen paintings were the complete City of Ipswich Collection, the collection now numbers over 430, most collected since 1984. The importance of the original fourteen

paintings has been lost as the collection has grown. Today these artworks are relegated to 'the past', and yet by their persistent physical presence they are part of the present. This dichotomy allows for an ongoing range of interpretive exhibitions to be mounted. Their inextricable connection with people and events of an Ipswich long past could only be identified through an exhibition such as that curated by Denoon: the collection becomes a conduit to the past and the connector to the future.

Investigating the history of ceramic production in Ipswich.

'Situating a local history study in an art gallery is an interesting exercise. In many ways it allows history to be thought of differently... seeking the involvement of contemporary artists (in the exhibition) is to consciously invite (into the exhibition) the process of transformation.'⁽⁴⁾

'Place Product: investigations into the history of ceramic production in the Ipswich area' has been one of the most successful projects instigated by the Ipswich Regional Art Gallery in respect of community involvement and interest.

The curator, Susan Ostling, set out to examine the history of ceramic production in the region through historical research and the display of 'historical artefacts', and to introduce a contemporary focus by incorporating structured residencies by three visual artists: Rod Bamford, Maree Bracker and Toni Warburton. Members of the community generously shared their knowledge with the curator and Jonathon Richards, a student in Queensland history studies at Griffith University, and Judith Pitts, an historian and the project's research assistant. Additional support came from the Queensland Studies Centre and curatorship students at the



Corresponding framed text opposite Melville Haysome's *Devil's Kitchen*. From 'War Crimes, Starlings, Hockey and Scones: Locating a Context for 14 Paintings', at Ipswich Regional Art Gallery.

Queensland College of Art. Above all, the exhibition reinforced the gallery's links with the local clay industry and reintroduced the Ipswich community to a part of its heritage.

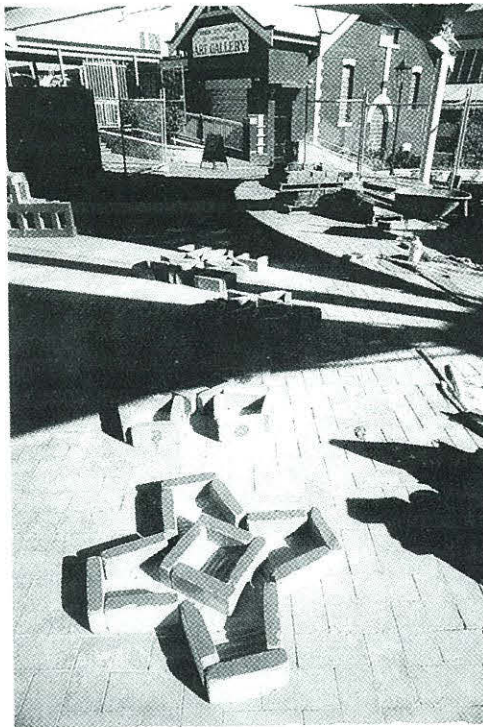
Ostling posed insightful questions in the exhibition's catalogue: When is the made object art or artefact, industrial or personal? Is the past simply the past or can it 'return' to interact with the present in the particular time and space created by the exhibition?(5). The considered blend of collected objects, site-specific works created by the three resident artists and the lively community interaction made this exhibition one that simultaneously referenced the past and actioned the present.

Many of the collected utilitarian objects - mixing bowls, figurines, planters and urns - documented the kinds of works made in potteries in the Ipswich area between the 1890s and the 1950s. Their utilitarian and everyday 'usability' reinforced their art/artefact duality. One reading of these objects could focus on them as bearers of peoples' stories; another could consider them as artefacts, links to another time another place.

The past was represented by historical photographs and objects. Bricks from collector Jim Innes' large collection were selected for their historical and idiosyncratic value. Ordered and classified they spoke to the viewer about a considered museological practice that depends on chronology for validation and interpretation.

Bricks were first manufactured in the area as early as the 1860s - the three on-site artists also used the brick as a physical and metaphorical link with Ipswich's past and present. Each artist worked in and outside the gallery over a period of seven days, creating work where process was paramount: 'Process of thinking, making, communicating, recalling and transforming'.(6)

Rod Bamford focused his work around the logic of the module. Structures were laid out, a long vertebrae-like structure was suspended from the gallery ceiling. While clearly ordered, it also became potentially disruptive. Maree Bracker's work investigated the positioning of people ('the body') with place and product. Time and experience became pivotal to her explorations. Toni Warburton used seven as a recurring motif to explore structures of ornament... seven days, seven works, seven as a dominant determiner of choice.



Toni Warburton, from *Patterns of Rain*, resited, unfired pavers, iron oxide and white clay wash, 1.2 x 1.2 m. 'Place and Product: investigation into the history of ceramic production in the Ipswich area', at Ipswich Regional Art Gallery, October 1994. Photographer: Peter Liddy.

The ever changing dynamic that developed around the historical material in this exhibition posited new readings, interpretations and resonances. The old was reconsidered through the new, the newly constructed referenced the past.

'Place Product' considered the history of ceramic production in the Ipswich region and how three artists could engage and interact with the past and the people of today. It also became a story of three domestic mixing bowls, covering a period of thirty years, two manufacturers, a designer, two makers and three owners. This search for the 'true' story, that is, who made the bowls who decorated them, why and when, allowed the curator the opportunity to link the actuality of people living their daily lives in a community, together with the structures and frameworks of the museum/gallery. This detective story allowed the

viewer an opportunity to engage with the past while examining the tangible evidence of the three mixing bowls on display.

The experiences of post modernity has undoubtedly resulted in the erosion of a sense of place. The 'gap' often referred to by historical and archaeological practitioners is that which separates the present from the past. The two exhibitions mounted by the Ipswich Regional Art Gallery attempted to address 'the gap' and, in so doing, the illusioned reality of the museum/art gallery became real.

Craig C Douglas
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Scholarship and the Blockbuster: the Matisse exhibition

by Alison Inglis

Over ten years ago, the visiting American art historian, Albert Elsen, strongly advocated the concept of the blockbuster exhibition to the Australian museum profession by emphasising its educational benefits: '... it is the blockbuster that permits the public to see a substantial and critically selected body of work by a great artist that is otherwise dispersed all over the world... All good exhibitions foster and allow discoveries, but the blockbuster creates the possibility of major revelations to artists, scholars, connoisseurs and the public.(1)

Of course the much-promoted 'blockbusters' are now an integral component of any major art museum's calendar (and budget), both internationally and locally. More recently, however, the actual scholarly contribution of these great exhibitions has come under increasing critical scrutiny. Art historians have warned that marketing considerations and tighter deadlines will more often result in 'the intellectually vacuous blockbuster, [rather than] large exhibitions with a critical purpose'.(2) Some fear that too many blockbusters simply pander to the general public's desire for 'masterpieces', leading to a proliferation of exhibitions of 'treasures', or of popular artists, like the French Impressionists. Furthermore, the external origins of many of the 'pre-packaged' touring exhibitions inevitably prevent or minimise any Australian perspective on the choice and display of the works. Against this background of art historical misgivings, it is reassuring to consider the Queensland Art Gallery's major exhibition of 'Matisse', which has been widely praised for its conceptual coherence and 'vigorous' scholarship.(3)

The exhibition was initially conceived in 1985, as a small exchange between the sister cities of Brisbane and Nice. But during its ten-year planning phase, the project was shaped by the fact that no comprehensive display of Henri Matisse's work had yet been staged in this country. Thus the organisers decided, by means of careful and judicious selection, to present the full depth and diversity of this leading 20th century artist's career - ranging from his early student works of the 1890s to the final grand decorative designs and cut-outs of the 1940s -1950s. And unlike recent international retrospectives of Matisse, which have focused predominantly on paintings, the current exhibition sought 'to show Matisse's contributions across media - paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints, cut-outs, illustrated books and costumes ... [giving]

an appreciation of Matisse's entire oeuvre and the rich interconnections of his work'.(4)

In view of its ambitious scope (some 270 works), the exhibition has been practically structured around eight clearly defined themes, such as 'Fauvism and the colours of Collioure'; 'Exoticism and experiment'; 'Murals and myths'; and 'Final Fashionability - Jazz, decor and decoupage'. This thematic approach is especially well suited to Matisse, whose art reveals an ongoing fascination and experimentation with certain ideas and images. A fact which was dramatically conveyed by the dense but effective installation created by the exhibition's curator, Dr Caroline Turner, at the Queensland Art Gallery. Works from different periods and in differing media, but still illustrating the same favoured motif (such as the reclining Odalisque, or the arabesque) were placed in suggestive proximity.

Another significant feature of the exhibition has been its subtle showcasing of the works by Matisse in Australian public and private collections. Dr Turner sought to put the Australian works into a broader context, and certainly the rich holdings of the National Gallery of Australia - their magnificent illustrated books, works on paper, costumes and large scale works (*The Abduction of Europa and Oceania, the sky*) - are shown to particular advantage. This desire to provide an Australian dimension or 'sub-text' to the project is even more clearly articulated in the exhibition catalogue, where several Matisse scholars have contributed essays on either Australian works or else colonial /South Pacific themes.

The scale and ambition of the 300-page, superbly illustrated exhibition catalogue could be said to embody Elsen's claim that: 'Our best blockbuster catalogues are written by teams of scholars and the knowledge they impart is up to the moment and state of the art ... [which] because of very large editions ... can be priced within the means of students as well as the public.(5)

Described as 'setting a new standard in international collaborative scholarship for an Australian exhibition',(6) this catalogue reflects the energy and input of the editors, Dr Turner and Dr Roger Benjamin, the Melbourne-based Matisse scholar, whose appointment, as the exhibition's scholarly adviser, in itself indicates the institution's serious commitment to engage with experts and disciplines outside the art museum's walls. With Dr

Benjamin's encouragement and 'networking', the catalogue was envisaged not simply as a record of the exhibition, but as a valuable contribution to Matisse scholarship: 'My idea was that we bring in a range of ... high-flying American and French scholars who would give us a more progressive and unorthodox presentation'.(7) The selection of writers was divided between distinguished senior figures from the university and museum profession, such as professors Yves-Alain Bois of Harvard, Richard Shiff of the University of Texas (the latter contributing his first ever essay on Matisse), MoMA's Dr John Elderfield and Mme Isabelle Monod-Fontaine from Paris' Musée National d'Art Moderne; and a number of younger academics, who had recently produced fresh empirical research on the artist.(8) Thus, the catalogue incorporates material that has never before been published, such as a series of Tahitian drawings from the Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Paris.(9) Alongside these new perspectives, three essays supply an overview of Matisse's work in various media, catering for the full range of potential readers. Lastly, the detailed text is accompanied by a sumptuously illustrated catalogue of works, a select bibliography, a short chronology of Matisse's life and an index, making it a surprisingly practical research tool and an elegant production.

Another educational innovation of this exhibition which warrants mention was the scheduling of a postgraduate student seminar in conjunction with QAG's Matisse Conference. Selected university students, working in the field of modern art, were awarded airfares (courtesy of one of the sponsors, Ansett) to attend a special 'masterclass' before the conference. An opportunity for academic discussion was provided by an afternoon seminar, during which Professors Shiff and Bois presented papers; this was followed by a private 'walk through' the show accompanied by the visiting scholars. Dr Benjamin describes this initiative as: '... an educational gesture, if you like. We wanted to be able to disseminate the scholarly work of the conference to an undergraduate and postgraduate audience in art history, as well as the general public'. But the aim also raised the standard of debate in the main conference forum, for: '... the [student] grant winners were expected to contribute actively to the conference proceedings during question time, which they did'. Dr Turner is equally positive about the success of this extended educational component, but also acknowledges Matisse's particular suitability for such an event: '... [the artist] has provoked great enthusiasm amongst students, both here and in Canberra ... perhaps more than other recent exhibitions'.

In conclusion, one might say that one of the central features of the 'Matisse' exhibition is its commitment to the belief that a 'blockbuster' can - and must - have a serious scholarly underpinning. Dr Benjamin believes curators should not underestimate their audience for 'they will always respond better when intellectually challenged'. It also provides a concrete

example of what can be achieved when art museums collaborate creatively with academics.(10) As one reviewer remarked: 'Matisse', 'is easily the most intelligent blockbuster exhibition ever mounted in this country' (11) and certainly it provides a timely counterbalance to, what has been described as, 'a growing divorce between art-historical objectives and institutional aggrandisement'.(12)

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- (10) A belief that is gaining currency when one considers other recent exemplary productions, like *Surrealism: Revolution by Night* and *Albrecht Dürer in the Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria*. See also: Editorial, 1990, 'Scholarship in Museums', *Burlington Magazine*, v. CXXXII, No. 1052, November, p. 759; also Ruddel, T. 1989, 'The Museum's need for a conscience: a role for universities?', *Muse*, v. 7, Fall, pp. 49 - 53
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(This article was submitted with an extensive list of references. Unfortunately, due to space considerations we are not able to print the list in its entirety but copies are available on request. Please phone the editor on (03) 9486 3399.)

The Conservation and Restoration of Ceramics

The Conservation and Restoration of Ceramics, by Susan Buys and Victoria Oakley, published Butterworth-Heinemann, London, 1993

This book continues the series of extremely useful and informative Butterworth-Heinemann publications, now established as primary reference sources for conservation and museology. Past publications include such diverse titles as *Conservation and Exhibitions*, *Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art and Antiquities*, *Conservation of Building and Decorative Stone* (two volumes), *Conservation of Glass*, *Conservation of Marine Archaeological Objects*, *Organic Chemistry of Museum Objects* (2nd edition), and *Textile Conservator's Manual* (2nd edition). These publications present contemporary discussions on theory and practices within specific fields of conservation, as well as an objective comparison of different methods and approaches to conservation treatments. They are extremely important manuals.

The publication under review focuses on the conservation and restoration of ceramics. Although authorship is accredited only to Susan Buys and Victoria Oakley, the diverse subject matter covered within this volume has meant that many experts in the field of ceramic conservation have been consulted and have contributed to the final book. This is not merely a manual of techniques, nor is it presented as the definitive survey of past and present materials and methods used in ceramics conservation.

The book is divided into four parts. The first deals with the technology of ceramics, and stresses the importance of documentation, examination and research prior to any conservation work.

The second commences with a history of ceramics conservation

and leads into a discussion on conservation techniques. One good discussion centres around retouching of ceramics, including both the theory and practice of colour-matching and paint application by conventional brush and air-brush. This section also discusses the removal of previous restoration materials, the cleaning, reinforcement and consolidation of ceramics, and bonding and replacement of lost material. This successfully draws attention to the question of whether or not treatment should be undertaken, what it is that the treatment is intended to achieve, and the criteria on which the choice of treatment should be based.

Part three concerns the more technical details of types of materials used in the treatment of ceramics, and includes health and safety aspects of different equipment. It also deals with planning and equipping a studio for ceramics conservation.

The fourth section covers display and mounting techniques for ceramics and concludes with a discussion on emergency procedures, particularly the importance of disaster planning for both minor and major disasters.

The book concludes with two appendices and an extensive bibliography/reference guide dealing with all aspects of ceramic conservation. The first appendix lists international conservation associations and institutions dealing with ceramic conservation and research, the second lists international suppliers of materials for ceramic conservation.

This is an extremely informative and well researched publication with a clear, easy-to-follow and read design layout. It is liberally interspersed with clear, explanatory photographs and diagrams, and the comprehensive index allows for easy reference to specific information in the main text.

It is important to stress that this

is aimed at the professional conservator or conservation student. It is not intended as a do-it-yourself manual and some materials, tools and techniques discussed are dangerous both to people not used to working with such materials, as well as to the object being treated.

Tom Mosby
Conservator

Enquiries regarding conservation should be directed to the national branch of the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials: The Secretary, AICCM Inc., GPO Box 1638, Canberra ACT 2601, or telephone Gina Drummond or Cheryl Jackson at the Australian War Memorial Annex. Ph: (06) 243 4531, Fax: (06) 241 7998, Email: gina.drummond@awm.gov.au

Exhibition Installation & Lighting Design

Exhibition Installation & Lighting Design, by Paul Thompson and Jim Wallace, published Art on the Move, 1994, rrp \$7; and *Travelling Exhibitions: A Practical Handbook for non-State Metropolitan and Regional Galleries and Museums*, by Sara Kelly, published NETS Victoria, 1994, rrp \$12.

Because we manage our own collections and exhibition spaces, staff at public galleries and museums are, ipso facto, the local experts on all aspects of installation. This is laudable in sentiment, but time-consuming in practice. We are also the local information resource for the secondary students and tertiary students who are our future colleagues, and so we want to assist them as far as possible.

It is therefore with open-armed gratitude that publications such as *Exhibition Installation & Lighting Design*, and *Travelling Exhibitions: A Practical Handbook for non-State Metropolitan and Regional Galleries and Museums* are received.

Both are published by NETS (National Exhibition Touring Schemes) agencies and were

developed in response to client needs. Both are well priced, well designed and presented in an easy-to-handle scale with easy-to-follow layout. Both were developed with input from their client base and authorities in the field, but while *Travelling Exhibitions* has commissioned articles, *Exhibition Installation* was developed from a workshop conducted by Art on the Move. *Travelling Exhibitions* is a one-off publication while *Exhibition Installation* is part of an open-ended series of booklets, which has influenced the range and density of the information. One seems directed at those with a solid grasp of the concepts, the other seems to be an introduction to the basic premises of the subjects: a guide to the basic practical considerations.

Exhibition Installation & Lighting Design is the third booklet published by Art on the Move in its workshop-associated series. Art on the Move's initiatives in this venture are commendable, given that publishing in association with workshops presents its own dilemmas: how to create a follow-

up reference for participants while retaining information and meaning for non-participants. Both chapters tackle this challenge by referring to theory, in this case construction of meaning through exhibition practice - making objects and themes intellectually and emotionally accessible - and then concentrate on the practicalities of how to do it. Paul Thompson concentrates on how to make objects physically accessible; Jim Wallace on ensuring they are physically visible.

Paul Thompson's comments on the height and arrangement of items for display and the ratios of space is good, standard advice. It is also very useful information to have on hand in printed form for 'community development work', for example, attempting to persuade against 'wallpapering with pictures'. The inclusion of a basic equipment list is a handy starting point, however, as with most of this chapter, I found that the advice was fairly specific to a particular type of hanging system, devices and venue. Nevertheless, it is still a useful reference for compiling one's own kit.

Lighting is one of the major capital costs in setting up an appropriate exhibition area and it is often more practical to have a long-term plan for installation of fixtures. Jim Wallace's comments explain the various possibilities from the array of available fittings and describes how to avoid common pitfalls. Equipped with this background information one can feel more confident in dealing with those with an interest in our institutions' financial rather than cultural assets. Thus we can make informed recommendations as to

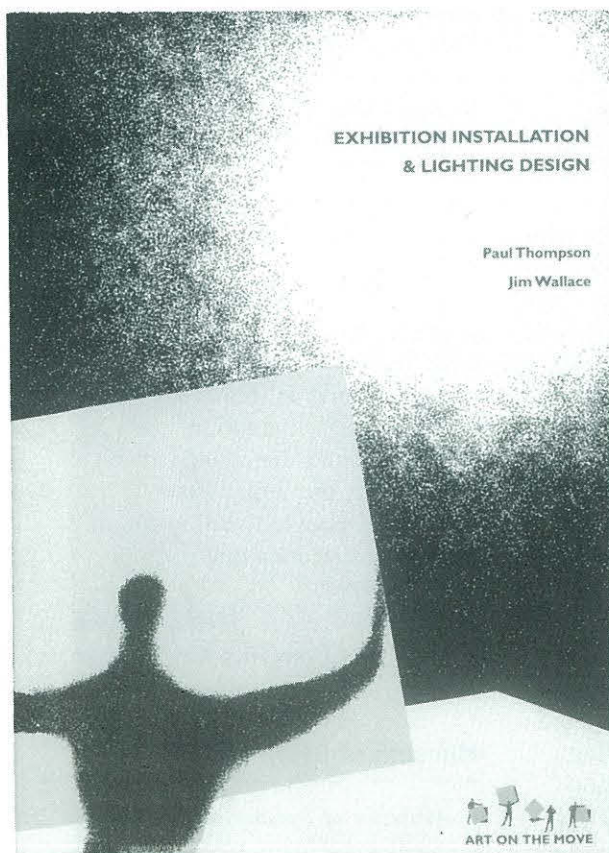
comparative merits of extending the lighting grid in stages, upgrading the standard or variety of fittings to increase flexibility in the type of exhibition, and the financial planning for such a project.

Travelling Exhibitions: A Practical Handbook for Non-State Metropolitan and Regional Galleries and Museums is very specifically targeted, yet it provides comprehensively on all aspects of the subject. It is extremely thorough and seems to cover all eventualities: how to devise the plan, how to ensure it goes to plan, and, importantly, what to do if it doesn't. I was delighted to see checklists of considerations for various stages of planning, development and implementation. Not all points are applicable to every occasion, as Sara Kelly notes, but going through such a list lessens the likelihood of any being overlooked. Which can also be said of the sample contracts and condition reports.

This publication is essential for anyone contemplating sending an exhibition out on the road and for anyone receiving a touring show. It provides guidelines on what can be expected of the initiating or host venue, and so is a professional development tool in itself.

Chapters on budgeting, environmental conditions for exhibition and storage, loan fees, insurance, preparation and packaging of art and artefacts, promotion and merchandising contain good advice for everyday, good gallery housekeeping.

A not uncommon concern among museum studies students is that perhaps they have missed something vital - it all seems like such obvious commonsense. When we get out into 'the field' we realise how uncommon commonsense is. It's also very useful to have a published schedule for arguing why various things are necessary - it's often difficult to explain to those outside the



industry why it is necessary 'to go to all that trouble'. Both publications are recommended as essential for galleries, museums and school and university libraries.

Isabel Jackson
Curator/Acting Director
Waverley City Gallery,
Monash City Council

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Museum Basics

Museum Basics, by T. Ambrose and C. Paine, published ICOM in conjunction with Routledge, London and New York, 1993. Available from The Law Book Company Ltd, 44-50 Waterloo Rd, Nth Ryde NSW 2113. \$59.95.

Museum Basics introduces all museum functions to those institutions with few professional staff and limited financial resources. It discusses museum marketing, education, facilities, buildings, interpretation, exhibitions, the development and care of collections, and the administrative management of museums. Organised into 85 units, the book can be used as a self-training manual. Readers can work through the publication, reflect on highlighted key words, focus on special sub-themes within a unit, and consider the 'study examples' in relation to their own situation. Cross-referencing to other units of relevance is a thoughtful feature.

New, in museology references, is the extensive emphasis on the primary importance of museum users. The book accepts that without a collection there is no museum, but that the care and development of collections are dependent on user needs. This may be an anathema to the old school of curators and museum directors whose holy grail revolves principally on the sacredness of their collections.

The poor bibliographic citation of references is disappointing. Publishers are not mentioned, and for those listed with an ISBN number a trace could be made but for those without, insider knowledge would be required to locate the reference. This seems rather discriminatory. The authors intend the book

for those museums with limited resources: will such museums have the resources to find apparently useful references?

A contemporary book such as this, which covers all museum work and employs comparatively simple language and text layout, has been much needed. It should be essential reading for undergraduate students and a regular reminder reference for those museum workers in regional and state museums with professional staff. It should complement the Queensland Museum's 1992 publication *A Manual for Small Museums and Keeping Places*.

Many volunteer-managed museums could find the publication overwhelming, however, so there is a need for an even more basic book to gently introduce such workers to their responsibilities. While the information in *Museum Basics* must be communicated to museums without paid or professional staff, the current layout may be too dense for smaller museums. Summarised notes and/or diagrams and sketches, backed up by the prose expression of all the issues might be preferable. A sizeable number of museum workers may also be confused (or even alienated) when informed that 'volunteers should only work under supervision', (p. 122-3).

This book is a valuable reference which pinpoints the basic principles underlying museum work. It should also prove a supportive tool in training courses around the country, even considering the limitations mentioned above. Every museum should have at least one copy of *Museum Basics*.

Helen Tyzack
Freelance Consultant

Museum of Sydney

Museum of Sydney on the site of

First Government House, cnr Phillip and Bridge Sts, Sydney

The opening of the Museum of Sydney on the Site of First Government House (MOS to its friends) has been awaited with much interest; its curator, Peter Emmett, has been called Australia's first postmodern curator. Mastermind of the re-presentation of Hyde Park Barracks under the aegis of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Emmett here pushes the envelope of museum history in more fluid and mysterious directions than any other historical presentation in this country. Originality and innovation are certainly virtues, and challenges to conventional wisdom constitute timely interventions in historiographical habits. Yet the fragments, hints and murmurs which compose this museum leave me ultimately unsatisfied.

MOS occupies a stylish

building, a sleek sandstone cliff on the harbour-side of a gigantic CBD development, which funded the expensive design and finish. The building perches on the flank of a tower block in order to expose a plaza covering the archaeological remnants of First Government House. Centre of imperial power in the Australian colonies from 1788 to 1846, the place is now interpreted as representing the interface between Aboriginal people and the British, containing tragedy for one and profit for the other. A portion of the ground plan of the house is traced in white markers, its bulk now underneath a busy asphalt intersection; it is overlooked by a sculptural forest of tall, variously textured poles representing 'the edge of the trees' when the original owners looked out at the invaders. This conjunction foretells the frame of the MOS interpretation of colonial history, and to the ire of some

First Fleet descendants and others, there is none of the conventional glory of colonial foundation in its picture.

Instead, the story is presented in shards of excavated pottery, brick and bone, labelled on blocks of clear perspex and therefore almost invisible. 'Labelled' is the wrong word in any case. In a catalogue essay, Paul Carter draws a distinction between captions, which he calls neutralising agents of the power of objects, and quotations, which he posits as agents of imaginative liberation. I am not convinced by the distinction, but it explains the style of 'labelling' throughout the museum: long panels of quotes abstracted from early diarists and occasional philosophers, plus a regular dose of David Malouf interspersed with items of the Eora language. As commentators, they are an odd but interesting panoply, and they present a

George Peacock, *Old Government House*, circa 1845, oil on canvas. Photo: Jenni Carter©. Courtesy Museum of Sydney.



multiplicity of voices commenting on the museum's themes in impeccably correct diversity.

I think we're expected not to read every panel, but to dip and browse and have our attention unexpectedly carried away into speculation beyond the hackneyed realm of linear history. There is certainly plenty to divert attention: artefacts are arranged in unconventional space and form; soundscapes cut in and out in many tones and accents; talking heads converse with each other as you eavesdrop, or sometimes rant into the dark. There are so many such episodes that in a three hour visit, I never heard one repeat, which must be a mercy to the young guides who move among the audiences, prompting and encouraging.

But what does it all say? Six or seven themes are distributed, mainly in small packages, in the museum's tall, narrow spaces. The bush environment of Sydney appears in a two-story high bank of video monitors: they offer vast, grainy images of timeless sandstone coast and bush. The indigenous Eora people are acknowledged with implements and more videos, this time asserting that contemporary Aboriginal people survive and occupy the land still. The colonists of Sydney's first 50 or so years are represented by a host of busy tools and equipment, by a dark chamber of disembodied projections, and a sighing, chattering soundscape which is said to offer a meditation on the theatrical nature of the museum. British power is presented in signs of luxury such as gilt-framed portraits and silver swords.

Typifying the oblique ambiguity of the MOS displays is the contrast of the Dixon Library's painted cedar collector's chest (circa 1820) with a pair of postmodern chests of drawers made of stainless steel. Each glass-topped drawer pulls open to reveal a little pile of bones, or a scatter of clay pipe

stems, or an arrangement of old buttons, set on or in historic or natural imagery. As you pull, tiny lights spotlight the objects, and when you let go the handles, the drawer slides shut by itself - magical, entrancing. I couldn't see an attribution, but I believe this strange conglomeration was composed by artist Narelle Jubelin, who has employed museum artefacts in previous work. I found myself captivated by opening the drawers, peeping in and letting them shut, but I have no idea what it means. This makes me restive: the abandonment of purposeful analysis of historical material seems to me an irresponsible rhetoric of emptiness. And in refusing to succumb to fairy pleasure, I don't appreciate being cast as a curmudgeon who resists jokey digs at conventional history; jokes are infamous masks of the assertion of power, and of subliminal inadequacy.

MOS has been the butt of fierce criticism simply for coming into existence. The Friends of First Government House (I may not have the whole story) feel that any museum on the site should interpret primarily the house itself, its occupants and the stories of colonial power enacted here. My own view is that these issues are indeed addressed in the presentation, but that the manner of their appearance trivialises them, makes them ephemeral and impressionistic. This strikes me as a more important criticism than the possibility that the facade re-creation may not be 100% accurate, or that the name claims more of Sydney's history than it actually offers. These are sins of many museums, but at least of museums that attempt to offer explanations of the events that shaped today's products and relics.

Emmett's presentation at MOS offers maximum relativism of sources to create unique individualistic understandings. They contest the traditional

authority of the museum, but at the expense of shared, social or civic experience. Among the mansions of the museum house, this one is for children of the thirty second soundbite, the rock video and neo-pulp fiction. Curmudgeons will love the temporary show of First Fleet sketches and watercolours, gathered together in a rare realisation of Bernard Smith's *European Vision in the South Pacific*, but are likely otherwise to be disheartened.

Linda Young,
Lecturer, Cultural Heritage
Management
University of Canberra

Female Irregularities

Female Irregularities
Shown at the Fremantle Asylum
Museum in November - December
1994

Like conception, 'Female Irregularities', shown at the Fremantle Asylum Museum at the end of last year, crept up on viewers and then made a powerful impact. In the hallway of the Fremantle Asylum Museum the gentle landscapes of Shane Pickett and Claude Kelly, complete with kangaroo hopping along a bush track, were seductive viewing. Turning left into the Community Access Gallery the impact of three male metal catheters, each of them angled precisely on a separate plinth with perspex cover, was both forceful and authoritative. One label read: *Case no. 2484 Crown v W B April 1894 near Beverley. Using an instrument to provide an abortion. Guilty 10 years.* The emotional response was immediate.

In this interesting, low cost exhibition (the brochure referred to it as an installation but I'll stay with exhibition), historian and museum curator, Denise Cook, visual artist, Holly Story, and curator and writer, Melissa Harpley, explored aspects of contraception, abortion and



Mary O'Grady, the first registered midwife in Western Australia. Photo courtesy of the Battye Library.

childbirth in Western Australia at the turn of the century. The trigger for the exhibition was the historical association between the Fremantle Midwifery Training School, established in 1910 in the asylum building, and the exhibition space in the Fremantle Asylum Museum.

My understanding of the curatorial aim was to use objects and images to look at the common ground in gallery and museum presentations and also the disjunction, sometimes, between the emotional and historical responses to objects - the personal meaning - to which I would add a third ingredient, memory, as distinct from history.

The first room of the exhibition

succeeded best in this approach. Objects such as speculums, rubber enema, syringes and catheters were displayed in a determinedly gallery approach. The accompanying text referred to their tactile nature, but as everything was behind glass or under perspex covers one couldn't actually touch the objects. The ubiquitous metal catheters are very durable so perhaps one could have been left naked for visitors to touch.

In the second room we were in safer museum territory: an image of Mary O'Grady holding twins, the first registered midwife in Western Australia; books like *The Wife's Guide and Friend*, and *Knowledge a Young Husband Should Have*; the midwife's basket of

contents; and a prominently displayed verse

*Little Mary full of hope
Read a book by Marie Stope
Judging now by her condition
She must have read the wrong
edition?*

It's a comfortable approach exploring objects and images in context - the achievable sort of women's display that should be in many museums across the country but isn't.

And yet I kept returning to the first room. I was transfixed and confronted by a half empty showcase displaying, at least, a very relaxed approach to objects and space. I was mesmerised by the androgynous catheters and their dual gender roles, glued to the knitting needle with the crochet hook end wondering how many viewers knew it was the gruesome saviour of many women with unwanted pregnancies. It rightly challenged some ingrained museum practices and it turfed the God Provenance out the window. I was pleased the tape that went with the exhibition was not available the day I visited. I can't imagine what it could have contained that wouldn't have been intrusive.

In an industry that pays homage to increasing technological whizz-bangery but otherwise is not very innovative, 'Female Irregularities' was an important exhibition in terms of content and because Denise and Melissa stretched a few boundaries that needed to be stretched.

**Wendy Hucker
Hon. Director
The Pioneer Women's Hut,
Tumbarumba**

(The tape referred to in this review contained information relating to documents from the period on contraception, sexuality and midwifery, plus records of the midwifery school. Although the exhibition no longer exists in the format displayed at the Fremantle Asylum Museum, anyone interested in the objects or historical material should contact the curators at the Fremantle Arts Centre on 09 335 8244. Ed.)

Crossing the Borders: cross-disciplinary education at the National Portrait Gallery

The National Portrait Gallery is a program of the National Library of Australia, opened by the Prime Minister in March 1994. It is a rich educational resource aiming to encourage innovative and imaginative ways of looking at portraiture, and to raise questions about how we see ourselves as individuals, as communities and as a nation. As historical documents, portraits offer students of all ages an opportunity to learn something about Australian history and society.

Education at the National Portrait Gallery is shaped by learning theory and educational philosophies which recognise that experiential, emotional and intellectual learning takes place in the museum environment. Program development explores new interpretive roles in the visual arts and the potential for informal, open-ended learning through active engagement with exhibited material. Specific aspects of the program include services to schools and higher education institutions, families and other visitors, establishing links with the community, outreach programs and touring exhibitions.

Programs for the formal education sector are designed to encourage students to look at, identify and discuss works of art and to develop an awareness of the links between the visual arts, Australian history and cultural life. Students are introduced to portraits as documents of past and present social organisation while familiarising them with the development of portrait art within the context of Australian art history.

At the curatorial concept development level, the program is a collaborative venture between curator and educator. This helps strengthen links between scholarship and interpretation, and makes the educational process central to the National Portrait Gallery's mission.

The possibilities for learning are far-reaching. A portrait can be studied as a source of information: it can be seen as an object composed of many different layers - canvas, ground, paint, varnish - and of different materials. A portrait can tell a specific story or put a point of view. Viewed in a new context, it may convey quite a different message.

The curatorial thesis of the recent exhibition 'All in the Family: Selected Australian Portraits' used portraiture to trace changes in Australian family life. It offered a selection of portraits of prominent and representative Australians from many walks of life utilising a range of media: photography, cartoons, drawing, sculpture and paintings. A critical 'reading'

of portraits in the exhibition allowed students to appreciate the diverse and changing aspects of Australian society; to draw conclusions about projected social values, time and place in history and to name particular aspects of the works carrying the interpreted meaning.

By looking at a group portrait by Robert Dighton (1752 - 1814) of Governor King (1758 - 1808), and family (1799), secondary students were encouraged to learn something about the subjects: their social position, their relationships with each other, the time and setting of the work. It is possible to read these things in a portrait image by looking at clothes, pose, the arrangement of figures, background details, and even the size and medium of the work. Facial expressions, eyes, brows, mouth, angle of face, and body language all suggest the personality of the subject. A range of biographical material of Governor King's political and family life supplemented a visual reading of the portrait. Students were encouraged to develop an understanding of basic historical concepts, about the nature of history as a form of knowledge and to read the portraits critically, not to take this group at face value. Portraiture can conceal as much as it reveals - it can set out to deliberately mislead the viewer into sharing the sitter's and/or artist's point of view.

The gallery's next exhibition, 'High Society: Society Portraiture and Photographers 1920 - 1960', documented an almost vanished world of Australian social life and charted the development of photographic portraiture in Australia. Senior secondary students were challenged to consider: What is taste? How can it be defined? How does fashion indicate social and cultural change? This approach, complementing and building on curriculum requirements for Studies of Society and Environment, enabled students to gain insights into the ways histories of society and culture are constructed and reflected in portrait art. Learning areas based on cultural diversity, present, past and future roles in society can be developed through an exploration of portrait subjects, costumes, setting, composition and other contextualities.

In short, portraits offer far-reaching learning possibilities which extend and cross the conventional disciplinary boundaries to re-establish the relationship between art, science and history.

Pamela Clelland Gray
Education and Public Programs,
National Portrait Gallery

Innovation at NETS Victoria

In May, Anna Clabburn started work with NETS Victoria as part-time education and marketing program officer. Her brief is to improve general community and gallery interaction with exhibitions of contemporary art and craft touring regional galleries around the state. The program grew out of a perceived lack of dialogue between contemporary art exhibitions, and the regional venues in which they tour.

Defining audience groups, particularly those unique to each region, is vital to the program's development. The program will include a range of events targeted at specialised groups, such as students and local teachers, and those activities open to a more general audience. Where possible the program is focusing on exhibitions (not necessarily those toured by NETS), permanent collections in regional galleries, or aspects of rural culture or business. The emphasis here is on creating a program which educates audiences about contemporary art in a non-didactic and inviting way. Options include a diverse array of formal and informal events from lectures by artists and other professionals, to seminars designed to exchange information, one-off performances or installation work.

The program endeavours to improve communication between urban and rural arts workers involved in contemporary practice. During the first six months the focus will be on developing meaningful ties between exhibitions, gallery staff and local teachers and to assist each venue develop and target specific audience groups and/or to supplement existing education programs. Written material, such as educational kits, preview teachers' notes, room brochures to facilitate a more thorough and productive understanding of contemporary art among those involved in bringing it to the local community are being produced. Also, a range of professional development events will be organised to promote aspects of contemporary practice to regional staff and

teachers. These will take place both in Melbourne and regional centres.

In June NETS Victoria surveyed Victoria's 18 regional venues. Feedback highlighted the fact that many galleries feel pressure from their local communities to make contemporary art more accessible and relevant. Consequently, a large part of the program focuses on events which demystify aspects of contemporary practice in the visual arts and crafts industry. This includes talks by artists, curators and other professionals, seminars or forums catering to specific groups, such as VCE course criteria, and hands-on workshops for various student levels and the general public.

This is a precious chance to create a fresh precedent for education and outreach programs in regional galleries. Ideally, community knowledge and appreciation of contemporary art will improve as the program progresses and enables galleries to expand their own range of activities. Part of the program's rationale is to establish an ideas base for future events, which galleries can then implement independently of NETS.

Time and funds are invaluable in an area so dramatically under-resourced (many galleries have part-time or no dedicated education staff). However, the success of the program is entirely dependent on supportive communication with Victoria's 18 regional galleries and relies on close liaison with education staff in each venue and their input at all levels. Programmed events will require cooperative marketing and promotion if they are to draw audiences.

Anna Clabburn
NETS Victoria

Comments are sought from inside and outside the industry. Contact Anna Clabburn at NETS Victoria (03) 9208 0255 for the forthcoming schedule of events of artists' lectures, previews, seminars and professional development seminars.

Uncovering Queensland's Hidden Heritage

In Queensland during the last few decades over 200 community-based museums have been established, mostly due to local initiatives. These museums contain a vast wealth of material culture, some of it nationally significant, much of it uncatalogued and inaccessible to an audience other than the local community.

Arts Queensland's recent report *Hidden Heritage*, provides a blueprint for local and regional development of a coordinated museums industry to

the year 2001.

The report highlights issues of common concern across Queensland's community museums: an inequality of public funding as compared to art galleries and libraries; concern that the Queensland Museum's Local Museums Grant Scheme (currently distributing \$190,000 in about 175 small grants) will be discontinued; inconsistent local government involvement in the provision of facilities, funding and charges; a declining and ageing volunteer workforce

needing training in collections management and computer technology; an inability to market the cultural attractions of isolated museums or to cater to the increasing number of cultural tourists; and a need for technical assistance in cataloguing, conserving and displaying the rich and diverse collections.

Hidden Heritage makes the following recommendations:

1. The Queensland Government should increase support and double the existing base allocation of grants to the community museum sector.
2. To help alleviate the cultural tension that exists between museums and art galleries, Arts Queensland should take a leadership role and create a permanent staff position to oversee the implementation of the Museums Development Plan 1995 - 2001. It should further establish an inter-departmental committee for the museums industry to oversee development and integration of a statewide museums policy, and establish a museums assessment panel to assess applications from community museums and galleries for accreditation and provide ministerial advice on funding issues.
3. A regional network of six museum resource centres, staffed by professional museum development officers, should be established under the auspices of the Queensland Museum and supported by a technical advisory panel with broad stakeholder representation.
4. To help redress the ad hoc training of community museum personnel, Arts Training Queensland's training strategy should: encourage providers of training workshops, such as the Queensland Museum, Museums Australia (Qld), and the Regional Galleries Association of Queensland, to formally accredit their programs; encourage TAFE to develop a certificate course specifically for the museum sector; and encourage TAFE to coordinate provision of existing modules available in non-museum TAFE courses, such as business management, and to review their content to allow for their integration into the certificate course.
5. Tourism is a growth industry in Queensland, however, its marketing concentrates on natural heritage. Arts Queensland should initiate development and ensure appropriate resources for implementation of a cultural tourism strategy for the state in partnership with the Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing.
6. Local government should play an equal partnership role with the State Government in establishing and maintaining the regional network of museum resource centres, and participate in appropriate committees, panels and steering committees in developing the statewide museums policy and cultural tourism strategy.
7. Museums Australia (Qld) should receive additional government funding to allow it to promote its vision to a coordinated museums industry capable

of addressing those issues identified as areas of concern to the museum sector. It should also be represented on the appropriate committees established to oversee the new initiatives.

8. Implementation and effectiveness of the Museums Development Plan 1995 - 2001 should be measured by performance indicators to help overcome poor reporting and monitoring of community museum activities.

9. Australia's first peoples and minority groups should be given full access to training and funding programs in community museum developments. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, South Sea Islanders, people of non-English speaking backgrounds and other cultural diversities should be highlighted to allow a better understanding of their role and contribution to Queensland's history, material culture and regional identity. Training partnerships are recommended.

10. Training programs in community museums should specifically address the needs of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with training partnerships arranged between existing keeping places and the major cultural institutions. Training should involve appropriate protocols for the identification and display of indigenous material and cultural items.

Hidden Heritage, A Development Plan for Museums in Queensland 1995 - 2001, by Jane Lennon, a Report of the Community Museums Assessment Reference Group, published Arts Queensland, March 1995. Copies are available from Arts Queensland, GPO Box 1436, Brisbane Qld 4001, Ph: (07) 224 4896, Fax: (07) 224 4077.

The report forms part of the Queensland State Government's cultural statement Building Local - Going Global. At the time of going to press we are not sure who has won the state elections or what the status of the report will be under a new government.

The Australia Council's simplified grant assessment structure, will be introduced in 1996. Under the simpler two-tiered structure three of the council's five boards and their committees will be replaced by funds of the same names: the Literature Fund, the Visual Arts/Craft Fund and the Performing Arts Fund, which may be further broken down to include funds for dance, drama, music and hybrid arts. Each fund will comprise seven members, including a chair who will be a member of council. Members of the funds will assess grant applications with assistance from additional expertise, on a one-off basis, from a central register of peers. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board, the Community Cultural Development Board, the Major Organisations Board and the Australia Foundation for Culture and the Humanities remain unchanged. Under the new structure, the Australia Council will establish an Arts Marketing Advisory Board in 1996.

Cairns Regional Gallery, Queensland's largest regional gallery, opened in July. Featuring nine separate exhibition spaces, an education room, sidewalk cafe and shop, the \$3.2 million refurbishments to the heritage listed Public Curator's Office building were funded by the local community and the Queensland Government. Ongoing support will be provided by the Cairns City Council.

The National Museum of Australian Pottery, dedicated to Australia's nineteenth-century potters, opened earlier this year. The collection, covering the period 1819 - 1918, contains over 500 pieces of domestic pottery from 72 companies throughout Australia: 66 South St, Wodonga. Ph: (060) 563 152.

The Jewish Museum of Australia, a national centre for Jewish culture, is due to reopen in new premises in Melbourne in August. The new premises provide the long-awaited opportunity to display the museum's collection of Judaica, and an expanded exhibition program surveying Jewish art, culture and social history: 26 Alma Rd, St Kilda, Vic 3182. Ph: (03) 9534 0083.

The NRMA Museum opened at NRMA headquarters in Clarence St, Sydney, in March. The museum celebrates those who contributed to the establishment and growth of the 75-year old organisation. Ph: (02) 260 9222.

Australian Archives' new brochure *Putting urban history at your fingertips* is available from its Canberra office. The brochure outlines archive holdings relating to the development and growth of modern Australia's trade, postwar reconstruction, immigration, urban and rural settlement and the planning, design and construction of government buildings. Contact Andrew McKenna (06) 209 3953.

The Powerhouse Museum has won two awards in this year's American Association of Museums Publications Design Competition. Competing against other institutions with budgets over \$500,000 *Real Wild Child: Australian Rock Museum Then and Now* won first prize in the posters category, and *Treasures of the Powerhouse Museum* received an honourable mention in the books category.

Mark Edgoose, Melbourne-based jeweller and metalsmith, has won the 1995 VicHealth National Craft Award with *Stack I-V*. The \$30,000 non-acquisitive award was judged by Robert Bell, curator of craft and design at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Future development of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery will be centred on two sites: the existing museum in Wellington Street and the former railway workshops at Invermay, one of Tasmania's most important industrial heritage sites. The 17-

hectare site consists of over 70 structures and will be developed into a cultural precinct shared between the University of Tasmania's School of Visual and Performing Arts, the Royal Launceston Show Society and the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery.

The Eureka Flag, housed in the Selkirk Family Eureka Gallery in the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, underwent conservation work in June. Previously backed with chipboard, the flag was re-backed with marine ply and placed in a new display-case style frame illuminated with fibre-optic lighting. Fibre-optic lighting is also being installed throughout the Selkirk Gallery, enabling objects and prints to be seen in their true colours. Visitors were able to view the flag and watch the conservation work in progress.

Australia ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) is to review the *Burra Charter* following its April conference, in which delegates discussed the charter and its guidelines. Topics included the council's philosophy on conservation, how well heritage is managed by planning legislation, the relationship between conservation practitioners and other consultants, the need to integrate interpretation into the conservation process, the philosophy of authenticity and whether or not this is a Western construct, and the fact that outsiders often don't understand conservators' terminology. Most conference delegates thought changes should be made to the charter and its guidelines. Members are currently providing written comments and proposals will be available in November. Contact Burra Charter Review, PO Box N77, Grosvenor Place, Sydney 2000.

The Commonwealth Government is funding a major program to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders greater input into indigenous heritage management. The Indigenous Cultural Heritage Protection Program is coordinated within the Heritage Branch of the Department of Communications and the Arts, in conjunction with a steering committee representing the Australian Heritage Commission, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, ATSIC and the University of Canberra's cultural heritage conservation program. The program focuses on the development of a planning framework, particularly decision-making processes and principles and their application, and heritage management training. The guidelines are comparable with the *Burra Charter* and use elements of the charter, particularly the central notion of establishing significance and maintaining the cultural value of places.

The Guidelines for the Protection, Management and Use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Places are in draft format but are due for publication soon. They consist of two documents: a

shorter version targeted at executives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander organisations, tourism operators and developers; and a longer version targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander site managers, site owners and community groups. For information contact: Marilyn Truscott, Heritage Protection Section, Commonwealth Department of Communications and the Arts. Ph: (06) 279 1614, Fax: (06) 279 1697.

Most people in France think museums are good things, according to recent analysis of a 1993 survey. The survey includes people who never visit museums. Of those interviewed: 15% have never been to a museum in their life and 51% have not been during the past three years; the highest proportion of those who frequently visit choose museums of art and history; of every 100 visitors, only eight go to museums of modern or contemporary art; nearly 50% of all visitors regard museums as elitist or difficult; factors preventing those interviewed from attending more frequently include not enough time (53%); too expensive (41%), and too tired (33 $\frac{1}{3}$ % of those in the over 55 age group). Females showed a marked preference for art museums and visit more frequently than males; the number of children visitors has trebled over the past 50 years.

While metal detectorists are causing irreparable damage to scheduled monuments and excavations, they are also improving archaeological knowledge with thousands of finds each year. According to a new survey by English Heritage, *Metal Detecting and Archaeology in England*, only a small proportion of metal-detected finds are declared by the estimated 30,000 amateur metal detectorists in England. English Heritage is encouraging archaeologists to use metal detectors more often in their fieldwork and to find ways of working with hobby detectors to persuade them to operate on less sensitive land, and to help stamp out illegal and damaging raids on scheduled monuments.

The 1994 Council for Business and the Arts in Canada (CBAC) reports that the 149 institutions surveyed had a positive year in terms of financial performance: 52 had deficits and 67 had surpluses. Attendances at galleries and museums increased by 1 million during the survey period, even though the number of institutions charging admission remained the same.

Funding from Canada's three levels of government declined, private donations decreased, and corporations and foundations barely maintained their previous levels of support. Despite this, generated income increased significantly with most of this coming from 'Other Income', which includes gift shop sales.

Arts groups are learning how to replace the declining support available from the public purse: The Art Gallery of Windsor temporarily moved to a shopping mall for two years while the provincial government started a casino in the gallery's permanent home (which will be extensively renovated before the gallery moves back in); museums and galleries across the country have also participated in the '2 admissions for the price of 1' promotion, and the Selections catalogue, in which 22 cultural organisations marketed their memorabilia.

Capital campaigns declined by more than 40% and the Canadian Museums Association (CMA) has made a formal request to the Federal Government to put a moratorium on the construction of new galleries and museums due to the shrinking funds available to run and maintain them.

Federal arts funding, previously dispensed by Communications Canada, is now being channelled through a new Department of Canadian Heritage.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage has tabled special legislation in the House of Commons to establish a formal appeal mechanism over the determination by the Canadian Cultural Property Review Board of the fair market value of donations. The move provides donors with legal recourse when they dispute the board's decisions of the fair market value of art works or artefacts.

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has announced it will lay off 18 people and close the department responsible for mounting travelling exhibitions, following cuts in the museum's subsidy from the government of Quebec.

The Department of Human Resources Development Canada has approved funding for further implementation of the Human Resources Strategy. The museum community can now start exchanging information, begin work on competency frameworks and profiles, and conduct more demonstration projects to create tools needed for HR planning, management and development.

The Museum of the City of New York is preparing an international directory of museums that collect, preserve and interpret the history of cities for the International Forum of City Museums in Budapest in 1997.

The directory includes history museums, historical societies, historic houses, history centres, museums of archaeology, architecture, ethnology, neighbourhoods, politics and geography; and functions such as police, fire and transit museums, in cities with populations greater than 150,000 people. Send details of: names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of such museums, and the names/titles of principal contact people to Peter Simmons, Museum of the City of New York 1220 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10029, USA. mcny@pipeline.com