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1901-2001
Centenary of Federation

* This exhibition is supported by
The National Council for the
Centenary of Federation.

Axel Poignant *Australian Swagman* 1953-
54 (detail) gelatin silver photograph
National Gallery of Australia

 national gallery of australia
www.nga.gov.au

POLITICS BOB McMULLAN

A NEW SHADOW MINISTER

As many of you will be aware as a consequence of the recent minor reshuffle on the Federal Labor Frontbench I am now the Shadow Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Shadow Minister for the Arts.

I am delighted to take on both of these portfolios.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs portfolio is obviously important. Relations between Indigenous Australians and other Australians and the improvement of social conditions for Indigenous Australians are the most important social justice issues of our generation.

There is a significant overlap with the arts portfolio—with museums and galleries in particular. The arts play a crucial role in the

shaping of a nation's identity, culture and heritage.

In relation to the arts, I have, of course, had the privilege of serving as the Federal Arts Minister 1993–1994 and the Shadow Minister for the Arts 1996–1998. I was delighted when Kim Beazley offered me the arts in his latest reshuffle.

Australia has a strong tradition in relation to its museums and galleries and I have a strong commitment to ensuring that this tradition continues. Galleries and museums are important to our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world.

Nationally, some of the larger institutions, including the National Archives, National Gallery of Australia, National Museum of Australia and National Portrait Gallery,



Bob McMullan the day of the Shadow Cabinet reshuffle, September 5

Reproduced courtesy of Bob McMullan

are based in my home city of Canberra. However, many of the most important public policy issues relate to regional and local institutions. I have a

strong interest in visiting the excellent facilities that exist in regional Australia. One focus of my activities will be to ensure that these facilities and collections develop to their full potential.

I hope that I get the chance to meet many of you over the coming months and please don't hesitate to contact me or my office at any time.

THE HON. BOB MCMULLAN MP IS THE SHADOW MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS, RECONCILIATION, THE ARTS AND MANAGER OF OPPOSITION BUSINESS

POLICY IAN McSHANE

PIGGOTT AND MUSEUMS IN AUSTRALIA

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections. Popularly known as the Pigott Report after its chairman, toy entrepreneur Peter Pigott, it was a remarkable and disturbing analysis of Australian museums. The report offered a far-reaching set of policy recommendations to remedy years of institutional neglect and bring Australia into line with overseas trends in museology.

Although influential in setting the broad policy agenda for Australian museums over the past three decades, the report also provides a yardstick for measuring the negative impact on the sector of changes in government finance and administration and the diminishing purchase of public good arguments—in short, the rise and rise of economic rationalism.

The Pigott Report is noteworthy for the absence of an overt political strategy, beyond its unheeded call for the establishment of a Museums Commission by the Commonwealth Government.

Indeed, it may have been the studied political naivety of the report that enabled it to survive an acrimonious change of government (Whitlam to Fraser). The report's argument about the deficiencies of Australian museology convinced the Fraser Liberal Government to establish the National Museum of Australia in 1980, surely the only Australian government cultural institution to be set up on the strength of an idea.

The most influential long-term outcome of the Pigott Report was the intellectual context it provided for the realignment of the museum paradigm in Australia. Following the report's brilliant application to the Australian context of changes in museum philosophy taking place elsewhere in the world, all major generalist museums in Australia developed an interest in Indigenous studies, environmental science and social history.

IAN MCSHANE WAS CURATOR OF HISTORY AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA FOR TEN YEARS. HE NOW WORKS AS A MELBOURNE-BASED CONSULTANT

MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA LOSES AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FUNDING

Museums Australia received a letter from the Australia Council in August, advising that funding to our association will cease on December 31, 2000. Australia Council funding (\$152,969) provided more than half of the National Office's operating revenue for the year 1999. The Australia Council's decision will therefore have a substantial impact on Museums Australia.

Historically, we inherited Australia Council funding through one of our predecessor associations, the Art Museums Association of Australia (AMAA). This funding has had a long and changing history. Funding to the Art Galleries Association was first received in 1973, ceased in 1976, and re-granted in 1986 to enable the later association, the AMAA, to establish a secretariat, added to by occasional one-off grants for projects including the biennial national conferences. In 1991, the AMAA was awarded funding to support a Professional Development Grant Program that continued to be administered by Museums Australia following amalgamation. Devolution of this program ceased in 1997. However, the grant for

administrative support was continued.

Undoubtedly MA's constituency, comprising those working in art museums alongside history, science and other museums, has received significant benefits from Australia Council funding, and the Visual Arts/Craft Fund's (VACF) support is acknowledged with gratitude. MA has, we believe, delivered appropriate outcomes in response to the Australia Council's expectations for contemporary visual artists and their work.

The Australia Council letter comes at a time when the strategic importance of museums to society is increasingly recognised as an avenue to building audiences for the creative industries of which we are part. It is therefore disappointing, especially given our long relationship with the VACF, not to have one-year support to enable us to restructure and refocus our activities.

It is important to recognise that the Australia Council's decision regarding funding affects only the operations of the National Office of Museums Australia. Your Council has taken a number of

decisions to reduce expenditure in the short term and is exploring ways to find new and better-fit funding. We have met with representatives of the Australia Council and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA). We have also discussed with the Minister for the Arts, the Hon. Peter McGauran, our challenge in re-securing our association.

While MA will need to refocus the activities of the National Office, there should be little impact on the State branches and the chapters. *Museum National* will continue to be published, partly funded through Environment Australia and with income derived from advertising revenue and subscriptions. General services will be retained for our members, and funding applications have been submitted to support the newly-established and highly-acclaimed Museum Leadership Program. Project funding at the national level is expected to continue to support additional activities. Most recently DCITA has advised the National Office of funding for the national conference in Canberra in 2001 and support

for the publication of *Museum Methods*.

It would be understating the importance of the Australia Council in maintaining our funding base not to acknowledge that Museums Australia is in a critical position as we move towards 2001. While the Council of Museums Australia is working actively to secure funding that is compatible with our aims and objectives, we urge your continuing support of your local branch or chapter, and of your association.

SUE-ANNE WALLACE IS THE PRESIDENT OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA



As of September 22, 2000, the position of National Director was made redundant. Accordingly, Paul Costigan, who held this position, will now pursue his professional career elsewhere. Under the terms of the redundancy, no further comment will be made.

See page 26 for more MA news and information

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A QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP

A year after the inaugural, and highly successful, Museum Leadership Program, 31 of the original 40 MLP participants returned to the Melbourne Business School for a Refresher (September 7-10). Jeanne Liedtka (one of the three original lecturers) again came from the USA for the four days. The Refresher was made possible through the generosity of the Gordon Darling Foundation, one of the main sponsors of the original program. As one participant put it: 'The commitment of the Darlings was exceptional. The clarity of their signal of belief in each of us is cherished encouragement at a personal level.'

Participants of the original program were encouraged to comment on the value of the program, and they did. As

Michael Crayford (Director, Penrith Regional Gallery and The Lewers Bequest) said: 'The debates were confronting, informative and challenging.' For Steven Pozel (Director, Object—Centre for Contemporary Craft) the rewards were practical: 'I now have the most important resource that any of us would need to survive the changes and demands of this field—over 40 colleagues I could phone or email without hesitation.'

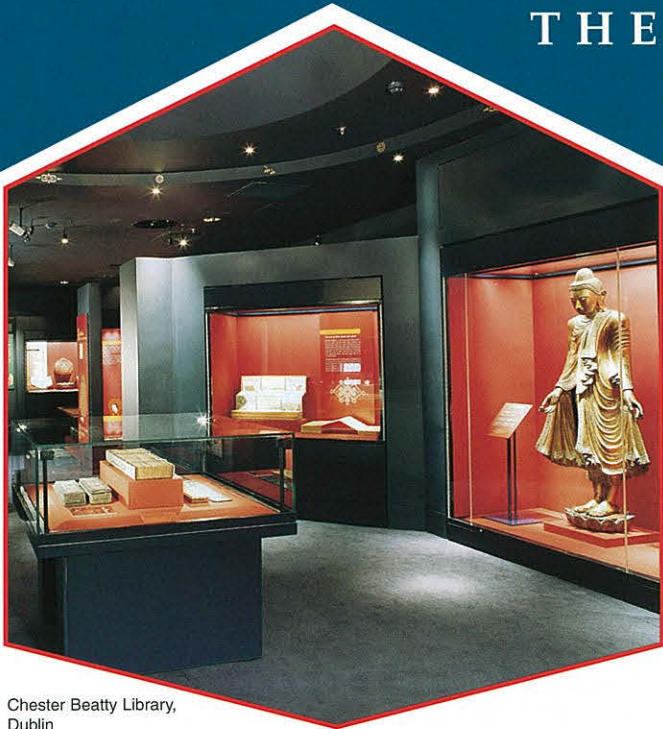
One year later, participants were asked to reflect again and describe the most significant outcome for them in their own workplace/career. One obvious change noted at the Refresher was that of the original 40 participants, 10 have had significant career changes!



Photographs by Kris Newton




THE Case for Quality



Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

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What they said:

More models to try—reminding me of things I'd forgotten to include in my thinking. The need to break old habits and complete what has already been started.

Patricia Sabine, Director, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, TAS

Realising that the process of change I had been through in my organisation was no different to the case studies [we discussed].

Warwick Reeder, Director, Heide Museum of Modern Art, VIC

...increased clarity to concentrate on the essential, rather than the urgent.
John Barrett-Lennard, WA

New ways of working within my organisation; and a greater understanding of my strengths, weaknesses and personal style.
Andrew Moritz, Director, National Wool Museum, VIC

The opportunity to discuss a wide variety of issues in a forum of committed fellow professionals.

Daniel McOwen, Director, Hamilton Art Gallery, VIC

The opportunity to 'stretch', and think of strategies for change; and tools for the implementation of professional strategies.

Susan Herbert, Head of Education and Public Programs, National Gallery of Australia, ACT

[This has been] the introduction to a whole new way of thinking. ...It has clarified for me that vision can succeed within an organisation.

Kevin Wilson, Director, Noosa Regional Art Gallery, QLD

[The MLP] changed my behaviour in staff management—staff restructuring and shared decision-making [I'm still working towards this one!].
Margaret Rich, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, VIC

Self-empowering [and] ...Professionally challenging—it's had me thinking differently about certain issues and relationships, and opened me up to new 'possibilities'.

Helen Light, Director/Curator, Jewish Museum of Australia, VIC

My work is more rewarding than ever—I've never enjoyed the 'process' as much as I do now.

Steven Poze, Director, Object—Australian Centre for Craft and Design, NSW

The Refresher participants also agreed to establish and maintain a more formal network—there is now a broadcast email facility and web site hosted by Museums Australia. There was also an agreement to establish some type of 'bulletin board' service for Alumni. Discussion on how to keep existing Alumni in touch resulted in agreement to hold regular get-togethers and scheduled activities in each State/Territory, and a session

for Alumni at the annual Museums Australia conference.

The next Museum Leadership Program is planned for August 11–19, 2001. Further details and application forms are available on Museums Australia's web site www.museumsaustralia.org.au under 'Programs'.

COMPILED BY KRIS NEWTON FOR MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA

Opposite:

(1) Denis Carmody (right), acting director Arts Victoria with Gordon Darling and Marilyn Darling, major sponsors of the MLP

(2) Rupert Myer, representing the Myer Foundation, one of the major sponsors of the 1999 MLP

(3) Dr Sue-Anne Wallace (right), MLP course director with Dr Jeanne Liedtka, course leader MLP Refresher

(4) Dr Jeanne Liedtka (right) with 1999 MLP Alumni Suzanne Davies and Gary Dufour at the Refresher

COLLABORATIONS GEORGINA BINKS

WAR HERITAGE MEMORABILIA



Why is the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) interested in museums? DVA administers the Government's commemorative program, *Their service—Our heritage*, which assists individuals,

organisations and communities to acknowledge the experiences and sacrifices of Australians who have served in wars and conflicts since Federation.

Memories and memorabilia is one of the initiatives under *Their service—Our heritage*. A booklet was produced in 1998 to raise awareness in the community of the significance of wartime memorabilia, and the need to identify, care for and display it at the local level (available on the DVA web site, www.dva.gov.au).

DVA is now identifying opportunities for assisting individuals and museums to achieve this. A strong focus will be on local and regional museums, outside the major cities.

DVA administers two commemorative grant schemes under *Their service—Our heritage*. The Regional War Memorials' Project (RWMP) provides up to \$4000 toward the construction, maintenance or restoration of war memorials and honour boards. The Local Commemorative Activities Fund (LCAF) provides up to \$3000 for projects such as publications, education initiatives and memorabilia displays. Application forms and guidelines are available from the DVA Grants Administration Team, phone 1800 026 185.

DVA is also considering how it may be able to provide non-financial assistance and encouragement. For example, by collecting information about

successful war heritage displays and preservation projects, as case studies for other organisations. Partnerships between local museums and ex-service organisations, and education initiatives related to wartime memorabilia collections, are also being explored.

Later this year DVA will be surveying a number of museums about war heritage memorabilia. The survey will provide an opportunity to identify some of the interests, and needs, that are out there.

GEORGINA BINKS IS THE MUSEUMS PROJECT OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS (CANBERRA)

MANAGING INDIGENOUS CULTURAL HERITAGE



In Cooktown, in August, a pilot workshop was conducted into the training needs of Queensland Indigenous communities. The workshop, hosted by the Gungarde Aboriginal Corporation at the Gungarde Community Centre, and the National Trust of Queensland at the James Cook Museum, was an outcome of research by Museums Australia Qld (MAQ) and Regional Galleries Association of Queensland (RGAQ).

Facilitated by Kym Yuke and Jody Currie, from the Yugambeh Museum Language–Heritage Research Centre in Beenleigh (near Brisbane), the workshop involved representatives from Indigenous communities in the far north—Gungarde Community (Cooktown), Wujul Wujul Community, Injinoo Community, Aurukun, Laura,

and Lockhart River.

Queensland Indigenous communities have identified a strong desire to have control of their own cultural heritage and to present it in ways that were meaningful to them (a view voiced in the March 2000 report, *Training and professional development needs of Indigenous people in museums and art galleries throughout Queensland**). Many communities lack the skills and resources to achieve these things, and this pilot workshop provided an opportunity for communities to begin identifying their own needs and to initiate their own projects to realise their community goals.

The workshop focused on interim projects that were not necessarily reliant on the establishment of infrastructure.

Wujul Wujul Community representatives, Francis Walker and Kate Prout, outlined their plans for a cultural mapping project concentrating on their region. They also wanted to undertake a program of preventative conservation for a community collection of photographs and begin to care for them to archival standards to encourage storytelling and documentation of community oral histories.

Cooktown visual artist and consultant on Indigenous Collections to the James Cook Museum Project, Conrad Michaels, talked about coordinating a touring exhibition of historic photographs of community life on the Aboriginal reserves in the 1960s, which would be accompanied by contemporary artworks and oral histories inspired by these significant photographs. The exhibition would travel intra-regionally in the far north.

Roy Solomon, Cultural Development Officer for the Injinoo Community of Cape York, discussed his idea for a language and dance project, which would utilise the community-based radio station and see the cultural knowledge of elders being passed on to

the younger generation through traditional dance, oral history and song.

The workshop provided the museum development officers in attendance with the opportunity to establish and renew contact with communities in the north. The workshop was also an opportunity to explore the potential of the proposed pilot position of Indigenous Arts and Museum Development Officer (for which MAQ and RGAQ are still seeking funding). This position is particularly significant if support of Indigenous Queenslanders in the care of their own cultural heritage is to continue in a strategic and appropriate way.

REBECCA DEZUANNI IS THE PROGRAM OFFICER, TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM [MAQ/RGAQ]

*The full report is available from www.maq.org.au/profdev/ or by phoning (07) 3250 1270.

Francis Walker and Kate Prout, Wujul Wujul Community and Tracey Avery, Co-project Manager, James Cook Museum
Reproduced courtesy of MAQ

EQUALITY ON THE WEB

Web site technology has been embraced by the museum sector with over 1500 museums now listed on the World Wide Web Library of Museum pages (VLmp). However, web site creators may not be aware of the potential barriers for the web site user with special needs or the many ways and means by which people access the information. And while the Australian *Disability and Discrimination Act* provides that equal access is required by law for information published in electronic format on the web, no law currently exists to enforce web site creators to adhere to a standard set of guidelines.

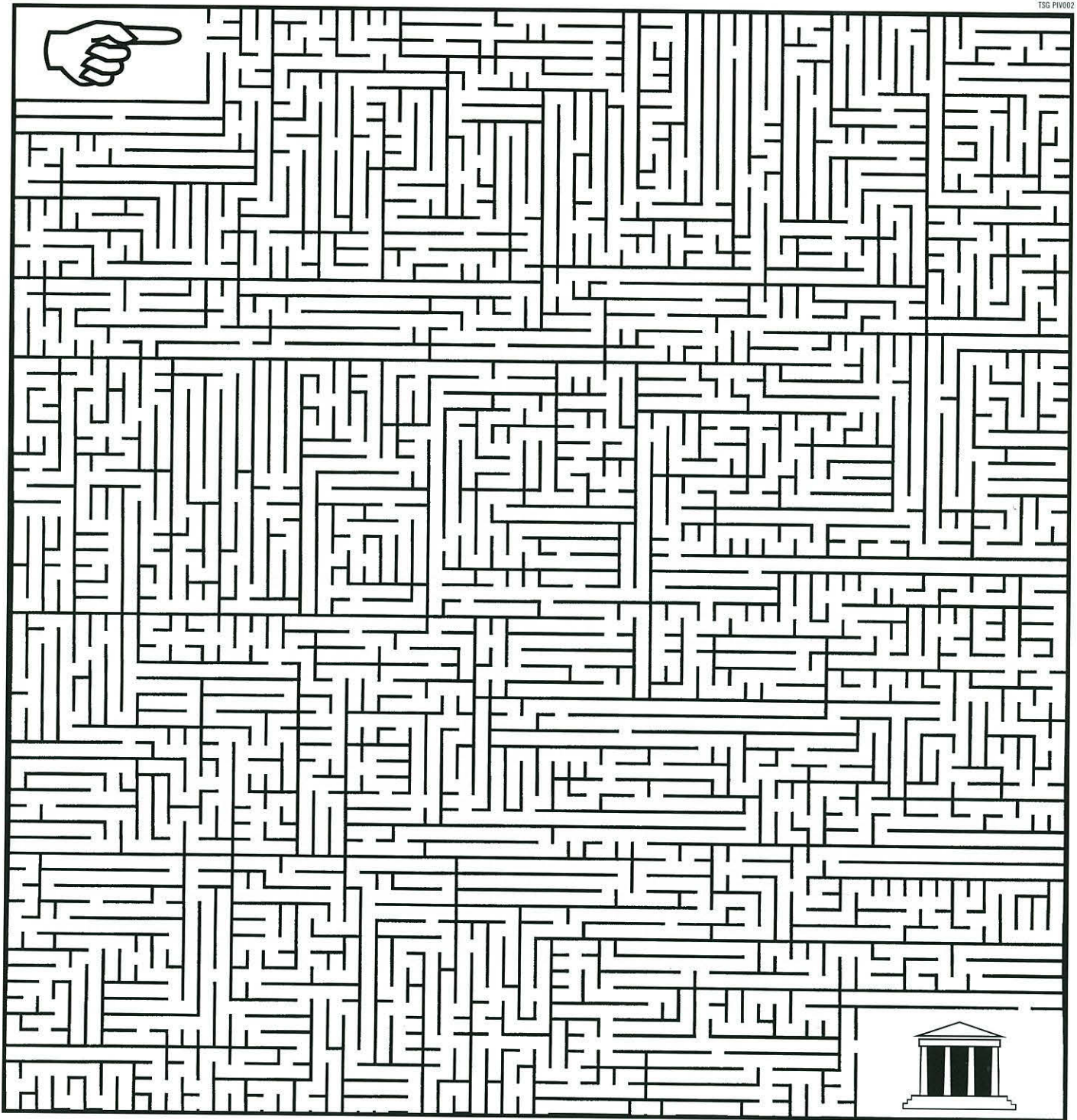
The Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST) based in England has developed a site for testing the accessibility of web sites, called **Bobby**. This site, created in 1999 and found at www.cast.org/bobby is a web-based tool available to any user

online. Bobby 'approval' is granted by passing various categories and levels of accessibility based on the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) set of guidelines. Approval is acknowledged by a Bobby icon, which may be displayed on the site.

Of the 29 museum sites tested on Bobby during 1999–2000, only three sites were approved according to Priority One, the lowest Bobby status of accessibility, as follows:

1. Museum Victoria at www.mov.vic.gov.au
2. The National Gallery of Australia at www.nga.gov.au
3. The Hermitage, Moscow at www.hermitagemuseum.org.au

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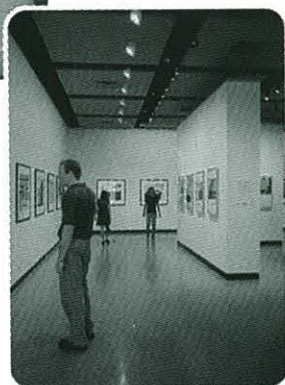
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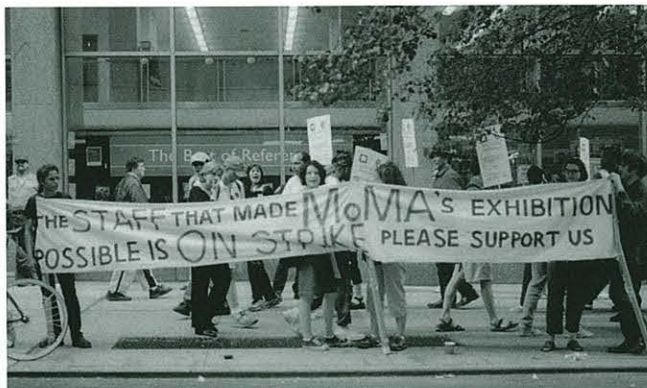
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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS EVA RESPINI

A NEW WORLD OF LABOUR RELATIONSHIPS



The MoMA's daily picket line in front of the museum's 53rd Street entrance, New York

© Jennifer McCabe, 2000

On April 28, the Professional and Administrative Staff (PASTA) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York went on strike. While this wasn't PASTA's first strike, it was certainly the longest and most unique. 140 workers, including myself, demanded better health benefits, higher wages, union security and increased job security in light of MoMA's downsizing during the upcoming \$800 million expansion project. The stakes of the strike got higher as the weeks dragged on, and what began as an effort to save our healthcare became an out-and-out war to save our union and earn respect for our profession.

From the outset, this strike was different, and we approached it with all the skills unique to our group. Our union is an oddity in the modern-day work force, as we are an orderly (but persuasive!) bunch of white-collar workers made up of curators, educators, editors, registrars, librarians and other administrators. We utilised time-tested methods, picketing the museum's entrance and putting up a 24-hour watch at the museum loading dock to halt deliveries. We organised rallies and benefit events, creating flyers in all major foreign languages, a web site and a rather sophisticated letter-writing campaign to museum members, trustees and the arts community. We also had a fleet of committees working on everything from signage to press, culminating in an open letter urging the museum to negotiate signed by over 100 prominent artists.

On September 9, after four and half gruelling months, MoMA agreed to a five-year contract that locked in not only the healthcare benefits we demanded, but also a 17.5 per cent wage increase over five years. Tears, general euphoria and pride prevailed as strikers realised that the long and hard fight was finally won. Now, the difficult task of healing the wounds between strikers and management lies ahead.

The strike showed us that large museums now operate on levels comparable to corporations, where fundraising and expansion are top priorities. The experience crushed our idealist notions of protest gleaned from the 1960s and 1970s, leaving us shrewder and more determined to win a fight in a new world of labour relationships, where even highly educated professionals still need to stand up and fight for what is due them.

EVA RESPINI IS A CURATORIAL ASSISTANT AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

REPATRIATION OF HUMAN REMAINS

On July 4, Prime Minister John Howard and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, issued a joint statement on the repatriation of human remains to Australian Indigenous communities. Howard and Blair endorsed the repatriation wherever possible (and appropriate) from both public and private collections and agreed to increase efforts to have culturally sensitive remains returned to Australia. The statement acknowledged the efforts already made by the British Government and institutions and agreed that the way forward is through cooperation between both governments. Both Prime Ministers recognised that a range of significant issues had to be addressed in order to facilitate the repatriation process and that there needed to be a coordinated long-term approach by governments, collecting organisations and Indigenous communities.

Several British organisations have already negotiated agreements with Indigenous communities for the release of significant remains and others are following their lead.



The cataloguing of 450 Indigenous human remains in the collection of the British Natural History Museum and distribution of the information to the Australian Government has been welcomed as part of the development of protocols for the sharing of information between governments and Indigenous people. However, major organisations such as the British Museum remain firm on their policy to withstand demands for the return of any part of their collections, which they state is in accordance with legislation enacted in 1753.

AUDIENCES AND MILLENNIUM MUSEUMS

A succession of UK museums opened with National Lottery money to mark the millennium may fail because of over optimistic visitor predictions. Patrick Green*, President of the Museums Association, cited the experience of London's Millennium Dome, which demonstrated the risk of relying on exaggerated predictions. The initial target of 15 million people was later reduced to 12 million and then dropped to 6 million. Green

urged the Millennium Commission to consider abandoning two planned multi-million pound centres in Portsmouth and Cardiff and instead spend the money on securing the future of existing attractions. Out of all the new developments, it was found that only modern art galleries appear to be thriving.

Tate Modern has led the way and exceeded its annual visitor target (2 million) within the first 12 weeks of opening. The Lowry Gallery in Salford has also gone beyond expectations, attracting 271,750 visitors, 115 per cent more than anticipated. Sadly, Cardiff's Centre for Visual Arts, which opened last September has announced that it will close after withdrawal of funding from the Arts Council of Wales. The late 19th century former library was converted at the cost of £9m but failed to draw the crowds.

K.P. HALL IS AN AUSTRALIAN WRITER AND CURATOR CURRENTLY WORKING IN LONDON

* *Metro*, Tuesday August 8, 2000

The Centre for Visual Arts in Cardiff, which opened in September 1999, is now about to close after withdrawal of funding.

Reproduced courtesy of the Centre for Visual Arts
Photograph by John Davies

MUSEUM NATIONAL IN 2001

• Reviewing exhibitions

In the May edition of *Museum National* Linda Young challenged the status quo by stating categorically 'the museum profession owns no critical culture'.

In August Anna Clabburn continued the debate with a call to arms—get into it, be critical, have arguments, feel attached.

In the next issue Kirsten Wehner asks what ideas film culture might offer museum critics. Look out for it.

• Art and culture: are we sustainable?

One of the messages arising from new millennial consciousness is a renaissance of ethical awareness about the role human activities play on planet Earth. From world trade discussions to global communication, government, business and society at large are beginning to ask big questions about the sustainability of present-day ways of living. Australia's tourism industry has already adopted a Code of Sustainability—but what about our galleries and museums?

In the next issue Anna Clabburn looks at how to make sure our cultural organisations remain active participants in an environmentally sustainable future.

RATIONAL

passions

WITH THE BRIEF TO TELL THE HUMAN HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA FOR THE NATIONAL MUSEUM, MARION STELL SHARES HER THOUGHTS ON ELICITING STORIES FULL OF TRUTH, WIT AND PASSION.

Most exhibitions bore me, I'm not totally sure why.

Perhaps it is because many fall within that damning category of 'worthy but dull'. Coupled with this is the insistence that everything be written at a child's reading age and reduced to the lowest common denominator. By trying to appeal to everyone, they appeal to no one. Where is the emotion, where is the passion?

Increasingly, exhibitions are not satisfying. Few are as compelling as a good book that you can't put down, or a film you talk about for days, or a painting that stirs your emotions. No wonder then, that they are rarely critiqued. Many simply have nothing to say. Exceptions become experiences to savour. In them success does not equate with resources or technology or the size of the institution. A small museum with passion can compete with any.



Above: Harley Davidson Sportster, 1998 model, purchased by the National Museum 2000
Spray painted by artist Alan Puckett for the *Eternity* theme 'Passion', 2000

Opposite: 'Eternity' by Arthur Stace, c.1960, purchased by the National Museum 2000
One of only two known surviving examples of Stace's evocative chalk message, estimated to have been written by him over 500,000 times on the streets of Sydney, 1930s-1967

Images reproduced courtesy of the National Museum of Australia

WE SAT IN LIVING ROOMS AND GARDENS ACROSS THE COUNTRY LISTENING TO PEOPLE RELIVE STORIES ABOUT FEAR AND ABOUT JOY.



no one emotion can, or probably should, sum up a person's life, they do provide a powerful insight into that life, and ultimately into the lives of Australians.

The final exhibition displays just one object for each person selected.

The most compelling object—the word 'Eternity' written by Arthur Stace in white chalk on black cardboard—sits outside the ten emotive themes and also contributes the exhibition title. His was the only story we researched that fitted into all ten emotive themes.

Emotion in *Eternity* is heightened by the use of singular evocative colours and fonts for each theme. All the text is delivered in first person; there is no curatorial voice beyond the selection. There are iconic objects and objects imbued with personal significance. Some of Australia's best authors contributed their take on the 10 emotive themes.

You will have to wait until opening in March 2001 to see all the people selected and experience the many rich layers of *Eternity*. There will be people that you have never heard of, together with some familiar faces. You won't like all the stories, just as we didn't.

My team and I personally elicited every story in *Eternity*—we sat in living rooms and gardens across the country listening to people relive stories about fear and about joy. It is not too strong to say that producing this exhibition changed our lives. There are stories and experiences that made us squirm with discomfort, or roar with laughter. It is these stories told with truth, wit and passion, with simultaneous rationality and emotion, that *Eternity* will present. They will capture the visitor's rational passions as never before. History may never be the same again.

DR MARION STELL IS CURRENTLY A POLICY OFFICER AT JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY OF NORTH QUEENSLAND. SHE CURATED THE EXHIBITION *ETERNITY*, AND IS WRITING A BOOK ON *ETERNITY* TO COINCIDE WITH ITS OPENING IN MARCH 2001

¹ Theodore Zeldin, *An intimate history of humanity*, Minerva Paperback edition, 1997, p. vii.

² I wish to acknowledge the extraordinary talents of my colleagues on *Eternity*—Sophie Jensen, Johanna Parker, Allison Cadzow and Zoe Greenwood.

For a short while during the mid-1990s many museums felt threatened by virtual exhibitions, wondering if people would ever cross their physical threshold again. Reassuring research suggested that visitors would always come in person to see the real, the authentic object because it invoked an 'emotional response' in the visitor. Few questioned and explored the precise nature of this emotional response.

From 1998 until May 2000 I was employed by the National Museum of Australia to develop a gallery of Australian people for their new museum. The overall framework of the museum's content—land, nation and people—had been developed under the directorship of Dr William Jonas. My brief was to tell the human history of Australia.

My ambition, from the beginning, was to make this gallery very different. I did not want to regurgitate the predictable 'famous' Australians, pay lip service to a couple of token women and eulogise the 'unsung heroes'. I wanted a way to eschew limiting and unsatisfactory social history categories like 'migrants', 'achievers', 'sporting heroes', 'the disabled'. I wanted to abandon uninspiring chronological constructions and lazy timelines. For me the exhibition had to say something worthwhile and new, and it had to say it differently.

I began experimenting with some fresher themes that I aired at a workshop of interested people in mid-1998. Here the filmmaker Charlotte Seymour, understanding the direction I wanted to head, suggested that I read a book by Theodore Zeldin, *An intimate history of humanity*. In Zeldin's own words it is a book about 'humanity's whole record of cruelty, misunderstanding and joy', about our 'desires and regrets'.¹

Inspired by my reading of Zeldin, I produced 10 new exhibition themes based on the universal emotions of real life, namely: thrill, loneliness, joy, passion, chance, hope, mystery, fear, separation, devotion. My team² and I set about the long, complex and rational task of matching a whole array of people with emotions. It was my intention that stories selected in this way would cover the sweep of Australian human history. While

passion 1. any kind of feeling or emotion, especially when of compelling force 2. strong amorous feeling or desire 3. passionate sexual love 4. an instance or experience of it 5. a person who is the object of such a feeling 6. a strong or extravagant fondness, or desire for anything 7. the object of such a fondness or desire 8. a passionate outburst

A CULTURAL

terrorist

AS CURATOR OF THE MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE OF THE ART OF LIN ONUS, MARGO NEALE WRITES OF HIS LEGACY. FOR HER, ONUS WAS A CULTURAL TERRORIST OF GENTLE IRREVERENCE: HE KNEW HOW TO UNSETTLE EXPECTATIONS IN A GENTLE BUT POWERFUL WAY.

The life and art of Lin Onus, whose career spans the period from 1974 to 1996, parallels the rise and development of urban-based Aboriginal art in Australia. As a great Australian artist he addressed the critical issues of the day and is exemplary in the way he explores what it means to be Australian. Onus died prematurely on October 24, 1996 at the age of 47. And a major retrospective exhibition, put together in collaboration with the Onus family, is touring nationally during 2000 and 2001. *Urban dingo: The art of Lin Onus 1948–1996* is a tribute to Onus' life and outstanding contribution to Australian contemporary art.

Being of Scottish and Aboriginal ancestry, Lin Onus was a restless soul who seemed to be searching for a place between the cultural spaces through which he journeyed. His works are like that of a roving storyteller and mythmaker. It is not that he did not have a 'place'—defined in Aboriginal culture as the place you come from. It is more that he was looking for his place in a multicultural Australia that had difficulty acknowledging the diversity of Aboriginal cultures, instead favouring the newer imported cultures. His cross-cultural background afforded him a glimpse through many slightly ajar doors.

As Onus said: 'I couldn't quite resolve the extent of my Kooriness and I couldn't quite resolve the extent of my whiteness.' In his struggle, not uncommon to displaced people, Onus set out to define his place in this equation, and in doing so challenged the way urban Aboriginal people were defined by the dominant culture.

As an artist and an activist, the struggles of Indigenous Australians for social, political and cultural recognition provide a powerful undercurrent in his work. A self-confessed cultural mechanic, Onus wove together strands from his Aboriginal and European heritages, and brought together dualistic views: one Western and representational, the other Aboriginal and spiritual. He used wit and humour to give poignancy to his work. It was his most powerful weapon.

For Onus, art was for everybody and it was with comics and cartooning that he saw a way to broad accessibility. While his ironic and extremely clever work *Kaptn Koori* was created for his son as an alternative to *Superman* and *Batman*, it also addressed the serious issue of erasure of Indigenous heroes and historic figures, reinforcing the never-to-be underestimated



role of black humour as a survival strategy against the determination of assimilation.

Urban dingo is more than an art show, more than aesthetics. It deals with social history and identity politics. How many other exhibitions are successful in a cathedral of high art, such as the Museum of Contemporary Art, in the dress circle of what is arguably Australia's arts capital during an international event such as the Olympics (selected as a key SOCOG cultural event) and be equally sought after by museums, regional galleries and international venues as well.

Urban dingo opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art, will be at the Queensland Art Gallery, November 2000 to March 2001, followed by the Melbourne Museum, April 2001 to July 2001.

MARGO NEALE IS THE CURATOR OF *URBAN DINGO* AND CO-EDITOR OF THE FORTHCOMING *OXFORD COMPANION TO ABORIGINAL ART AND CULTURE*. SHE IS ALSO PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF THE GALLERY OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PROGRAMS AND THE GALLERY OF THE FIRST AUSTRALIANS, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

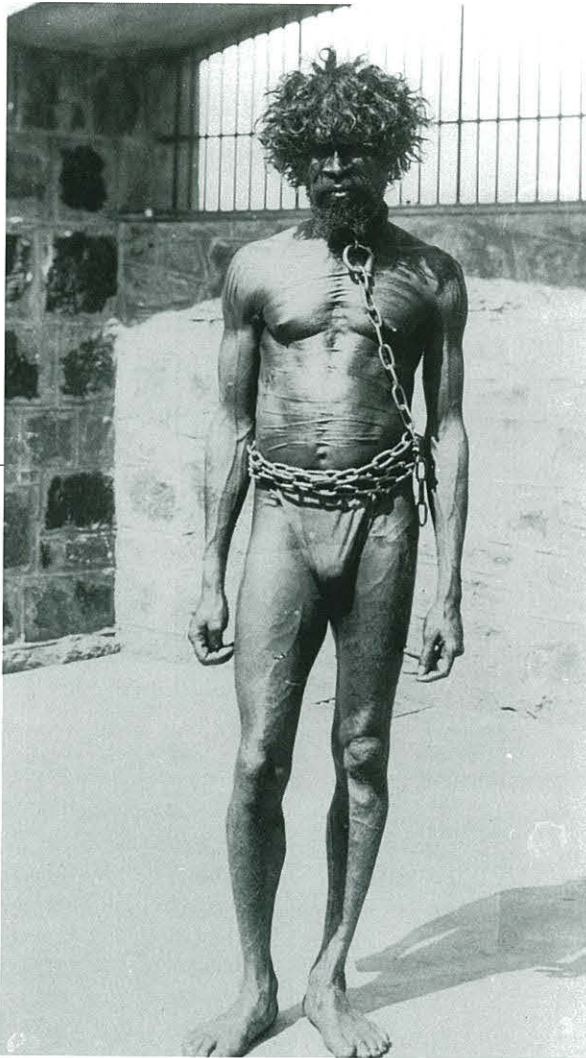
Kaptn Koori 1985 by Lin Onus
Gouache and ink on illustration board; 82.5 x 58.5 cm (framed)
Onus Estate

Part of *Urban dingo: The art of Lin Onus 1948–1996*
Queensland Art Gallery until March 2001, Melbourne Museum
April – July 2001

© Lin Onus / Licensed by VISCOPY, Sydney, 2000

UNEARTHING HIDDEN

histories



LLYRUS WEIGHTMAN TELLS OF THE OBLIGATION SHE HAS TO RECORD AND MAKE ACCESSIBLE THE PILBARA'S FOREVER UNFOLDING STORY.

It has been said you either hate or love the Pilbara; with me it is the latter. From the moment I arrived in this country of red rocks and spinifex I loved it. For the past six years I have been the Local History Heritage and Museum's Officer for the Shire of Roebourne and have been searching for the hidden histories and stories of the Pilbara. When reading the contemporary history of Australia, you could be forgiven if you believed there were no women or Aboriginal people here, nor did they have anything to do with the development of the country.

During my research for a set of posters and booklet, entitled *One hundred years of the culture of womanhood in the Pilbara*, I discovered that not only women's history was hidden but in many cases it was buried so deep that it was never expected to see the light of day.

The process involved in this research was frustrating and sometimes daunting. It was not only men (who were the writers of history) but also women themselves who perpetuated the myth that women's history was not of enough importance or interest to be included in the history books. As an historian my obsession for the truth of our history drove me to ensure *all* the history of the Pilbara was included, unsavoury or not. This Pilbara of ours is a country of great exquisiteness and wonder, steeped in history that goes back thousands of years.

IF WE KNOW WHERE WE COME FROM IT WILL GIVE US A CLEARER DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE.

One very important and often overlooked aspect in the recording of history is the environment. The Pilbara is moving ahead with mammoth developments and if we are not careful the push for more export dollars may consume the natural and built heritage and leave a legacy of factories and pollution along the northwest coast, instead of pristine waters and the oldest land and rock art in the world.

And if women's history is hidden then Aboriginal history does not exist. The wonderful Aboriginal tradition of oral history is rapidly being lost as the elders pass on.

We have a duty as historians and keepers of records to ensure that Aboriginal and women's histories are recorded along with the great explorers and pastoralists that feature in our vast history. These hidden histories are what we need to preserve to gain an appreciation of our past so we can learn from them and teach our children. If we know where we come from it will give us a clearer direction for the future. Knowledge of the wrongs and rights, the justices and injustices of our past will, hopefully, ensure a future of informed adults that can make wise decisions.

LLYRUS WEIGHTMAN IS THE LOCAL HISTORY HERITAGE AND MUSEUM'S OFFICER FOR THE SHIRE OF ROEBOURNE

Aboriginal prisoner 'Kianardie' who escaped from custody and outran a Police Trooper on a horse on Eighty Mile Beach
From *The Old Roebourne Gaol: A history* compiled by Llyrus Weightman
Image from Shire of Roebourne Local History Pictorial Collection; courtesy Llyrus Weightman

passion 1. any kind of feeling or emotion, especially when feeling or desire 3. passionate sexual love 4. an instance the object of such a feeling 6. a strong or extravagant something 7. the object of such a such a fondness or desire

JEN WEBB ARGUES THAT IN THE
WORLD OF PUBLISHING IN

MUSEUMS,
WRITERS AND
EDITORS NEED TO
BE HIGHLY
FLEXIBLE, ADROIT
AND REFLEXIVE.



Erich avant-gardist
Buchholz
the restless
Jen Webb

of the institution at heart; the curator may be committed first of all to *this* exhibition, *these* objects. Education officers and researchers will want to communicate information related to the objects on display. These interests may be incommensurable, because it's not just the tastes and focus of each player that are at stake, but the often contradictory functions of the cultural institution.

Museums are, of course, repositories of 'culture', and storehouses of knowledge,

Publishing is one of those background functions of a museum, like cataloguing, cleaning or conserving, that is often regarded as relevant not because of its own significance, but because it supports the 'core purpose' of the museum: to disseminate cultural information, and to provide access to the collection¹. Seen from another angle, though, it is highly significant because it is within this routine practice of producing catalogues, pamphlets, wall texts and labels that the 'core purpose', and particularly the politics of the institution, come to light.

Because of this, publishing in museums is often a contentious practice. Curators, education officers, researchers, editors and directors all have a finger in this particular part of the institutional pie, and have different issues they want to promote. The director, ideally, will have the long term interests

heritage and creative objects, but they are also business institutions, legal entities and information brokers. Each brings different demands to the process of publishing. For instance, the fact that cultural institutions are also in business means that while publications must meet standards of quality and authority, they have to do so quickly and cheaply. But they can't cut corners: what is published must reflect well on the sponsors and on the museum. And the museum is also an information broker, and widely regarded as a legitimate and authoritative source of information, which means that the material published so quickly and cheaply must also be accurate, reliable and verifiable.

The legal and ethical ramifications are a further touch. Museum publishers are dealing with other people's property,

whether images or words, and need to have at least a general sense of the contents of the *Copyright Act 1968*, and the ability to convince those in charge of the budget that in fact there is a real difference between the work itself and the intellectual property invested in that object, and a responsibility to pay for the use of that property. And the responsibility isn't just to pay for reproduction, but to ensure that rights of attribution and integrity are respected, and that the reproduction doesn't debase or distort the object in question.

Underpinning all this is the responsibility to recognise that in writing text, or reproducing images, we are making meanings, offering interpretations and evaluations. There is no unmediated or uninflected information (there are no facts, Nietzsche says, just interpretations). Given this, what meanings should the museum be making? And for whom? Are these meanings fit for purpose and audience? And who decides these questions?

Above all, beyond budgets, information, level, tenor, discourse, and legal and ethical commitments, is the unspoken responsibility of a publisher in a cultural institution to satisfy the tastes and interests of the director and other managers. Will they like your text? Have you prepared your grounds so that you can argue for the validity of the sorts of interpretations, evaluations and meanings you've made? Knowing from experience that they will almost insist on having some input to your drafts, have you allowed enough time to make the amendments that will allow the publication to be produced on time and within budget?

All this means that writers and editors in cultural institutions need to be highly flexible, highly adroit, and highly reflexive.

Having a good sense of language and a visual aptitude helps, but perhaps more important are the abilities to apply meticulous attention to detail and context, and to analyse the texts as you write/read them: what are the underlying premises? do they make sense? are they likely to offend someone? can they be substantiated? And perhaps most valuable of all is the ability to dance: to negotiate that tricky and constantly changing space between the museum's various public responsibilities, the director's personal and institutional

...PERHAPS MOST VALUABLE OF ALL IS THE ABILITY TO DANCE: TO NEGOTIATE THAT TRICKY AND CONSTANTLY CHANGING SPACE...

vision, the audiences' tastes and literacies, and the demands of the works themselves.

Michel de Certeau writes, 'Beyond the question of methods and contents, beyond what it says, the measure of a work is what it keeps silent'². We can never cover all the bases; but if we can produce text on time, within budget, in a manner that meets the purposes of the institution and the tastes and interests of its director/s; and if we bear always in mind why the works are on display, and what our text 'keeps silent', we will be moving a long way towards publishing material that communicates clearly, without silencing voices that have a right to be heard.

DR JEN WEBB IS CURRENTLY A LECTURER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA AND PREVIOUSLY WORKED AS AN EDITOR IN CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

- 1 According to Brian Kennedy of the National Gallery of Australia, speaking at the 'Copyright and the Electronic Image' conference, NGA, Canberra, July 1998.
- 2 Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse of the other*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986.

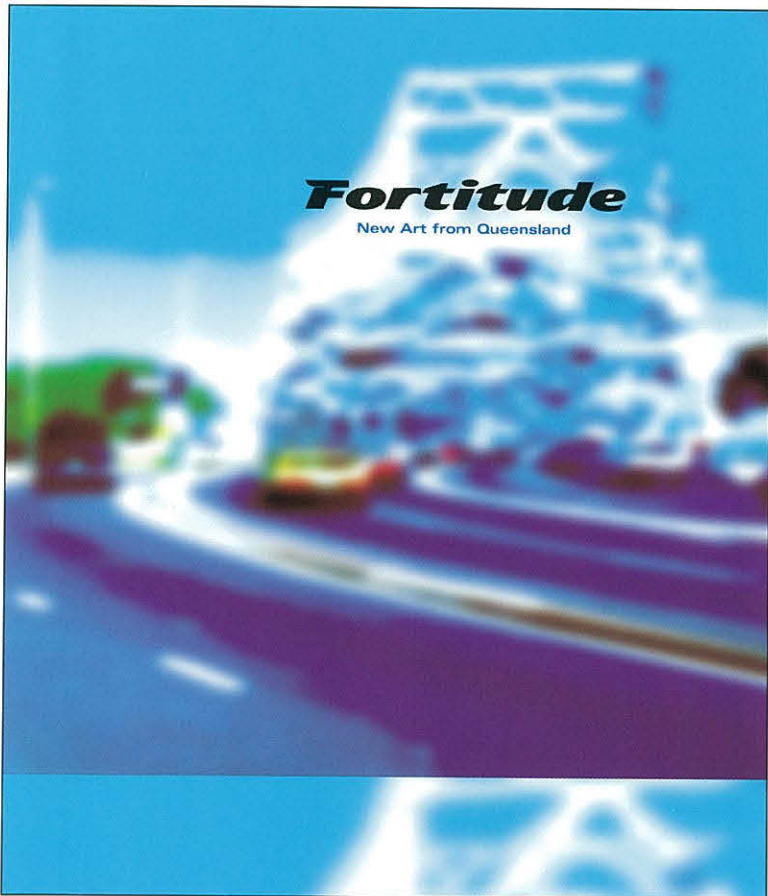
Opposite: *Erich Buchholz: The restless avant-gardist*, Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, 2000. Published in association with an exhibition of the same name, held at the Queensland Art Gallery 25 June - 17 September 2000 and curated by Anne Kirker.

Design by Brett Geoghegan
Reproduced courtesy of the Queensland Art Gallery

Left: *Fortitude: New art from Queensland*, Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, 2000. Published in association with an exhibition of the same name, held at the Queensland Art Gallery 30 September - 12 November 2000. Coordinating curators: Joanna Bosse and Julie Walsh

Cover photograph by Richard Stringer, manipulated by Brett Geoghegan.
Reproduced courtesy of the Queensland Art Gallery and Richard Stringer

Fortitude New Art from Queensland



A PASSION FOR

change

THE EXHIBITION *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS*—THE STORY OF THE STOLEN GENERATIONS—NOT ONLY REFLECTS A PASSION FOR CHANGE IN AUSTRALIA, SAY GABRIELLE HYSLOP AND KYLIE SCROOPE, IT HAS CHALLENGED THE WAY ARCHIVISTS SEE THEMSELVES.

Most people don't associate archives with change. On the contrary, archivists are expected to focus their attention on keeping their collections safe and secure within stable physical and intellectual environments, so that their treasures will be kept for future generations. But over the past 10 years radical changes and new priorities have generated passionate debate within the National Archives of Australia, and exhibitions are at the heart of it.

The access and equity imperative came late to the archives profession and it was only in the 1990s that Australian archival institutions shifted accessibility to the top, rather than the bottom, of their priorities. For many this meant placing greater emphasis on their researchers' needs. For a few it also meant leaving their repositories and taking their collections out to the general public, through exhibitions, publications and public programs.

This is too sad. I wish that non-Aboriginal people would take notice and make an effort to understand the history.

Adelaide, 1995

Ten years ago the National Archives had no staff devoted to exhibition work, which was generally regarded as a luxury that we couldn't afford. For George Nichols, the new Director-General appointed in 1990, enhancing accessibility was a high priority. This meant not only listing our holdings in more user-friendly ways, but also that we raise our public profile and become more widely known. Exhibitions were central to the new image George Nichols envisaged.

In 1992 the Archives was given exhibition space in Old Parliament House and the following year the exhibition *Between*

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7. the object of such a such a fondness or desire 8. a

Homes Are Sought For These Children



A GROUP OF TINY HALF-CASTE AND QUADROON CHILDREN at the Darwin half-caste home. The Minister for the Interior (Mr Perkins) recently appealed to charitable organisations in Melbourne and Sydney to find homes for the children and rescue them from becoming outcasts.

I like the little girl in Centre of group, but if taken by anyone else, any of the others would do, as long as they are blonds

two worlds was developed for the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. It tells the story of Aboriginal children of part-descent in the Northern Territory who were taken from their families and placed in institutions.

This was the first Archives exhibition to tour, and to date more than half a million people have seen it in 16 venues throughout all states and territories. Their responses have been overwhelmingly positive. The visitors' books for the exhibition are so moving that they were included as exhibits when the exhibition opened at the Archives Exhibition Gallery in Canberra in May 2000. Many visitors use them as Sorry Books.

I did not know...that this terrible thing had occurred.

Dubbo, 1995

The *Between two worlds* visitors' books reflect a passion for change that is clearly evident throughout the Australian community. The topic for the exhibition, suggested by Dr Peter Read, was remarkably timely. In 1993 'the Stolen Generation' was not the familiar phrase it has since become. The Archives was fortunate to have a project manager, Helen Nosworthy, and curator, Rowena MacDonald, who could see the potential in Read's suggestion. When they began work on the exhibition they did not know what aspect of Indigenous history to present. The policy and practice of removing Aboriginal children from their families was a story well documented in the Archives collection and well researched by Peter Read. His work and the major contribution of the Aboriginal advisory group formed the

I cannot imagine my little girls being taken away from me—I think I would die.

Canberra, 2000

foundation for Rowena MacDonald's curatorial interpretation. As Dr Read predicted in 1993, the Stolen Generations were about to hit the headlines. The Archives is immensely proud of the contribution the exhibition has made in educating people about this story.

The exhibition has done more than provide evidence about a painful chapter in Australian history. It has changed the way archivists see themselves and, we hope, it is still changing the way other people see archives. While there is great debate within the National Archives about how our exhibitions should be developed and how many resources should be devoted to them, staff throughout the organisation are proud of *Between two worlds*. Along with other archivists, they see in this exhibition an approach to interpretation that combines scholarly research and the use of documents, photographs and other records from the collection to present authoritative history, together with profoundly moving personal stories told by six people whose lives were affected by the policies of removal in the Northern Territory.

Between two worlds has helped the Archives to take its rightful place together with the museums, galleries and libraries that encourage Australians to ask questions about themselves, their society and their future. Storytelling, adopted so effectively in this exhibition, is the key to making our rich collection of Commonwealth Government records more widely appreciated. The exhibition team continues to pursue with passion the task of making the National Archives accessible in new and unexpected ways.

GABRIELLE HYSLOP IS THE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC PROGRAMS AND KYLIE SCROOPE IS EXHIBITIONS MANAGER AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA

Opposite: Boy at the bungalow, Alice Springs, 1920s
National Archives of Australia: A1, 1930/1542

Above: In 1934 the Minister for the Interior had a plan to find new homes in the southern states for children from Kahlin in Darwin and the Bungalow. Following the appearance of this photograph in the Melbourne *Herald*, a woman wrote to the Minister offering to take one of the girls.
National Archives of Australia: A1, 1934/6800

Images reproduced courtesy of the National Archives of Australia

MAKING A difference

FROM 'KNOWING NOTHING ABOUT MUSEUMS' TO BECOMING THE
MANAGER OF WHALEWORLD, LES BAIL DESCRIBES THE WAY
THINGS CAN HAPPEN.

Having grown up in a town with an active whaling industry until 1978 I was no stranger to the gory spectacle of the carcasses of these gentle giants being processed on the flensing deck of the Cheynes Beach Whaling Station. However, my first real contact with whales took place in September 1985 beneath the waters of Princess Royal Harbour, the gateway to the Port of Albany.

This vast natural bay on the south coast of Western Australia has had a rich and at times violent maritime history—but that is another story. In my case a passion for diving and photography took me beneath the waves to see first-hand the spectacle of the world's largest animals in their own environment. To this day I remember being in awe of the sheer size and power of whales and, above all else, their gentle nature. Little did I think that 10 years on I would be in charge of Whaleworld—a combination heritage site and museum which interprets the site of Australia's last whaling operation and tells the story of an industry that operated from before European settlement.

It happened in 1996, on the death of my good friend John Bell in a tragic air crash. John had, amongst other things, been a spotter pilot and a leading light in the establishment of Whaleworld after the whaling station closed. When the Jaycees Community Foundation Inc (the not-for-profit group who operate Whaleworld) asked me to assist by acting as manager for three months, I agreed. Some four years on I am still here.

At first, I felt totally lost when I arrived on site; I knew nothing about museums, and museum practice. I felt as if I was going to drown slowly in my own despair. I had a consultant's report that told me exactly what I already knew but not how to fix it. I had Peter Bell, John's son, and a labourer; limited money and a very tired run-down 40-acre facility. I had lots of Sunday architects and critics offering advice. What I did have in my favour was the fact that I had been through the University of Life, together with a lot of common sense.

Over the years through the diving, I had met some of the professional staff at the Western Australian Maritime Museum and these were the people I first approached for help. As it turned out they had grave concerns for where Whaleworld was heading so were very keen to assist me. I have nothing but praise for the dedicated professional people that assisted me, at times well beyond their call of duty and in their own time. I had to ask some pretty dumb questions at times but not once was I ever made to feel uncomfortable or lacking. I think it was this support that made me realise that I could contribute and that my skills along with their guidance and support would, and could, make a difference.

I was very aware of the significance and importance of the Whaleworld site and that it was crucial to conserve it. I undertook a crash course in museum practice, registered in workshops and any activity that had the potential to broaden my knowledge.



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2. strong amorous feeling or desire 3. passionate sexual love 4. an instance
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Left: Whaleworld Museum on the shores of King George Sound, near Albany, Western Australia, the site of Australia's last commercial whaling operation

Above: The Cheynes IV—the only whale chaser ship remaining in Australia

Images reproduced courtesy of Whaleworld

There were times when I thought that nothing was happening—we felt stranded in a fog of problems that blocked us from making our way. There were so many jobs half done. Apart from it being a very hostile site, we lacked the money to complete some work. We did not seem to be able to get ahead of the deterioration and rust problems. But after about two and a half years things started to come together a little better and we could see our course set. The journey has been a long and hard one—it is not yet over—but we know we are now on track and can look back on some major achievements.

LES BAIL IS THE MANAGER OF WHALEWORLD MUSEUM

In the past four years Whaleworld has increased its attendance from 68,000 to 75,000 and is on target to exceed this again in 2000. Time spent on site by visitors has increased on average from 20 minutes to 2.5 hours. School and students visits have increased by 100 per cent. Whaleworld now supports a staff of six full-time, seven part-time and a roster of five volunteers over seven days on the Cheynes IV.

TO GROW **and** grow

If a frisson is a shiver or a thrill, then the title for this year's Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial embodies the growth of a textile biennial from a small regional exhibition to its current multi-state tour. Michael Rolfe takes up the story.

Macrame never meant so much! And probably never will. Through the 1960s and 1970s the Tamworth Art and Craft Society organised an annual exhibition where local artists and craft workers combined with others from further afield to compete in what could be described as a traditional community/municipal competition.

From these humble beginnings grew one of Australia's most significant regional visual arts craft events, the Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial. In 1975, following criticism of the diverse and dull content of the

existing annual exhibition, organisers decided to focus on fibre and textiles.

Tamworth City Gallery, which was founded in 1919 with a bequest of 100 artworks from the collection of artist John Salvana, became the venue for the fibre biennial in 1980. This development coincided with the appointment of the gallery's first professional director and a decision that the gallery specialise in the interpretation, development and collection of fibre/textile.

From my own perspective, as a former director of Tamworth City Gallery, the fibre/textile biennial provided an opportunity to work both nationally and locally—from within a cautious and conservative community context, and all that that entails—achieving widespread recognition for the contribution being made. Professionally it was exciting to work on a project as complex and compelling.

The year 2000 marks a 25-year continuum for the biennial and 20-year association with Tamworth City Gallery. In that time criticism, debate and controversy have raged, both at the local 'parochial' and national 'art versus craft' level. The show has toured extensively and since 1996 the gallery has received funding to invite a curator to widen the contemporary scope of the biennial and, according to Brian Langer, the current director, 'extend its potential to intersect with contemporary cultural debate'.

The missing link is a new venue to house an ever-expanding fibre/textile collection that now comprises more than some 100 works. Tamworth City Council, whilst providing substantial resources to allow the project to grow, has not grasped the nettle and understood the necessity to build a new gallery for the city and its nationally prominent

collection. Such a development is inevitable, but unfortunately to this point in time decision-making and vision to that effect is lacking.

The 14th Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial, titled *frisson*, includes the work of 27 artists from all over Australia. Invited curator Gillian McCracken carried out an extensive selection process travelling to all states and territories, meeting over 60 artists. Following Tamworth the exhibition embarks on a multi-state tour through to the end of 2002...catch it if you can.

MICHAEL ROLFE IS THE DIRECTOR/MANAGER OF THE HAZELHURST REGIONAL GALLERY AND ARTS CENTRE, GYMEA, SYDNEY

Frisson, 14th Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial, Tamworth City Gallery until November 12, touring from January 2001 to Ararat, Northern Territory, Adelaide, Bathurst, Noosa, Grafton, Manly and Toowoomba

For more information contact Tamworth City Gallery (02) 6755 4459

a passion FOR PRODUCTION

At the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre they are building the social capital of the region they represent in order to create a better place to live. Lisa Havilah explains.

Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre is a converted 1950s powerstation that is located on the banks of the Georges River three kilometres south of Liverpool, the fastest growing city in Australia and we produce 95 per cent of our cultural product. It is developed from ideas and issues that are generated from out of our community. Local issues carry a strong global resonance and because of this understanding we don't view it as a particularly ambitious quest to have Western Sydney as a leader in the presentation of contemporary art and culture.

Through the research and presentation of over 100 exhibitions and events a year, art has a direct applicability to both our community and our environment. Casula's fast moving program runs to the very core of our strategic plan: 'to create a better place to live'.

How can the production of culture create a better place to live? It is an aim that may seem overly simplistic, but the Casula Powerhouse believes that it is the responsibility of cultural organisations to build the social capital of the region they represent. It means that we need to be responsive to change, be open to questioning and value assessment.

The definitions and explorations of what binds us together is something that is explored in its most concentrated form within

our Residency Program. This program draws together local, national and international artists, places them within a supportive environment, in order to give them the freedom to experiment with new work while engaging in dialogue that opens new fields of experience. This mutual exchange forges a unique kind of human contract.

Our passion for place extends into our natural environment, with the implementation of environmental projects such as the revegetation of 10 kilometres of the banks of the Georges River from Liverpool to Casula. A critical element of this project is the construction of a Weaving Garden, which will halt the drainage problems from the suburb of Casula into the Georges River by creating a wetland area. The native plants will be used for cultural production by Indigenous and Pacific Islander communities within the region.

Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre is constantly rethinking the notion of place through the things that we produce. If we can produce positive experiences for people to assess themselves and their place within the world, if we can support and encourage our communities to communicate and produce the things that fulfill them, we have contributed to the development of contemporary cultural practice within Australia.

LISA HAVILAH IS THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CASULA POWERHOUSE ARTS CENTRE

struck BY LIGHT

From early on Gael Newton has been besotted with photography. Here she reveals what it is that draws her to this medium: its aesthetic force, vitality and edge.

Laying out *Life* magazines in an exhibition recently I had a flashback to the 1960s and the art room at Manly Girls' High. Then we used to cut up copies of the magazine for source material to illustrate texture, pattern and figure studies for our real-art artworks. The disrespect is not surprising—in those days photography was seen as a tool, not an art; only libraries and museums collected photographs and then as illustrative material. Photography was only rarely and temporarily allowed into Australian art gallery displays.

A few years later in art history at Sydney University, photography warranted one lecture on its use by painters. It wasn't until art school in Auckland in the early 1970s that photography was on the agenda. Suddenly it was appearing everywhere as legitimate culture. I had hardly even taken a photograph before then but the passion of the teachers—usually older ex-professional photographers—was compelling. In comparison with the 'expressive artists' persona these teachers were engaged with the world.

Photographic art seemed marvellous to me and its images so unlike anything in the 'fine' arts. So the medium became a cause and a career as it did for so many converts in the 1970s photoboom. We somehow thought the medium was still to be formed as an art but this notion was quickly disproved by a flood of publications in the 1980s—books, magazines, exhibitions and research-and-rescue historical studies—that



revealed its rich yet barely-known history. For me it was the start of a great love affair: I was besotted.

For some three decades then we had fun with photography. But there is also a more serious question to ask, namely: how has the culture as a whole been affected by the changed status of the medium? Surely what the new appreciation of photography in the late twentieth century has achieved is about inclusion and

diversity, of not just what is art, but the nature of creativity itself in a technological society.

What I like about photographs, ultimately, is the aesthetic force that can be found in all genres down to the most crude vernacular forms of snapshots, tin type portraits and the like. It is also the richness of the experience of a huge array of representation and print qualities; the ideological wars between straight, documentary

photography versus pure art exponents; black and white versus colour; and the extravagance and technical majesty of commercial work.

Photography still draws much of its vitality from its engagement in representation and propaganda as the illustrative medium of the twentieth century and beyond and like the lotus has its flowers above the water but its roots in mud. I particularly enjoy the edge in photography arising from the process of creation when it seems the photographer is not doing much more than wandering around trying to fit a tiny rectangular frame around bits of the world.

Photographs are chemical equations: they can't be separated back into their component elements. They can be laboured and deliberate, or erupt in a moment as in Wayne Luddy's 1993 photograph of footballer Neil 'Nicky' Winmar pulling up his vest to point out his pride in his black skin in response to taunts from the crowd. An icon being born.

Gael Newton is Senior Curator of Photography at The National Gallery of Australia

'Proud to be Black' 1993 by Wayne Luddy, born Australia 1963
St Kilda team player, Nicky Winmar, pointing with pride to his Aboriginality after hostile comments from Collingwood football club fans at a match in 1993
type c colour photograph printed 2000-10-02; 76.6 x 44.3 cm

Reproduced courtesy of The Age Company, Melbourne

REVIEW PAMELA BELL

WHERE IS THE GLORY?

1000 Years of the Olympic Games: Treasures from Ancient Greece, organised and lent by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Athens, on display at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

In this technological age, it is appropriate that a millennial Olympic games exhibition devotes about half its space to virtual reality. But the core remains the display of objects. The theme of *1000 Years of the Olympic Games* is 'extraordinary objects [which] reflect the ritual and glory of the Games'. Passing from the introductory foyer, one arrives in a long, imposing hall, with small rooms opening off it. Most of the objects are small, but admittedly 'extraordinary'. Depending on one's viewpoint, they could be seen as jewels in a grand setting, or small objects swamped by their environment.

Many are votive and grave offerings, showing gratitude to the gods or commemorating the life of an athlete, thus emphasising the religious aspect of the early Games. While this is explained in introductory wall panels, it is surprising to see so many throughout the entire exhibition. Such objects reflect the ritual of the Games, but

where is the glory? Not an olive wreath in sight!

Some of the most engaging displays combine material, such as the small statuette of a weight lifter displayed with a real pair of weights and a small boxer figure displayed with a large statue fragment of a boxer's bound arm. Linking objects effectively enhances understanding through concentration on particular details.

Initially it appears that there are not enough objects to support the overall theme. Perhaps this is because they are so small. A more analytical view suggests that the display techniques do not make the most of them. Objects such as small bronzes are displayed in vitrines, set out some 20 centimetres from the wall; being decorated on all sides, the display inhibits all-round viewing. Similarly, many of the wine cups are placed too low to see both interior and exterior decoration. Many labels placed at hip height are difficult to read.

Three large rooms are devoted to virtual reality, including a grand recreation of Olympia and a giant statue of Zeus. The virtual reality component complements the realia by situating the Games in a 'real' environment, enhanced by occasional, viewer-selected panoramas of the ruins of present-day Olympia. The 3D



revolving statue is impressive, but there is no comparison to indicate its immense scale.

A close reading of *1000 Years of the Olympic Games* highlights differences between the archaic conventions of the original Olympic Games and their modern counterpart. It provokes thoughtful assessment of the meaning of the Sydney Games. Were the original Games more (or less) ferocious than the modern version? Did they rely entirely on the religious component? What might be today's expression of such ritual purposes? But the exhibition doesn't ask or answer such questions. Perhaps the

organisers sought rather to link the Sydney Games with Athens as an opener for the 2004 Olympic games to be held in Greece.

PAMELA BELL IS A SYDNEY ART CONSULTANT AND VALUER AND WAS THE FIRST CURATOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY ART COLLECTION

Olympia ex Clay oil container (kekythos), depicting a long jumper, of Athenian manufacture, 475-470 BC. From *1000 years of the Olympic Games: Treasures of ancient Greece*, Powerhouse Museum, until November 15

Reproduced courtesy of the Powerhouse Museum

PUBLICATIONS

BE PREPARED FOR DISASTER

When we think of disasters, we tend to imagine large and catastrophic events, like earthquakes, floods or plagues of locusts. In reality, disasters

come in all shapes and sizes and can wreak as much havoc as those 'sent from the heavens'.

Sound disaster preparedness asks the hard questions. What poses a risk? What can we control and what is out of our hands? What will the staff do in these situations? How well these questions are

answered determines how well the museum will cope when disaster strikes.

The Heritage Collections Council has put together an informative, practical document designed specifically to help small or under-resourced museums equip themselves for a disaster.

Be prepared: Guidelines for small museums for writing a disaster preparedness plan is free of charge and can be ordered from the Heritage Collections Council Secretariat, DCITA, GPO Box 2154, Canberra ACT 2601. It is also available online at www.AMOL.org.au

A KNOCK-OUT SHOW

Side by side, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth



J.P. Russell, *L'Aiguille, Soleil d'hiver, Belle-Ile 1903*, The Wesfarmers Collection, Perth

Reproduced courtesy of Art Gallery of Western Australia

Unsurprisingly, I entered *Side by side* with an eye for comparisons. Here were juxtaposing works from key Perth private collections such as Wesfarmers, Stokes and Holmes á Court with those from the Art Gallery of Western Australia, and at the foremost of my mind was whether it would reveal any markedly different collecting strategies between the types of 'institutions'. However, after 10 minutes of scanning the wall plaques for indications of provenance I gave up—there was no point. Aside from preventing me sinking into this knock-out show (with a contemporary Indigenous section to die for), as far as I could see there is no

discernible difference. It absolutely isn't the case that AGWA has the iconic and most adventurous pieces, while the private collections offer up the trimmings. In this regard, I am extremely impressed by Wesfarmers, especially their powerful Gordon Bennett's, like *Flatland 03* (headed by John Stringer, the 'cutting-edge cred' of Stokes' work was never in doubt).

This noted (and despite the PR spiel put out by the gallery), *Side by side* is about much more than showing off prize works. Instead, thanks to an incredibly deft hang, it is about re-connecting us with the adventure of gallery-going. What a treat it is to take a gander at Dan Flavin's flouro-

tube minimalism and then turn a corner to stumble across James Angus's life-size pink giraffe frozen in mid-stride, or to suddenly find oneself perching on Juan Davila's delicious 'Stupid as a painter' from the Stokes' collection. Having lost none of its power, the latter work is still charged with an erotic frisson and perverse cultural-boundary-leaping humour.

Even more rewarding were the more subtle artistic conversations between artists from different locales. For Perth audiences, one of the most fascinating should be the placement of senior WA artist Howard Taylor's serene, pared back meditations on nature alongside Fred Williams's

surprisingly expressionistic *Stump* series. It reveals Taylor to be more like an antipodean Ernst than the Nash disciple we'd previously considered him. In this vein, the presentation of Taylor's curved black wooden wall piece next to Agnes Martin's magnificent painting 'Night harbour' cast his work in yet another light, allowing us to think it only natural that he's a part of the geometric abstractionists' camp.

In these and countless other perfectly pitched match-ups (Balson and Nicholson for example), the rule book is thrown out the window. Cutting a swathe through the tedious certainties of art history, it is all up for re-writing. Above and beyond the dubious pleasure of scoping some 'never seen before' booty, *Side by side* is an object lesson in the intellectual power of a good hang to generate fresh responses to art we once thought we'd got a safe handle on. Can't ask for more than that.

DR ROBERT COOK IS CURATOR OF WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ART AT THE LAWRENCE WILSON ART GALLERY, UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, AND AN ARTS JOURNALIST AT *THE WEST AUSTRALIAN*

BASKING IN ALCHEMY

During May and June this year I was fortunate to be able to participate in *Alchemy*, an international masterclass for artists and curators working with new technologies, organised by the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT) in partnership with the newly opened Brisbane Powerhouse, Centre for the Live Arts.

Alchemy offered an opportunity to work closely with artists and curators from around the world, in an environment conducive to experimentation, information exchange and friendship.

Daily tutorials in both technical and theoretical aspects of new media art production, presentations by visiting artists and tutors, and an ongoing exchange of art work and other investigations were all key components of the masterclass. Each week of the six-week masterclass focused on a different aspect of new media art practice, including art and science, Indigenous issues, curatorial practice and a digital region (the Asia Pacific).

To provide a working structure for collaboration and extend ideas within and beyond the masterclass, the participants decided to use a map of the Powerhouse as a site for conceptual and physical projects. The dominant architectural aspects of the Powerhouse and its location on the banks of the Brisbane River stimulated the awareness of social and political responsibilities expressed by many of the *Alchemy* participants. The river was previously a food source for Australian Indigenous people, sections of mangroves still exist in small

pockets along the edges of the imposing industrial structure, reminding us of gentler days when turtle hunting and other food gathering activities took place there. Past and present site-related aspects, as well as those drawn from wider sources and experiences, informed the diverse art works developed within the critical production site. The combined



Left: Brisbane Powerhouse, Centre for the Live Arts

Site for the many arts projects developed by participants at the *Alchemy* international masterclass for new media artists and curators, Brisbane, May – June 2000

Above: *Alchemy* artists at work
Photographs courtesy of Mae Adams



'alchemy' of the participants provided a rich source of thought-provoking material, resulting in imaginative conceptual works created for the *Alchemy* web site.

Personally speaking, the opportunity to take time out from daily responsibilities to concentrate on expanding ideas with others was greatly appreciated, as was the international focus of the program. Participating in *Alchemy* was exhilarating and challenging. Environments that are conducive to exploration and creative production are often overshadowed given the pace

of today's world, so it was refreshing and invigorating to be able to spend time basking in one.

MAE ADAMS, VISUAL ARTIST AND EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOR NATIONAL EXHIBITIONS TOURING SUPPORT VICTORIA

ALL ABOUT ANAT

ANAT is Australia's peak network and advocacy body for artists working with science and technology. It is a national organisation, formed in 1988 and housed at the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide. Our programs include developing a national

database, providing training, coordinating critical programs, maintaining a web site of artists' projects and establishing networks and partnerships across the arts, government, industry and the corporate sector. The near future will see ANAT seeking new partnerships. We will be developing our international residency and exchange program, to ensure a lively cross-fertilisation of ideas and techniques between artists from diverse backgrounds. It is an exciting time for ANAT, as we continue to provide research and development opportunities, ensuring that Australian artists remain at the forefront of the art and technology field.

JULIANNE PIERCE IS THE NEWLY APPOINTED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ANAT. SHE WAS AWARDED A MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA TRAVEL GRANT IN 1998 TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH INTO EUROPEAN NEW MEDIA CENTRES

Visit the ANAT web site for more at www.anat.org.au

GST AND YOU

Bean counters across Australia have adopted a new mantra to ward off mistakes—'It's not just a new tax, it's a new tax system'—but even while I chant I still keep thinking that maybe I've missed some of the finer points of this new system. I admit that I have not studied the swag of books and videos that I have received as these currently fill a whole drawer of a filing cabinet.

By October 21 every individual or organisation registered for the GST should have returned a Business Activity Statement or BAS to the Tax Office.



Did you do it? What was it like?

I have already completed two BAS forms because Museums Australia remits monthly, and there's nothing like filling out a cheque to the ATO to make you double-check your figures.

It's not simple and there are a few things to watch out for.

- Have you charged GST for everything you should have?
- If your organisation is a registered charity, some services you supply may not need to have GST applied. These supplies must be provided at less than 75 per cent of the market value. But how do you determine the market value? I have some guidelines from the ATO on this. Look on the MA web site under 'hot topics'.
- Did all of your suppliers quote ABNs?
- Did they all charge 10 per cent GST or did they charge less or even no GST?
- Did you compensate anyone for expenses that they incurred on behalf of your organisation (eg petty cash items) and could you tell if there was a GST component when they paid?
- Have you paid invoices since July 1 that were actually for goods or services provided to you prior to July 1?

Good luck, I hope this goes past you like the millennium bug did.

COMPILED BY NEIL TAYLOR FOR MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA

COMMONWEALTH CULTURAL GRANTS

Financial assistance for touring exhibitions

Visions of Australia makes the nation's collection of scientific, heritage, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and artistic material accessible to more Australians. It provides funding to develop or tour cultural exhibitions.

Start-up assistance is also available to assist small cultural organisations based outside capital cities to develop touring exhibition proposals.

Applications are sought from museums, art galleries, science and cultural centres and agencies for projects which will commence from 1 July 2001.

Applications are due Friday 9 February 2001

Program guidelines and application forms may be obtained from:

Tel: 02 6271 1628 Fax: 02 6271 1697

Email: visions.australia@dcita.gov.au

Website: www.dcita.gov.au/visions.html



ABOUT US

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2001 NATIONAL CONFERENCE APRIL 22-26

THE THEME OF THE 2001 NATIONAL CONFERENCE IS 'NATIONAL COLLECTIONS, NATIONAL CULTURES?'. IT IS DESIGNED TO ENABLE EXPLORATION OF THE ROLE MUSEUMS HAVE PLAYED AND CONTINUE TO PLAY IN CONTRIBUTING TO AND CHALLENGING NOTIONS AND MYTHS OF NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL IDENTITY.

A number of timely events give the conference particular opportunities to explore this theme: the location of the conference in Canberra, the presence of ANZAC Day in the middle of the conference, 2001 being the Centenary of Federation and the fact that by April 2001 the impact of the Olympics on Australia's perceptions of itself will have been played out. Some of the topics to be explored are:

- how have national, regional and local museum collections and programs enhanced or interrogated notions and myths of identity?
- how has Federation contributed to the fortunes of the museum community?
- how is the concept of a 'distributed national collection' working?

As well as working within this thematic framework, the conference will give time to contemporary or 'hot' issues affecting the museum world at the beginning of this century.

For more details visit the Museums Australia web site. Contact Mark Whitmore, ACT President at mark.whitmore@awm.gov.au or Louise Douglas at l.douglas@nma.gov.au

MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2001

Call for nominations

Under the Constitution and Rules of Museums Australia Incorporated, nominations of candidates are being called for positions on the Museums Australia National Council.

Nominations must be in writing on the Nomination Form and be received at the Museums Australia National Office by **Friday 5 January 2001**. Councillors are elected for a term of two years.

Positions vacant: officers bearers of president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer; eight ordinary members made up of at least six members who are nominated by Special Interest Groups; and up to two other members.

For more details see the insert in this edition of *Museum National*.

Visit Museums Australia online.



Visit us at
www.museumsaustralia.org.au

MUSEUM NATIONAL EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

With the move of *Museum National* to Canberra, and the accessibility of email and teleconferencing, the Editorial Advisory Committee for this magazine has welcomed several new members since August. The committee's membership is structured in accordance with guidelines that were recently revised, prior to approval by the National Council. Museums Australia thanks past and current members of the committee for their contributions, and acknowledges the various employer organisations that enable their staff to participate in the development of our magazine.

The current committee

Margaret Birtley is the Coordinator of the Museum Studies program at Deakin University. She was co-opted to the Museums Australia Council last year, and is also active within the 'Training of Personnel' committee of ICOM. Margaret is the Convenor of the Editorial Advisory Committee.
mbirtley@deakin.edu.au

Anne Kirker is Curator of Prints, Drawings and Photographs at the Queensland Art Gallery, a post she has held since 1988. Previously Anne held similar art curator positions in New Zealand.
anne.kirker@qag.qld.gov

Ian McShane was Curator of History at the National Museum of Australia for 10 years. He now works as a Melbourne-based consultant.
i.mcshane@eisa.net.au

Doreen Mellor is an Indigenous Australian and the Project Manager for the Bringing Them Home oral history project at the National Library of Australia. Prior to moving to Canberra, she was the Director of Flinders University Art Museum.
dmellor@nla.gov.au

Robyn Sloggett is Deputy Director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art and the Chief Conservator at the Ian Potter Conservation Centre, The University of Melbourne. She is a past-president of the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material, and has undertaken a variety of consultancies in the Asia-Pacific region.
r.sloggett@art-museum.unimelb.edu.au

Kevin Sumption is Curator of Information Technology at the Powerhouse Museum, as well as national project manager for Australian Museums on Line (AMOL). In his spare time he lectures in Design Theory and History at the University of Technology, Sydney.
kevins@dphm.gov.au

Ian Watts is the Chair of Museums Australia Education Special Interest Group; Manager, Visitor Services, Gold Treasury Museum; and Education Officer, Post Master Gallery.
ian.watts@auspost.com.au

Linda Young is an historian by discipline and a curator by trade. She currently teaches aspects of Cultural Heritage Management at the University of Canberra. Linda is the honorary Reviews Editor for *Museum National*.
young@scides.canberra.edu.au

Department of Museum Studies

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- assessment by coursework and dissertation
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Applications considered for April and October intakes.



University of Leicester

GRADUATE STUDIES

Call us today

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museum.studies@le.ac.uk

Website:
http://www.le.ac.uk/
museumstudies/

FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Museum National

- **February**
Defining the museum: historical issues and new initiatives
- **May**
Champions and stakeholders: building community with museums
- **August**
Museums and the nation

Contribute to *Museum National*.

Write, fax, email.

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THE DIGITAL AGENDA AND MUSEUMS

The *Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Bill 1999* was passed relatively swiftly, given the sweeping technological change it aims to regulate. It began as an exposure draft in February 1999, passed through the House of Representatives within twelve months (including public hearings and a Parliamentary Committee report) and was passed by the Senate on August 17, 2000, having undergone detailed amendment in the process. The Act arises out of the explosion in Internet-based communications and the Government perceives creators and copyright owners believe they lack effective means of redress or remuneration for digital use of their copyright material.

'Technology-neutral' right of communication to the public

The 'centrepiece' is said to be a new technology-neutral right of communication to the public, which is defined as making available online or to electronically transmit. The right does not seek to affect existing physical distribution of hard copy formats. The rights of broadcast and transmission to subscribers to a diffusion service have been compressed into this one right of transmission to the public. And the definition of 'to the public' has been amended to make it clear 'the public' may both be within and outside Australia. So Australian copyright owners can control communication of material from Australia to overseas audiences.

Acts not constituting infringement

As well as clarified rights and additional remedies for copyright creators and owners, the Act provides new exceptions for users. This extended set of fair dealing exceptions, says the Government, is intended to allow similar use of transmissions and receptions in the digital environment to those offered for print material.

The problem of exceptions has been contentious, not least because of the complex history of the relationship between creators, publishers and users. Both publishers and users in educational environments have the troubled history of photocopiers, cassette recorders and VCRs to remind them entire sub-industries can arise from such exceptions to copyright owners' exclusive rights. These exceptions have been enshrined as desirable public policy exceptions since the *Berne Convention* of 1888. Even at the last moment, the

Bill was amended in the Senate to avoid an authorised digitisation for a permitted purpose perhaps allowing uninterrupted replication throughout cyberspace. And as part of a package of compensation, the Government announced the allocation of a further \$38 million to be distributed to publishers and authors through the Educational Lending Right Scheme as a complement to the Public Lending Right Scheme.

One of the hard-fought issues has been whether or not to extend the definition of 'archive' to museums and art galleries. The existing legislation, in effect, limited 'archives' to particular kinds of library. The new definition extends the definition to museums and galleries, but not private or 'for profit' institutions.

Another feature is that a museum which copies a copyright work for preservation or archival purposes will not infringe new rights of first digitisation. But

the museum's use of that digitised image is restricted. In particular, the image may not be displayed to the public unless the original is too fragile to be exhibited. The Government has sought to achieve balance between the digital image's convenience and the fact that publicly displaying the image is tantamount to publishing copies. Should museums and galleries wish to display digitised images of copyright material, they will need to clear those rights through copyright collecting societies. To this end, the delayed commencement of the Act is intended to allow relevant bodies to negotiate rates of remuneration through the Copyright Tribunal.

DR MARK WILLIAMS IS A PARTNER, LOGIE-SMITH LANYON, LAWYERS

NOTE: The information contained in this article is of a general nature and is not intended to be relied upon in any manner. The law is current as at August 17, 2000.



NOTICEBOARD

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Visual Arts and Crafts

VACSIG is launching into the new millennium with a range of carefully targeted events and initiatives, intended to fit snugly into our members' already very busy and 'information rich' lives.

One of the ways we intend to do this is via our newly setup and very timely 'VACSIG Chatsite' which has been trialled successfully by the committee over recent months to make this site accessible and easy to set up on your home or workplace computer. From now on, all currently paid-up SIG members will be automatically entitled to FREE REGISTRATION on the site. We would like members to think of this forum as an online newsletter, helping to facilitate a realistic exchange between individuals around the country.

To subscribe email majordomo@vicnet.net.au
Contact Jane Scott, Monash Gallery of Art: phone (03) 9562 1569, fax (03) 9562 2433, email janes@wgc.vic.gov.au

Maritime

The Maritime SIG is planning to hold its conference at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney, November 10-11, in tandem with a Batavia Dutch East Indies Festival. One day is planned for museum collections management and development issues, and the other for boats, ships and conservation, and 'philosophical discussion'. Contact Daina Fletcher: email daina@anmm.gov.au

Historians

The Historians' conference committee is planning a conference/meeting to coincide with the Museums Australia

conference to be held in Canberra in April 2001. The theme is 'History after Howard'.
Contact Viv Szekeres: fax (08) 8207 7591, email vszekeres@history.sa.gov.au

CONFERENCES AND TRAINING

Australian Copyright Council

November 6-10, Adelaide
Seminars for web site creators, graphic designers and photographers, educational institutions, libraries, government departments and agencies.
Phone (02) 9318 1788, email sales@copyright.org.au or visit www.copyright.org.au

Cyberhate: Bigotry and prejudice on the Internet

November 5-6, Sydney (venue to be announced)
Contact Herbert & Valmae Freilich Foundation, Humanities Research Centre, ANU: phone (02) 6249 5527

Human rights, human wrongs: Bigotry, government and social change in Australia 1950-2000

November 10-12, Humanities Research Centre
Contact: phone (02) 6249 5527

Museums Australia 2001 national conference

April 22-26, 2001, Canberra
The theme of the 2001 national conference is 'National collections, national cultures?'
For more details visit the Museums Australia web site.
Contact Mark Whitmore, mark.whitmore@awm.gov.au or Louise Douglas, l.douglas@nma.gov.au

First Australian regional galleries summit

April, 2001
Contact Martin Thiele, Global Arts Project/Public Galleries Association of Victoria: phone (03) 9534 6508, email gap@gap.net.au

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

2001: A pest odyssey

October 2001, London
Contact Helen Kingsley: email h.kingsley@nmsi.ac.uk

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Getty Leadership Institute course

June 10-29, 2001, Berkeley, California
Applications are now available for the MMI (Museum Management Institute) three-week residential course, offered by the Getty Leadership Institute, focusing on leadership and strategic thinking for museum directors and senior executives.
Applications are due by December 15, 2000. Admission is competitive. The program fee is \$3300, and scholarships are available. Course materials, housing, and most meals are provided.
Contact Getty Leadership Institute to receive complete details and the required application form.
Email (preferred) at mmi@getty.edu, phone (310) 440-6300, or fax, (310) 440-7765

Leadership seminar

November 3, 3-4:30pm, Deakin University, Room LT10, Building L (M)
Hear Dr. Sherene Suchy, Honorary Fellow, School of

Australian and International Studies, present an overview on the first international INTERCOM (ICOM) conference on museum management/leadership (Ottawa, September).
Contact Margaret Birtley: mbirtley@deakin.edu.au

OPPORTUNITIES

Victorian Community History Awards 2001

Entries close February 23, 2001
Developing awareness of community history across all Victoria
Subject matter limited to history within the State of Victoria.
Contact Information Victoria: www.information.vic.gov.au

Visit Museums Australia's web site for updates and news at www.museumaustralia.org.au

***While due care is taken in compiling Noticeboard, notification of changes to details and programming remains the responsibility of organisations and contributors.**

FROM THE EDITOR

In May *Museum National* was given a new look and revamped and I am pleased to say that the magazine has contributed greatly to a substantial growth in the organisation. During 2000 the membership of MA increased significantly.

This edition will, however, be my last one as editor. Given this I want to take the opportunity of saying how much I have enjoyed working with Museums Australia and the museum and gallery sector over the year. I hope and trust that *Museum National* will continue to go from strength to strength. I wish it well and all who are involved in its future.

Francesca Rendle-Short

NOT THE BIBLE!

The manual of museum planning

edited by Gail Dexter Lord and Barry Lord, 2nd ed., London, The Stationery Office, 1999

How many museum professionals find ourselves in the enviable position of being involved in the planning of a new museum from start to opening? Probably very few, but we are all expected to plan effectively and efficiently to review, manage, improve and/or extend our museums. A book that comprehensively presents most of the key issues, and more importantly, extols the virtues of planning per se, should be a useful reference tool for any self-respecting museum professional. Is this the tool?

Lord and Lord, consultant museum planners and editors of the *Manual*, note that a conventional approach to planning is to call in the architect. Their premise is that museum planning is not purely architecture, design, marketing or management but a combination of all four disciplines. They believe that it is the role of the specialist museum planner to draw all four together, whether in-house or consultant. It has been my experience that the interaction of the key stakeholders—taking account of expert input, and kept on track by judicious project management—achieves the desired outcomes. In my opinion, the museum planner is part of this team, but not the lynch pin.

How useful is the *Manual* as a planning reference tool? The key lies in Section 1.7, which provides a series of useful figures describing the central elements of museum planning, the critical players



and the planning process itself. This summary is comprehensive, though explanation of the dynamic nature of the process would enhance it.

The *Manual* discusses museum planning in three sections; contributors come from an impressive range of museum and business backgrounds.

Section 1, 'Planning for people,' presents familiar issues including evaluation, institutional planning and community needs. Of significant practical use are the chapters on market and financial feasibility and visitors with special needs. Each chapter wisely cautions the need for realism and for seeking further specialist information.

One intention for the section 'Planning for collections' is to provide highly specialised technical information for the non-specialist. This is mostly achieved. The significance of taking a preventive conservation focus in planning is articulated clearly. The sketchy discussion on exhibition development, however, presents a singular view on process, though a worthwhile introduction to new media and technologies.

The final section, 'Planning for construction,' includes areas that are less familiar to many museum professionals. For this reason it may be the

most worthwhile. Ignoring references to UK standards, the chapters on cost control and project management are sound and quite comprehensive introductions. It would be interesting to see some discussion of the interaction of the project manager and the specialist museum planner, as I suspect they can be one and the same person. Reference to the importance of independent cost control and issues that arise between architects and others would add more realism.

My conclusion: a useful reference tool, but not the Bible!

HELEN WITHNELL IS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS AT THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon. Bruce Scott MP, inspecting progress on the Primary Works with the Director Steve Gower and Assistant Director Public Programs, Helen Withnell

Reproduced courtesy of the Australian War Memorial

this reader, and more importantly, how they are framed. As a 'textbook' published by a global publisher like Routledge, I expect it to speak, at the very least, to an English-speaking audience. I am sorry to say that I am disappointed, even though I agree with and like the choices. The problem with the book is in its framing.

Its organisation is quite sensible. The first task for students is to understand how national cultures are invented and maintained, focusing particularly on the use of heritage. The second is to take a historical view, while the third is to understand present day issues. Last, we need to be aware of the contexts of museums and cultural management. The latter links contemporary issues about cultural diversity in museums with a particular school of cultural policy developed at Griffith University, Brisbane, through the work of people like Tony Bennett and Colin Mercer.

Why do I have a problem with *Representing the nation*? Because of the assumptions made by the editors in the framing statements and their affect on the final selection of readings. The first problem is the claim that issues affecting nation formation are the same everywhere. While the book includes case studies from America and Australia (David Goodman on the establishment of the National Museum of Victoria), they don't really consider the history of nation formation outside Europe, more specifically, in

REVIEW ANDREA WITCOMB

A PROBLEM WITH FRAMING

Representing the nation: A reader: histories, heritage and museums

edited by David Boswell and Jessica Evans, Routledge/Open University, London, 2000

As someone who teaches on the relationship between national identity, heritage and public institutions, I am extremely interested to see which essays are selected for

settler colonies like Australia. This is a pity. Tony Bennett's essay 'Out of which past?' would have been a much better selection on the problem of producing representations of national history in Australia, instead of his essay 'Useful culture.'

Another problem is the assumption that the production of heritage values is necessarily a conservative process. This seems to me an insular interpretation of museums, from the British critical perspective on the heritage industry. From an Australian viewpoint, it is in fact Labor governments that have tended to support institutions like museums.

To be a serious contender in Australia *Representing the nation* needs to include at least one other essay dealing with nation formation in a colonial situation. It also needs a few more contemporary case studies rather than trying to establish a link between cultural policy studies and the representation of the nation in museums, important though that may be.

DR ANDREA WITCOMB IS LECTURER IN THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE AT CURTIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, PERTH

REVIEW SUE VALIS

LONG OVERDUE

Care and conservation of natural history collections

by David Carter and Annette K. Walker, Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford, 1999

For anyone working with natural science collections, this book is long overdue. Its aim is to be 'useful to curators and all those responsible for the care of natural history collections'. For this reason

there is a strong focus on taxidermy and preparation techniques for specimens and on collection management aspects of this discipline.

The authors define conservation to mean 'preventive conservation' rather than remedial or treatment conservation and, as a consequence, individual chapters are devoted to the collection environment, pest management and disaster planning.

The book covers each of the main collection areas but does not deal with mineralogy and

interesting chapter is devoted to DNA and methods of preventing the degradation of genetic material.

Each section of the book has its own useful, and in some cases quite comprehensive, reference list. It is great to see so many publications of the last 10 years.

Two issues briefly touched on deserve further exploration. First is the lack of interaction between various museum professionals, particularly between the taxidermist/preparator and the conservator.

parameters need to be established.

Second is the difference in approach to the conservation of natural science collections, as distinct from archaeological, historic or ethnographic collections. The book is right on the ethics of conservation and promotes best conservation practice. However, there is a need for more evaluation of the types of treatments undertaken on natural science collections, on the degree of intervention of these treatments and on the repercussion of treatments on the scientific value of specimens.

From a conservator's point of view, working on natural science material is still a large unknown and it may be a mistake to grasp at the word 'conservation' in the title of this book in the hope of finding information on specific treatments. Very little is mentioned on appropriate treatment methods and materials. It may be that much treatment information still needs to be collated, written and published. Certainly there is a need for a sequel publication on the conservation treatment of natural science collections in the near future.

SUE VALIS, OF THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, IS ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S FEW CONSERVATORS SPECIALISING IN NATURAL SCIENCE SPECIMENS

Natural science conservator, Sue Valis, at work

Reproduced courtesy of the Australian Museum



palaeontology, these having been covered in two Butterworth publications in the same series. Adequate detail is given to mounting systems, labelling, handling, packaging of loans and storage, with particular emphasis on documentation practices. An

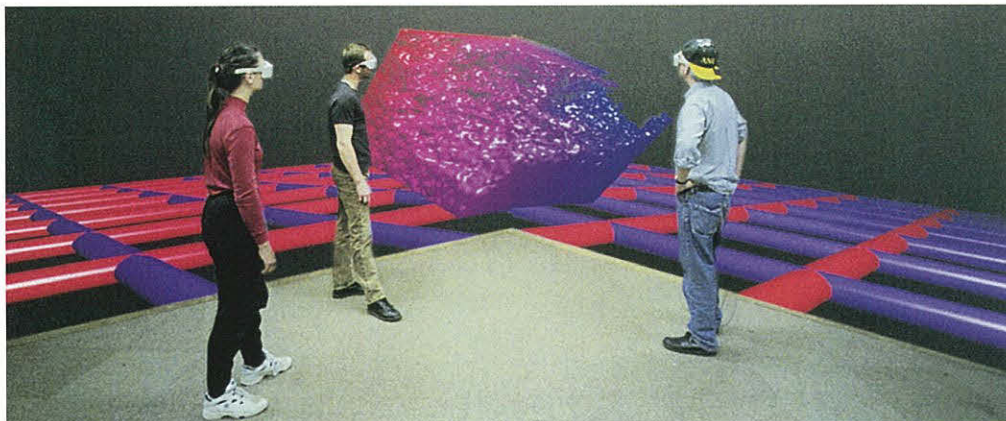
What are the roles and ethical considerations of each of these professionals? Where is the overlap in their work? What are the compromises in their treatments? As more conservators engage in the treatment of natural science specimens, clearer work

AND ANOTHER THING ...

AWARDS KEVIN SUMPTION

POWERHOUSE MUSEUM RECEIVES THE DIBNER

The Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) recently met in Munich for its annual awards ceremony. The Powerhouse Museum was presented with the Dibner award for the exhibition *Universal machine: Computers and connections* (discussed in the technologies feature of the August edition of *Museum National*). The Dibner award was established in 1985 and is named after the distinguished US historian and engineer Bern Dibner. SHOT presents the award annually for exhibits that excel in their interpretation of the history of technology, industry and engineering. Recent winners include the Museum of



Science and Industry, Manchester's Fibres, Fabrics and Fashion; National Science Center Delhi, India and the New York Transit Museum's *Steel, stone and backbone: Building New York's subways 1900–1925*.

A citation from Dr Lucy Taksa (School of Industrial Relations and Organisational Behaviour, UNSW), praised the exhibition 'because it

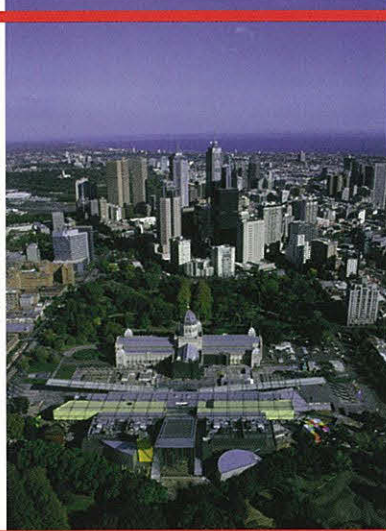
emphasises people rather than machines, incorporates historical and cultural processes, and has something to say to a broad range of audiences in a critical, thoughtful way'.

For more information visit www.phm.gov.au/universal/ or www.press.jhu.edu/associations/shot/

KEVIN SUMPTION IS THE CURATOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AT THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM AND NATIONAL PROJECT MANAGER OF AMOL

The Wedge, a virtual reality theatre developed at the Australian national University for the exhibition *Universal machine* at the Powerhouse Museum

Reproduced courtesy of the Powerhouse Museum



MELBOURNE MUSEUM IN STAGES

Melbourne Museum finally opened its doors to the public in late October in what was called a 'Stage One Launch' (the museum was due to open in July). According to publicity it was always planned that the museum would be opened in stages as new gallery attractions developed. Further exhibitions of the museum still to come are the Forest Gallery and the Children's Museum's Big Box Gallery in late 2000, in early 2001 Human Mind and Body and Science and Life Arcade and then in autumn 2001 the Evolution Gallery.

Nestled within the Carlton Gardens, Melbourne Museum and its neighbour, the Royal Exhibition Building, are a short walk from the city's main business district.

Reproduced courtesy of the Melbourne Museum

Photograph by Andrew Chapman

US POSTCARD SARAH ROBINS

DEFINE SUCCESSFUL

The New York Times recently (August 15) opened the Arts Section with an article that discussed the setbacks that have forestalled the opening of the Jewish Museum in Berlin—it is now 11 years since the Libeskind design was approved, three since the

building was completed and yet a newly revised opening date of September 9, 2001 has been announced. Amid concerns that the proposed 'object theatre', also described as 'Disneyland aesthetic', will diminish the seriousness of the institution, Ken Gorbey, formerly of 'Te Papa, New Zealand's

enormously successful national museum in Wellington' has been appointed project director. One wonders exactly what measure of success this reference was based upon.

SARAH ROBINS IS A RESEARCH ASSISTANT AT MOMA

THE NEW-LOOK MUSEUM NATIONAL

What you have been saying...

'*Museum National* is looking great—well done!!'

'I am impressed by how much you pack into 36 very lively pages.'

'Congratulations...it is improving with every issue.'

'It is a real improvement with the colour pages and better layout.'

'The magazine looks terrific and has come ahead in leaps and bounds in terms of content. It's great to read about other initiatives from within the museum sector and not just from the major institutions—the MA is becoming more inclusive and representative of all its members.'

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