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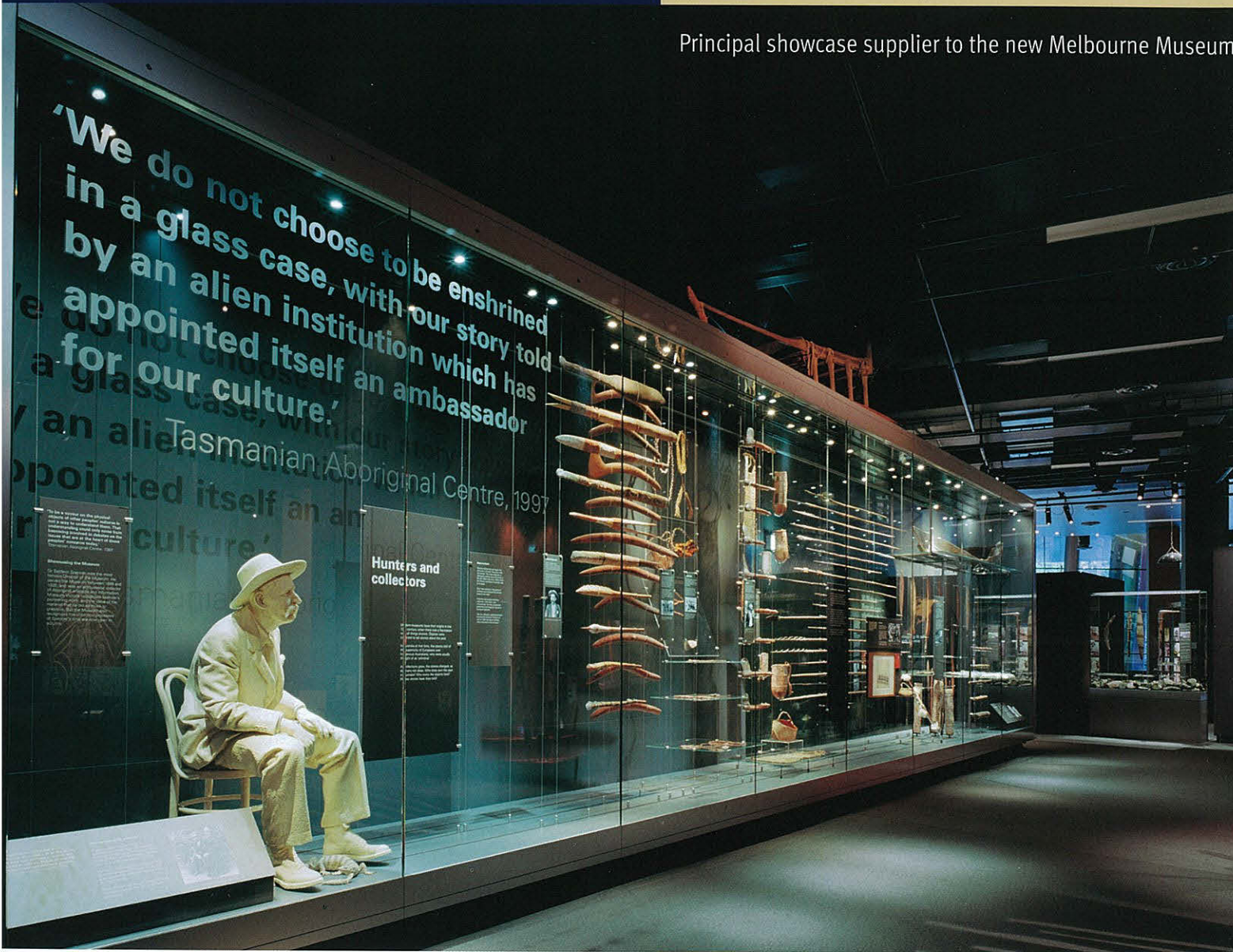
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Contributions from those involved or interested in museums and galleries are welcome.

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Cover: Sculpture from *Magical Golland* by Alison Clouston, stool from Rouse Hill Estate Collection.

Photograph by Jenni Carter
Reproduced courtesy of Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales

WHAT'S ON, WHAT'S COMING



World Without End: Photography and the 20th Century.

World Without End, a survey exhibition of photography in the 20th century now showing at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, is nearing its closing date of 25 February. Sydneysiders and visitors to Sydney interested in photography — and in the experience of living in the century just past — should not miss this exhibition.

World Without End brings together 200 works by acclaimed Australian and international artists whose photographs have shaped our perceptions and our sensibilities of the modern world. It also includes over 80 publications, emphasising the effect of the reproduction and

distribution of images throughout the 20th century.

World Without End is not a comfortable exhibition, but it is a compelling one. The photograph reproduced here, by eminent Australian photographer Frank Hurley, of remnant trees on the battlefield of Chateau Wood in France in 1917, typifies the exhibition's ability to deliver a powerful spiritual and emotional message as well as an aesthetic experience.

INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY JAN BATTEN, PRESS OFFICER, ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Above: Frank Hurley *Remnants of an avenue of trees at the entrance to Chateau Wood 1917* Gelatin silver photograph, sepia toned
 Photograph courtesy of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.
 Reproduced courtesy of Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales



Cook & Omai: The Cult of the South Seas, opens 14 February at the National Library of Australia.

The journey of one man across half the world, from his home in Tahiti to 1770s London and then back again, provides us with a key to understanding the significance of Cook's three Pacific voyages and the cultural milieu in which they took place. That man was Mai, better known in Europe as Omai. He is the subject of the National Library's latest exhibition, *Cook & Omai: The Cult of the South Seas*, developed in association with the Humanities Research Centre

at The Australian National University.

For the European world in which Omai arrived in 1774, the dominion of knowledge was growing daily under the influences of empirical philosophy and the tools of scientific investigation. New ways of understanding and ordering the physical world had created confidence in an ultimately perfectible system of knowledge. But advances in understanding also tended to highlight areas of profound ignorance such as the full extent of the globe's landmasses and, on a more intimate scale, the true lineaments — physical and

THE JOURNEY OF ONE MAN ACROSS HALF THE WORLD, FROM HIS HOME IN TAHITI TO 1770S LONDON AND THEN BACK AGAIN, PROVIDES US WITH A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COOK'S THREE PACIFIC VOYAGES AND THE CULTURAL MILIEU IN WHICH THEY TOOK PLACE.

cultural — of human creation. The ship on which Omai travelled to London was returning from a voyage to the Pacific under James Cook, who had been charged with remedying one of those areas of ignorance by establishing, finally, the existence (or otherwise) of the fabled great southern continent.

They found no such land, disappointing many an armchair geographer and raising the possibility that other assumptions about the world based on received wisdom and deductive reasoning rather than hard evidence might prove equally chimerical. Both Cook's first and second voyages to the Pacific carried scientists and artists to guarantee the quality and reliability of the evidence they brought back. This was not always enough, as Joseph Banks, the naturalist on the first voyage, was to discover when some of his observations — published in Hawkesworth's *Account* — met with considerable public outrage and disbelief.

But why should those who sought to answer some of the

most pressing questions of their age meet with such hostility? The answer lies in part with the Enlightenment's increasingly polarised views as to the virtues of civilisation, and to a destructive contradiction at the core of European attitudes to the peoples of the Pacific (and the non-European world generally). On the one hand, the islanders were seen as examples of the Noble Savage, free and wild beings drawing their laws (and their moral strength) directly from nature, uncorrupted by the vices of civilised life. On the other hand, many Europeans saw the complexity of a society's material culture as an index of its progress.

Omai, conveniently brought before those enquirers into natural history unable to see Tahiti first-hand, would serve as evidence to prove or disprove diametrically opposed theories about the nature of humanity. However he chose to behave, Omai risked disappointing the expectations of at least a part of his audience. His visit was, in fact, a triumph. On 17 July 1774 he

was presented to the King and Queen at Kew, revealing the grace and 'natural' good manners that first astounded and then delighted his audience.

Cook & Omai: The Cult of the South Seas, necessarily presents a very Eurocentric — and therefore partial — vision of the Pacific. What the exhibition can reveal in fascinating depth are the responses of the culture of the Enlightenment, drawing ever closer to the brink of revolution, in the face of new and alien cultures that called into question many of the certainties of their world. In seeking to increase the sum of knowledge by voyaging to the ends of the world, and creating such rich records in response to what they found, 18th century Europe effectively discovers itself to us.

MICHELLE HETHERINGTON IS EXHIBITIONS CURATOR AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

Opposite: Portrait of Omai
Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Australia

MAGICAL GOLLAND

Art and museum objects meet in *Magical Golland*, an exhibition for the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales at Elizabeth Bay House until 20 May 2001. Sculptor and curator Alison Clouston has created a magic world from the real and imagined life of a 19th century child, Kathleen Rouse. She interweaves the natural world of the Australian landscape with objects from Kathleen's domestic life at Rouse Hill House. Newly sculpted pieces, such as this koala on a pincushion and the grass crown on the cover of this issue, seem to give life to inanimate objects from the past.

Photograph by Jenni Carter reproduced courtesy of Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales



QUESTIONS OF LEADERSHIP — PLANNING AHEAD

The first international conference on museum leadership and management, held in Ottawa from 6–9 September 2000, was a credit to the collaborative efforts of the Canadian Museum Association, INTERCOM and ICOM. Participants came from Australia, Canada, USA, the Philippines, Spain, Israel, England, France, Barbados, Bulgaria, South Africa, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway and Portugal.

The conference opened with Stephen Weil, Senior Emeritus Scholar at the Smithsonian Institution, outlining a challenging definition of the 'worthiness of museums' through a standard of measurement focused on ends (impact on the community) rather than means (collections). As one of two Australian representatives invited to participate in the conference, I offered an interactive session exploring new ideas for defining and developing museum leadership for the 21st century. The presentation focused on emotional intelligence, to develop leaders in social capital for success in a market economy. Suggestions were made, based on practical experience, for a new approach to leadership development programs; for example, the use of 360 degree feedback, behavioural change programs targeting key competencies, and on-the-job action learning projects.

Audience discussion included feedback from the director of a museum in Israel, who said they too have just embarked on a senior level development program using emotional intelligence as a framework. Three other museum directors indicated

how pleased they were that someone had finally acknowledged the role that intuition plays in complex decision making. Several people queried whether emotional intelligence leadership competencies could be developed, and reference was made to a new program with a behavioural approach to leadership skills which I designed and which will be offered through the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. (Information available at www.uvcs.uvic.ca/crmp/)

The post-conference two-day workshop on 'Succession Planning and Career Paths to Museum Leadership' involved participants from Canada, Spain and France. We packed too much into the time available. There was consensus that succession planning is a 'big issue', especially in Canada where a large number of retirements are anticipated over the next five years. The French participant was keen to explore frameworks for succession planning. Despite the fact that director appointments are centralised in France, there is still a need to think about more sophisticated Organisational Development/Human Resources practices. The participants from Spain were contending with political appointments which interfered with the whole idea of succession planning, yet they were still keen to develop processes within their own organisations. Both participants were directors who were aware of the need to develop leadership around them.

One of the Canadian participants was reluctant to abandon the idea that curatorial experience is

THERE WAS A SUGGESTION THAT SUCCESSION PLANNING WORKSHOPS BE POSITIONED AT THE BEGINNING OF MUSEUM CONFERENCES AS A CRITICAL GLOBAL ISSUE.

necessary for museum directorship. After some discussion we agreed that smaller museums have directors who have to wear two hats: direct the museum as well as curate exhibitions. This dichotomy needs to be honoured in succession planning in small museums. There was a suggestion that succession planning workshops be positioned at the beginning of museum conferences as a critical global issue. The workshops should include representatives of government and boards of trustees, as they are the ultimate decision makers when directors are selected. A whole museum conference dedicated to succession planning was suggested, as this is a new idea for many in the museum sector at a time when there is a diminishing pool of potential leadership talent worldwide.

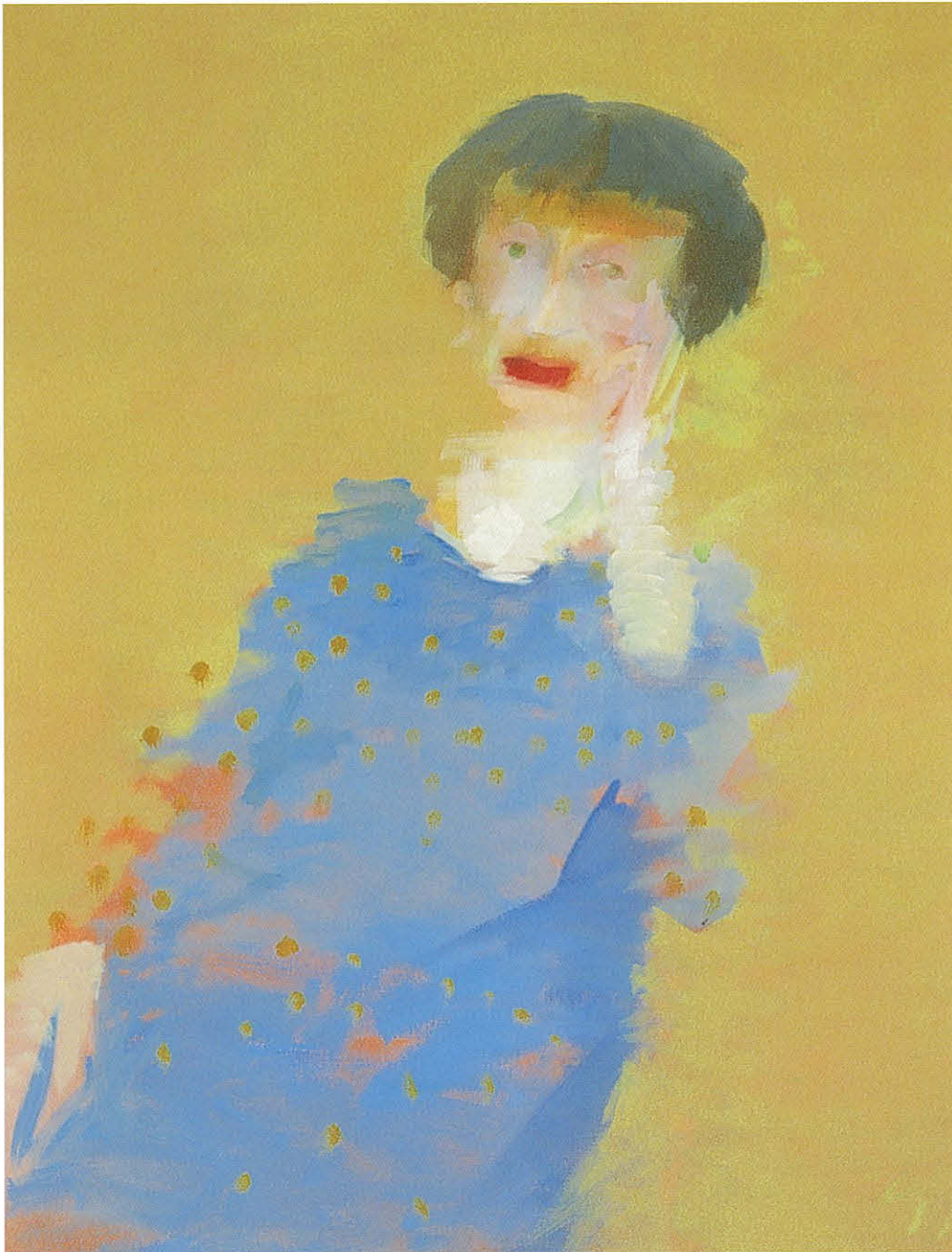
Participants were encouraged to go back to their museums and coach selection committees to start looking for replacement directors four years ahead of the need. This means museums must have a clear framework and approach to succession planning as an 'organisation development' issue. This is linked to the issue of continuing professional education. There is a 10-year lead time to successfully develop leadership skills in shifting

from indirect leadership in an expert domain (curator, marketing, education and so on) to a direct leadership role as a museum director.

The workshop participants discussed and developed what they thought should be covered in the 10-year period: marketing, finance, change management, business management principles, organisation behaviour/development, power/influence management, negotiating enterprise agreements, job evaluation, team building, and mentor/performance coaching. Participants were encouraged to make contact with their local university to access programs through divisions of continuing education; seek non-credit modules in business or management schools; find mentors; and, most important of all, set up a task force to look at the issue of succession planning and career paths to leadership within their own national museum associations.

DR SHERENE SUCHY IS AN ADJUNCT LECTURER WITH THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY. SHE IS IN PRIVATE PRACTICE AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES CELEBRATE THE CENTENARY OF FEDERATION



Museums, galleries and collecting institutions around Australia have seized the opportunity offered by the Centenary of Federation to demonstrate the many ways in which their collections can tell the nation's story.

The Australian War Memorial and the National Gallery of Australia began the flow in late 2000, with *Forging the Nation 1901–1920* and *Federation: Australian Art and*

Society 1901–2001.

The Museum of Sydney strikes a local note with its exhibition, *Sydney at Federation*, exploring the life of the city that witnessed the birth of the Australian nation. Sydney is also the place to see *Belonging: A Century Celebrated*, a collaborative venture of the State Library of New South Wales, State Library of Victoria, National Archives of Australia and National Library

of Australia. The exhibition will travel to Melbourne in May, Canberra in August and Tasmania in December, and to Brisbane in 2002.

The Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney, in conjunction with the Australian Customs Service, offers *Smugglers: Customs & Contraband 1901–2001*, until late July, with a smaller version travelling around Australia during 2001.

New galleries opening in national institutions include Questacon — National Science and Technology Centre's Australian Innovations gallery, with an exhibition celebrating *100 years of Australian Innovation*; and the National Archives of Australia's *Federation Gallery*, where the 'birth certificates' of the nation are on permanent display. In March ScreenSound Australia opens its Centenary of Federation exhibition, *Sights and Sounds of a Nation*, featuring 100 years of Australia's film, television and recorded sound.

March is also the month of the flagship event of the Centenary of Federation, when the National Museum of Australia opens in the national capital.

In Brisbane, Queensland Museum will present *Queensland 1901* from March, showing how the year's events affected the lives of ordinary — and not so ordinary — Queensland people.

Throughout March and April Queensland Art Gallery will be showing *A Centenary of Faces*, an exhibition of around 100 Australian portraits brought together from the Gallery's collection for the first time.

ROSLYN RUSSELL IS MANAGER OF AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE PROJECTS

Sam Fullbrook
Portrait of Ernestine Hill 1970
 Oil on canvas
 96.8 x 76.3 cm
 From the Queensland Art Gallery exhibition, *A Centenary of Faces*, March–April 2001
 Photograph courtesy of Queensland Art Gallery

SHAPING IDENTITIES —

THE CHALLENGE OF DEFINING MUSEUMS

WHAT SORT OF THING IS A MUSEUM? MUSEUM PRACTITIONERS ARE NORMALLY HIGHLY SKILLED AT IDENTIFYING AND CATEGORISING OBJECTS. YET WE SEEM TO TOLERATE THE GAP THAT HAS DEVELOPED BETWEEN THE OFFICIAL DEFINITION OF A MUSEUM, AND THE CURRENT BEHAVIOURS AND PURPOSES OF MUSEUMS. THIS GAP AFFECTS OUR CREDIBILITY WITH AUDIENCES, REVIEWERS, GRANT-MAKING BODIES, AND POLITICIANS.

Currently, Museums Australia uses a definition that corresponds with the one formulated in the 1970s by the International Council of Museums:

A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.

The museum is not only a collection of objects, but also a collection of professionals dedicated to protecting, using and interpreting the objects.

[paraphrased from Edson, 1995]

Museums Australia and ICOM employ this sentence in order to assess membership categories. The cynic might comment that the definition is framed in order to recruit as many subscribers as possible, rather than to provide a succinct statement of identity!

The sentence also defines our sector to outsiders. The Commonwealth study *Museums in Australia 1975* used the ICOM definition as a primary starting point, noting that it 'sets out an ideal' with which few Australian museums then complied. Currently, the Australian Bureau of Statistics uses the same definition as the basis for its data-gathering and analyses. There is merit in working with a definition that aligns Australian

Museums are places where people go to think and feel about what it means to be human.

(O'Neill, 1994)

museums with the international scene. Yet how many of us have managed to commit the ICOM definition to memory — and if we have, how helpful is it when we are asked in social settings to justify why this or that enterprise is entitled to be called a 'museum'? As Kenneth Hudson commented in 1977, 'If the word "museum" is required to cover both the American Museum of Natural History and Mrs Wilkerson's Figure Bottle Museum, it could conceivably have outlived its usefulness'.

Nevertheless, the word is still in use, and the variety of meanings it is required to carry has not diminished. The most recent was announced last November, when the museum world gained a new public benchmark — the approval to establish a new internet domain name — .museum — for use by organisations that comply with ICOM's definition of a museum:

But how effectively does the ICOM definition describe museums in Australia?

Do the words represent who we are and what we do? At the Museums Australia AGM in 1999, I suggested that it would be timely to review the current definition on the grounds that:

- The ICOM definition places greater emphasis on museum functions than on museum purposes — and this mix of function and purpose may no longer reflect the needs of the Australian museum sector, nor assist individual museums to fulfil their potential;
- The definition is important to the cause of Museums Australia's effective advocacy of the museum sector in Australia; and
- A number of other museum associations (e.g. Canada, the USA and the UK) work with independent definitions that relate to their own political, legal, environmental, social and cultural contexts.

I am also concerned that many in our sector feel that the word 'museum' excludes art museums, and so we often find the cumbersome phrase 'museums and galleries' where — if the definition were adequate — a single word would suffice. Have we reached the point in the history of our own professional association when we should consider framing our own

Museums are sites in which seductive totalizing mythologies of nation-state and Enlightenment rationality struggle against alternative classifications, and in which 'high culture' and 'popular culture' battle for legitimacy.

(Macdonald, 1996)

definition? This matter will be taken up at a workshop session during the forthcoming national conference of Museums Australia in Canberra (April 2001).

I have specific concerns about the relevance of the current definition. There are some terms that can be (and are) interpreted in various conflicting ways by Australian museum practitioners: 'non-profit making', 'service', 'society' and 'development'. The phrase 'study, education and enjoyment' seems to insist that all three purposes have to be fulfilled or else the place is not a museum — yet this would exclude a Holocaust Museum that is engaging, but hardly aims to stimulate a sense of enjoyment.

Furthermore, the definition makes only oblique reference to visitors (the 'public' for whom the museum must open its doors), and omits entirely the two components of museums that consume vast sums of capital and operating revenue: the building, and the staff.

The history museum becomes a place where the products and processes of memory meet.

(Kavanagh, 2000)

Fresh definitions emerge with practically every new discussion about museums. For example, the 40 practitioners who participated in Museums Australia's Museum Leadership Program in 1999 developed a statement about the core value that is at the heart of museum work, suggesting that 'museums aim to understand humanity and the environment through ideas and objects'. In a recent conversation, Matthew Nickson of Museum Victoria suggested to me that the museum is 'a construct that flexibly inhabits the changing space that exists between the zones of education, research, recreation, information and entertainment'. He feels that the reason museums are so hard to define, and appear in such diverse forms, is because each is created at a unique moment in time, and in the context of a particular grouping of communities. 'Each museum tries to fit

the unique cultural gap that relates to the specific contemporary boundaries of those five zones', he says.

The museological literature abounds with statements of definition. And the Museums Association in the UK recently (1998) revised its definition to read: 'Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society'. An effective definition needs to mention the 'people' who (as staff) create and (as visitors) experience the museum, and the fact that museums occupy real and virtual space. We need to be able to report the definition to — say — a funding agency without the bureaucrat's eyes glazing over and mind switching off.

Lacking a compelling definition of ourselves, we run the risk of alienating audiences, and failing in our collective responsibility to advocate the importance of museums. Can we afford not to redefine the museum for ourselves and our stakeholders in the 21st century?

A list of references to the works cited in this article and the quoted definitions is available from the author by email mbirtley@deakin.edu.au or facsimile (03) 9251 7158.

MARGARET BIRTLEY

COORDINATOR OF MUSEUM STUDIES, DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

Museums represent an organizational principle for the content of cultural identity and scientific knowledge.

(Crane, 2000)

Last November, the museum world gained a new public benchmark with the establishment of a new internet domain name — .museum — (or 'dot-museum').

Use of this top-level domain name on the internet will be controlled by MuseDoma (the Museum Domain Management Association, www.musedoma.org) founded by ICOM and the J. Paul Getty Trust. MuseDoma's press release (20 November 2000) states that eligibility to use the name will be 'limited to museums and their professional organizations based on ICOM's definition of a museum'. The dot-museum domain name will apparently 'allow Internet users to recognize this as a sign of authenticity, ensuring that sources of information about cultural and scientific heritage are verifiable'.

This makes big assumptions about whether compliance with the ICOM definition also guarantees verifiable information! Alan Sisley, Director of the Orange Regional Gallery, contributed to the debate on the Australian Museums Forum, stating 'I do not like the idea of ICOM, or any other body, working out who is or is not a museum' (11 October 2000).

Museum National is keen to hear from readers with opinions on this issue.

THE CUSTOMS MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

IT IS THEREFORE NECESSARY, EVEN DESIRABLE, THAT CUSTOMS SHOULD UTILISE THE EXPERTISE OF OTHER INSTITUTIONS IN PROVIDING PUBLIC ACCESS TO ITS COLLECTION.



The Australian Customs Service manages a number of small displays around Australia. The larger ones are in the Customs Houses in Canberra, Fremantle and Melbourne. Customs also runs *ad hoc* displays in various venues in regional Australia. The material available to Customs reflects the administrative border role that Customs has undertaken since 1800. This includes colonial artefacts — wax seals, measuring equipment and the like — and more recently, examples of prohibited goods, including wildlife, performance enhancing drugs, copyright infringement items, weapons and items associated with drugs.

Customs maintains a collection of about 4000 objects and 5000 photos. The collection is spread across all states and is looked after by volunteer officers. These officers, collectively, have qualifications in Australian history, oral history, public relations/journalism and materials conservation.

Customs is not in the business of running its own 'museum' as such. It is therefore necessary, even desirable, that Customs should utilise the expertise of other institutions in providing public access to its collection. So, rather than establish its own museum, which is common in the European context, Customs has cooperated with a number of other institutions in establishing Customs displays/exhibitions, including the Australian Federal Police Museum in Canberra, Museum Victoria, and, most recently, the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney.

Such cooperation works for a number of reasons, not the least of which are:

- unique material is available for the participating museum;
- both partners benefit from access to each other's client base;
- Customs still controls use of its objects while making them readily available for loan;
- if you are lucky, the participating museum will generously offer to undertake conservation treatment on a loan item that desperately needs it.

From a more narrowly focused Customs perspective, material is made available to a much broader section of the community than otherwise would be the case. Customs' purpose in mounting such displays/exhibitions is twofold.

Firstly, it demonstrates Customs' role in the social and economic development of Australia through the administration of government policy such as the 'White Australia Policy', censorship, tariff policy and more recently as an agency involved in the government's 'Tough on Drugs strategy'. The tariff issue, or more correctly, the colonial tariff issue, was a major element in the movement towards Federation.

Secondly, it showcases contemporary Customs and demonstrates to the public how Customs operates and the rights and responsibilities of Customs' clients. Displays may highlight the types of goods that cannot be imported into Australia or require a permit, for example, certain wildlife products, narcotics and weapons, while providing interesting objects and stories to the public.

Nowhere has this approach been better utilised than in the current exhibition at the Australian National Maritime Museum. This exhibition brings together all the benefits of a cooperative venture. It has been important from the Customs viewpoint to provide the material and background knowledge, while the Museum has provided its design and curatorial expertise. The exhibition focuses on drugs, wildlife, other seized goods and Federation in their historical and contemporary contexts. A smaller travelling exhibition is due to open at the South Australian Maritime Museum in Port Adelaide in mid-February 2001.

GRAEME AUSTIN, NATIONAL HISTORY OFFICER,
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Australian Customs Service display in Customs House, Canberra
Photograph by Dorian Photographics

COLLECTING, ACCUMULATING AND MUSEUM STANDARDS

IF A MUSEUM 'COLLECTS AND EXHIBITS', WHAT DO WE CALL AN INSTITUTION THAT 'ACCUMULATES AND EXHIBITS'? DOES IT MATTER? THE COMMEMORATIONS BRANCH OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS (DVA) IS CONFRONTING THIS ISSUE, AS WE SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS TO IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF IDENTIFICATION, PRESERVATION AND EXHIBITION OF AUSTRALIA'S WARTIME MEMORABILIA.

Some war memorabilia is held by major state and national institutions, and some by relatively well resourced and supported regional or special interest museums. A great deal, however, is held by organisations that are not equipped well enough in any sense (money, space, expertise, or support networks) to do anything but 'accumulate' the objects they are given.

Ex-service organisations (ESOs), such as RSL sub-branches, are a good example. Almost every RSL sub-branch holds some war memorabilia, and they are often the first organisation to which veterans or their relatives turn to donate items such as medals, letters and souvenirs.

Sadly, through lack of resources, items are often stored/displayed in a dusty, overcrowded cabinet, with little identification or accompanying interpretation. Many within these organisations find themselves in a difficult position when it comes to implementing any form of collection policy, as there is a strong and often emotive expectation on both sides that all donated material will be publicly displayed.

Many people within the institutions are motivated by a sense of duty to take possession of objects associated with friends or colleagues, fearing that otherwise those objects will be destroyed. Moving beyond simple possession, to considered management, care and display, can be challenging.

DVA is committed to helping RSLs, historical societies and other such organisations introduce museum-like practices. In most cases, the most pressing priorities are improving the storage procedures (especially environmental controls), introducing cataloguing techniques, and improving exhibition quality (especially interpretation). Small improvements in these



areas can vastly improve the long-term condition of objects, and the public accessibility — including the interest level — of the displays.

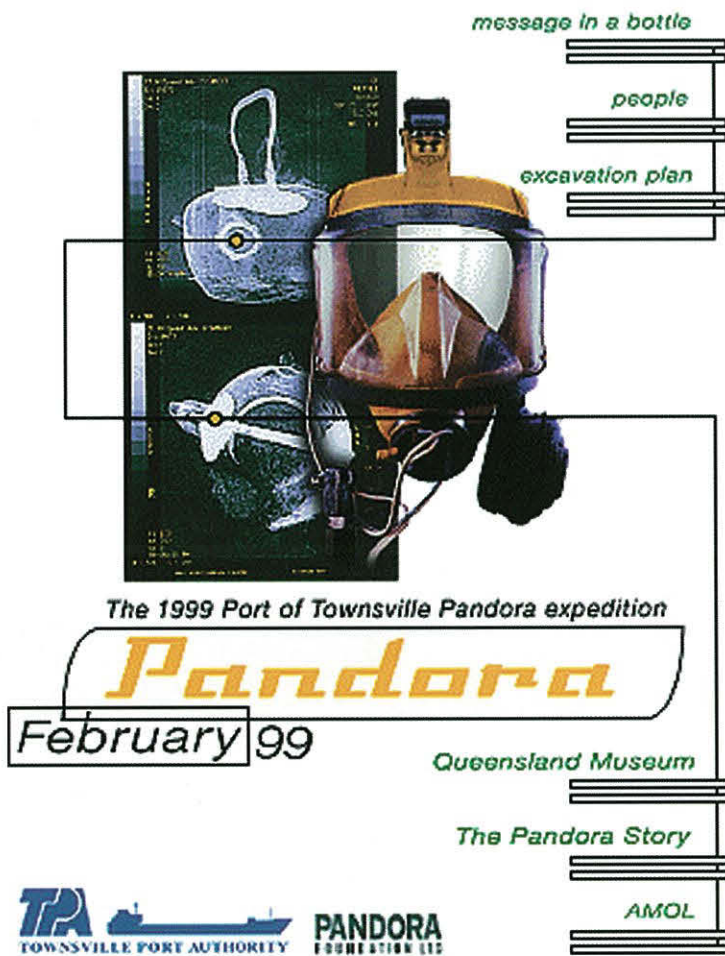
Therefore DVA emphasises the advantages of achieving even a basic level of improvement, using the underlying concepts of museum practice. That foundation can later be built upon, but aiming for higher-level 'museum standards' initially can be intimidating, and hence counter-productive.

Even without progressing beyond the basic improvements, an organisation that has accumulated objects still benefits from introducing modified museum concepts, standards and techniques. With each step towards better care and interpretation of the objects, the organisation also happens to take a step closer to being a 'museum'.

DVA administers a small grants scheme to assist organisations achieve this objective. *Their Service – Our Heritage* is a Federal government commemorative program that aims to encourage the community to remember and honour the contributions made by Australians who have served in wars, conflicts and in peacekeeping operations. Through the very successful commemorative grants program, the government is promoting the ongoing recognition of Australia's servicemen and women by providing financial assistance for a variety of purposes. Projects receiving support through *Their Service – Our Heritage* include education initiatives, public awareness activities and the restoration and display of wartime memorabilia. Grants of up to \$3000 may be made. For more information on the commemorative grants program please visit our website at <http://www.dva.gov.au/commem> or contact our grants team on freecall 1800 026 185.

GEORGINA BINKS, DVA MUSEUMS PROJECT OFFICER

A typical RSL sub-branch foyer display of war memorabilia
Courtesy of Department of Veterans' Affairs



THE 'CONSENSUAL HALLUCINATION,' FIRST IMAGINED BY WILLIAM GIBSON IN HIS SEMINAL SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL *NEUROMANCER*, IS NOW A REALITY. LAST YEAR OVER 150 MILLION PEOPLE USED THE UBIQUITOUS PUBLISHING, COMMUNICATION AND RESEARCH MEDIUM WE CALL THE INTERNET.

Left: IMM website — Queensland Museum marine archaeologists used the *Pandora* website to answer emailed questions as well as post images and reports from the dive site (<http://amol.org.au/pandora/>)
Reproduced courtesy of AMOL

Opposite: Institutional meta-centre. Through the Australian Museum website the public can gain easy access to numerous vertebrate, invertebrate and mineralogy databases (<http://www.austmus.gov.au>)

The 'consensual hallucination,' first imagined by William Gibson in his seminal science fiction novel *Neuromancer*, is now a reality. Last year over 150 million people used the ubiquitous publishing, communication and research medium we call the Internet. In 1999 over three million Australians partook of this consensual hallucination and a further 3.9 million visited a museum. Not surprisingly, the Australian heritage sector has reacted, with nearly a third of all museums now operating their own websites. In an age when costs and benefits are carefully weighed, it's clear we need to better understand the needs and motivations of our virtual visitors.

To monitor these trends Australian Museums On Line (AMOL) regularly surveys museum website users, managers and developers. AMOL conference papers, seminars and workshops ensure this information comes back to museums to help them make better sense of a medium that, as we all know, is constantly talked up. However, separating promise from reality is not always easy. After all, the techno-evangelists promised the web would free us from the one-dimensional interface of traditional infotainment mediums, and change the way we live, work and play. In the early years we had few methods of substantiating such claims. But nowadays a proliferation of

evaluation tools is not only debunking some of this hype, but also highlighting the real accomplishments of museum websites.

Using a combination of unsolicited user feedback, on-line questionnaires and data from log file reporter tools like *WebTrends*, AMOL, Reading University (UK), the Science Learning Network and the National Museum of Science & Industry (UK), have all shown that museum websites can work as effective marketing and outreach tools. Recent North American studies have also demonstrated that many are also meeting the needs of students and shoppers. The same studies also acknowledge that there are constraints on what museum websites can currently achieve. Where they can certainly release museums from the economic and spatial constraints that limit both collecting and display in the real world, they don't yet provide an experience analogous to the cognitive, spatial and social interaction that characterises a visit to a real exhibit. It's this mix of the possible and the impossible that has shaped the content and structure of contemporary museum websites to form a series of discrete types. Each of these website typologies, either by accident or design, has thus evolved to meet the specific needs of all kinds of users.

Because of its relative low cost and ease of maintenance, the most widespread museum website type is the *electronic brochure*. Typically these consist of between one and 20 pages,

and utilise recycled visual and textual information from research or promotional pamphlets. Electronic brochures function as marketing vehicles and provide basic how to find, opening hour, exhibition and admission cost information. From the anecdotal evidence AMOL has collected, they tend to be most used by potential visitors who have made up their mind to visit the museum, but need additional location and opening hour information.

As the cost of digital cameras continues to fall and Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) software proliferates, electronic brochures are giving way to *tour sites*. Tour sites characteristically utilise a combination of gallery images and remotely accessible collection management systems, to partially recreate the spatial and cognitive experience of the *real* museum. AMOL research has demonstrated that tour sites, like that of the Australia National Maritime Museum, can provide the ambient and thematic information potential visitors may use to help them to decide whether or not to visit the real museum.

The Australian Museum and Australian War Memorial websites have been purpose built for researchers, and are examples of the *institutional meta-centre* typology. Characteristically, institutional meta-centre websites provide remote access to archives or photographic collections that number in the thousands or even millions. Traditionally, access

australian museum online

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TOP | ABOUT THE MUSEUM | WHAT'S NEW | MEMBERSHIP | MAP | HELP | HOME

Technical Reports
of the Australian Museum

AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM

IN AN INCREASINGLY MEDIATED WORLD THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT MUSEUM WEBSITES WILL CONTINUE TO THRIVE. AS THEY DO I'M SURE MANY IN MUSEUMS WILL AGAIN QUESTION THEIR EFFECT ON THE STATUS OF REAL OBJECTS AND REAL MUSEUMS. AS WE MOVE INTO THE 21ST CENTURY, THE ACCUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF THE WEB WILL CERTAINLY RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT MUSEUMS CAN CONTINUE TO FUNCTION AS IMPORTANT OBJECT-ORIENTATED ENVIRONMENTS.

to these collections has been via special research centres within the museum. Now many of the same search tools and databases, originally devised for these centres, have been modified and placed on line.

Finally there are the websites of our major science, technology and social history institutions, many of whom have deliberately explored the interactive and multimedia potential of the web. Characteristically, content on these IMM (interactive multimedia) websites changes regularly and is drawn from one of three sources: webcasts of talks or special events like AMOL's webcast from the site of the *Pandora* wreck. Alternatively the museum re-purposes audio-visual or interactive material originally created for an exhibition. Less common are specially designed interactive products, such as the Powerhouse

Museum's Race Across Time (RAT), which was designed for upper primary school students. The critical advantage of the IMM typology is its potential to not only turn *virtual* exhibition visitors into *real* visitors, but also to cater for the needs of emerging markets like primary and secondary school students.

In an increasingly mediated world there is little doubt that museum websites will continue to thrive. As they do I'm sure many in museums will again question their effect on the status of *real* objects and *real* museums. As we move into the 21st century, the accumulative effects of the web will certainly raise questions about whether or not museums can continue to function as important object-orientated environments.

I seriously doubt any of the current typologies will ever supplant the *real* museum. After all, the increasing virtuality of our world seems to demand its own counterpoint in the materiality of those objects that have withstood time. Far from diminishing the authority of museums, museum websites will surely intensify the need for emblematic objects that signify the extraordinariness and the ever-rarer primary human experiences.

KEVIN SUMPTION, NATIONAL PROJECT MANAGER AMOL,
CURATOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

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A MUSEUM FOR THE NATION

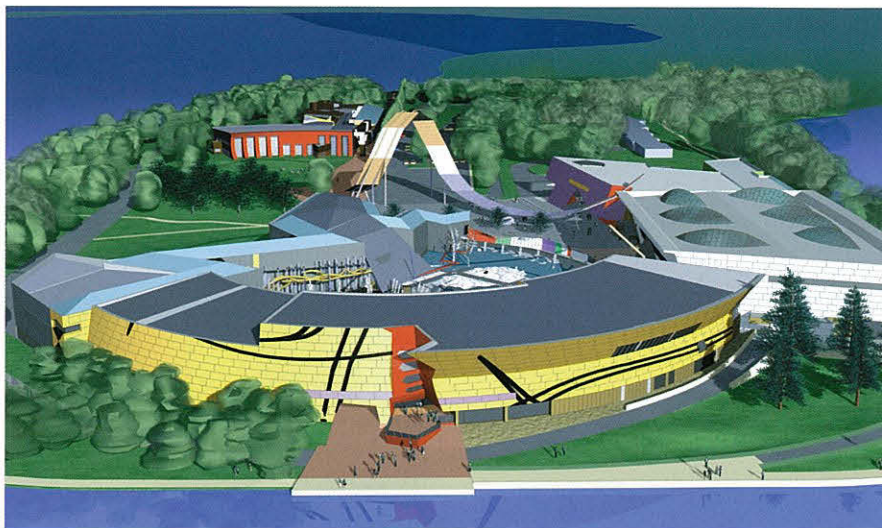
THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA OPENS ITS DOORS ON 11 MARCH 2001. THIS WILL BE THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT'S FLAGSHIP EVENT TO MARK THE CENTENARY OF FEDERATION, THE CULMINATION OF NEARLY A QUARTER OF A CENTURY'S THOUGHT AND PLANNING FOR THIS MAJOR NATIONAL INSTITUTION.

The Museum is a striking landmark in the Canberra landscape, located on Acton Peninsula with stunning views of Lake Burley Griffin. Its construction, and that of the neighbouring Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, has been achieved by an innovative 'Alliance' of the design and construction team and the clients, the first for a building construction project. The National Museum's brief is to be the first major cultural institution in the country to devote itself to the stories of Australia and Australians, and to explore the key issues, events and people that have shaped and influenced the nation, using the latest design ideas and the many resources now available to museums through modern technology.

Such a mission, at the beginning of the 21st century, is as much an exercise in reflecting on where we are going as on where we have been. NMA Council Chairman Tony Staley says that 'the National Museum is just as much about the future of Australia as it is about its past'.

How has the National Museum of Australia negotiated the complex stories of Australia, and the issues surrounding representation of the experiences of diverse groups and individuals that have shaped our past and will continue to shape our future?

The Museum's intellectual structure is organised around three major themes:



Land, Nation and People, illustrating them through its collection of around 100,000 historical and Indigenous objects. The themes are further sub-divided into five permanent exhibitions — *Nation: Symbols of Australia*; *Horizons: The Peopling of Australia since 1788*; *Eternity: Stories from the Emotional Heart of Australia*; *Tangled Destinies: Land and People in Australia*; and *First Australians: Gallery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*.

In addition to displaying the permanent collection, the Museum will also feature 'blockbuster' temporary exhibitions, housed in a purpose-built 1000 square metre temporary exhibition space, and sourced from Australian and international institutions. The first of these, to coincide with the Museum's opening, is *Gold and Civilisation*. Museum Director Dawn Casey says that the exhibition 'explores our timeless fascination with gold and reveals how its discovery led to the creation of modern Australia', and places that discovery in an international context.

Above: An architectural computer graphic of the new National Museum of Australia
Reproduced courtesy of Ashton Raggatt McDougall, Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan. Architects in Association

Left: Dawn Casey, the Director of the National Museum of Australia
Reproduced courtesy of National Museum of Australia

Key dates

- 1975 Pigott Report, *Museums in Australia 1975* recommends an Australian Museums Commission
- 1980 *National Museum of Australia Act 1980* carried with bipartisan support
- 1986 Yarramundi Visitor Centre opens
- 1996 Government decides to proceed with permanent facility
- 1997 Funding of \$151.9 is announced
- 1998 Prime Minister John Howard turns first sod to begin building on Acton Peninsula
- 1999 Construction underway
- 2001 National Museum of Australia opens

These shields represent some of the most remarkable from the National Museum of Australia's extensive collection. Made mostly from wood, although sometimes from bark, the shields are often decorated with painted or incised designs.

Shields by (from top) Paul Kropinyeri; unknown artist; Andy Jabangardi; pigment on wood.
Reproduced courtesy of National Museum of Australia

Of most interest to museum people will be the way in which the National Museum has interpreted its themes.

The imperative to provide excitement and innovation through state of the art technology and design has been blended with more 'traditional' approaches to museum display, with objects and text taking as prominent a role as audio-visual and multi-media components.

The *First Australians* gallery provides many striking examples of this, displaying wonderful objects from the permanent collection, including a taxonomic array of Kimberley points which functions as much as an artwork as a museum exhibit. There are over a thousand exhibits in the open collections area, where Indigenous communities and researchers can come to share their knowledge with Museum staff. The tough questions about the relationship of Indigenous people with European occupiers have not been shirked: issues surrounding frontier conflicts, mission policies and land rights, along with the continuing story of negotiating coexistence, are all here in the Museum.



- The Museum's Collection includes:
- 60,000 stone tools
 - Australia's largest collection of bark paintings
 - Over 1600 works of art
 - Convict clothing, leg irons and tickets of leave
 - 19th and 20th century material on the migrant experience
 - 'making do' domestic material from rural Australia
 - memorabilia of 1930s men's and women's cricket
 - Australian political satire
 - Early European depictions of Aboriginal people
 - Bushwalking and mountaineering equipment
 - Tasmanian marsupial fur products

Nation: Symbols of Australia uses a recreated arch from the celebrations to mark the opening of the first Commonwealth parliament in May 1901 and a Digger memorial statue as dominant starting points to begin an exploration of the symbols of national identity and the experiences that gave rise to them. There is also an enormous multi-media installation, *Imagining the Country*, which is visible from three floors, and invites visitors to explore the ways in which people have imagined, mapped and understood the Australian continent.

Horizons: The Peopling of Australia since 1788 explores the successive waves of European arrivals in Australia, from convicts in the late 18th century to late 20th century refugees. Their contribution to Australia's development and identity is captured through the stories of a diverse range of individuals, from Richard Johnson, Sydney's first Anglican priest, to Vietnamese tram conductor Le Thanh Nohn. Emblematic objects such as manacles from North Head Quarantine station used for detaining some arrivals, and the *Hong Hai*, one of the first refugee vessels to arrive in Australia from Vietnam, speak of the multi-layered nature of the migration experience. *Eternity: Stories from the Emotional Heart of Australia* is a first for museums in Australia, as it seeks to use the



Left: The kangaroo has emerged as a pre-eminent symbol of Australia, one that is recognised the world over. This arrangement of objects from the Terence Lane collection was acquired by the Museum to play a part in 'Hopping Mad' — an exhibit in the *Nation* exhibition that looks at the kangaroo as an icon and its use in Australian literature, the arts, sport and national celebrations.

Reproduced courtesy of National Museum of Australia

Below: Commissioned by the Australia-China Friendship Society as a bicentennial project, the 45 metre long *Harvest of Endurance* scroll is painted in traditional *gong bi* style and depicts the historic contribution of the Chinese people to Australia. This panel, showing Chinese who rose to the top of their professions, includes Professor Christopher Chen; Dr Victor Chang; Rev. Philip Sik Kee Fong; Claudia Cream; Fr Pascal Chang; Helen Sham; Harry Chan and Alec Fong Lim.

Reproduced courtesy of National Museum of Australia



emotions to delineate the experience of living in Australia. Lively design and striking objects are teamed with evocative personal stories based on ten themes — Joy, Hope, Passion, Mystery, Thrill, Loneliness, Fear, Devotion, Separation and Chance — that place individuals and their experiences squarely at the centre of the interpretation of Australian history. The Gallery's title is based on Arthur Stace's chalked word 'Eternity' which appeared on the streets of Sydney and its suburbs throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and has achieved iconic status through its adoption as a central symbol for the Sydney Harbour Bridge fireworks at the millennium celebration. (A feature on the

Eternity gallery appeared in the previous edition of *Museum National*.)

As important to the interpretation of the theme as the stories is the chance offered to visitors to contribute their personal stories, making concrete the Museum's claim that it is not a museum of the past but of the present and future.

Tangled Destinies: Land and People in Australia is another first for the Museum. It brings together the scientific and cultural history of the continent in a way that no other Australian museum has attempted before now. The gallery explores how people have responded to the Australian environment over thousands of years, and focuses on how

human history is written on the land. Rather than taxonomic collections of natural history specimens in glass cases, the gallery has exhibits such as the Diprotodon skeleton which comes to life before your eyes, a memorial to the Thylacine, and a soil cross-section from Lake Eyre showing 120,000 years of climatic history. The human story is illustrated by evocative objects such as bushwalking equipment which belonged to pioneer bushwalker and environmentalist, Myles Dunphy.



The opening of the National Museum of Australia on 11 March 2001 will be a key event in the cultural history of our nation. The next issue of *Museum National* will take a look at the completed museum, to see to what extent it has fulfilled its promise to give us all 'a chance to explore what it means to be Australian'.

National Museum 'firsts'

- First to be built using 'Alliance' system
- First devoted entirely to the stories of Australia
- First to incorporate a broadcast studio
- First to put Torres Strait Islander culture in the national context
- First to bring together social and national history
- First to explore history through emotion

Above: This dress was made out of old curtains and painted with house paint. It was made in the early 1930s for Patricia Chalcraft to wear to a fancy-dress party. The dress depicts the various odd jobs the Heidelberg Unemployment Bureau in Melbourne was seeking for its members at the time. The Chalcraft family hoped the dress would win first prize (a cash prize) to buy Patricia some new shoes. Alas, it won second prize, a book. The dress is now on display in *Eternity*, representing the theme of 'Hope'.

Reproduced courtesy of National Museum of Australia

Right: Myles Dunphy, pioneer of Australian bushwalking and an early conservationist, made these shoes for his dog Dextre, who accompanied Myles on a walk from Kanangra to Katoomba, New South Wales. Without the shoes the dog's paws would have been badly cut on rocks. Dextre's dogboots — an example of how we respond to our environment — can be seen in the Museum's *Tangled Destinies* exhibition.

Reproduced courtesy of National Museum of Australia



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a forum for debate of museum and gallery issues, developed in collaboration with the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage at Curtin University in Western Australia.

National Exhibition Venues Database

a database of venues, facilities and exhibition programs around the country, designed to assist organisations in planning touring exhibitions.

AND COMING SOON ONLINE...

Significance

a guide to assessing the meanings and values of movable heritage objects and collections, designed to assist museums set priorities for collecting, conserving, storing and interpreting those objects.*

Resources Directory

an interactive resource of up-to-date information on museum accreditation programs, advisory services, committees, conferences, grants, professional development, publications, state support agencies and training programs.

ReCollections

a compendium of practical collection management and conservation advice specifically addressing the needs of small museums.

Capture Your Collections

a course to assist small museums with the digitisation of collections, developed in collaboration with the Canadian Heritage Information Network.

Discovernet

will provide a quick and easy way to search and link to educational resources produced by Australian museums, for students, educators and life-long learners.

*** HARD COPIES OF THESE RESOURCES ARE ALSO AVAILABLE FROM:**

Heritage Collections Council
Secretariat

Cultural Development Branch
Department of Communications,
Information Technology and the Arts
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Email: hcc.mail@dcita.gov.au



UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS

UNIVERSITY COLLECTIONS ARE MAINLY FORMED FOR TWO REASONS: RESEARCH AND TEACHING. SCIENTIFIC AND HISTORICAL ITEMS IN UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS ARE COLLECTED NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE NECESSARILY RARE OR VALUABLE, BUT

BECAUSE OF THE INFORMATION THEY CONTAIN.



Turtle-shell mask from Erub (Darnley) Island in the Torres Strait, collected on the *Chevert* expedition of 1875, financed by William John Macleay
Reproduced courtesy of the Macleay Museum, University of Sydney

The information may be peeled off in layers and examined by research workers or shared by teachers. University staff sometimes collect objects for research purposes. If the objects are deemed of little further value after the research project has been completed, they may be discarded. This 'deaccessioning' is an interesting ethical point of difference between (what is called by some Europeans) 'academic heritage' and 'normal' collections. However, objects remaining at the university often develop into a collection or a museum.

University collections are used by tertiary, primary or secondary students, or by adult classes. Some university curators also visit nursing homes and other groups of senior citizens to give talks about their collections. Any member of these various audiences may add to knowledge by contributing their own experiences in discussion triggered by the object itself.

The artworks that dot our campuses are not purely decorative. They are there to contribute to the life-long learning of staff and students. Even those students who have no special interest in art absorb some aesthetic principles during three or more years of daily contact with paintings and sculptures. Those that venture into museums during their time on campus absorb feelings for heritage. These feelings influence unconscious and conscious decisions throughout life in both work and leisure, to the benefit of the community.

Community outreach

While many regional museums are often used as doorways to explore the local region, university museums are seldom so used to explore the campus. They remain doorways, but reflect instead the scholarly interests of the university.

That universities remain forbidding places to locals is partly a result of the view of many staff associated with university

museums that their responsibility is to their own sector of the campus population, and not to the public or the university as a whole. The reasons for this are many: most significantly the direct pressures from their own departments that control funding. Other reasons include their sense of isolation within the university and also from the wider museum profession beyond the campus. However, attitudes are changing and university curators are now increasingly seeking to form links and associations in order to remedy this isolation.

Links with others

The Council of Australian University Museums and Collections (CAUMAC) was formed in the early 1990s and is now a Special Interest Group (SIG) of Museums Australia. CAUMAC was in part responsible for the two government reviews of Australian university museums (the Cinderella Reports http://www.amol.org.au/craft/publications/miscarticles/cinderella_contents.asp). The Vice-Chancellors' Conference of New South Wales (NSWVCC) has a standing committee on university museums and collections which meets a number of times a year. It was responsible for the travelling exhibition, *Cinderella's Gems*, which toured four states over two years; and for the publication *Minimum Maintenance Requirements for University Museums* (<http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/mcm/minmain.pdf>).

A new approach

The latest linking opportunity is the formation of an International Committee of University Museums and Collections (UMAC), one of the international committees of ICOM.

UMAC intends to forge a role and identity for itself in accordance with the aims of ICOM, concentrating on those matters in which university museums and collections differ

from 'other' museums. UMAC aims to:

- 1 Clarify the role, requirements and relationships of university museums and collections with the university and its communities;
- 2 Assist the preservation of academic and cultural heritage;
- 3 Promote university museums and collections within governments and their agencies, institutes of learning, the broad museum sector, the professions, business and the population generally;
- 4 Provide advice and guidelines for those collections which are emerging, isolated, deteriorating or otherwise in need;
- 5 Facilitate international and regional collaboration to stimulate networking, partnerships and research and to initiate exchanges of artefacts, exhibitions, standards, practices and other information;
- 6 Encourage staff in charge of university collections to participate in museological training, mentorship and career development.


The first meeting of UMAC will be in Barcelona, Spain, 1-6 July 2001, with other international committees of ICOM.

If you are interested in the aims of UMAC and would like to become a member please contact Andrew Moritz (amoritz@geelongcity.vic.gov.au) If you are already a member of ICOM and would like to be a voting member of UMAC, please send an email to secretariat@icom.org

I hope to see you in Barcelona! I will be pleased to answer any further questions. The interim board of UMAC welcomes your comments and suggestions.

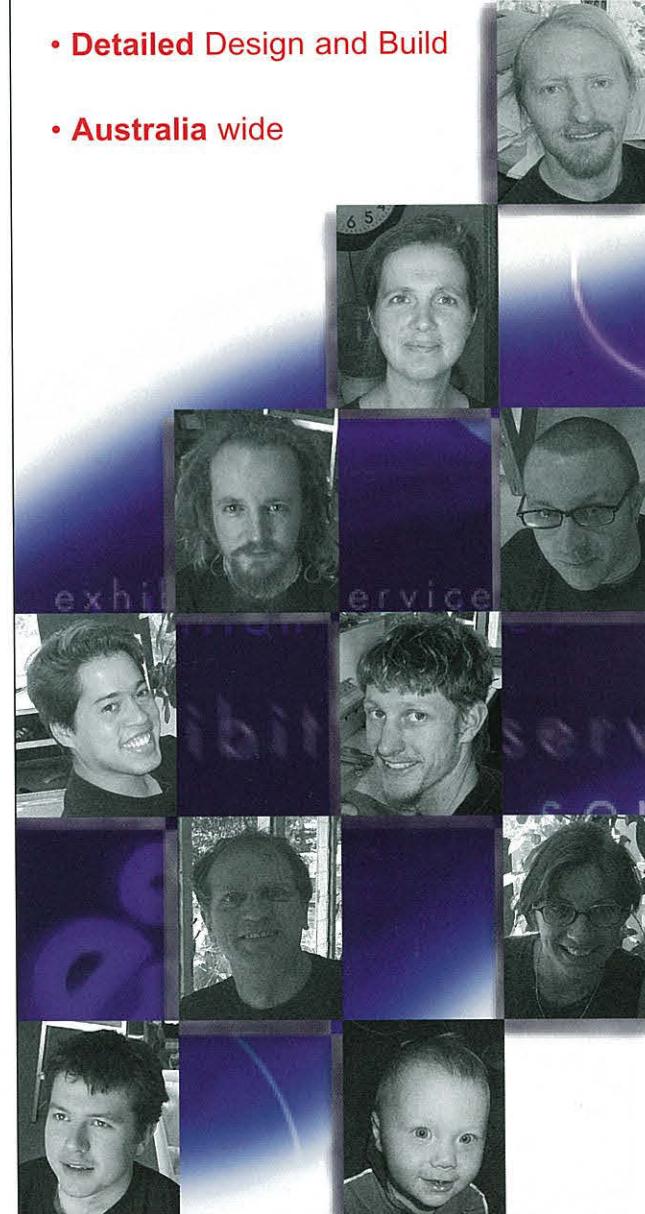
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WILL CINDERELLA MAKE IT TO THE BALL?

The Council of Australian University Museums and Collections (CAUMAC) consists of people working in or with Australian university museums and collections. The group started as a grass roots movement in November 1992, as the result of a conference on university museums initiated by Barrie Reynolds (then at James Cook University) and Peter Stanbury (then at the Macleay Museum). The meeting was attended by 30 delegates. It was significant because, in general, these staff had not previously networked beyond their own discipline-specific university structures.

The group discovered they were united by concerns about poor funding levels, perceptions of poor understanding by their host institutions, and lowly status in the museum profession. Many also felt there was a considerable unexploited potential in engaging with external communities. For those who joined a few years later, such as myself, access to a like-minded community of museum people was a breath of fresh air in times of increasing fiscal constraint in the tertiary education sector.

The fledgling organisation supported efforts to secure funding for a national investigation into university collections that resulted in the two 'Cinderella' reports (*Cinderella Collections 1996* and *Transforming Cinderella Collections 1998*), the term 'Cinderella' evoking a strong image of a poor relation in the museum industry. These investigations uncovered a bewildering array of collections scattered throughout Australian universities, consisting of close to five million objects with a staggering estimated value of \$1.5 billion.

The reports contained a raft of recommendations on policy development, funding, and staffing levels that were clearly

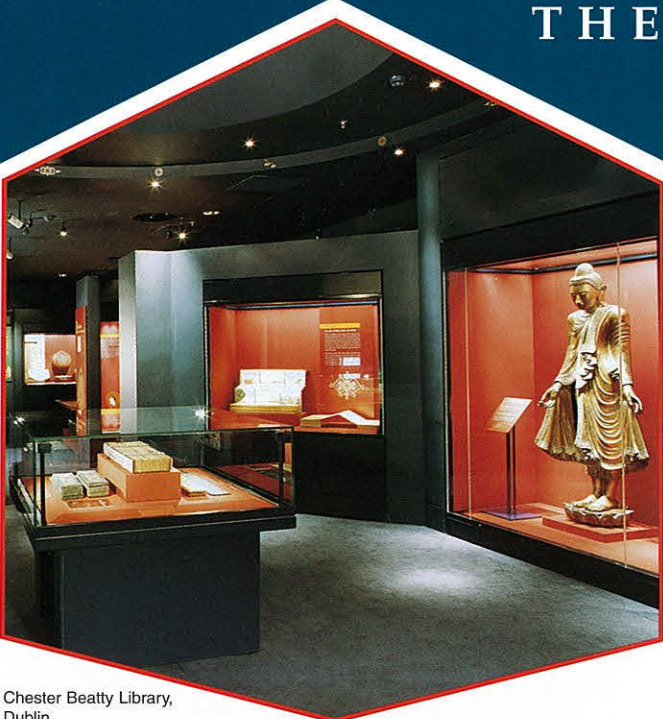
minimum requirements for university museums and collections to attain adequate levels of responsible stewardship commensurate with industry standards elsewhere in Australia. While considerable advances have been made since the Cinderella Reports were delivered, results to date are somewhat patchy. Australian universities continue to grapple with downsizing, restructuring and seeking a new identity in the global education market as financial pressures increase. In the turmoil, issues concerning their museums and collections can sometimes slip out of sight.

Members of CAUMAC remain committed to seeking the implementation of all the Cinderella Report recommendations, encouraging the development of mechanisms to ensure responsible stewardship and bringing the treasures housed in universities out of the cupboard to be enjoyed by all Australians.

CAUMAC staged a number of highly successful national conferences around Australia as an independent organisation. At the 1997 conference in Perth, however, the majority of members voted for incorporation as a Special Interest Group of Museums Australia. Members felt that amalgamation with the peak industry body would open university museums and their staff to a broader range of museum experience and expertise. This was considered essential to pursuing the Cinderella agenda. She needs help to get to the ball! Please make it your business to get to know a university museum today.

ANDREW SIMPSON IS MUSEUMS EDUCATION OFFICER, DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND LIFE SCIENCE AT MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY, NSW


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FILM AND EXHIBITION: COMPARATIVE THOUGHTS ON CRITICAL CULTURES

IN RECENT ISSUES OF *MUSEUM NATIONAL* LINDA YOUNG AND ANNA CLABBURN HAVE COMMENTED ASTUTELY ON THE SOMEWHAT SAD STATE OF EXHIBITION REVIEW IN AUSTRALIA. INFORMED COMMENTARIES ON, ESPECIALLY, NON-ART EXHIBITIONS ARE SELDOM PUBLISHED IN EITHER ACADEMIC OR POPULAR LITERATURE, AND A SUSTAINED DISCUSSION ABOUT ANY ONE EXHIBITION IS RARE INDEED.

As Young writes, 'it has to be said that the museum profession owns no critical culture'. This state of affairs exists in stark contrast to the critical culture that surrounds film. Popular film reviews are a staple of television and print media and there is a robust academic practice of cinema studies. Rather than tracing the reasons for this discrepancy, I explore here how the practice of film review might help in developing a critical culture around exhibition practice.

A film review usually begins with a formal analysis of the film text, attending to both the characteristics of the individual elements of the film and the ways in which they are combined. The analysis might include examining the film's narrative structure, techniques in camera position and movement, use of various types of sound, modes of lighting, the duration of shots, editing practices, the film's relationship to the historical world, the style of cinematography, the aesthetics of the *mise-en-scène*, and the qualities of the dialogue and acting. A specialised vocabulary is employed to describe the film text and to identify how particular film-making techniques have created specific characteristics.

This detailed description is used in interpreting and evaluating the film. Critics draw on a range of 'film theories' to decide how meanings are created in a film, incorporating ideas and methods from semiotics, textual analysis, psychoanalysis, feminism, post-structuralism, cultural politics and historical studies, depending on the writer's theoretical bent and capacity for esoterica. Such practices of interpretation are comparative. They depend on examining a particular film in the light of past efforts and on considering how different techniques have created different meanings. These 'privileged' interpretations can provide reference points for investigating how different audiences employ their own cultural codes to understand a film.

Similarly, evaluating a film — deciding whether it is more or less successful — relies upon comparing the film with an established history of films with similar aims, as well as judging whether the director has realised his or her vision. Evaluation is aided by shared understandings that divide the whole field of film practice into categories such as fiction/non-fiction, narrative genres, and mainstream/experimental. These categories provide

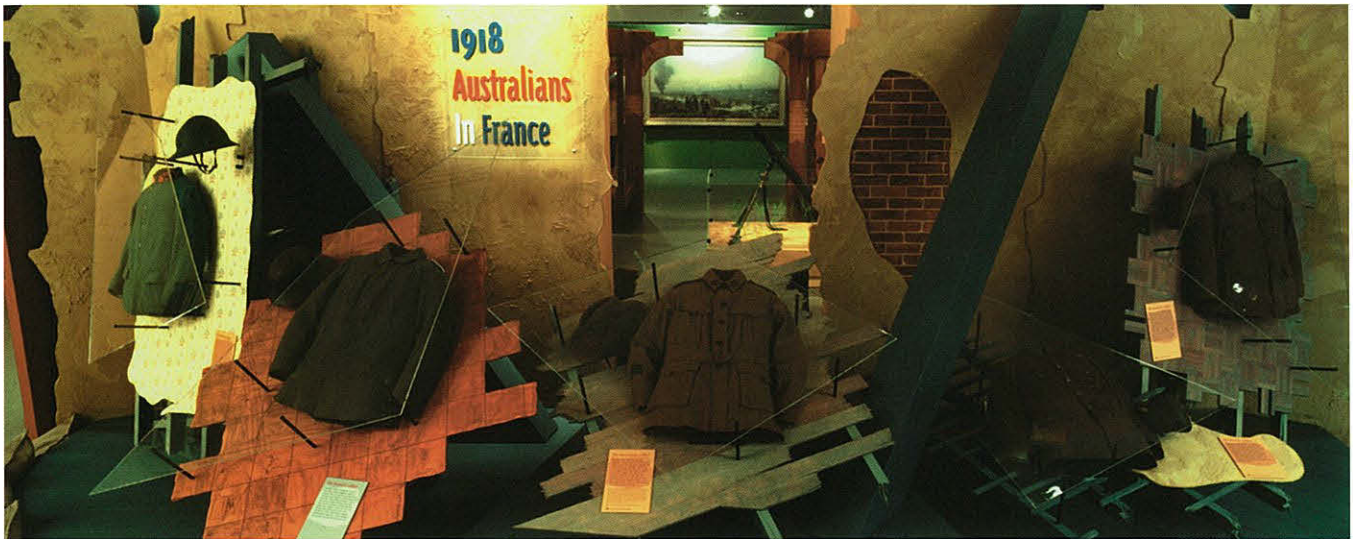
delineated arenas for critical conversation, as well as being important marketing tools. Over time, successive evaluations create a 'canon', a body of films and film reviews which are seen as 'classics' of the genre and which provide a benchmark for later productions. Often disputed, canons nevertheless focus discussion about what filmmakers are trying to achieve.

Different kinds of film review emphasise different aspects of this practice. Popular reviews steer clear of interpretation, focusing on evocative description and overtly subjective evaluation. Reviewers use widely held understandings of genre and style to help audiences decide whether they would be interested in a particular film. Academic reviews, on the other hand, emphasise interpretation, developing conceptual tools for understanding the social and psychic functions performed by films. All these activities, however, rely upon skills of formal analysis, knowledge of the history of film, and the ability to communicate the visual, aural and grammatical elements of films in words.

There are considerable differences between film and exhibition. They are created in different kinds of institutions, emerge through different cultures of work, and have different physical and conceptual possibilities. Films are usually seen as defined by the individual creative vision of the director, while exhibitions are understood to emerge parentless from an authoritative institution. Films are profoundly linear while exhibitions construct multiple paths between modules. Viewers watch but visitors wander around. Despite these differences, the model of film review I've described above does suggest some clues in developing a critical culture in the museum profession.

In comparison to the language used to critique films, we have relatively few concepts and words to discuss exhibitions. Film criticism attends to the interplay of textual content and form, considering how the juxtapositions and relationships between different filmic elements create meaning. Discussions of exhibitions tend to move quickly to questions of intellectual content, sliding superficially over the physical and technical qualities of an exhibition. It is rare, for example, to read (or even hear) explorations of the effects of exhibition architecture, wall colours, lighting techniques, security systems, textures of exhibit cases or the aesthetics of labels, brochures and audio-visual elements on the overall system of the exhibition. Yet these features, and particularly the interrelationships between them, are as important as the selection of objects and the wording of labels in determining the 'texts' visitors encounter in museums. Film reviewing suggests that developing a nuanced and complex language for describing these exhibition elements is essential to a vigorous critical culture.

Of course, many experienced developers already use such a vocabulary to talk about exhibitions, but it rarely circulates beyond unrecorded conversations to contribute to the entire profession's language. Design and curatorial staff employ aspects of a descriptive vocabulary but the gap that often stretches between them tends to fracture any holistic discussion about exhibitions. Drawing out these already existing resources into a broader critical culture would not only help us talk more fruitfully about our exhibitions to colleagues, but it could also



help us make them more interesting to the public. If we described, through popular reviews, the type of sensory experience visitors could enjoy at an exhibition, we might tap the same impetus that sends viewers to action or romance films, not for the plot but for the emotional and aesthetic punch.

Film critical culture also suggests the importance of an awareness of the history of exhibition practice to critical practice. The Australian museum profession boasts no established canon of exhibitions against which contemporary efforts can be considered and evaluated, although museum staff do develop individual records of successes and failures. Exhibitions are rarely interpreted in the context of established genres of display, and indeed we are a long way from deciding what those genres might be. It is impossible to think of categories of exhibition in the same way that we immediately understand divisions of comedy, action, drama, or horror in a video shop. Consequently, when people do feel moved to review an exhibition, the sensation is of murmuring in the wilderness rather than participating in a dynamic conversation. This situation derives, perhaps, from the very ephemerality of exhibitions. Unlike films, exhibitions are rarely accessible to those who don't get to visit them. They usually survive, once visitors have gone, only as a catalogue and a few photos. An integral part of developing a critical culture may be the creation of an accumulative record of exhibition practice.

I have no wish to disparage the efforts of scholars and museum professionals on many of these fronts. In interpretive work in particular, there is a growing body of literature that draws on ideas from semiotics, cultural studies and visitor learning to understand how exhibitions make meaning. These analyses, however, rarely seem to feed directly into either exhibition development or to stimulate popular reviewing. This disjunction may be caused by the lack of a widely shared descriptive vocabulary and historical knowledge I identified above.

I am merely throwing in my 'two bobs worth' on what I see as things we need to focus on in order to develop a dynamic and integrated critical culture. The example of film review demonstrates the need for variety in interpretive activities. We need to encourage the popular review of exhibitions in order to communicate with museums' publics and develop understanding of the new directions museums are taking. If the film world is



any example, however, this popular conversation relies upon a healthy specialist discussion about exhibition practice that can develop the descriptive, interpretive and historical resources that form the tools for any critical culture.

KIRSTEN WEHNER IS COMPLETING A DOCTORATE AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

1918: *Australians in France*, a travelling exhibition of the Australian War Memorial
Reproduced courtesy of Griffiths & Young Design

HOT POTATOES — CONTROVERSIAL EXHIBITIONS AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS

What happens when your dream exhibition becomes your worst nightmare?

This was the question behind an entertaining and well-attended hypothetical, 'Hot Potatoes', held in December at the Brisbane Powerhouse and organised by the Training and Professional Development Program (TPDP) of Museums Australia Qld and Regional Galleries Association of Queensland.

Panellists came from the Queensland museum and gallery industries – Ian Galloway, Director of the Queensland Museum (the Director), Frank McBride, Director of Brisbane City Gallery (the Curator), freelance arts writer, Peter Anderson (the 'muck raking' journalist) and Marett Leiboff, Queensland University of Technology law lecturer (the lawyer after a buck). The moderator was Professor Tom O'Regan, Director of the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy.

Panellists met in advance to develop six scenarios exploring what might upset your apple cart when managing a controversial exhibition. They centred on a hypothetical major British touring exhibition, *By Royal Decree*, offered to Australia in honour of the Australian Centenary of Federation, which the Queensland State Museum has agreed to take.

Then the nightmares begin ... and include:

Political interference ... The state Arts Minister, a fervent republican of Irish Australian ancestry, objects to the royalist nature of the show and off the record threatens to reduce museum funding unless it is cancelled.

Domestic/commercial intrigues ... Frank, the State Museum curator, is approached by a relative, an art dealer, offering significant (and much needed) sponsorship, provided a work he wants to sell is included in the local component of the touring exhibition.

Stolen property ... The iconic object of the exhibition is a painting donated to the royal collection by a British lord who served in Europe in World War II. An 85-year-old Holocaust survivor, now living in Brisbane, sees a billboard featuring this image and recognises it — and she has photographs of her home with the painting on the wall to prove it.

Public outcry ... Simultaneously, the museum's Access Gallery has a local Indigenous perspective on reconciliation featuring a poster demanding the prime minister apologise. Everyone going to the British exhibition (enormously successful because of the high number of monarchists per capita in Brisbane) queues for tickets in front of this poster. After complaints, the poster is relocated out of sight. Radical members of the Indigenous community picket the museum — and ticket sales suffer.

The lively discussion also addressed the influence of the media in fanning public controversy, and the legal, political and personal ethical considerations arising from the hypothetical dilemmas. The full text of 'Hot Potatoes' is available on the TPDP website (<http://www.maq.org.au/profdev/>).

CHRIS BROPHY, EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA QLD

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FUTURE DIRECTIONS

'What do art museums want?', reads a recent *New York Times* article: '... the answer, it increasingly seems, is that they want to be anything but art museums. Just look around. The lineup of fall shows suggests that museum professionals, driven by the desire to be financially secure, wildly popular or socially relevant, opt for one of two alternatives: exhibitions that look like upscale stores [read *Armani* at the Guggenheim and NYU's Grey Art Gallery exhibition, *Face to Face: Shiseido and the Manufacture of Beauty*], or exhibitions that look like historical society displays [*Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861* at the Met; *Made in California* at the LA County Museum of Art].'

Perhaps a more pertinent question to pose is: what can art museums be? How can they redefine their position within the current climate, the ever more complex matrix of new and familiar issues: sponsorship, audience development, cultural diversity, merchandising, professional development and so on?

Curating Now: Imaginative Practice/Public Responsibility, a forum organised by the Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative in October 2000, addressed many of these issues from a curatorial perspective. Rob Storr (MoMA, NY) led a hearty debate on the multiplicity of curatorial practice, outlining his recent experience of recontextualising the Moderns' collection in MoMA 2000 and the importance of conveying such theses to a public that may be unaware of plural interpretations, echoed by Nicholas Serota in regard to the opening of Tate Modern. In recognition of the evolution and expansion of the profession from a foundation of art

history scholars to include specialists from other disciplines and an expanded notion of visual culture, much discussion focused on where and how one might develop an informed curatorial practice. Thelma Golden, Deputy Director at the Studio Museum in Harlem, outlined the development of her own, primarily institutional career which has included positions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Whitney and the Norton Family Collection, the focus of her practice largely defined by context. In contrast, Hans Ulrich-Obrist (Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris) spoke of the pros and cons of 'in-between positions', freelance work and the 'biennial phenomenon', and the frequent necessity to think laterally in order to realise an exhibition, perhaps in another form, such as the broadsheet he produces and distributes in collaboration with retailer Agnes B. Kathy Halbreich, Director of the Walker Art Center, outlined the significance of community involvement, from inviting artists to serve on boards of trustees to the mentoring of high school students, shaping a collection that 'sings with many voices', extending this to include other institutions, such as the Walker and SFMoMA's recent joint purchase of a Matthew Barney piece that the two institutions will share on rotation. The crowded Philadelphia venue at 9 o'clock on a Saturday morning was testimony to the strong demand for such events — we'll hope to see more of the like in the future.

SARAH ROBINS HAS BEEN APPOINTED INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION COORDINATOR, LIVERPOOL BIENNIAL OF CONTEMPORARY ART, UK

Symposia at the National Gallery of Australia

MONET & Japan

10 March 2001

The symposium held in conjunction with the exhibition *Monet & Japan* will explore the influence of Japanese art on Monet's paintings. Specialist speakers will discuss various aspects of Japanese art and culture, broadening our understanding of this influence.

Speakers include: *Professor Virginia Spate*, University of Sydney; *Gary Hickey*, National Gallery of Australia; *Timothy Clark*, The British Museum; *Dr David Bromfield*, Freelance scholar; *Colta Ives*, Metropolitan Museum, New York; *Geneviève Lacambre*, Musée d'Orsay, Paris; *Haruki Yoshida*, independent scholar and *Professor John Clark*, University of Sydney.

Fourth Australian Print Symposium

20 – 22 April 2001

Reproduction in Our Region

A provocative and challenging examination of printmaking in Australia and the Australasian region, the Symposium will coincide with the National Gallery's exhibition *Islands in the Sun: Prints by indigenous artists of Australia and the Australasian region*, 17 February – 27 May 2001 www.australianprints.gov.au

For further information or to obtain a registration form for either Symposium phone Membership (02) 6240 6504 www.nga.gov.au

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PROFESSIONALISING THE MUSE

How do we attract, recruit and coach performance in the 21st century museum?

More time and energy is given in the museum/arts industry, without remuneration, than in any other sector because of people's love of, and passionate commitment to, cultural institutions. After 10 years' experience as an organisational psychologist in this sector, one could say that chronic low pay means most staff and consultants are also volunteers.

While this love affair with museums and galleries will never change, other things have. Research conducted in the 1990s described the 21st century museum as an audience-driven organisation with a special role to play in the creation of social capital in a market-driven economy. This phenomenon is irreversible. It challenges all associated with the museum sector to make the shift towards professionalising.

The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines professionalising as 'making a business of something not properly regarded as a business'. This is why new millennium museum directors/leaders are grappling with ways to support business development while developing a climate for the 'business' of cultural creativity.

The implications for volunteers become clear with the second definition: 'one who makes a business of an occupation, especially in the arts or sport, in which amateurs engage for amusement or recreation'. It is important to understand what an audience-driven organisation means to volunteer staff, given that the backbone of any museum, no matter how big it gets, is its volunteers.

Values

People volunteer because of personal values, the foundation for all our choices in life. Volunteering is based on a complex combination of values, influenced by a person's stage and age in life, gender, culture, education, and financial resources. Values cited by volunteers in the museum guide training program at the Art Gallery of New South Wales included: belonging and helpfulness, love of aesthetics, research and learning, personal development, integrity and self-respect.

Many people volunteer in between jobs, or during retirement from active work, because they value doing something meaningful, value social contact, or value the use of a particular skill that brings them pleasure. Volunteering is an excellent way of 'sampling' an organisation, as well as embarking on a new type of work without the risk of 'getting fired' if the role doesn't suit.

Gender makes a difference. More women than men seem to value volunteer work. If we look around our museums and galleries, we find the majority of volunteers are women who value cultural and community development.

Cultural mindset makes a difference. A country's religious and socio-economic history shapes values and makes a difference. Some cultures are more open than others to the idea of giving time without payment. For example, a participant in the 1999 World Congress of Friends of Museums described difficulties attracting museum volunteers in Hong Kong.

Needs

The most important reason for volunteering is basic: it gives us another way to do what we like to do, want to do, and need to

do to feel good about ourselves. Maslow's Hierarchy provides one model for understanding human motivational needs. This describes how lower level physiological and safety needs (food, shelter, income) have to be met before higher order needs such as social affiliation, self-esteem and self-actualisation become important. Attracting volunteers is easier when the museum understands how to tap into and meet the volunteer's needs. Remember, it's only when basic needs are met that people are motivated to volunteer.

Minority groups, low income groups, wise elders and other target groups museums would like to include as volunteers will only be able to do so when their own basic needs for food, housing and a secure income can be met. Either look for people whose lower level needs are already met (income), so they can volunteer, or meet these needs in some way so they can be part of the museum world. Once there, work out ways to meet higher order needs (social affiliation, self-esteem and self-actualisation), and the volunteer will make a long term commitment to the museum.

Motives

Motive theory, rather than needs, provides another way of understanding how to attract and retain volunteers. Three underlying motives influence the choices people make in life: achievement, power or influence, and affiliation. Although volunteers act on all three, one is usually stronger than the rest.

A volunteer with an Achievement motive will be attracted to opportunities for improving skills and talents. One with a Power and Influence motive will seek opportunities for using skills to make things happen with clear win/win outcomes. Volunteers with an Affiliation motive will be attracted to the museum because it offers opportunities for friendship, relationships, expression of feelings and social networks.

Negotiating expectations

Understanding why people volunteer can inform a well-designed selection process and performance agreement. Negotiating expectations around who does what, how to come into and go out of a museum, is best supported with an informal performance contract. The challenge of the job, whether for staff or volunteers, is the same. Professionalising the museums depends on successfully motivating and coaching performance that supports our museums as centres for the creation of social capital in a market economy.

The results? Managers of volunteers learn new skills, resulting in increased management competency. Volunteer jobs may lead to paid employment within the museum, which results in cost-effective selection and recruitment. Volunteers come with skills, learn new ones, and go on to other paid jobs as advocates for organisations in the business of cultural creativity.

DR SHERENE SUCHY IS AN ADJUNCT LECTURER WITH THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY. SHE IS IN PRIVATE PRACTICE AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA — PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In this year of the Centenary of Federation, we pause as a nation to take stock. Within the last four months, Museums Australia has also been taking stock.

Times of transition are often sobering and the Association experienced some considerable challenges during the latter part of 2000. But the outcome of that period has been a revitalised organisation with a determination to move forward positively into this new millennium. As President, I am happy to be able to say that we have achieved the necessary re-structure in such a short time due to a combination of the willingness of the Museums Australia Council to work as a team and face the challenges and the positive support of the membership base and our major stakeholders.

And the outlook is positive. After the loss of the Australia Council funding in 2000, it is heartening to be able to report that the Association has received a grant of \$20,000 from DOCITA towards the 2001 Museums Australia conference, \$24,300 from Environment Australia towards operating costs and a donation from the Thyne Reid Trust towards the publication of *Museum National*.

In addition, the National Office has been re-structured and now has an excellent team comprising Debbie Milsom (Membership Manager and Office Manager), Lindy Thornton (Accounts), Roslyn Russell (Editor — *Museum National*) and Catherine Gardner (Advertising Manager).

In 2001, we look forward to our first national conference

since 1999. The Conference Committee, ably led by co-convenors, Louise Douglas and Mark Whitmore, has put together an excellent program. The conference theme is *Australian collections, Australian cultures: museums and identities in 2001*.

Keynote speakers, parallel sessions and Special Interest Group activities will combine to offer a diverse and exciting program. Planned for 23rd–26th April in Canberra and specifically organised to include the Dawn Service on ANZAC Day, the conference highlights the essential issues and events that have given rise to a unique Australian identity and the role that museums play in the reflection, development and construction of that identity.

In this edition of *Museum National*, you will find a registration form for the conference. Further details can be located on our website at www.museumsaustralia.org.au I urge you to take advantage of the early bird registration and book now! I look forward to seeing you in Canberra.

Carol Scott
President
Museums Australia

MUSEUM NATIONAL HAS A NEW EDITOR AND A NEW ADVERTISING MANAGER.

Editor Roslyn Russell is a historian, and manager of Australian Heritage Projects, a public history consultancy that undertakes research, curatorial, writing and editing work. She holds a Master of Arts (Honours) degree in History, and a Graduate Diploma in Cultural Heritage Management. Author of several books, she edited the *Australian Customs History Journal* for some years.

Catherine Gardner, advertising manager, is director of her own marketing business, MARKETING THAT WORKS. She is the producer and managing director of the Australian Jazz Festival, held in Canberra in February. MARKETING THAT WORKS is assisting the National Museum of Australia with the organisation of its opening events.

MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA SIXTH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

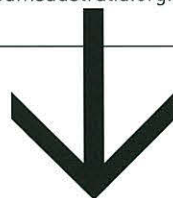
**Australian collections,
Australian cultures:
museums and identities
in 2001**

23–26 April 2001
*Manning Clark Centre,
Australian National
University, Canberra*

Members who wish to take advantage of the early bird rate will find a registration flyer in this issue of *Museum National*. Early bird registrations are available until 16 February.

Updates on the conference are being posted on Museums Australia's website. A copy of the information on the website will be sent to members who cannot access the Internet — please contact the Museums Australia office (02 6208 5044).

Museums Australia's website address is:
www.museumsaustralia.org.au



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FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Museum National

- **May**
Champions and stakeholders: building community with museums
- **August**
Museums and the nation

Contribute to *Museum National*.
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Heritage cabinets need a home

SCREENSOUND AUSTRALIA (AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL SCREEN AND SOUND ARCHIVE) IS GIVING GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS THE OPPORTUNITY TO BORROW, ON LONG TERM LOAN, SOME MUSEUM DISPLAY AND STORAGE CABINETS.

These beautifully crafted cedar and glass cabinets were made in 1931 to house Sir Colin MacKenzie's comparative anatomy collection. This collection generated, and was housed in the Institute of Anatomy at Acton, Canberra. When Screensound moved into that building in 1985, it acquired the large cabinets as part of the premises. As the cabinets are not ideal for the display of Screensound's collection, they are currently in storage. Screensound would now like to offer the long term use of them to organisations which have the space and purpose to accommodate them. One such successful loan has been to the Braidwood Museum; however, most still remain in storage.



The cabinets are very large and are of four different designs:

Type 1: Flat topped display case with double-sided sloping glass cover, on legs.

Dimensions: 3645mm(length) x 1555mm(width) x 1200mm(height)

Type 3: Top designed as above but supported on 24 wooden storage drawers on each side instead of legs.

Dimensions: 4960mm(length) x 1570mm(width) x 1200mm(height)

Type 2: Flat topped display case with sloping glass cover, supported on 24 wooden storage drawers. Backed by tall, narrow display case with full length glass doors on opposite side to wooden drawers.

Dimensions: 4500mm(length) x 1280mm(width) x 2130mm(height)

Type 4: Tall narrow display case with full length glass doors at front.
Dimensions: 4500mm(length) x 510mm(width) X 2130mm(height)

They are crafted primarily of Australian cedar and glass, with brass fittings and are in good condition.

The Australian Heritage Commission has given permission for the cabinets to be loaned to organisations on the understanding that they will remain intact, their origin be acknowledged and that they be used for a suitable purpose.

If you are interested in acquiring one or more of these cabinets, and would like more information, please contact the Manager, Collection Management at Screensound on 62482273 or email: Bob_pymm@screensound.gov.au. Photographs are available.

FOSSILS

Patricia Vickers-Rich and Thomas Hewitt-Rich, *Wildlife of Gondwana: Dinosaurs and other Vertebrates from the Ancient Supercontinent*, Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1999. ISBN: 0 253336 430

The concept of an ancient supercontinent, Gondwana — comprising Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica, India, Africa and South America — explains much that was puzzling to the early European naturalists, explorers and settlers of Australia. *Wildlife of Gondwana* goes some way to elucidating the evolution and dispersal of the Great South Land and its wildlife.

Until recently, there was a dearth of books on Australian fossils, and those few were restricted in scope or intended more as student texts. Books on fossils were relegated to the children's section of bookstores, or, if they had more text than pictures, to obscure science corners. Fossils were perceived to be rather dull, odd-shaped lumps of rock, of interest only to 10-year-old boys and nerds. *Wildlife of Gondwana* gives the lie to both of these stereotypes.

The authors bring a wealth of experience to the project. Columbia University PhDs in palaeontology, they joined Dr R H Tedford on a 1971 expedition to find Tertiary mammals in Australia. They decided to emigrate, Tom going to the Museum of Victoria as Curator of Vertebrate Palaeontology, and Pat to the Department of Earth Sciences at Monash University. After working on Tertiary marsupials from central Australia, Tom followed a lead provided by one of Pat's students, and began a program



of excavation for Cretaceous dinosaurs and mammals along Victoria's south coast.

The book contains a wealth of exceptional photographs, mostly by Francesco Coffa and Steven Morton, of many of the best specimens representing the ancient life of Gondwana. Some reconstructions by artist Peter Trusler bring the fossils to vivid life.

Despite its 'coffee-table book' appearance, *Wildlife of Gondwana* is a mine of information and a fascinating glimpse of vanished times. The book has something for almost everyone — biography, history, geography, adventure, mystery, discovery, and of course, animals, and some superb photography. It is divided into four self-contained sections: 'Gondwana in perspective', 'The search for beginnings', 'The fossil vertebrates of Australia' (six chapters), and 'Gondwanan faunas in global context', together with an extensive glossary of terms, a systematic list of species and their geological occurrences, and a comprehensive bibliography.

First published in 1993, this new edition is revised, updated and includes an afterword on 'New discoveries in Gondwana'. Such is the rate of new fossil discoveries: an

indication of the increasing level of public interest.

Production of the book is excellent. The text is clear, the photographs are crisp and the numerous diagrams and maps are informative and well-captioned. There are a few criticisms, e.g. the common error, 'Quaternary' for the correct 'Quaternary'. Disappointing also is the omission from the 'Afterword' of a second, quite different monotreme, *Kollikodon*, from Lightning Ridge. But it is difficult, in a field as broad as palaeontology, to keep up with all changes and decide on which discoveries to mention or omit.

Wildlife of Gondwana is a good browse and a good read. It demonstrates the vigorous state of museum and university fossil work in this country. Many of the species depicted here can be seen in actuality in your State museum.

NEVILLE PLEDGE IS CURATOR OF FOSSILS, SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM

Above: Megalania prisca, the giant goanna here shown menacing the nest of Genyornis newtoni, is reconstructed from a composite partial skeleton based on bones borrowed by Dr Tom Rich from a number of museums around Australia

EXHIBITION

The Maritime Museum of Tasmania, Argyle Street, Battery Point, Hobart.

I have to confess that I have never felt particularly at home in maritime museums. They seem designed for older men with upright bearing and weather-beaten complexions, who examine each of the many, many ship models on display with intense and expert eyes. I had been once to the old Maritime Museum at Battery Point, mainly to see the lovely old houses it used to inhabit. So it has to be said that I approached the new Maritime Museum with something less than whole-hearted excitement. But what a pleasant surprise awaited me!

For a start the place was full of women, apparently enjoying themselves just as much as were their menfolk, those of the upright bearing and weather-beaten complexions. The whole impression was of colour, of pictures, of a wide range of interesting objects, of inviting-looking text panels with crisp, even witty headings. Wow!

Maybe maritime history was for me after all.

The museum spreads through three main galleries. In the first, we encounter Aboriginal Tasmanians, the island's first sea-going people; French, Dutch and English exploration; early Hobart history in which ships played such a key role; and early shipping ventures. In the second, topics include a major exposition of the whaling industry; famous shipwrecks; Hobart's colourful small ketches and steamers; naval history and shipbuilding from colonial times to the innovative and internationally successful Seacat, contrasting with the colonial ships like a bit of spacecraft fallen to earth.

So the topics covered seem fairly obvious, although the hatch cover from Joseph Conrad's first and only command, the *Otago*, which ended its days in Otago Bay near Hobart, was an

unexpected treat. But the way in which they were treated was a real surprise. It was immediately obvious that Jeff Gordon, the Curator, and his volunteer staff had risen in an exemplary way to the challenge of making their passion accessible and appealing to non-seadogs. Each topic deals with stories about people, including a number of women whose contribution to this history is happily acknowledged, from documents, published works, photos and paintings, objects and oral history. There are lots of models, lovely paintings, a couple of very nice figureheads (which need to be installed high up, not left on the floor), some charming ephemera and some really beautiful scrimshaw.

Densely textured, rich in anecdote and humour, succinct and an object lesson in brevity, each text panel repays close reading. The writer, Mike

Nash, is a maritime archaeologist seconded from National Parks and Wildlife, and as I understand it has never done this before — well, he could teach the rest of us a thing or two about lively, concise writing. And the style of the text presentation also puts many a well-funded, large institution stacked with professionals to shame. The font is readable and of a good size, line lengths are short and lighting is good, making text inviting and minimising visitor fatigue.

I have only one major complaint and one very minor one — sometimes a story is realised over a number of panels, which is fine, but the order in which the visitor encounters them tends to be confusing. I sometimes felt as though I was intended to start in the middle and then fan out left and right, or start at left and work my way left to right in an alcove. Neither feels natural or comfortable. And just a quibble — while images are well-chosen and generally well-used, occasionally they lack a caption.

The new Maritime Museum of Tasmania is an outstanding addition to the wealth of exciting museums and galleries around Tasmania. Given the importance of our maritime history as Australia's island state, that is as it should be.

JULIA CLARK, MANAGER,
INTERPRETATION &
COLLECTIONS, PORT ARTHUR
HISTORIC SITE

in UTS's postgraduate Arts and Management course needed this volume! It is a very welcome addition to the literature — for students, policymakers and industry professionals alike.

Stevenson sets out 'to take stock of turbulent times in cultural policy and arts practice and, by utilising social and cultural theory, to contextualise and analyse significant policy and industry changes'. With an emphasis on turbulence and change, she succeeds well in achieving this aim.

The book arcs nicely from some quick theoretical scene setting and the big moments in recent cultural policy and arts practice history, from Paul Keating's Creative Nation to a deft unpacking of that most important bureaucracy, the Australia Council (including the role of the values of access, equity and excellence in its grant giving). Moving on to the role of state, territory and local governments, Stevenson laments the position of local government, which finds itself managing a substantial portion of cultural and arts activity around Australia. She demonstrates that advent of cultural planning as a methodology has not necessarily made the lives of local government any easier, as many regard cultural planning as a 'radical even revolutionary approach to city governance and the management of urban space'.

The final third of the book deals with issues of interpretation and representation. The development of cultural tourism and the growing awareness of the importance of cultural industries and tourism to each other is well covered, with Stevenson arguing that 'if the cultural tourism strategy "gets it right" for the local community visitors will want to enjoy the

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REVIEW LOUISE DOUGLAS

CULTURAL POLICY

Art and Organisation, Deborah Stevenson, University of Queensland Press, Cultural and Media Policy Studies, 2000

As I read *Art and Organisation*, I remembered how much the first cohort of students (1990)

same experiences'. Questions around how authenticity and sense of place are manipulated and made meaningful to the casual visitor are explored but perhaps not enough. It would have been useful to see historian Peter Read's work on sense of place incorporated into this discussion. Stevenson describes the way in which structures and policies encourage the marginalisation of minority groups in the arts, using the situation of Indigenous people as a case study.

In tackling the complexity of cultural industries *Art and Organisation* works across a very broad canvas and this inevitably gives rise to weaknesses in coverage. Taking the perspective of the heritage and museum sector, including examples from science and technology (an integral part of what makes up cultural life in 2001) would have given the book a sharper relevance. Also, the discussion of 'blockbusters' which has created such debate in the museum community is dealt with in a cursory manner. These are relatively slight criticisms in the context of the overall achievement of the book and I commend it to museum people who will, as I did, find it an insightful and enjoyable read.

LOUISE DOUGLAS, MANAGER, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROGRAM, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

REVIEW BRIAN CROZIER

MATERIAL CULTURE

Material Culture. Henry Glassie. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1999. ISBN: 0253335744

'If history reduces to a linear, segmented tale of change', writes Henry Glassie, 'it falls

into alliance with the forces of oppression. If history can be a myth that entails progress and oppression and continuity, a story that is spatial as well as temporal, moral as well as factual, gentle to adversity, then it can serve its people.' (p.39)

This is his plea for a fully democratic history which is concerned with continuity and all the non-written forms of human expression, and which is culturally useful. To this extent, Glassie's book deserves attention from Australian museum curators.

Cultural heritage curation in Australian museums draws its inspiration from two sources: history and anthropology. Of these, anthropology has a significant lineage and a relatively clear sense of identity. History, on the other hand, is still trying to define itself in the museum context. While the historians clearly recognise the significance of material culture as a concept to their work, the phrase is one from anthropology. Glassie defines it as 'the conventional name for the tangible yield of human conduct' (p.41) though in practice he is concerned mostly with traditional art and craft.

In the early sections of this book he uses the phrase as a counterpoint against history as practised by the historians. His argument is based on what he sees as the more inclusive nature of anthropology, which deals not just with those who can write, but with the many more who make things, and with sub-groups (women, ethnic minorities, sub-cultures of all kinds) inhabiting the 'darkness' ignored in the historical preoccupation with elites, and with continuity as well as change. Glassie argues that history needs to be more 'useful', that is, of more use in our contemporary cultural dialectic, and looks for a



'reconciliation of anthropology and history...' (p.8) In this view, it is as important to look at what does not change, i.e. cultural continuities, as at what does change.

The book comprises valuable chapters on 'History' (the 'quest for better historical constructions') and 'Material culture' (the nature of material culture and the many contexts in which items of material culture can be seen). Two chapters explore the nature of material culture through exemplary craftspeople working with carpets and pottery. A final chapter is on vernacular architecture.

The nature of the prose is important: Glassie makes an affirmation, rather more than an argument. The proposition outlined at the opening of this review is not fully developed: the book's real concern is the relationship between the craftsperson and things made by hand. It is based on William Morris's rejection of an industrial culture in which consumers have no relationship to the things they use. 'Those who make things', on the other hand, says Glassie, 'know who they are'. The artist's creations work in the world, embodying cultural complexities and shaping relations among people, between people and the

environment, between people and the forces that rule creation.' (p.194)

Morris, of course, writing at the end of the 19th century, idealised a world that had already passed. In the same way, we have to wonder if the art and craft eloquently evoked by Glassie is quite as mystical in its context and execution as he suggests, or if the traditions to which he refers are quite so unchanging. The romanticism which infuses the book will be attractive to those already committed to asserting the values of traditional craftsmanship over industrial production and consumption. But I would like to see an account of material culture more firmly based on Western industrial society, and a further development of the broader themes outlined at the opening of this review.

BRIAN CROZIER IS SENIOR CURATOR, SOCIAL HISTORY, QUEENSLAND MUSEUM, BRISBANE

Above: Curators examine objects at the Queensland Museum
Reproduced courtesy of Queensland Museum

NOTICEBOARD

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS — LINKS ACROSS THE NATION

The Special Interest Groups (SIGs) of Museums Australia link members with specific museum interests across the nation, as distinct from the geographical orientation of the state and territory branches. This issue of *Museum National* carries two articles on the work of one SIG, CAUMAC, for university museums, demonstrating how a national SIG network, once established, can itself become linked to the international network for that area of museum interest.

MA Noticeboard would like to hear from your SIG soon! Information about upcoming events such as conferences and professional development opportunities — or other news from your SIG — would be most welcome for the May issue of *Museum National*.

stimulating events and programs of *Palimpsest*, and provides a chance to meet some of the more interesting contemporary artists. The draft program is available on the website of the Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV), www.pgav.org.au

Australian collections, Australian cultures: museums and identities in 2001, Sixth Annual Museums Australia National Conference, 23–26 April 2001, Manning Clark Centre, Australian National University, Canberra. See Museums Australia website, www.museumsaustralia.org.au for details.

Bridging the boundaries, 5th National Regional and Remote Museums Conference, Kalgoorlie, 26–29 October 2001. Contact Museum Assistance Program of the WA Museum at RRRMuseumConference@museum.wa.gov.au

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IAA Training workshops

Interpretation Australia Association is holding a series of training workshops throughout 2001, beginning in Canberra on 19–20 February. John Pastorelli will lead workshops in Guiding Skills and Creative Thinking. Other workshop topics over the next few months include Cross-Cultural Communications, Audience Research and Evaluation, Hearing and Vision Impairment Awareness, Quality Interpretation, Festivals and Events Management and 'Train the Trainer'. For more information on the program and updates on times and venues, contact Cath Renwick, mobile 0419 491 104, email oito@pcug.org.au

Museums in the 21st century

— Session 387 of Salzburg Seminar, 16–23 May 2001, Schloss Leopoldskron, Salzburg, Austria. The Salzburg Seminar is the world's foremost convenor of mid-career professionals on topics of global concern. This session will bring together museum directors, curators, arts management professionals, cultural economists, museum patrons, cultural theorists, politicians and representatives of philanthropic organisations and cultural ministries around the world to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by museums in the 21st century. Email www.salzburgseminar.org

The deadline for Noticeboard items is 30 March; an article about your SIG should reach the editor by 19 March.

CONFERENCES IN AUSTRALIA

Symposium held in connection with the exhibition, *Monet and Japan*, National Gallery of Australia, 10–11 March 2001. Contact Barbara Poliness, 02 6240 6619, fax 02 6240 6560.

The Exotic During the Long Eighteenth Century (1660–1830), 26–28 March 2001, National Library of Australia, Parkes Place, Canberra, ACT. Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University. The conference accompanies the exhibition on Omai (see article in this issue).

Summit 2001 – Dissolving Distance, 18–20 April 2001, Mildura Arts Centre, Victoria, for all directors, curators, education officers and board members. Coincides with the

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

Museum 2000 — Confirmation or challenge?, 10–13 June 2001, Stockholm, Sweden. The organisers welcome museum colleagues and researchers from all over the world to discuss the future of museums, their renewal, and the necessary work of change that contemporary issues provoke in cultural institutions. Contact Sophie Nyman, tel +46 8 691 60 21, fax +46 8 691 60 20, email sophie.nyman@riksutstallningar.se For updated information about the program visit the website <http://museum2000.riksutstallningar.se>

Managing Change: museums facing economic and social challenges, ICOM 2001, 1–6 July, Barcelona, Spain. Email info@icom2001barcelona.org <http://www.icom2001barcelona.org>

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AND ANOTHER THING ...

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

High praise for the Biennale of Sydney 2000 from *ARTNews* reviewer Peter Hill in the November 2000 issue.

'Sydney's 12th biennial this summer gave a compelling overview of global art practice from the past two decades. Although many of the names were familiar — Sophie Calle, Matthew Barney, Pipilotti Rist, Xu Bing, Gerhard Richter, Chris Ofili, Yoko Ono — many new works were displayed, while older pieces were presented from fresh viewpoints ...'

'One expects disappointments at biennials, such is the usual grab bag of selection and curation. Yet this biennial, team-curated by Nicholas Serota, Fumio Nanjo, Harald Szeeman, Louise Neri, Robert Storr, Hetti Perkins, and Nick Waterlow, just got better and better. The Museum of Contemporary Art was a triumph of inspired selection and intelligent juxtaposition.'

Tracey Moffatt and Fiona Hall were singled out for special mention by Hill, and the review is illustrated by one of Hall's signature 'sardine tin' sculptures.

NEW HEAD OF AUSTRALIAN ART AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA

Dr Anna Gray, formerly senior curator at the Australian War Memorial, was appointed in late December to the position of head of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Australia, after the resignation of Dr John McDonald.

Gray, described by *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist Joyce Morgan as a 'safe choice' after McDonald's controversial appointment and resignation after just a year in the job, has had over 20 years' experience as a writer, curator and art administrator. She is an expert on the work of George Lambert, and has just spent a year at the National Library editing Donald Friend's voluminous diaries.

She is not perturbed by the administrative aspects of the job that so frustrated her predecessor and claims 'I get a lot of pleasure out of problem-solving'.

'I have a passion for art and Australian art and where best could I do something for both of those but in this job.'



Two-up game on the Kalgoortie Goldfields

5TH NATIONAL REGIONAL AND REMOTE MUSEUMS CONFERENCE Kalgoortie, 26–29 October 2001.

From Meekatharra to Mullumbimby and Broken Hill to Broome, people working in the management and development of cultural heritage will be drawn to this conference, to be hosted by the Western Australian Museum and partners.

The National Prospectors' and Miners' Hall of Fame is to be opened by the prime minister only two days before the conference, which will take full advantage of the Kalgoortie-Boulder region's diverse and multicultural history.

Models and strategies will be showcased through seminars, workshops and field trips to remote locations, assisting museums to enhance their value within communities. The Goldfields' rich natural and cultural heritage, with its mining and social history and such new developments as the interpretation of the 560km Golden Pipeline heritage site and the controversial Brothel

Museum, make a stimulating backdrop for an exchange of ideas, knowledge, experience and stories in this year of the Centenary of Federation.

Strategically situated at the eastern gateway to WA, Kalgoortie-Boulder can be reached by direct air service from Adelaide, and the Indian Pacific Railway offers an opportunity to take one of the world's great train journeys. The Nullabor provides a bitumen link past the scenic Great Australian Bight from the eastern states. For the more adventurous, the road through the red centre via Uluru, Kata Juta and Laverton offers a chance to experience a major Australian dirt trail.

Make the odyssey to WA in 2001.

Attractive travel packages and bursaries will be available. For further information contact the Museum Assistance Program of the WA Museum at RRRMuseumConference@museum.wa.gov.au

ASIA-PACIFIC TRIENNIAL'S FUTURE SECURED

Queensland Art Gallery's Board of Trustees has endorsed the continuation of the Asia-Pacific Triennial (APT) into the next decade.

The fourth Asia-Pacific Triennial will be the inaugural exhibition in the new

Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, due to open in 2005.

Queensland Art Gallery Director Doug Hall said that approval for the APT project had given the Gallery the opportunity to build on the momentum and reputation

established over the last decade.

'One of the most tangible and exciting realisations of the APT has been the strengthening and building of what is now an internationally recognised collection of

contemporary Asian art. Our commitment over the past 10 years has seen the development of a rich network of professional relationships with artists, curators, writers and administrators in the region.'

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