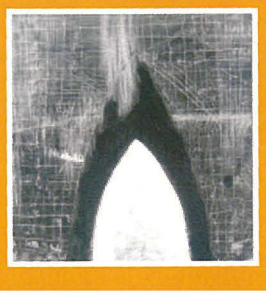
museumsaustralia MAGAZINE

AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES ISSUES • NEWS • VIEWS MAY 2008

Converging Currents – Valuing Museums II



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Museums Australia Magazine is a forum for news, opinion and debate on museum issues.

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

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(Top) Katie with yacht from *Bateaux Jouets* exhibition. Photo by Andrew Frolows, courtesy of Australian National Maritime Museum.

(Bottom, left to right) Sally Flynn, *The Grid*, 2004, from *Framing Marginal Art*, Cunningham Dax Collection; Bluey Roberts, *River spirit dreaming* 1989, from *Murray Cod: the biggest fish in the river*, courtesy of the artist. Museum Victoria; Carla Krijt, *No title*, 1998, from *Framing Marginal Art*, Cunningham Dax Collection; Dolls in toy boat from *Bateaux Jouets* exhibition, photo by Arnaud Fux courtesy of Australian National Maritime Museum.

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VALUING MUSEUMS: EXHIBITIONS AND GIFTS

The theme for *Museums Australia Magazine* this year, introduced in the February issue by Carol Scott's thought-provoking article, 'What the public values about museums', is 'Valuing Museums'. One of the key reasons why the public values museums is that they 'offer different ways to interact with objects and the stories that lie buried within them'. Exhibitions are one point at which this interaction takes place.

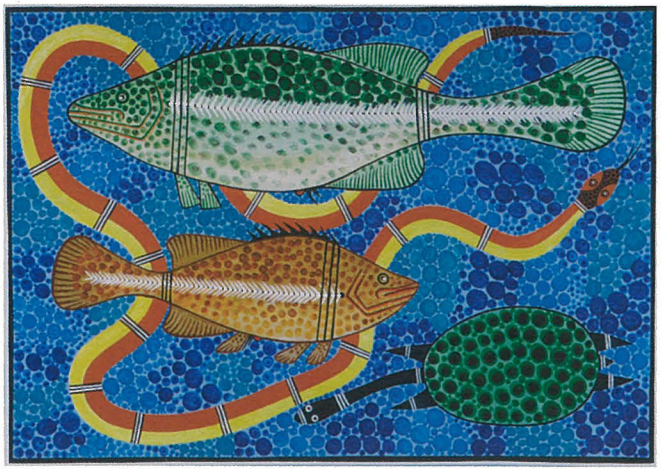
Museum exhibitions can encompass large themes: for example, conflicts in which Australians have been involved since 1945 at the Australian War Memorial; the nineteenth-century tradition of landscape painting, in *Turner to Monet* at the National Gallery; or a sporting tradition beloved by generations of Australians at the National Museum. They can tell the story of a whole city, as does *The Melbourne Story*, the largest exhibition ever developed by Museum Victoria. They can also highlight little known aspects of a subject, focus on a specific species of fauna, or take a thoughtful look at creativity in a specific context.

Public response to exhibitions often generates media comment, particularly when crowds come out for high profile shows. Easter and the school holidays were busy times for Canberra's national institutions, with large visitor numbers reported at the Australian War Memorial for the newly opened *Conflicts 1945 to today* exhibition. The National Gallery of Australia's *Turner to Monet: the triumph of landscape painting* exhibition, showcasing nineteenth-century landscape painting in the Western tradition (and demonstrating yet again that the name 'Monet' in an exhibition title is sure to appeal), generated long queues to enter the exhibition. The National Museum's *League of Legends: 100 years of Rugby League in Australia* has attracted a new audience to the Museum. Here are a few more exhibitions, among the many on display around the country that are bringing the collections of our museums to public notice.

The Melbourne Story at Melbourne Museum features more than 1200 objects from Museum Victoria's collections, including iconic objects from Melbourne's history such as a bark canoe from the Yarra River, a restored Cobb & Co coach, a carriage from the Luna Park Big Dipper and the much-loved 'Little Men' from Coles' Book Arcade.

Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, looking north from Flinders, around 1900.

Photographer: Unknown. State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection
Courtesy of Museum Victoria



Bluey Roberts, River spirit dreaming 1989, from *Murray Cod: the biggest fish in the river*. Courtesy of the artist.

Museum Victoria

Melbourne Museum's Bunjilaka Gallery is showing an exhibition developed by Swan Hill Regional Gallery, *Murray Cod: the biggest fish in the river.* It showcases visual art inspired by Australia's most iconic fish, with over 40 works by 27 artists. The exhibition's curator, John Kean, said that it 'includes some of the first illustrations of the Murray cod by European scientists and explorers, as well as the ongoing association of Indigenous people with the fish'. The story continues into the era of commercial harvesting of the Murray Cod, and its appeal for anglers, and is on display at Melbourne Museum until 27 July.

University museums have rich collections that make fascinating exhibitions. The Nicholson Museum in the University of Sydney is showing *Classical Fantasies: The Art of South Italy*, *Classical Fantasies* uses the entire collection of the Nicholson's more than 200 South Italian pots, dating from the 5th to the 3rd century BC, to explore the lives of the influential artists, poets, authors, collectors and designers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when Neo-Classicism was born.

A way to show appreciation of the value of museums is to take an active part in building their collections. There have been some major gifts to Australian art galleries in recent months. *The Art Newspaper* (April 2008) headlined its article on John Kaldor's magnificent gift to the Art Gallery of New South Wales of 260 works of contemporary art '"A quantum leap" for Australia'. Kaldor's gift includes works by international contemporary artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Christo, Sol LeWitt, and Jeff Koons, and Australian contemporary artists Fiona Hall, Adam Cullen and Mike Parr. The Gallery is converting a former storage area into a gallery to house the collection, a process funded by another donation, from the family of the late Franco Belgiorno-Nettis.

The National Gallery also received a gift from the family of Rosalie Gascoigne, another of Australia's celebrated contemporary artists, when they donated her last major series of ten works, *Earth* 1999, to the Gallery. National Gallery Director Ron Radford said that 'The gift to the nation will help us continue to recognise and share Rosalie Gascoigne's remarkable contribution to Australian art with our many visitors for many years to come'. (*Canberra Times*, 19 March 2008)

CONVERGING CURRENTS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE

'Museums are increasingly grappling with broader cultural heritage issues outside their traditional roles: intangible heritage, heritage of place, and their legislative and institutional frameworks are some of the elements providing the impetus for convergence of intellectual and physical management of our cultural heritage.'

These words introduced an invitation to an event on 18 February this year, when 86 people gathered at Old Parliament House for a symposium, *Converging Currents*, organised by Museums Australia National Office and the University of Canberra (Cultural Heritage Studies Program), in conjunction with Old Parliament House. The symposium was timed to take advantage of the UNESCO *Memory of the World* International Conference that opened the following day at the National Library of Australia, and was 'designed to canvass the issues relating to convergence across sectors in cultural heritage management'.

The objectives of the symposium were

- to draw out and clarify the international and national frameworks impacting on the interpretation, management and sustainability of cultural heritage programs;
- to consider how this frames cultural heritage management generally in Australia, and how it affects museums in particular;
- to use this framework to map out how inter-disciplinary and cross-cultural work within museums might better engage and draw support from a broader range of bodies and programs operating in the external environment;
- to look at education models within museums and supporting museum practice, and individual efforts to capitalise on convergence of cultural heritage practice.

In Session One, 'Establishing the Framework for Cultural Heritage Policy', Alissandra Cummins, President of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and Chair of the International Advisory Committee of UNESCO's *Memory of the World* (MoW) Program, gave a presentation on 'UNESCO, World Memory and Museums', and the strategic framework within which ICOM and MoW operate. Museum collections, with strong links to community memories, can be ideal candidates for inscription on *Memory of the World* registers. Ms Cummins encouraged museums to become involved with the MoW program, and gave examples of museum collections that are already inscribed on both the Australian and international *Memory of the World* registers.

Craddock Morton, Director of the National Museum of Australia, spoke on 'Conserving Australian Heritage and Communicating it to the World'. He outlined the infrastructure supporting cultural heritage management in Australia, and the Commonwealth legislative frameworks enabling community heritage protection.

In Session Two, 'Convergence Across Sectors – What are the Implications?' Dr Jane Lennon of the Australian Heritage Council spoke on 'Convergence of Care? Collections & Place', and claimed that there is still a split between the ways in which cultural and natural heritage, and places and objects are treated in Australia. While the Burra Charter revision carried out by Australia ICOMOS in 1999 recognised intangible heritage values, the treatment of cultural heritage is still fragmented, and we have not yet achieved convergence. She concluded that Australia still lacks 'a national approach to cultural heritage'.

(Above) Patricia Sabine, representing the Australian War Memorial, accepts a certificate of inscription on the UNESCO *Memory of the World* Australian Register from Joie Springer, representing the Director-General of UNESCO, at a ceremony at the National Archives of Australia on 22 February 2008.

Photograph courtesy of the National Archives of Australia

(Left) Alissandra Cummins addresses the *Converging Currents* symposium at Old Parliament House, 18 February 2008.

Photo: Roslyn Russell

Kate Cowie, Assistant Secretary, Old Parliament House Exhibitions, Research and Programs, described the complex heritage issues presented by Old Parliament House's history of management since Parliament left in 1988, and the collaborative process of developing the interpretation of the former Press Gallery when she addressed the issue of 'Practical Convergence – Creating Meaning in a Heritage Site'.

Session Three, 'Museums, Universities and History Education' concluded the symposium on a high note. Glenda Smith, Acting Manager, Communications and Visitor Services, Old Parliament House, gave an insight into a successful event involving educators and the heritage spaces of Old Parliament House, in 'The Australian History Summer School Program – Convergence in Action'. Dr James Warden, Convenor of Cultural Heritage Studies, University of Canberra, spoke about 'The Three Cultures of Heritage', in a presentation which ranged from the interpretation of 'three cultures' in a historic site in Mexico City, to documentary heritage from Mexico (and Spain and Australia) on the *Memory of the World* register, and challenged delegates to take a holistic view of educating cultural heritage students in the full gamut of heritage practice, from the sciences to the humanities.

Later that week, in the concluding event of the UNESCO *Memory of the World* International Conference in Gallery 1, National Archives of Australia, three museum collections were inscribed on the Australian *Memory of the World* Register: the National Gallery of Australia's James Gleeson Oral History interviews with Australian artists; the Australian War Memorial's Gallipoli 1915 film by Ashmead-Bartlett; and Museum Victoria's Donald Thomson Ethnohistory Collection.

NEW ERA FOR COLLECTIONS SECTOR IN WA

Between November 2007 and February 2008 three major state government announcements have ensured that a new era has indeed dawned in the Collections sector in Western Australia. A collective sigh of relief has been heard as finally it appears that the 'booming economy' of Western Australia will ensure that there is a legacy left for future generations.

The announcements began in November when Minister Sheila McHale, released the long-awaited and much-anticipated Museum Policy Reference Group Report, 'Developing a Way Forward for Western Australia's Heritage Collections and Collectors'.

The Reference Group chaired by Peter Watson MLA, and comprising a well credentialed group representing all aspects of sector activities, delivered a report which paints an accurate, and not always optimistic picture of the WA Collections sector. The survey results accompanying the report provide a valuable profile of organisations in the sector, their audiences, policies, operations, and the state of their collections and resources.

The Watson Report lists sixteen key recommendations. They include working with the sector to encourage implementation of national guidelines and benchmarks, and the development of purpose-designed and co-located cultural facilities with local government and other State and federal agencies.

While falling short on delivering a 'Museum Policy' per se, the first recommendation of the Watson Report, that the State government prepare an Action Plan, has been delivered with the 'Collections Sector Action Plan', announced by the Minister at the time of releasing the Report.

The action plan seeks to address most of the Watson Report's recommendations, and has distilled these into three key action areas: advocate and support nationally endorsed projects; strengthen relationships with key partners; and expand grant opportunities for collections development.

Support for National Programs will mean increased support for the Collections Council of Australia (CCA), a commitment to pilot the Regional Hub Project proposed by the CCA, subject to Federal government support, and increased funding for the repatriation of Indigenous cultural property. In its support for Regional Hubs the State government is the first state to commit financial support to this project.

In its desire to strengthen relationships with key partners in the sector, the Department of Culture and the Arts (DCA) and Museums Australia WA (MAWA) have reached an in-principle agreement for three-year funding allowing MAWA to deliver key projects including the roll-out of National Standards and a Collections Sector Training Review. Most importantly though, there are expanded and new grant opportunities, including an additional $75,000 per annum available through existing DCA grant programs of Emerging Curators and Short Term Artist in Residence, as well as a new grant program of $80,000 per annum specifically for collections.

Some weeks later at another gathering of the arts community, the Premier and the Minister were once again providing welcome news to the sector with the announcement of Ignite!, a total package to the Arts and Culture sector of $73M million over four years.

The Art Gallery of Western Australia was a major beneficiary, with the creation of an Acquisition Fund to enable the WA State Art Collection to become the pre-eminent collection of Western Australian Indigenous art and non-Indigenous art, and a world renowned collection rich in iconic contemporary works that will in turn provide a vital experience of Western Australia's culture.

The Government has contributed $10 million initially to kick start the Fund and, in a ground-breaking deal, the Government has offered a further $5 million if the Gallery can get the corporate sector to match the $10 million.

On 8 February the Premier, Alan Carpenter, made the announcement we had all been waiting for: a new world-class museum for Western Australia to be constructed on the site of the former East Perth Power Station.

Planning and design of the new museum will begin this year, with construction expected to begin in 2012. The extensive fit-out required for the museum is scheduled to start in 2013, with completion of the entire project expected in late 2015.

The new site will allow the museum to display far more of its permanent collection, which it has been unable to show at the Northbridge site. We look forward to seeing some really exciting and innovative exhibitions in years to come.

These announcements recognise the importance of our cultural heritage and the need to collect, preserve, interpret and educate about Western Australia, the current powerhouse of the nation. At a time of changing leadership within the sector, with both major collecting institutions, the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the Western Australian Museum searching for new Directors, the spotlight is certainly on us. We can look forward to a revitalised sector fostering opportunity and growth.

Jane King is Executive Officer, Museums Australia, WA

MAYDAY! MAYDAY! MAYDAY!

During the month of May Blue Shield Australia are encouraging archives, galleries, libraries, museums, cultural heritage sites and organisations across the country to participate in MayDay – a national campaign for the protection of cultural heritage from disaster.

MayDay aims to raise awareness about disaster preparedness and to encourage people to perform at least one disaster-preparedness task each May. There are many types of emergencies that we can be better prepared for, from the potential impact of faulty electrical wiring in the building next door, to bushfires, cyclones or even internal or external floods.

The MayDay concept originated with the Society of American Archivists (SAA) in 2006. Heritage Preservation (HP) partners with the SAA to promote MayDay and to provide some useful learning resources for American organisations.

The May/June 2007 issue of the SAA newsletter Archival Outlook contained an article titled 'MayDay Focuses on Emergency Preparedness' which described some of the activities undertaken by organisations across America for their annual MayDay campaign. Please see: http://www.archivists.org/periodicals/ao_backissues/AO_May-June07.pdf. The article also welcomed the 'land Down Under' to the initiative in 2007.

What is the Blue Shield?

The Blue Shield is the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross. It is the symbol specified in the 1954 Hague Convention for marking cultural sites to give them protection from attack in the event of armed conflict. It is also the name of an international committee set up in 1996 to work to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by wars and natural disasters.

Blue Shield Committees around the globe comprise four international cultural heritage 'pillar' bodies –

International Council on Archives (ICA);

International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS);

International Council of Museums (ICOM); and

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

In Australia, these pillar bodies are represented respectively as follows: Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA); Australia ICOMOS; ICOM Australia; Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA).

MayDay Australia 2008

In 2007, Blue Shield Australia distributed fliers outlining what to do to prepare for a disaster. In 2008, they are going one step further, arranging a series of workshops to be delivered through the Australian Library and Information Association in partnership with CAVAL. Entitled 'Disaster Planning for Cultural Collections', the workshops will be presented by esteemed Conservator, Mr Kim Morris, between May and September 2008 across six Australian cities. ALIA encourages practitioners from any field of cultural heritage to attend a workshop. Details about the workshops are available on the ALIA, CAVAL and Blue Shield Australia websites: http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au; http://www.alia.org.au/events; http://www.caval.edu.au.

Another new item on the flier for this year encourages checking of your organisation's 'business continuity' plan. This planning is generally undertaken by medium to large organisations to minimise the disruption to business from any surprise event.

For more information please see: http://www.thebci.org.au/BCAW.htm, or contact Mr Les Whittet on 02 62927822.

What should I do?

In 2008, people in cultural heritage organisations are once again encouraged to print the MayDay 2008 flier and post it on a notice board before 1 May.

The flier is available at the following webpage: http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/blue+shield+fourth+announcement+31+march+2008.aspx

Then it's just a matter of acting upon one or more of the suggested activities. Here are some of the suggestions from this year's flier:

- Dust off your disaster plan and make sure it's up to date or make a timeline for developing one.
- Get to know your local firefighters and police, and invite them to tour your organisation and give you pointers on safety and preparedness.
- Identify the three biggest risks to your collection or heritage site.
- Meet with the people working in the other cultural organisations in your area and find out how you can share resources in the event of a disaster.
- Attend a 'Disaster Planning for Cultural Collections' workshop in your city between May and September.

For more information contact Veronica Bullock, Development Officer, Collections Council of Australia, at blueshield@collectionscouncil.com.au, or call (08) 8207 7287.

Hot Topic for August

Local government amalgamations – pain or gain for local and regional museums?

How do you rate your museum's experiences of local government amalgamation?

We will present some views on this topic, and invite our members to have their say.

Email the Editor at editor@museumsaustralia.org.au, with the subject line, Hot Topic LGA, before the end of June.

Hot Topic I

Thanks to Linda Young for raising important issues in her *Hot Topic-Professional standards need professional resources*.

She identifies a contrast in her conclusion between libraries' services and museums, noting that libraries may be perceived to be valued. Those who offer library services are paid.

There was a long and frustrating time for those in libraries between what the Munn-Pitt Report of 1935 envisaged as the desirable level of service in libraries and its fruition decades later.

Are those in museums and those who manage heritage-type organisations prepared to wait and be involved in such a struggle? Or perhaps a more important question: Is a fully professionalised staff the goal to be sought?

I do not wish to begin a 'hot' debate about professionals versus volunteers in museums. However, I will offer some comments.

There is a bi-modal workforce in museums, the volunteers and the professionals. The key point of difference is that the latter are paid, the former are not. That is a given.

However, what other points can be made about the two types of museum workers?

There seems to me to be little to be gained by contrasting the groups. One is better trained than the other; one may have a higher level of commitment to the wider issues related to museology than the other; members of one group may have a greater identification with the local institution than the other, who may be focused on an upwardly moving career.

Evidence may be gathered but there will be examples from each group that defy the generalisations. Volunteers may be gaining a whole range of 'professional' awards in museums and heritage. There will be professionals who devote a whole career to a single institution. Volunteers may bring expertise from other employment areas and professionals to their museum work that is outside the experience of those trained narrowly in museums and heritage.

While the Munn-Pitt dream was for a fully professionalised library service, perhaps the museum future needs to incorporate a spectrum of organisations in which there are appropriate contributions from both professionals and volunteers. That does not just mean 'professionalised volunteers'.

Is the vision for Australia of a range of heritage institutions whose services are delivered by both professionals and volunteers meaningful and realistic?

As we seek a picture of a future in Australia for our heritage preserving/conserving/exhibiting organisations, the plan will need to be acceptable to those who will work in these institutions and to those who develop the policy and provide the finance for such services.

I do not have answers to these concerns.

But I would like to thank Carol Scott for her contribution in the same number of MAM. She explored the concept of 'public values'.

Her article, and also her thesis, are both worth reading. However, specifically in her paper she notes a public 'instrumental' value. That value incorporates the contribution of museums to economic and social policy.

How impressed would the social planners and taxpayers be to be presented with a picture of how heritage-preserving institutions are promoting their vision of the future that recognises that these institutions, in their range and diversity, are able to be managed and serviced by a very diverse labour force, consisting not by accident, but by desire and design, of both professionals and volunteers. This variety of institutions would be guided hopefully by appropriate standards.

Barrie Brennan is a former academic, and currently a museum volunteer (Australian Country Music Foundation)

SYDNEY MUSEUM CELEBRATES JEWISH COMMUNITY

Contrary to what was published in the February issue ('Jewish Museum of Australia', p. 22) the Jewish Museum in Melbourne is not the only museum of this type in Australia that does not focus entirely on the Holocaust experience. The A. M. Rosenblum Jewish Museum in the Great Synagogue in Elizabeth Street, Sydney, is also devoted to celebrating the life of its local faith community.

Curator Lori Burck invited me to visit the museum any time I was in Sydney. As a former Sydneysider, I have often walked past the tall wrought-iron gates and lanterns, looked up at the rose window in the Synagogue's façade and wondered what the interior was like. Now was my chance to see the treasures of Sydney's major Orthodox synagogue, and maybe even see inside the Synagogue itself.

Lori welcomed me warmly, and showed me first of all the Museum's temporary exhibition of hand-coloured lithographs by a nineteenth-century Scottish artist, David Roberts, depicting the Holy Land. Each work was complemented by a description from Roberts' notebooks, and by contemporary photos of the same sites taken by members of the congregation on their visits to Israel. Sadly, some of these reflect the troubled nature of this land associated with three world religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The same room also contained two beautifully crafted nineteenth-century wooden 'arks' – cabinets that contain the sacred Torah scrolls. The Torah is the first part of the Hebrew (and Christian) scriptures, known as the Pentateuch.

Lori then showed me a Torah mantle, of deep blue cloth embroidered with silver thread, that covers the sacred scroll; a series of individual photographs of members of the large mixed choir of the Synagogue in the late nineteenth century; portraits of leading Rabbis; and some tiny – and chilling – photos of people on the back of a truck in the dark days of the Nazi occupation of Europe. The Museum does hold some Holocaust-related material, including a set of the distinctive blue-and-white clothing worn by concentration camp inmates. How these, and the tiny photos, survived the camps, would be a fascinating story.

The climax of my visit was a tour of the Synagogue itself. In an Orthodox synagogue men sit in the lower area, and women in a gallery above. Lori explained that the service itself was a celebration of community as well as of Jewish piety, with people chatting and children running about. Once the Rabbi begins to speak there is a respectful silence, but when the service ends the celebratory tone resumes, with candy thrown for the children to catch. On the day I visited the Synagogue there was an extra feature to see. A wedding had been held there recently, and the white fabric canopy under which a traditional Jewish marriage is celebrated was still in place. The interior was just as magnificent as I had imagined as I strolled past the building, with chandeliers converted from gas and finely crafted woodwork, all illuminated by soft light filtering through the lofty windows.

The Jewish Museum in the Great Synagogue is open from 12 noon to 2pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and for pre-arranged tour groups. The entrance is at 166 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, and the telephone number is 02 9267 2477 or email museum@greatsynagogue.org.au

Roslyn Russell, Managing Editor, *Museums Australia Magazine*

ALL HANDS ON DECK

The community's reliance on volunteers to keep its museums going has its problems but is overall a good thing, given our mixed economy. Linda Young's jeremiad (p. 20) and the review of Donna Ann Harris's book (p. 24) in the February issue of *Museums Australia Magazine* draw attention to the never-ending challenges of staffing and funding, but overlook positives close to home.

Firstly, let's get real about financial sustainability. When I was the only museum professional on the Board that built the Prospectors and Miners Hall of Fame (a mining museum in Kalgoorlie: don't knock it if you haven't seen it) I was forever refuting the notion that it would make money, a fantasy dear to my colleagues from the mining industry. We got it built and open, and it ran at a loss. After a couple of years its director was sent on a world tour looking at comparable institutions, and returned to report that they all depended on commitments to ongoing financial support. As the saying goes: 'If museums made money, Packer would be running them instead of casinos'. The task of making museums interesting and popular so they attract support, and vice versa, is endless and we must embrace it keenly.

Fundraising and finding sponsorship is an endless business for even the best endowed museums; they rely on budget allocations and other government grants, and establish foundations to tap the rich end of town for big dollars. Volunteer work is another currency, requiring sensible allocation of tasks between paid staff and those who donate their time. There is an access role for volunteer guides in the best-staffed institutions; and members or Friends groups are important for community contact and political support far beyond the value of any money they raise.

Linda is right to worry about the all-volunteer model; but in recent decades we have been seeing an encouraging increase in the number of local government heritage officers, as well as itinerant consultants and contractors – and sources to fund them. Community museums and private collections, including the quirkiest amateur ones, have a role in an open society, and it would be sad to see them all professionalised, homogenised or nationalised. When working at the Powerhouse in the 1990s, I disengaged from Museums Australia for two reasons: rightly or wrongly, I felt the NSW Branch's approach to accreditation (at that time) was a professional power game; and I was appalled by irresponsible calls from some high-profile members to slash the state museums' budgets and redistribute their funding.

The search for 'solutions' for unsustainable museums as canvassed in the D. A. Harris book (well reviewed by Suzanne Bravery) reminds us that not all wisdom and experience has to come from North America (or England). There has been progress in several Australian states towards 'rolling funds' to buy heritage properties, conserve them, and on-sell them with protection in place. In Western Australia, one of several states in which the National Trust operates under an Act of Parliament, the minister's permission is required if the Trust wants to sell a property. We have persuaded several ministers, over the years, that the Trust does not have to own every place forever: there are some you open as permanent museums, some you rent out to keep them used and conserved, and others you pass on to a good owner when the opportunity arises. We have also ethically managed a deaccessioning program without the backlash experienced by some organisations which have blundered into this difficult exercise in the past. There is a lot of good work being done, and some of it, as in these cases, by community organizations heavily reliant on volunteers -- with minimal paid staff.

David Dolan, Cultural Heritage Studies, Curtin University

POLICING SUSTAINABILITY: GREENING THE VICTORIA POLICE MUSEUM

In an age of increasing environmental concerns, museums play an important role in the education of the public, not just through the contents of exhibitions but also though the methods used to exhibit them. This was very much in the minds of the staff of the Victoria Police Museum during its recent redevelopment.

On 4 October 2007, the new Victoria Police Museum was opened by the Chief Commissioner of Police, Christine Nixon. In the nine months the museum was closed, staff decided not only to re-examine outdated displays, but also how to make the new exhibition area more sustainable.

From the beginning it was obvious that financial constraints were going to be the greatest hurdle. At the time of its closure the museum only had two display cases, those specifically made to house the Russell Street Car Bomb and the Kelly Gang armour, of which the museum holds two complete sets. With no funding to build or to buy custom-built cases, the museum was lucky enough to be gifted 21 hoop pine display cases from another museum. New plinths were made, with storage space created underneath, while stabilising wires were attached to the top. Although gratefully accepted partly out of necessity, it cannot be denied that in doing so the museum saved valuable, museum-grade materials from destruction, and also allowed the museum to redirect any funds towards other areas.

The new space was designed on a touring hall concept, meaning that everything in the space can be moved around to suit new or touring exhibitions in the future. No penetrations have been made into the carpets or walls, and tracking systems have been used throughout the new museum for both hanging and lighting. This increases the flexibility of the space, and further reduces the need for costly repairs when the display areas change.

Lighting works and resource wasting was one area the museum felt it could make a difference. Using locally based company, James Clavering The Art of Fine Lighting, a system was devised which is not only comfortable for museum patrons and suitable for the displayed material, but consumes as little energy as possible. Five styles of lighting were installed to suit different aspects and needs of display areas these included: Selecon Aureoles & Aureol beam shapers to illuminate museum objects (20 watt MR16), Europer wash lamps to light the perimeter walls (200 watt Rs7 running at 35 per cent of capacity), Masson 2 x 18 watt compact fluorescent to provide light to areas of the museum which are not so light sensitive, and Megaman dimmable compact fluorescents bulbs to provide work light for museum maintenance and cleaning (dimming from 7 to 12 watts). This is the first time this particular type of fluorescent has been used in Melbourne for a museum application. Dynalite dimmers have been utilised to control this lighting system. These dimmers can store

up to 170 different settings, enabling the museum to choose different styles of lighting for different needs such as cleaning, security, after-hours, and working. It is anticipated these dimmers should quickly pay for themselves since the reduction in energy used means less cost. The use of dimmers also enhanced life span and the low wattage lamps, and also has a positive effect on the cost of air-conditioning, since one watt of heat requires five watts of cooling. The use of these dimmers is essential in reducing the carbon foot print of the new museum.

One seemingly small but in fact major achievement for the museum was in its obtaining its use of 100 per cent Green energy. This was difficult given that current government policy is to only use 10 per cent in its government-run buildings. This achievement means that all use of the environmental controls, which run 24 hours a day, are now completely carbon neutral.

Another positive step taken by museum staff was to use as many in-house services or local contractors and products as possible. Staff were well organised and prepared for the final installation, reducing the need for costly last minute solutions. As many in-house mounts were built as possible, and when not, local company POD Museum and Art Services was used. The lights were manufactured and installed by another local company, Masson Cosmaluce. All text labels were written in house and designed from within Victoria Police. This not only saved costs, but also reduced the chance of error or misunderstanding.

Using local businesses also reduced the need for excessive car travel by museum staff and or its contractors – the lighting designer cycled to and from the museum! In fact the museum has tackled this problem head on, allocating an allowance each day for volunteers to encourage them to take public transport. The museum lends itself to public transport, since commercial parking is difficult in the area. It is easily accessible from Southern Cross Station, has trams stopping directly outside the building on two sides, and from later this year will also have water taxis.

Unfortunately, despite these achievements, some decisions were taken out of the hands of the museum. Sustainable bamboo flooring had been the first choice of museum staff, but in the end it proved to be just far too expensive to do this at present. However, Brenda Baker and John Robinson, who have undergone similar experiences in America at the Madison Children's Museum, have stated that 'Sustainability is a process rather than a product. And it is a process that begins now and requires constant refinement' (Baker & Robinson, *The Sustainable Museum: It's not easy being green*). This is also true of the Victoria Police Museum and its efforts.

The Museums Australia Museums and Sustainability Guidelines state

Policing Sustainability

(Page 10, opposite)

Showcases display memorabilia (left) and items from the Russell Street car bomb incident (right), in the Victoria Police Museum.

(Left) Crime scene area, Victoria Police Museum.

Photos courtesy of Victoria Police Museum

that museums have an integral role in promoting and implementing sustainability in society (Museums Australia, *Museums and Sustainability, Guidelines for policy and practice in museums and galleries*, 4.3). Thus the accountability of museums has actually broadened from relatively simple object displays to demonstrating how they act as good citizens. Since so much attention today is focused on how families, individuals and businesses can act in more sustainable ways, it is only understandable that museums follow suit. And just as not all families can afford to create a roof top solar paradise, museums are also often limited in what they can do. Green energy costs more, as do the paper bags now used in Victoria Police Museum gift shop. It is the commitment to taking more environmental and social responsibility which is important. To see the far-reaching consequences of our actions today, and to make what is possible happen. It is this ethos that inspired the Victoria Police Museum to change its ways, and in doing so help to promote the 'green' in its predominantly chequered blue-and-white landscape.

Elizabeth Marsden is Collections Manager at the Victoria Police Museum. She has worked in various museums in New South Wales and the Netherlands.

The Victoria Police Museum and Gift Shop has been relocated to the newly created Lower Concourse Level at the World Trade Centre, 637 Flinders Street, Melbourne. Entry is free and open to the public from 10am ˆ 4pm, Monday to Friday. Enquiries can be made on (03) 92475214 or visit: www.police.vic.gov.au/museum

FRAMING MARGINAL ART

In September 2007 a unique partnership was formed between the Cunningham Dax Collection, the University of Melbourne, Melbourne Museum and the Mental Health Foundation of Australia (Victoria). Funded by a linkage grant from the Australian Research Council, a two-year project commenced to develop an ethically and conceptually sound framework for the display of artworks by people with an experience of mental illness and/or psychological trauma.

The complex nature of this field of enquiry is reflected in the interdisciplinary team of investigators involved in the project: Dr Anthony White as Chief Investigator (Lecturer in Art History, School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne); Dr Eugen Koh (Director of the Cunningham Dax Collection and practising psychiatrist and psychoanalytic psychotherapist); Dr Karen Jones (Senior Lecturer, School of Philosophy, University of Melbourne); and Dr Nurin Veis, (Senior Curator of Human Biology and Medicine, Museum Victoria). Each investigator brings a range of expertise to the project, enabling a multilayered research methodology to be developed. In this way the many different dimensions inherent in artworks created by people with an experience of mental illness, including psychological, aesthetic, biographical, socio-historical, art historical, cultural, legal, medical, and scientific aspects, can be explored comprehensively.

The project, entitled Framing Marginal Art, primarily centres around the Cunningham Dax Collection in Melbourne which consists of over 12,000 creative works by people with an experience of mental illness and/or psychological trauma. In a sense, the Collection, with its 60-year history, becomes a case study, providing the investigators with a diverse range of material with which to conduct and test their research.

This article presents the progress made in the preliminary stages of the project. The first stage of the project involved a broad range of in depth research and analysis in the fields of art and mental health, museology, philosophy and ethics. To this end, research assistants were employed to explore specific aspects of each of these fields. A paper by Jeremy St John, a philosophy student at the University of Melbourne, examined some of the ethical issues surrounding the display of works by the Collection. Exploring notions of informed consent and appropriation, his paper situates the project's, and the Collection's, aim to reduce the stigma of mental illness and to ensure the works are treated with respect and sensitivity within a broader philosophical context.

Research was also conducted into philosophical approaches to art by Dr Damon Young, an Honorary Fellow in Philosophy at Melbourne University, in conjunction with Eugen Koh. This involved an exploration of the question: how do we decide on the nature of an object? Karen Jones' report looked at issues of trust and respect and explored the ethical challenges in displaying artworks by people with an experience of mental illness, particularly where consent has not been given. The report also considers possible exhibition strategies that can increase benefits whilst minimising the potential harm to individuals.

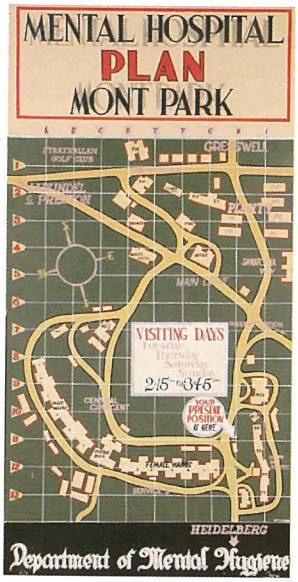
For my part I was asked to provide a history of the exhibition, an interpretation of art by people with experience of mental illness, an overview of current approaches to the exhibition and interpretation of these works in a range of contexts, including clinical, aesthetic, scientific, historical and community-based approaches, and to survey the recent reception and criticism of such approaches. This survey

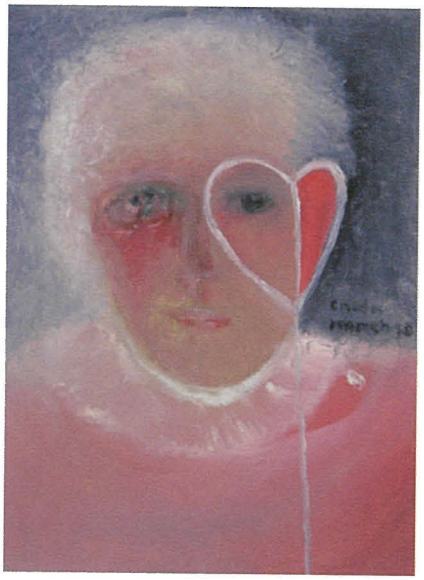
highlighted that, since its inception, the meaning attributed to works of people with an experience of mental illness have largely been generated and shaped, not by the artists/patients who made the works, but by those who have sought to use the works as a means to pursue their own particular interests, whether they be aesthetic, political, cultural, commercial or clinical.

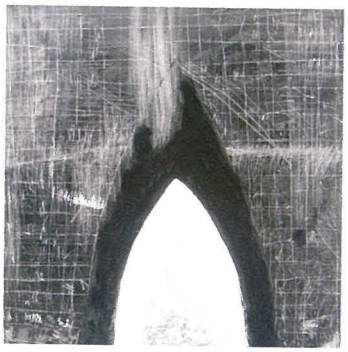
The survey also found a prevailing tendency for those who appropriate these works to adopt narrow and singular approaches to their presentation and interpretation to the exclusion of other aspects. It also found that these ethically questionable and reductive attitudes have had a significant impact in fostering widespread preconceptions, misguided assumptions and misunderstandings of people with mental illness and their creative expressions. The challenge for the investigators has been making sense of this diverse range of research in the development of an exhibition model.

Informed by the scholarly foundation provided by the researchers and by the recent research and exhibition program at the Collection, *The Art of Making Sense* is a new exhibition which aims to address and overcome the many problematic and questionable approaches to the display of creative works by people who experience mental illness and/or psychological trauma. The exhibition moves beyond the limitations of standpoints which emphasise either clinical or aesthetic aspects, to foreground the multi-faceted nature of the works. To achieve this task the co-curators, Anthony White and Eugen Koh, have devised five sections for the exhibition, each of which seeks to demonstrate how the works interrelate with a diverse range of issues, ideas, themes, and emotions. To this end, over seventy creative works have been selected from the Collection, including paintings, drawings, collages, textiles and sculptures, dating from the 1950s to recent acquisitions.

The first section explicitly sets out to challenge some of the prevailing assumptions and myths about the relationship between art and mental illness. Paintings have been selected to highlight the problems inherent in any broad generalisations about the nature of these works, while other works have been chosen to raise ethical questions related to issues of attribution and display without the consent of the creator of the work. The next section, entitled 'The Inner World', explores the ways in which interior mental states can influence and affect the production of an artwork. Works made by people who have undergone







(Opposite, p. 12) Photograph of Mont Park Hospital grounds, undated (reproduced permission of Iliya Bircanin).

(Left to right) Map of Mont Park Mental Hospital, 1959; Carla Krijt, *No title*, 1998; Sally Flynn, *The Grid*, 2004.

All images courtesy of Cunningham Dax Collection

various experiences of mental illness will be displayed to show the ways in which, consciously or unconsciously, these experiences may be reflected in their creative expressions.

The third section, 'The Outer World', contains paintings which depict scenes and events from the wider social and historic realm, countering the widespread notion that art made by people with a mental illness is somehow ahistorical, unmediated and always directly correlated to their psychological state. Other works in this section depict the experience of being hospitalised and portray various aspects of institutional life. These works are accompanied by photographs, archival documents and other writings which help to convey both the positive and negative sides of asylums. The fourth section, 'Life Histories', features three separate artists, containing a selection of several works by each. The works of these individual artists are presented in the context of their own personal narrative whereby various aspects of their biography are explored through their creative expressions. These works also clearly demonstrate the artists' relationship to art history and the influence of particular artists on their own work.

The final section of the exhibition, 'Creativity and Mental Illness', explores the relationship between notions of creativity and the experience of mental illness. Works have been selected to challenge preconceived notions of what constitutes creativity. While some works demonstrate a high degree of artistic skill, others are chosen to highlight the use of unconventional materials, techniques and styles. These works raise questions about the link that is commonly made between heightened creativity and 'madness', and challenge again the notion that there is one, singular way of approaching artworks made by people who have experienced mental illness.

The overarching aim of *The Art of Making Sense* is to demonstrate the multi-dimensional nature of creative works by individuals with an experience of mental illness and/or psychological trauma. Its success or failure will be put to the test, quite literally, when it opens to the public in May 2008. As part of the ARC project, the exhibition will be examined and evaluated by a series of multi-disciplinary focus groups, the general public and other stakeholders. Their opinions will be sought on the relative merits of various aspects of the exhibition and these will be recorded as part of the final report. Based on the findings of the research and exhibition, the final stage of Framing Marginal Art will be the publication, towards the end of 2009, of a comprehensive and detailed set of industry guidelines for the ethical display of artworks by people with an experience of mental illness and/or psychological trauma.

The Art of Making Sense is on display from 1 May – 1 November 2008, at The Cunningham Dax Collection, 35 Poplar Rd, Parkville VIC. Gallery Hours: Wed – Fri, 10am to 4pm, Sat, 1pm to 5pm www.daxcollection.org.au

Anthony Fitzpatrick, Collection Manager, the Cunningham Dax Collection and Research Assistant, Framing Marginal Art

MIGRANT ACTIVISTS MEET JAPANESE KIMONO AT VICTORIA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM

'To be poor, migrant and a woman is to achieve optimum disadvantage.' – Anon. *Trailblazers: Migrant women activists* reveals for the first time the story of migrant women's activism in Victoria during the 1970s and 1980s, celebrating the work of the many individuals who lobbied government and the community for specialist medical, social, workplace and educational services for women experiencing these disadvantages.

Developed in collaboration with the University of Melbourne's Cultural Heritage Unit, the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH), and the Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service, *Trailblazers* highlights the work of women in areas such as improving workplace safety and union representation, providing childcare and health information, running English language classes and establishing safe shelters for victims of domestic violence.

Adele Murdolo from the MCWH says there is a tendency for migrant women to be stereotyped as passive, subservient, and unlikely to participate in the feminist activism of the day. 'Migrant women in fact participated in a range of feminist projects. They acted on behalf of all women, as well as specifically on behalf of migrants who were often falling through the gaps between existing services,' Murdolo says.

'Many migrants brought with them past experience of political activism. By the 1960s and 1970s – the time of the Vietnam War Moratoriums, Women's Liberation and a growing workers' rights movement in Australia – the groundwork was set for ethnic rights activism, with women at the forefront of this movement.'

The *Trailblazers* exhibition includes photographs and ephemera from the era, as well as historical information on the women's achievements and the organisations and services they established. For instance, in the area of family planning, the Action for Family Planning group recognised the need to bring contraception advice to the home and the factory floor. Until then, a lack of interpreter services had meant that migrant women by and large did not use existing health services, and for many married women, abortion was the only means of birth control.

Murdolo says while historians have documented the 'fathers' of multiculturalism, 'we are now revealing the stories of the "mothers"'.

Another exhibition at the Immigration Museum this year, *Kimono: Osaka's Golden Age*, goes back 150 years and many miles to a golden age of prosperity in the Japanese city – a time when wealth was expressed through luxurious and splendid fashions.

This new exhibition, from the Osaka Museum of History, features around 60 highly decorated kimono, along with accessories such as shoes and hair ornaments. *Kimono* also offers a perspective on the history and culture of the kimono – how it was worn and its rich symbolism to the Japanese. Kimono in the exhibition include those worn by men, women and children, along with more unusual examples, such as a fireman's kimono.

The pieces in the exhibition are also symbols of an important time in the history of Osaka – the late Edo and Meiji eras (1850-1900) when it was the commercial capital of Japan.

'In this era, everyone in Japan wore kimono – from farmers to warriors,' says Padmini Sebastian, Manager, Immigration Museum. 'But Osaka's aristocracy and merchants opted for a spectacular display of wealth through their fabulous and flamboyant kimono, by using the most expensive fabrics and the most intricate designs.'

One of the beautiful examples of a kimono in the Immigration Museum's *Kimono: Osaka's Golden Age* exhibition.
Courtesy of Museum Victoria

Part of the Immigration Museum's tenth birthday program, this collection also celebrates 30 years of the Melbourne-Osaka sister-city relationship and is supported by the City of Melbourne.

Trailblazers: Migrant women activists will show at the Immigration Museum until 27 July 2008, while *Kimono: Osaka's Golden Age* will show from 15 May to 14 September 2008. The Immigration Museum is at 400 Flinders St, Melbourne. For more information call 13 11 02 or visit museumvictoria.com.au.

Freya Purnell is Regional Editor for *Museums Australia Magazine*

BATEAUX JOUETS: TOY BOATS FROM PARIS 1850-1950

Few children remain unmoved by the fascinating and almost magical act of setting a solid, sometimes heavy object to float on water, and watching it bob across the surface of lake, pond or bath. And it is an enduring pastime, as a major new exhibition at the Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM) in Sydney, *Bateaux Jouets: toy boats from Paris 1850-1950,* demonstrates.

Exhibitions

The exhibition, from France's Musée national de la Marine, brings together 200 beautifully made toy boats from across the period – ranging from simple paper boats to more sophisticated self-propelling vessels.

Although the exhibition is essentially all about toys, says ANMM director Mary-Louise Williams, it also reflects their industrial context in the nineteenth century, and the evolution of pleasure boats, passenger liners and fighting ships during the period.

Bateaux Jouets demonstrates that toy boats were among the most popular playthings in the hundred years from the mid-eighteenth century, with interest growing as urban development introduced parks with ponds suitable for toy boating and families took seaside holidays.

The exhibition also looks at toy boats as playthings at home, and traces the evolution of factory-made toy boats from those made of tinplate by small-time craftsmen through to the metal vessels produced in factories in France and Germany. It also shows the developing ingenuity when it came to propelling these boats – from the simple twisted rubber band to clockwork springs, fired-up burners producing steam and battery-stored electricity.

The ANMM is offering kids the chance to 'mess around with boats' with their holiday program, featuring a selection of toy boats for children to play with, a custom built wooden 'pond' maze built for boat races, as well as arts and crafts, and a free on-water remote-control boat bonanza, the Battle of the Bateaux.

Bateaux Jouets: toy boats from Paris 1850-1950 is on show exclusively at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour, Sydney until 17 August 2008. For more information phone 02 9298 3777 or visit www.anmm.gov.au.

(Opposite, p. 14), Dolls in toy boat. Photo: Arnaud Fux.
(Above) Beret boy.

Images courtesy of Australian National Maritime Museum

BRINGING THE *KETE* HOME: REPATRIATING PERSONAL EFFECTS

Much is written on the negotiation of museums and the customary owners concerned with the return of heritage objects, less about the more low-key transactions that are initiated by private individuals. This is one story of such a 'handover', which is becoming more common now. There are a number of reasons why this is the case. The most altruistic motive arises from an increased sensitivity and responsiveness to 'rightful ownership'. One can see this as a positive effect of postcolonial discourse; of recognising past inequalities between races and the value of promoting meaningful cross-cultural exchange.

In this particular case, the imperative was, on the surface, threefold. On one hand, it was to acknowledge past ancestors whose friendship straddled the so-called 'racial divide'. It was the realisation that *taonga* (treasures) require protection and preservation by professional custodians; in this instance, the staff of Taonga Maori at Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa. Not least, it was a belief that items of beauty, cultural significance and spiritual power can be powerful indicators of the value of museums as places of knowledge and inspiration. Yet, on a personal level, there was also the fact that the author wished, as a long-term resident in Australia, to mark her own links to country, namely New Zealand. And there was the urge to augment (and balance) the overwhelmingly 'Anglo' provenance of other gifts she had presented to Te Papa in the past.

The object in question is a small kiwi feather *kete* (woven flax basket) dating from between the late nineteenth century to c.1930. The ancestors referred to are Guide Rangi MBE (Rangitiara Dennan née Ratema, 1896-1971) of Arawa and Ngati Pikiao descent, and the author's father and aunt whom Rangi first met in the 1930s at Whakarewarewa. They were all about the same age, and it may have been Rangi's activity in the Women's Health League that was a platform for the friendship as well as the fact that my father, a medical practitioner from Auckland, was her husband's doctor. Certainly, both siblings (with their Victorian/Edwardian up-bringing) appreciated the warm openness with which Rangi greeted her guests. Invariably this was in her 'Whaka' home with its traditional wood carvings, lattice *tukutuku* panels and *kowhaiwhai* painting. Rotorua has always been a favourite holiday destination for Aucklanders and tourists generally.

As a celebrated guide to the hot pools, geysers and other extraordinary thermal activity evident at Whaka, Rangi is known to have been generous with gifts, not only to visiting dignitaries but to ordinary New Zealanders. In this, my family was not unusual. The *kete* was given to my aunt (Marion Queenie Kirker), possibly to mark her fortieth birthday, and I inherited it on my aunt's death in the early 1970s. In order to avoid nostalgia (and even hagiography) creeping into this account, I want to highlight instead the protocol and ritual that today pertains at Te Papa for the return of *taonga.* In doing so, it draws attention to the fact that it is not only the customary object as a collection item and future museum exhibit that is of importance, but equally the way it is *received,* as its custodianship alters.

This is dictated partly by provenance and the age of the object. Yet, aside from the power of the *kete* as having once come from Guide Rangi, the Museum is keenly aware that it belongs to the wider context

of the history of Maori weaving. Within its intricate fashioning, the woman responsible has inserted (almost invisibly) *kaka* feathers as her signature. As the *kete* comprises animal and plant species, New Zealand quarantine services were enlisted by the Museum in advance to ascertain any risks in its importation. A handover and blessing ceremony was scheduled for 1.00 pm at Te Papa on 10 March 2008. Weeks beforehand, Awhina Tamarapa, Curator, Taonga Maori, along with other indigenous Maori staff, had alerted Rangi's descendants in Rotorua. The particular point of contact was Edna Pahewa, daughter of Emily Rangitiaria Schuster, her niece. Emily Schuster was herself a renowned master weaver. Edna, an accomplished weaver and weaving teacher, is Chair for Te Roopu Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa, the National Mäori Weavers collective. She has also followed in her mother's footsteps as the Head of Weaving at Te Puia, formally known as the New Zealand Mäori Arts and Crafts Institute, Rotorua. Without her (and permission from her *whänau*) Te Papa would have been reluctant to accept the gift.

On the day in question, the author, with the boxed *kete,* arrived at Te Papa and was taken to a small nondescript storage area of the Museum by her guide at the ceremony, Awhina. She entered the room and took her place with those gathered for whom the *taonga* has specific cultural significance. These were staff of Maori descent, including Jonathan Mane-Wheoki (who heads Visual Arts) and members of the Mätauranga Mäori team, Huhana Smith, Senior Curator, Oriwa Solomon, Curator and Collection Manager Moana Parata. The group of seven was led by distinguished *Kaumätua* of the Ngäi Tahu *iwi* (clan), Kukupa Tirikatene, and Te Whe Phillips. They are the Te Papa *iwi kaumätua* in residence during the Ngäi Tahu *iwi* exhibition, *Mö Tätou*. Te Papa has a changing *iwi* exhibition program, where different *iwi* have a two-year opportunity to present their own stories and perspectives. At present, the Ngai Tahu exhibition and people are the resident *iwi* at Te Papa. Kukupa and Te Whe represent their *iwi* and Te Papa during this time. Acting as mediator, Awhina asked me to unwrap the *kete* and place it on a calico cushion on the table provided and then to remain standing with those assembled as the half-hour ceremony commenced. There were Maori chants (some translated for my benefit into English), religious invocations, and a brief reciting of poetry from a Brisbane installation project ('Palm Lines') that I had participated in for a friend, the Maori artist Maureen Lander, and Aboriginal poet Sam Wagan Watson. After the final *waiata* was sung, the *Kaumatua* invited me to

Bringing the Kete Home

describe my family's association with Rangi and then spoke of his own recollections. The tenor of proceedings was lightened and as a group we shared a *hongi* (and I was also hugged by the women present). The eldest enfolded me and said in English, 'Welcome home Anne'.

As a *pakeha*, this heartfelt comment was one of the most profound I could have received. For when I left New Zealand in the 1980s for Australia, there were mixed-race *hui* (meetings on the *marai*) that made it clear that those of colonial descent were clearly misplaced. Many of my generation and upbringing had gravitated to London to further their university training and sometimes to remain there. Mostly we returned to our Southern Hemisphere roots. For there was the realisation that we were not English (Irish, Scottish or Welsh) but simply colonials: an 'in-between' race. Some comfort in this liminal situation can be gained by reading the brilliant scholar Homi Bhabha, yet theory needs to be applied to ultimately be useful. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* is now widely consulted, but it is the camaraderie of women that for generations has instinctually healed rifts. I was not surprised when Awhina and the other female participants treated me to the customary 'tea' after the *kete's* reception and blessing. At Te Papa's café we all had a laugh and good yarn over cappuccinos and carrot cake.

Anne Kirker

The author wishes to thank her brother Jim Kirker, and Awhina Tamarapa and Jonathan Mane-Wheoki in the course of writing this account.

(Opposite, p. 16) The *kete* repatriated to Te Papa Tongarewa.
(Above) The group that welcomed the *kete* to Te Papa.
Photos courtesy of Te Papa Tongarewa/Museum of New Zealand

Reviews

Australia's Muslim Cameleers: Pioneers of the Inland, 1860s – 1930s (A South Australian Museum travelling exhibition). By Philip Jones and Anna Kenny. Wakefield Press in association with the South Australian Museum, ISBN 978 1 86254 778 0.

By choosing to expand and extend the life of a museum exhibition in publishing a book that uses the collected exhibits as the basis of its main narrative, the creators of *Australia's Muslim Cameleers* have inevitably produced a hybrid – something between a souvenir catalogue and a work of historical research. Both aspects of the project produce pleasing outcomes. Here, in attractively designed album style of just under two hundred pages, we have a permanent image and text record that will endure, giving visual and cultural substance to a relatively unsung aspect of Australia's diverse identity.

The book's stylish design immediately appeals, the photographs and other illustrations being carefully treated for presentation and sharpness in a variety of ways such as tints and textures. Placement on the page is approached creatively and there is generous use of well-drawn maps for context and clarity.

The book is a valuable addition to the history of the Islamic presence in Australia, even though the cameleers were a small Muslim minority. As such, after being initially accepted by European Australians, they faced eventual discrimination and tensions despite their acknowledged efficiency and contributions to exploratory expeditions (the book suggests the Burke and Wills Expedition marked the advent of camels in Australia) and the transporting of goods. These tensions were generally the result of grazing, water rights and competition with bullock drivers.

The subject of Australia's Muslim cameleers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has a potency that the authors of the text are quick to underscore. They contextualise the stories and experiences of the 'Afghan' cameleers within a background that includes the recent growth of interest in Islam in the wake of religious fundamentalist expansion and conflict and the fanning of racist sentiments. But they also express the belief that the cameleers present a significant and colourful episode in the nation's development as a diverse society rather than as a monoculture.

The general overview draws, as one would expect, on previous valuable works such as Christine Stevens' *Tin Mosques* and *Ghantowns*, Michael Cigler's *Afghans in Australia* and Pamela Rajkowski's *In the tracks of the camelmen: Outback Australia's most exotic pioneers*, amongst many others. The reference publications list attests to first class research. However, this reader was left wanting more from the text and perhaps less from the photographic bank, which in book design terms sometimes appears repetitive, despite its being a rich archival source. It is likely, however, that there is little more narrative than exists in these pages. End of story? But what happened in the conflicts with the rival bullock trains for the overland freight business? And what really lay behind the tragic events at Broken Hill on New Year's Day 1915? These are just two stories that still await research and fuller retelling.

The point about the photographic record is that similar images appear regularly as the intention is, it seems, to produce an archive rather than illustrate a narrative. This is not a quibble, because the illustrations produce a rich and engaging collection that through their publication become the property of the reader. Moreover, when the narrative is under way it enriches and illuminates. Much of the narrative detail is included in the detailed captions, so the reader is left to piece together an intriguing and multi-layered story of this formative period in Central Australia that emerges almost by osmosis from the pages of illustrations and captions.

Cameleering was biggish business and produced business operatives as well as a working camel-riding coterie. These agents, often 'Afghanis' themselves, acted as middlemen. This kind of contextual historical information is enlightening. The home country was not necessarily Afghanistan, as we know it today as such, but extended to what was British India. It thus produced diverse ethnicities among the cameleers including Pashtun, Baluchi, Punjabi, and Sindhi.

The book is also effective as a historical archive. Of particular interest is the biographical listing of the cameleers themselves, with frequent photo portraits where these exist. So we have their names and biographical details for posterity and know what many of them looked like. There is a good deal of detail about the cameleers and their associates, and this personalisation makes for good history. But again I was often left wanting more information, having been tantalised with intrigue. Perhaps this is the sign of a good book. This is not, then, a criticism of Jones and Kenny's work, which is a *tour de force* of research, and a task and subject to which they obviously warmed greatly. Both authors are steeped in the subject matter and this lends authority to their text. Leaving a reader wishing to learn more is thus something of a two-edged sword.

The book's interest level lifts perceptibly at the section that gives an account of the cameleers' encounters with those other marginalised Central Australians, the Aboriginal people of the Centre. Again the photographs and their captions lead the story, where one discriminated-against group finds common ground with another. The tribulations of Jack Akbar and his Aboriginal wife, Lalli, are indicative of current policies when they were faced with the decision of the West Australian Protector of Aborigines that their liaison was illegal.

There are so many personal stories tucked away amongst the photographs in this book that it works, in the same way as an album. It is a book you can put down and pick up again after a while to enjoy recapturing a hitherto lost period in Australia's colourful history. By the end you feel that you have been a witness to the era. That's an achievement for which any good documentary strives.

Harvey Broadbent is Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Modern History at Macquarie University.

All the articles and reviews in this issue can also be viewed on MAM On-line on the Museums Australia website -

www.museumsaustralia.org.au

On-line articles often have additional features such as illustrations and full references. For an even fuller story, check out MAM On-line.