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Museums Australia *Magazine*

Connecting museums and communities

Our newly designed magazine is an attractive and diverse publication that features items of interest for museum and gallery professionals and all those involved in the sector at large. Our distribution reaches beyond our membership and allows advertisers to reach thousands of industry and professional people in metropolitan and regional Australia and overseas in New Zealand and beyond.

Museums Australia Magazine includes collection overviews, education and related information, book reviews, Promotion and reviews of conferences, workshops, information for professional development, coverage of new museum and gallery developments, international news including ICOM events, advertising and design, web developments.

Museums Australia Magazine is published four times a year and has a readership of more than 17,000 professionals, volunteers, students and colleague agencies in Australia and abroad.

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President's message



Dr Darryl McIntyre

MA Life Membership for Sally Anne Hasluck

In my President's Report for 2008-2009, presented to the AGM on 6 May 2009, I had the pleasure of announcing that the National Council had resolved that Museums Australia will honour a distinguished colleague and long-term contributor to the museums sector, Sally Anne Hasluck (of Western Australia), with a Life Membership of the national association. She joins a small group of colleagues whose broad achievements in and on behalf of museums, and service to the national body, is honoured by an MA life-time membership.

Queens birthday honours for the museums sector

It was gratifying that Sally Anne Hasluck's achievements were further honoured by her admittance to the Order of Australia (as an OAM member) in June 2010. It was further gratifying that three other distinguished colleagues were honoured through the Queens Birthday Honours List in June: Andrew Sayers AM (new Director of the National Museums of Australia), Dr Robert Bell AM, head of Decorative Arts and Design at the National Gallery of Australia, and – through the Queens Birthday Honours List in the UK – Alec Coles OBE, who recently joined the Australian museums sector as CEO of the Western Australian Museum. All these colleagues have been sent letters of congratulation by Museums Australia and are further celebrated in the present Magazine.

Blue Shield Australia (BSA) and disaster preparedness

MA has joined Blue Shield Australia as an Associate member, which draws the activities of our two organisations closer together, and I have attended meetings of the Blue Shield Australia Committee, in Melbourne (in December 2009 and in June 2010). Museums Australia has recently agreed to become a financially contributing member of BSA, affirming MA's more active role as an Associate Member and frontline supporter of the activities of the organisation.

Blue Shield Australia held an important symposium in Canberra on 6 May 2010, at the National Library of Australia, at which a DISACT Letter of Intent (LOI) on Cooperative Disaster Preparedness by collecting institutions in Canberra and the ACT was signed.

The activities of Blue Shield Australia on behalf of the protection of cultural heritage and disaster preparedness are dealt with in an article in this Magazine issue by BSA chairperson, Detlev Lueth. Members of the BSA Committee are regularly appraising measures for improved disaster preparedness, and raising the sector's general consciousness of the various forms in which natural disasters may strike collections and heritage facilities that have been heightened by a succession of

events in recent years.

Following the effects of Cyclone Larry in 2006, successful fundraising by Museums Australia, launched at the National Conference in Brisbane in May, resulted in the purchase and distribution of seven diesel generators. These were dispersed to various recommended colleague institutions in the NT and Queensland, so that the Top End would be better protected in the case of future emergencies. The floods in far north Queensland in 2009, together with the disastrous bushfires in Victoria in the same summer, again heightened awareness of the catastrophic effects on heritage collections when disasters of nature strike suddenly. The destruction of the Marysville Historical Society building in the Victorian bushfires, and entire loss of its collection and records, is one the most tragic reminders of the devastation that nature can cause. A further article in the present Magazine reports on the very different effects of the recent earthquake and its aftermath in the far west – in Boulder-Kalgoorlie this year.

Colleagues in the conservation area continue to be wonderfully helpful in generating advice and guidance as to how best to handle the impact of sudden disasters when they strike, and our State/Territory based colleagues work closely with conservators and their national body, the AICCM, to disseminate awareness of preventive conservation as well as remediation measures that may assist local communities and individuals in handling the effects of sudden, destructive events on collections.

National Committee for Cultural Heritage

A national body that has a related role in the cause of protection of movable cultural heritage is the National Committee for Cultural Heritage, which has a primary brief to advise on and help ensure implementation of the *Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage 1986* (PMCH Act), and its associated Regulations which came into force in 1987 – both of which are currently under review by the Commonwealth.

I was honoured to be appointed recently by Minister Peter Garrett to chair the National Committee for Cultural Heritage (announced in May). I will be working with colleagues on that committee – some from the museums sector – to ensure that the intents of national legislation for the protection of the movable cultural heritage of all Australians are implemented (which include not only matters affecting heritage care across the country but also permissions for export of material such as works of art, objects of scientific and natural heritage, and other items).

Having originally worked with the late Dr Jean Battersby AO, on drafting of the Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act and its Regulations as well as the implementation strategy following the legislation's enactment, the PMCH Act and its objectives are familiar territory to me. Later in the late 1980s and early 1990s I oversaw a review of the legislation which resulted in some amendments to the Act and its

administration, so I am most interested to revisit this work on the front line of heritage protection today in chairing the National Committee for Cultural Heritage.

The ‘ANDS project’ for digital access to Australia’s collections (a CAMD-MA project)

A CAMD-MA application for funding was submitted in April to ANDS – the Australian National Data Service, an agency of government funded through the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR). This initiative sought funding for a project to enable the museums sector to develop a platform for coordinated digital access to collections nationally, or what has been called a Cultural and Historical Collections Metadata Exchange.

In May the two partner bodies (the Council of Australasian Museum Directors and MA) were advised by ANDS that our joint application had been received positively, and that funding of \$500,000 has been earmarked for realisation of this project. A process is now under way for negotiation of the contract for the project’s implementation, to be defined in detail with ANDS. This will put in place a governance committee and other arrangements incorporating representatives of both MA and CAMD as the partner bodies overseeing realisation of the ‘ANDS project’ (as it has been known informally through its development phase since September 2009).

Some members may recall a highly successful 2-day symposium in Canberra to scope out the ANDS project (15–16 February 2010). During this symposium a range of bodies within and beyond the museums sector participated in lively presentations. There was intense interest in the potential of the project, and a range of highly informed contributions came forward to tease out its possibilities, both for the sector and the Australian community at large. Distinguished contributors included Senator Kate Lundy and advisors to the government on the Government 2.0 initiative for greater digital access to public information nationally; the Australia Council; staff of ABC planning new initiatives within the regions for community-shaped production of content and ‘caring for culture’ locally; and other parties who brought imagination and enthusiasm to the discussion of the ANDS project application for federal funding.

I will be discussing latest progress on this project with the MA Council in forthcoming weeks, and advice will also be prepared for wider dissemination among members and the sector at large as soon as implementation arrangements are clarified.

MA National Conference 2010 (Melbourne, 28 Sept. – 2 Oct. 2010)

Work towards the 2010 National Conference continues and the Planning Committee, through MA-Victoria, has been developing a rich and interesting program, with a stimulating array of speakers,

including international guests this year (following the regional and national emphasis of the successful Conference in Newcastle in May 2009). The Early Bird registration date has been extended, and members are encouraged especially to attend to the provision for bursaries to assist attendance at the Conference. A stimulating program of papers ensuring engagement of the MA National Networks, and a diverse social program in the evenings, is also assured.

The National Council will have a face-to-face meeting just prior to the opening of the National Conference, and a pre-conference Membership Standing Committee meeting of Council is also targeted. This year the Rural and Remote Training Program, as a 1-day adjunct to the National Conference that has become so successful that it is a regular feature of conference planning annually, will occur at the end of the program (on the concluding Saturday, rather than the preceding Sunday). The Trade Show, as a further regular adjunct to MA’s Conferences, is guaranteed to be expanded and gain wider impact this year. This points to how this feature can be strengthened, ensuring the sector’s most valued suppliers and consultants, with a range of important products and services on offer, might be supported to have a stronger presence in each city in which our National Conferences occur annually.

The rich program of speakers is guaranteed to ensure discussion of current issues and new perspectives on challenges for the sector. A dynamic interconnection of colleagues from all parts of the country has been assured, bringing together people of diverse backgrounds and expertise throughout many sessions and informal events on offer this year. I look forward to welcoming all members and delegates from the sector at large, plus other guests, local and international, whom I’m confident will ensure a very successful National Conference for Museums Australia in 2010. **■**

Dr Darryl McIntyre is the National President, Museums Australia

Honouring outstanding service to the museums sector

New Life Member of Museums Australia: Sally Anne Hasluck (OAM)

Museums Australia is proud to honour the outstanding services to the museums sector by Sally Anne Hasluck (of Claremont, WA), recognised by her award of a Life Membership by the National Council of MA (reported at the AGM in Canberra, 6 May 2010).

Further endorsement of MA's decision came a short time afterwards, with the formal announcement of Ms Hasluck's admission to the Order of Australia. Her OAM award was announced in the Queens Birthday honours list published in June 2010.

Sally Anne Hasluck's outstanding professional contributions over more than three decades were noted by Council, beginning with her role as inaugural curator at Claremont Museum (1975–1989), and later there as Director. While developing the museum she also formed the first non-arts Friends Association in Western Australia.

Museums Australia pays tribute to Ms Hasluck's many years of service as a Trustee of the Western Australian Museum (1994–2001), including a period as deputy chair (1994–1998); and no less to her many personal honours and awards, which include Citizen of the Year (1993) in Claremont; and the Premier's WA History Award (inaugural), also in 1993.

The various offices she has held in serving Western Australian museum colleagues, especially in the state branch of the Museums Association of Australia (MAA), and later of Museums Australia when it was formed, signal a proud and inspiring record of prolonged service (including as Vice-President and President of the State Branch of MA), covering a period 1978–1987 continuously. Her years of service more recently as a Council member of the National Museum of Australia (2004–2010) seem a fitting national coda to so many years of service on various sectoral boards. Ed.

Other museum colleagues recognised in Queens Birthday Honours

Andrew Sayers AM

(Director, National Museum of Australia)

Andrew Sayers AM joined the National Museum of Australia as its Director in June, and in the same month was announced as a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia 2010 Queens Birthday Honours list – for 'service to arts administration, particularly as the Director of the National Portrait Gallery, and to the promotion of Australian portraiture'.

Following early posts at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and Newcastle Regional Art Gallery, Mr Sayers served for thirteen years at the National Gallery of Australia (1985–1998), when he left to become the founding director of the National Portrait Gallery. He oversaw the transformation of the NPG into a significant national cultural institution, including its relocation into a new lakeside building, with expanded staff and upgraded facilities enabling it to attract international exhibitions.



In addition to a number of scholarly publications, his principal exhibitions include *New Worlds from Old: 19th Century Australian and American Landscapes* (1998), *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century* (1994), *Sidney Nolan: The Ned Kelly Story* (1994) and (with Dr Sarah Engledow) *The World of Thea Proctor* (2005).

Dr Robert Bell AM

(Senior Curator, Decorative Arts and Design, National Gallery of Australia)

Also announced as a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia in June 2010 was Dr Robert Bell AM, one of the country's longest-serving art museum curators. His award citation was for 'service to contemporary craft and design as a curator and advocate, and to the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the National Gallery of Australia'.

Dr Bell is author of a number of substantial catalogues published in association with exhibitions he has curated. Contacted in the UK, where he was working and travelling in June, Robert Bell provided the following response:

I am delighted and honoured to receive this award after a forty-four year involvement in craft, design, museums and art galleries that has provided me with so many opportunities to meet, promote, collect and write about the work of craft artists and designers. Their imagination, skill and passion for their work are a constant inspiration for my own endeavours as a curator and I am enriched by their friendship and support. I warmly thank those who recommended me for this award and supported my nomination.

Alec Coles OBE

(CEO, Western Australian Museum)

The new director of the Western Australian Museum, Alec Coles, has been awarded the distinction of an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in this year's UK Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Mr Coles was recognised for his long-standing services to museums, and in particular for his seven and a half years as director of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums in the UK. As director he was responsible for AUD\$132m capital development projects, including redevelopment and completion of the Great North Museum (2009) and the installation of new displays throughout. This redevelopment is currently short-listed for the UK National Lottery Awards for Best Heritage Project.

A graduate in biological sciences, Alec Coles is also a staunch supporter of the public value of museums and has earned a reputation for increasing the diversity of museum audiences. ■



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
Sally Anne Hasluck OAM
PHOTO: Courtesy Museums Australia (WA), Dec.2009.

Andrew Sayers AM (Director, National Museum of Australia).

Alec Coles OBE (CEO, Western Australian Museum).

Dr Robert Bell AM (Senior Curator, Decorative Arts and Design, National Gallery of Australia).

Having a disaster - whether planned or not



ABOVE:
Zoe Scott and Bill Storer

TOP LEFT:
Western Australian Museum conservators (far left) Dick Garcia and Ulli Broeze-Hoernemann (far right), with Goldfields War Museum staff, Tim Cudini (second from left) and Manager, Caron Milner, inspecting the museum for on-site advice.

TOP RIGHT:
Post-earthquake bricks and building debris on costume showcase, Goldfields War Museum, Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

Bill Storer and Zoe Scott

Dateline: Kalgoorlie 30 May 2010:

The Goldfields War Museum (GWM) in Burt Street Boulder, Western Australia, was hit by an earthquake of 5.2 on the Richter scale at 08.17 am on 20 April 2010. In the ensuing ten days, at least 20 after-shock tremors were recorded.

Many heritage buildings in Boulder suffered damage, ranging from slight to catastrophic, during this period.

Fortunately there were no deaths or serious injuries recorded. However a columnist in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* commented on the huge quantities of toilet rolls that came on special in local supermarkets.

Why is this story being told now? Prior to the earthquake, the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder (CKB) had sought to undertake a significance assessment of the War Museum collection and have a plan for the relocation of the museum to another site completed. The intended move was to provide the opportunity to rationalise a thirty-year-old, somewhat eclectic collection so that it would more closely reflect the CKB Goldfields War Museum Collections Policy of today.

However after the intervention of the earthquake, earlier planning for an orderly relocation of the collection had become a moot point. It was some three weeks before structural engineers were able to approve access to the War Museum site. A load-bearing brick wall had been shaken, slightly dislodged, and bricks and other debris (including a deceased pigeon) had fallen through the ceilings into the main gallery, the collection store and the administration office.

Zoe Scott and Robyn Horner¹ gave a brief presentation on the impact of the earthquake to the Blue Shield Australia Symposium in Canberra 6 May 2010. Meanwhile on Monday, 17 May, CKB History and Heritage Unit, assisted by staff of Western Australian Museum Kalgoorlie-Boulder (WAMKB) were finally

allowed access to the GWM site.

Initially the team of six was allocated only one day to pack collection objects for removal from the damaged building. This very soon became two days; later five days; and eventually seven, 10-12 hour, days were required to complete the task. In all, more than 140 boxes and parcels of collection objects had been recorded, packed and transported to a safer location. Large objects could not be relocated in the time available.

Not surprisingly, there were insufficient resources on hand to accomplish the packing tasks, so - as highlighted at the Blue Shield Symposium - collaboration with nearby institutions was vital. Resources and support were readily provided, especially by WAMKB.

The situation after the initial remediation efforts of the first weeks following the earthquake can now be reviewed. A residue of brick dust pervades some of the textiles and some preventative conservation will be required. Again the resources of WAMKB will need to be utilised.

In summary, the initial challenge of the earthquake is past and the necessary work of significance assessment can now begin. ■

Bill Storer is former Chairperson of Museums Australia (NSW); he currently serves as Secretary, Museums Australia National Council, and chairs MA's Legal and Governance Committee. He has been contracted for a 3-month assignment at Kalgoorlie-Boulder, in the remediation measures undertaken locally to deal with the effects of the earthquake in May, 2010.

Zoe Scott has extensive experience in the regional museums field, having worked in a number of states/territories. She is currently Manager, Western Australian Museum Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

1. Robyn Horner is Curatorial Assistant at the Goldfields War Museum, Kalgoorlie, Western Australia.

Greener museums and sustainable practice



ABOVE:
Julian Bickersteth

BELOW:
Fig.2 RH and T requirements for 'Turner to Monet' exhibition loans and NGA temporary exhibition gallery (TEG), compiled by M. Mandy, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2008.

Julian Bickersteth

It is tempting in the wake of the Copenhagen Climate Change summit to be overwhelmed by the extent of the issues surrounding environmental sustainability. What can we do at a practical local level within the museums/galleries sector? The answer is a number of things, and this article looks at one of them: namely, the reduction of energy usage.

Critical to this discussion are the recommended environmental standards for display and storage of collections. These currently rely on enormous amounts of energy to keep them constant, so the museums sector needs to address a number of challenges: rising energy costs; questions over whether the current supply of energy can be maintained; and community pressures to be more environmentally conscious. These challenges lead on to two broader questions – namely, what are the opportunities/issues around reducing energy use, and what are the potential impacts on collections (sometimes referred to as the 'preservation equation')?

The current situation

Where are we at present? To answer this question, we need first to understand where we are coming from. The current generation of museum professionals has grown up working to the standards of 22°C +/- 2°C temperature conditions; and 55% +/- 5 % relative humidity.

There is now general agreement amongst the international museums community that in fact collections can withstand conditions within a range outside of these currently accepted standards. There needs therefore to be a shift accomplished in environmental standards that reflects a better understanding of the contemporary conservation needs of different types of objects, and the climate in which they are held.

Australia is already playing its part internationally in these discussions and undertaking a range of studies of the needs of our national collections. For instance, the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, has determined with some accuracy the required environmental parameters for safe display and storage of the

full range of its material types^[1] - see Fig.1 (opposite).

However although this work is important for our permanent collections, if we want to continue to borrow artworks and objects from abroad, we can move no faster than international lending institutions abroad in reviewing standards currently accepted as the norm. Current anomalies are clearly illustrated in the wide variance for loan condition environmental requirements plotted by the National Gallery of Australia for a recent major international exhibition, *Turner to Monet: The Triumph of Landscape* (March–June 2008) - see Fig.2 (below).

Meanwhile some good news is that the museums sector, particularly in Europe and North America, is determined to do something about reviewing these standards. Moreover in general, there are considerably more resources committed to conservation research in these regions, to examine issues in depth, than are available in Australia.

Further good news is that the issue of acceptable standards has moved from being a largely technical discussion between conservators and building managers to becoming embraced by those in key positions of decision-making to bring about change.

The UK National Museum Directors Conference (NMDC) is looking to cement international agreements during 2010 around a new set of environmental guidelines. Two directors in particular have been leading this discussion.

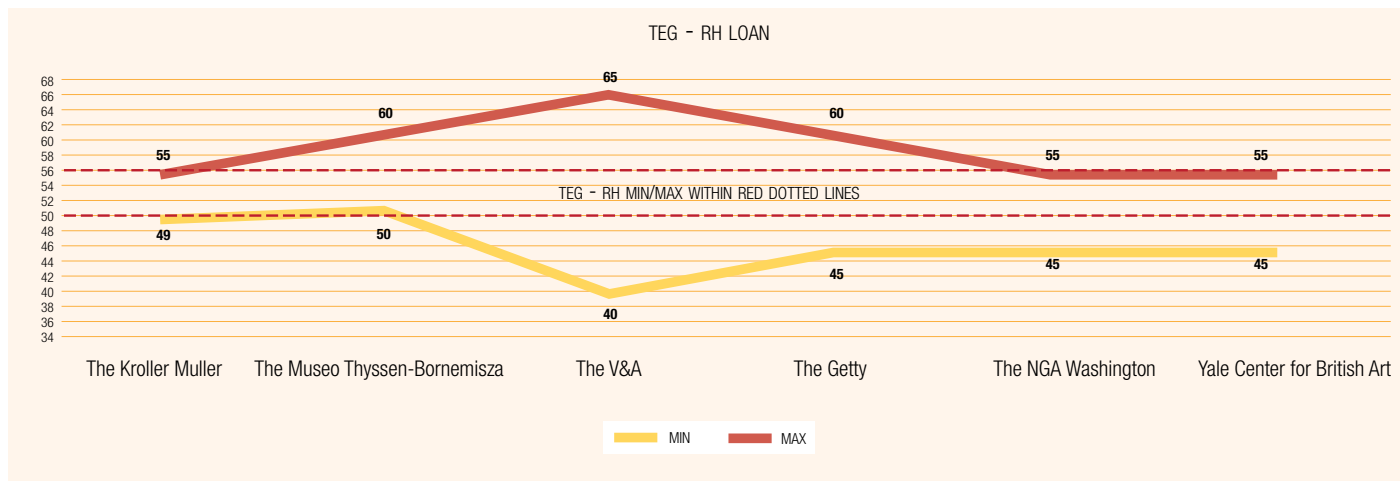
Mark Jones, Director of the Victorian and Albert Museum, London, has written extensively on the matter in such publications as the UK Museums Journal (November 2008):

Most museums do not properly understand the environmental conditions in their buildings, either because their systems are insufficiently sophisticated or because it is assumed that technical staff will sort out problems as and when they arise. This means that no one in a senior position takes the trouble to understand the significance of the data in question.^[2]

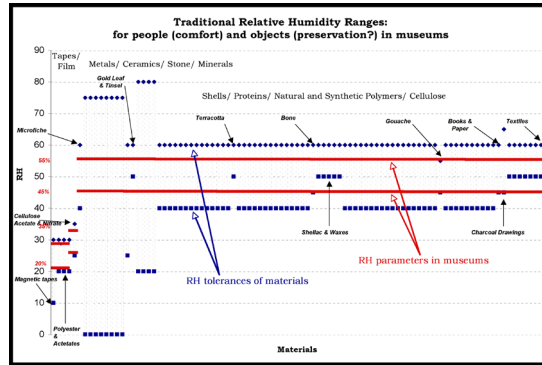
Sir Nicholas Serota, Director of the Tate, has also been outspoken on the matter. He joined a pivotal

1. See Barbara Reeve, David Fitzgerald, Laura Kennedy, 'Environmental parameters for long-term collection preservation at the Australian War Memorial', 2007, in A. Cheung, B. McGeachie, S. Pedder, S. Quinn & P. Riboust, *Protecting Collections Saving the Earth: A Balancing Act*; A project report for the 2008 Cultural Management Development Program [Australia]. Web available at: <http://www.nla.gov.au/openpublish/index.php/nlasp/article/viewFile/1392/1681>.

2. Web available at: http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/what_we_do_documents/guiding_principles_reducing_carbon_footprint.pdf



RIGHT:
Fig.1 RH ranges for materials,
 from Reeve, Barbara .H.C.,
Keeping it Local: Sustainability
 in Museums, COST42 Workshop,
 IAQ in Museums and Archives, 9th
 Indoor Air Quality Meeting IAQ
 2010, Chalon-sur-Saone, France,
 21-24 April 2010



public dialogue hosted by the International Institute for Conservation (IIC) at the National Gallery, London, in September 2008, stating that the issue of achievable appropriate environmental levels had to be addressed – even raising the proposition that visitors to the Tate might have to wear overcoats in winter due to the collections being exhibited at lower temperatures.

Both Jones and Serota are members of the Bizot Group, also known as the International Group of Organizers of Large Scale Exhibitions. Their initiatives have helped lead to the establishment by Bizot of draft guiding principles driven by museums’ need to find ways to reconcile long-term preservation of collections with reduced energy usage.

Whilst these principles cover the broad area of reducing carbon footprints, the relevant environmental guidelines principle reads as follows:

Environmental standards should become more intelligent and better tailored to clearly identified needs. Blanket conditions should no longer apply. Instead conditions should be determined by the requirements of the individual objects or groups of objects and the climate of the part of the world where the museum is located. [3]

As a result, NMDC has produced the following proposed interim guidelines for hygroscopic materials – being the most vulnerable material types – which is worth stating in full:

For the majority of objects containing hygroscopic material (such as canvas paintings, textiles, ethnographic objects or animal glue) a stable relative humidity (RH) is required in the range of 40 – 60% and a stable temperature in the range of 16 – 25 deg C. More sensitive materials (e.g. scroll paintings on silk, panel paintings, vellum or parchment) will require specific and tight RH control, specified according to the materials.

Less sensitive materials (e.g. stone, ceramic) can have wider parameters for RH and temperature.

It must be made clear in adopting these guidelines that RH conditions outside the range are not acceptable for the majority of hygroscopic materials, and that rigour will be needed to ensure that conditions

do not drift outside the specified range. If international agreement for loan conditions for all material types is to be achieved it must be recognised that the most sensitive material such as scroll paintings on silk, paintings of panels, vellum or parchment will always need tight control of conditions, which might be best achieved through the use of microclimates. Conversely the need for, and extent of, parameters for less sensitive materials should be re-considered and debated.

What happens next?

In Australia the issue is being widely debated, though perhaps not at sufficiently senior levels in museums. The Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM) has established a taskforce to develop a set of guidelines for Australian conditions. The taskforce is currently gathering data on existing Australian and international research in this area, and is due to report back to the next AICCM AGM, late in 2010.

Rather than reinventing the wheel, the AICCM is using as a starting-point the Canadian Conservation Institute’s Environmental Guidelines for Museums – Temperature and Relative Humidity (RH), compiled by two international experts in this area (David Grattan and Stefan Michalski), and published in August, 2009. [4]

The planned AICCM Environmental Guidelines for Australian Museums and Galleries will, it is hoped, be widely promulgated. Meanwhile the Bizot Group is developing a long-term strategy to achieve agreement and ratification of international guidelines for environmental conditions for all categories of objects – a project that will inevitably shape further revisions of the Australian guidelines.

Nevertheless energy usage is not dictated only by such environmental standards. It also involves, more broadly, the ways in which museums and galleries utilise what is generally their major physical asset – their building. Australian professionals may often be captive to international trends and unable to make unilateral decisions at their own behest when it comes to environmental conditions for loans; however we can lead the way in showing how buildings can be managed in environmentally more responsible ways.

Critical links in this process are formed by strategies that building managers and conservators implement to foster closer relationships and pursue dialogues on ‘green management’ issues. A secondary aspect, but no less vital, is the degree of support provided by senior management in museums and galleries to advance such dialogues and their outcomes.

There are encouraging signs that both are well underway. [5]

Julian Bickersteth chairs the AICCM Taskforce on environmental guidelines and Managing Director of International Conservation Services, Sydney.

Citation for this article: Julian Bickersteth, ‘Changing environmental standards for museums and galleries – Where are we now?’, *Museums Australia Magazine*, Vol.18 (Issues 3&4), June 2010, Canberra, pp.10-11.

3. *ibid.*
 4. See Environmental Guidelines for Museums: Temperature and Relative Humidity (RH); Web available at: www.cci-icc.gc.ca/crc/articles/enviro/damage-dommage-eng.aspx

Blue Shield Australia: the Red Cross for disaster response



Detlev Lueth

This Symposium was held at the National Library of Australia (NLA), on Thursday 6 May 2010. It was jointly organised by Blue Shield Australia (BSA) and Disasters ACT (DISACT), to coincide with both the BlueShield Australia annual May Day campaign and Information Awareness Month.

The title of the symposium was *Disaster Proofing Heritage Collections*. Under this rubric there were two sub-themes, with the morning session looking at *Regional Disaster Preparedness for Heritage Collections* and the afternoon session focused on *Risk Management of Energy-Efficient, Heritage Collection Storage*.

The symposium had more than 100 registered participants drawn from every State and Territory, with a majority representing collecting institutions large and small from all aspects of the cultural heritage sector.

Participants were welcomed by Jan Fullerton, Director General of the National Library, and the symposium was launched by federal Senator Kate Lundy MP - whose speech can be found at <http://www.katelundy.com.au/2010/05/06/disaster-proofing-heritage-collections-symposium-launch/>

At the commencement of proceedings, many heads of Cultural Collecting Institutions in the ACT region signed the DISACT Letter of Intent (LOI) on Cooperative Disaster Preparedness. The aim of the LOI is to encourage signatory institutions to practise prevention of and preparation for disasters. To this end, it sets out a broad understanding and intentions regarding cooperation in disaster preparedness. The DISACT network and its new LOI is the largest and oldest network of its kind in Australia.

Sue Hutley, CEO of the national libraries association, ALIA, then launched ALIA's *Guide to Disaster Planning, Response and Recovery for Libraries* (www.alia.org.au/disasterrecovery/ALIA_Guide_Disaster_Plan_Resp_Recover.pdf).

Detlev Lueth, as Chair of the BlueShield Australia (BSA) Committee, followed by presenting a brief paper outlining the aims and objectives of BSA, and launched the new BSA website and facebook page – which can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.blueshieldaustralia.org.au/>

Bernard Kertesz, coordinator of DISACT, subsequently gave a paper on the history of DISACT as a body. He gave notice further that the NLA will shortly be ready to host DISACT's new website.

This formal part of the symposium was followed by eight 20-minute presentations, with the final session of the day devoted to a lively panel discussion, raising questions and responses around the two themes of the day.

Audio podcasts, together with copies of the Power-Point presentations, will shortly be available on the BSA website. Meanwhile for agile twitterers: comments on the Symposium can be found on the Twitter website – searched on #disact.

About Blue Shield Australia

The Blue Shield is the cultural equivalent of the

Red Cross. The name Blue Shield comes from the UNESCO 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which specifies a blue shield as the symbol for marking protected cultural property.

Blue Shield is also the name of an international committee set up in 1996 to work to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by disasters of all types. The International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) and its affiliated national committees (such as Blue Shield Australia) work together as the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross internationally.

ICBS brings together the knowledge, experience and international networks of the expert organisations dealing with cultural heritage: an unrivalled body of expertise which is available to advise and assist in responding to events such as the war in Iraq, the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004, and more recently, in 2010, the earthquake damage in

Blue Shield Australia aims to raise awareness of the value of Australian cultural heritage and the need for its protection against threats of all kinds.

Haiti and Chile. ICBS is international, independent and professional.

The ICBS was named in the Second Protocol of the Hague Convention (agreed in April 1999 by 84 countries) as a body advising UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

Blue Shield Australia is one of many national committees organised under the mission and objectives of the ICBS. BSA was established in 2005, with the approval and support of ICBS, as a federation of four non-governmental organisations (or 'pillars'), which represent professionals active in the fields of archives, libraries, monuments and sites, and museums. The BSA committee comprises representatives from the following Australian peak industry organisations:

- ICA: the International Council on Archives, represented in Australia by the *Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities*
- ICOM: the International Council of Museums, represented in Australia by *ICOM Australia* – of which *Museums Australia*^[1] is a recognised partner body
- ICOMOS: International Council on Monuments and Sites, represented in Australia by *Australia ICOMOS*
- IFLA: the International Federation of Library



ABOVE:
Screenshot of BSA webpage

RIGHT:
Detlev Lueth




ABOVE:
Standing from left: *Liz Moorhouse* (Assistant Manager Heritage (Building), Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House); *Jeff Hobson* (Director Corporate Services, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies); *John Santolin* (Manager Business Services, National Gallery of Australia); *Vic Elliott* (Director Scholarly Information Services & University Librarian, Australian National University); *Nola Anderson* (Assistant Director National Collection, Australian War Memorial); *Andrew Sayers* (Director, National Portrait Gallery); *Mathew Trinca* (Acting Director, National Museum of Australia); *Dr Darryl McIntyre* (CEO, National Film and Sound Archive); *Allan Thompson* (Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services); *Steve Stuckey* (Chairman, Territory Records Advisory Council); *Anthony Polinelli* (Director Canberra Connect, Department of Territory and Municipal Services)/**Seated from left:** *Ross Gibbs* (Director General, National Archives of Australia); *Jan Fullerton* (Director General, National Library of Australia); The Hon. Senator *Kate Lundy*.

Associations and Institutions, represented in Australia by the *Australian Library and Information Association* (ALIA).

These four organisations work together to prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergency situations in case of armed conflict or natural disasters that could affect Australia’s cultural heritage. Representatives from these organisations on the BSA Committee include salaried professionals and independent consultants whose work for BSA is not directly remunerated and is frequently undertaken outside paid hours (i.e. voluntarily).

Blue Shield Australia aims to raise awareness of the value of Australian cultural heritage and the need for its protection against threats of all kinds. In order to achieve this aim, BSA organises an annual national campaign – May Day – which urges cultural heritage organisations around Australia to focus on disaster preparedness and response. This campaign on the 1st May each year, and throughout the remainder of the month of May, encourages archives, galleries, libraries, museums, and cultural heritage sites across Australia to participate in at least one step to prepare for disaster preparedness and response.

May Day month also conveniently encompasses International Museum Day annually (17 May) – with a theme for each year established in advance by the International Council of Museums, through the ICOM Advisory Committee that meets annually, usually in Paris. 

Detlev Lueth, Chair of Blue Shield Australia, is Assistant Director, Operations Development, at the National Archives of Australia's Burwood Heights campus in Melbourne – see www.naa.gov.au

Citation for this article: Detlev Lueth, 'Blue Shield Australia and DISACT Symposium in Canberra, 2010', *Museums Australia Magazine*, Vol.18 (Issues 3&4), June 2010, Canberra, pp.12-13.

1. Museums Australia has recently become a financially contributing Associate Member of Blue Shield Australia, and MA President, Dr Darryl McIntyre, has been attending BSA Committee meetings in this capacity since late 2009.

Asian collaborations: networks, 'soft power' and the challenge of the contemporary moment

RIGHT:
Poster, Third Asia-Pacific Triennial, 'Beyond the Future', Queensland Art Gallery, 9 Sept. 1999 – 26 Jan. 2000. Poster image by Wang Jun-Jieh.

FAR RIGHT:
Exterior signage for 'The 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art' (APT6), held at the Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, 5 December 2009–5 April 2010. PHOTO: Natasha Harth, Queensland Art Gallery.

1. Asialink <http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/> (consulted 3 June 2010). Asialink was founded in 1990 as a non-academic centre of the University of Melbourne and as an initiative of the Myer Foundation.
2. Asialink <http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/> (consulted 3 June 2010) and Asialink interim report by Professor Tony Milner and Jenny McGregor, circulated to participants 7 June 2010.
3. Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's Foreign Relations in the World of the 1990s* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press 1991), p.349.
4. Dr Gene Sherman also spoke eloquently regarding developing networks. Aaron Seeto, from Gallery 4A in Sydney, stressed the need for a more strategic and pro-active approach. A personal example I can cite is the surprising lack of Australian interest, thus far, in the important new Asian Art Museum Directors network. Both Alison Carroll and I have given papers at the annual meeting of this network, but as yet no other Australians have been involved.
5. The Australia-China Council (ACC), a grant-giving body and agency of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), was established by the Australian Government in 1978 to 'promote mutual understanding and foster people-to-people relations between Australia and China'. For web information, see <http://www.dfat.gov.au/acc/>
6. The Australia-Indonesia Institute (AII), a grant-giving body and agency of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), was established by the Australian Government in 1989 to 'contribute to a more broadly based and enduring relationship between Australia and Indonesia and to project positive images of Australia and Indonesia in each other's country'. For web information, see <http://www.dfat.gov.au/aii/>
7. The Asialink interim report quoted the annual Price Waterhouse Coopers Melbourne Institute Asialink index, covering areas such as trade, investment, education, tourism, migration, research, humanitarian assistance and business, which showed engagement is now four times higher than twenty years ago.



Caroline Turner

At the recent Asialink National Forum held on 25 May 2010 at Parliament House, Canberra, the then-Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, and Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, both spoke of the significance to our nation in the twenty-first century of cultural contacts with Asia.^[1]

The Forum, which brought together 130 specialists from 'business, diplomacy, universities, government, health and the arts',^[2] concluded that in the last two decades Australia has greatly expanded contacts with Asian nations, but much remains to be done. The Forum also noted that outdated stereotypes of Asian countries persist in Australia, echoing former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans's 1991 warning that the old Asian stereotypes 'are now dangerously misleading in not equipping us to deal with the reality of modern Asia'.^[3]

The arts panel, chaired by Robyn Archer, was composed of experts drawn from around Australia and including museum representatives. The panel was agreed on the necessity of continuing to expand cultural contacts with Asia, increasing 'Asia literacy', avoiding complacency about this set of relationships, and emphasising the importance of education and people-to-people contacts.

In calling for a renewed national strategy, the panel also stressed the importance of any engagement being equal and collaborative. While Australia has built major networks to connect with the Asian region, concern was also expressed by several speakers that



we are not being included in many of the *new* cultural networks that have emerged in Asia itself in recent times; that we are not engaging with those networks in a sufficiently 'proactive' and 'strategic' way.^[4]

The Forum acknowledged that there is enormous diversity within 'Asia'. One of the results of two decades of Asia-consciousness in this country has been to inform Australians of that diversity, raising understanding of the different cultural traditions and histories of this dynamic region, as well as the changing nature of its *contemporary* cultures and societies.

Nevertheless, the concept of 'Asia literacy' is a useful one in focusing on a region of three billion people in the context of what increasingly is being called 'the Asian century' – a term used as the title for the Asialink Forum, and which reflects the global changes that have seen the Asian region emerge, or more correctly re-emerge, on the world stage in political and economic terms. Meanwhile, as part of an evolving perspective of dynamic changes, the arts and museums are booming in many countries in Asia, and Asian museums are increasingly taking a leadership role internationally.

The May Asialink Forum in Canberra, together with the forthcoming International Council of Museums (ICOM) conference in November 2010 in Shanghai, provide an opportunity for the museums sector in Australia to take stock of what has been achieved to connect with Asia, and to raise the question of whether more could and should be done throughout our sector to increase 'Asia literacy' and knowledge about Asia in the twenty-first century. The Asialink



ABOVE LEFT:
Installation view of signage and Wang Wenhai's *Mao Zedong and Mao Zedong*, 2003, in *The China Project* curated by Suhanya Raffel, held at the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA), Queensland Art Gallery, 28 March–28 June 2009. PHOTO: Ray Fulton, Queensland Art Gallery.

ABOVE RIGHT:
Installation view of Zhang Peili's *Endless dancing* 1999 and Wang Wenhai's *Mao Zedong and Mao Zedong* 2003 in *The China Project* curated by Suhanya Raffel, held at the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA), Queensland Art Gallery, 28 March–28 June 2009. PHOTO: Natasha Harth, Queensland Art Gallery.

8. 'Australia accused of cultural complacency', *Asia Pacific* (Presenter, Linda Mottram), ABC Radio Australia, 26 May 2010 <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/asiapac/stories/201005/s2910260.htm>; (consulted 6 June 2010).

9. Stephen Fitzgerald, *Is Australia an Asian Country?* (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1997), p.145.

Forum called for a national conversation across *all* sectors encompassing an increasingly complex set of relationships in a rapidly changing region. Is a new national conversation, and indeed a strategy, for the museums sector also needed?

Issues raised here are intended to facilitate a discussion. They are based on my experience as Project Director of the first three Asia-Pacific Triennial (APT) exhibitions at the Queensland Art Gallery in the 1990s, as well as serving in the 1980s and 1990s on the Australia-China Council^[5] and the Australia-Indonesia Institute.^[6] Although so much has happened – from a trickle of projects to a flood in twenty years – much more could undoubtedly be achieved through greater strategic focus and purpose.^[7]

While Museums Australia has taken up a leadership opportunity in nurturing contacts with China – most recently with the very significant program of training workshops and site visits across four Australian capital cities for Chinese art museum professionals convened by Bernice Murphy in June 2009 – individual

museums need to continue to work together as well as with other sectors, especially universities, to enhance these Australia-Asia engagements. As Robyn Archer stated in a recent interview: 'Simply touring our product there or importing theirs here squanders the superb opportunities we have to conduct an authentic and highly creative dialogue with Asia through culture and the arts, not a dialogue about the arts but a dialogue about the Asian Century'.^[8]

Such a dialogue also contributes to critical debates about Australia's place in the world. That Australia still has an identity problem in this respect was indicated by the recent Lowy Institute for International Policy Poll, *Australia and the World*, on 31 May 2010. Of those canvassed, 32 per cent considered Australia is part of Asia (but only 15 per cent of young Australians felt that way, compared with 42 per cent of older Australians); 31 per cent believed we are part of the Pacific, and as many again, as part of no region at all.

It does not really matter that five per cent of those polled reported a startling perception that Australia is

Asia-Pacific regional focus



part of Europe – or any other region distant (or even nearer) geographically. What does matter, however, is that we are in reality located within a geographical region in which, as Stephen Fitzgerald wrote with great foresight thirteen years ago, the dominant influences will be ‘countries and governments whose outlook and values derive from cultures very different from our own’.^[9] Accordingly, whether Australians should try to understand these cultures better is no longer an option; it is an imperative for our future.

What then should be the role of Australian museums in cultural engagement with the region of Asia? It is of course essential for museums to maintain their core museological obligations, while acknowledging a context wherein a museum’s programs can also function positively in support of national cultural diplomacy objectives – sometimes called ‘soft power’ diplomacy.

Notwithstanding the concerns of some attending a recent National Museum of Australia discussion on ‘museums and citizenship’^[10] over the possibility of museums being merely reactive to government policy

(although in this case an example of bipartisan policy), I would argue that one role of the contemporary museum is undoubtedly to address issues of contemporary relevance to Australian society. This includes expanding knowledge about the region in which we live, and at the same time enhancing understanding of cultural heritages that make up Australia’s own multicultural society (which now incorporates significant Asian components *within* our cultural mainstream).

Museums can in fact play a key role in nurturing vital non-government links that underpin real and lasting relationships. Such NGO networks are thus critically significant in museums’ exercise of their expertise independently of the political sphere. Government-to-government connections, after all, are only part of the picture in which museums and galleries develop programs, share collection resources (notably in touring exhibitions), and build up peer contacts and initiatives internationally that long outlive political cycles and provide enduring benefits in support of culture and heritage enrichment for all Australians.

ABOVE:
Aerial view of Isabel and Alfredo Aquilizans’ Kids’ APT project *In flight (Project: Another Country)* 2009, installed at the Queensland Art Gallery for ‘The 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art’ (APT6), 5 December 2009–5 April 2010. PHOTO: Ray Fulton, Queensland Art Gallery.

10: ‘Six Conversations’, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2 June 2010.

TOP:

Installation view of Nalini Malani's *Remembering Toba Tek Singh, 1998–99*, in 'APT 2002: Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art', Queensland Art Gallery, 12 Sept. 2002–27 Jan. 2003. PHOTO: Ray Fulton, Queensland Art Gallery.

BOTTOM:

Dadang Christanto (born 1957, Indonesia), *Heads from the North, 2004*; performance in Marsh Pond, Sculpture Garden, National Gallery of Australia, 2004. The multi-part work was later acquired for the collection of the National Gallery of Australia. PHOTO: Sherman Galleries, Sydney, 2004.

Transformation in 'Asia literacy' in Australia in recent years has operated at many levels and involved many Australian museums. It is instructive to review briefly some key aspects of that story.

Important collections of historical Asian art have been developed in particular by the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) and the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA) – all of which have originated major exhibitions at the same time as developing their collection holdings.

Exhibitions of Asian culture have in reality had a strong presence in Australian museums since the 1970s. However this process has much older precedents; indeed, exhibitions of Asian culture were shown in international fairs or exhibitions in Australia in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, Asian-content exhibitions became a significant new emphasis in museum and gallery programming from the 1950s onwards. An unusual case amid the mainly historical exhibitions of Asian artefacts developed in the later twentieth century was the exhibition in 1958 of the Hiroshima panels: a memorable presentation of contemporary art works that dealt with the horrors of the atomic bomb.^[11]

However the real exhibition focus on Asia accelerated dramatically with the great series of historical art exhibitions related to China under successive Cultural Agreements, starting with *Recent Archaeological Discoveries from the People's Republic of China* in 1977, and later extended (again, at the 'blockbuster' level) by *Treasures of the Forbidden City* in 1981-2 and *The Entombed Warriors* in 1982.

As many as 20 per cent of the exhibitions shown in Australia since 1975 have been Asian in focus and content, and many have originated in Asia – that is, they have been drawn from collections *within* Asian countries themselves, but have been curated *for* Australia and involved Australian curators. Moreover they have been strikingly popular with our audiences. Meanwhile exhibition *exchanges* between Australian and Asian museums have undoubtedly increased exponentially, and have included more non-art museums in this process along the way.

For example, the Australian Museum, Sydney, undertook some pioneering early exhibitions, including *Beyond the Java Sea: Art of Indonesia's Outer Islands* (1993). More recent examples have included *The Great Wall of China: dynasties, dragons and warriors* (2006), developed by the Powerhouse Museum in partnership with the National Museum of Beijing, which later moved on from the Powerhouse to the Melbourne Museum in 2007.

Currently, the National Museum of Australia is following up the highly successful 2008 Emily Kngwarreye exhibition, curated by Margo Neale for exhibition in the museums of modern art in Osaka and Tokyo, with *Papunya artists: out of the Australian Desert* (from the museum's collection) – which opened at the National Art Museum of China, Beijing,



in June 2010 as part of a new series of exchanges planned by the NMA.^[12]

There are many other examples of smaller-scale but important exhibitions involving the agency of our museums and galleries that could be drawn into this overview. Meanwhile new projects are being planned every year – for example, the forthcoming National Portrait Gallery's exhibition of Asian portraits, curated by Christine Clark, to be shown in 2011.

In the area of contemporary art exhibitions and collecting, the Queensland Art Gallery's Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT) projects, beginning in 1993, have had a substantial impact. The six exhibitions thus far have received a total attendance of more than 1.5 million visitors.^[13] It is important to state that a key aspect of the APT venture, from its inception, was a broad definition of the geographic region encompassed by its scope. This crucially included provision for Indigenous cultures from

11. See my essay in a forthcoming volume edited by Des Griffin, Leon Paroissien and Margaret Anderson on the development of museums in Australia (to be published by the National Museum of Australia in 2011).

12. NMA website: <http://www.nma.gov.au/index.html> (consulted 3 June 2010).

13. Queensland Art Gallery official figures quoted in Fact Sheet 2009 reveal that the total attendance for the first five exhibitions was 1.3 million. APT 6, in 2009–2010, had an astonishing attendance of almost 532,000 visitors (communication with the author); a large proportion of these visitors, as in previous years, was under 35 years of age.

Asia-Pacific regional focus



Australia and the Pacific to be highlighted, and as a result, for a space for discussion of Indigenous, 'tribal' and 'minority' arts from Asian countries to be raised and advanced as part of the APT projects' evolution.

In the context of the Asia-Pacific Triennials, the Queensland Art Gallery greatly expanded its collections and audiences; it made new connections with local communities (especially with schools and young people); and it intensively enriched its intellectual and artistic networks through fieldwork and research in the region internationally.

These developments were decisively facilitated in the early years by utilising the parallel Asian networks of a broad range of Australians outside of the gallery itself. Such colleagues included David Williams, as head of the Canberra School of Art, who had already set up art academic links with Asia. Other cooperative support was able to tap the long-term partnerships already in place at the QAG from the early 1980s, involving Japanese and Chinese museums.

As I have argued elsewhere, the early APT projects would not have gathered their momentum and enrichment as steadily as was achieved in the 1990s without these broader network links, together with the Gallery's own groundwork exchange exhibitions with Japan in the 1980s – which, in many ways, provided a model for the APT.^[14] Other Australian art museums, including regional galleries, also began exhibiting and collecting contemporary Asian art in the 1990s.

Among the most significant museum initiatives of the 1990s was the very important series of exhibitions of contemporary Asian art commissioned by the new Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Sydney,^[15] as well as Claire Roberts's 1992 exhibition of contemporary Chinese art which travelled to a number of venues.^[16]

Mention must be made also of the non-museum initiatives focusing on Asia in other developing contexts: for example, through arts festivals – notably, the pioneering artist exchanges developed in Perth through the Artists' Regional Exchange (ARX) projects in the 1980s; the Sydney Biennale's inclusion of Asian artists in its 1976 edition and afterwards (although not in great numbers until much more recently); and of course the many and diverse itineraries of programs initiated through the crucial agency and support of Asialink. This singularly important

body has in the last twenty years developed Australia-Asia connections through contemporary cultural and educational collaborations, residencies and exhibitions in twenty-one countries, in addition to a groundbreaking series of arts and cultural initiatives under Alison Carroll, as Founding Director of the Asialink Arts Program.

In review, it is worth stressing that exhibitions do not have to be specifically focused on contemporary art in order to capture issues of relevance to Australian society. The study of Asian cultures is in itself of major value and consequence in developing understanding of the complex history of this region over thousands of years.

A recent series of substantial exhibitions with a thematic focus on Asian *religions* and *cultural practices* – notably, *Buddha Radiant Awakening*, curated by Jackie Menzies for the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney (2001); James Bennett's *Crescent Moon: Islamic Art & Civilisation in Southeast Asia* for the Art Gallery of South Australia and National Gallery of Australia (2005); and *Speaking with Cloth* (textiles from the Abbott Collection) presented by the Museum and Gallery of the Northern Territory in 2006 – continue to provide examples of very fine Australian-curated exhibitions with far-reaching contemporary relevance. Indeed an understanding of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam could hardly be more pertinent in today's world. Accordingly, the considerable collections of historical artefacts in Australian museums that, among other qualities, vitally illuminate these huge religious traditions in the world at large, harbour far-reaching significance and educative impact when well deployed.

Finally, in advocating a progressive conversation regarding our connections with the region in the twenty-first century, I offer some suggestions to spur the discussion.

The first suggestion is that we include the Pacific clearly in our ongoing consideration of the region. This is important for many reasons – not least, the agency of our own Indigenous cultures as a crucial partner in mediating engagements with Pacific countries.

We also need to increase people-to-people contacts through professional exchanges with our Asian counterparts among museum staff *at every level* of colleague institutions. Australian museums can and are developing such exchanges directly on a museum-to-museum basis. Moreover there have been valuable ICOM Australia partnerships (through the National Committee of the International Council of Museums) and other exchanges nurturing collaboration and new projects between institutions, as well as Asialink residencies for arts managers and curator exchanges. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has steadily sponsored many cultural delegations to and from Asia that have included museum personnel over many years. These programs all deserve to be expanded even further.

Such international partnerships, rather than one-off projects, are critical to forming long-term relationships

LEFT:

View of Pacific art works, *Second Asia-Pacific Triennial, 1996*; installation view in Queensland Art Gallery. In foreground, Lin Onus, *A stronger spring for David ... Toas for a modern age, 1994*; collection Queensland Art Gallery. PHOTO: Margo Neale.

14. The APT's national committee in the 1990s chaired by then QAG Director Doug Hall, included David Williams, Alison Carroll (now of Asialink), Neil Manton (formerly DFAT) and artist Ian Howard (currently head of the College of Fine Arts, UNSW). Many other Australian curators were involved in curatorial teams, and as writers for the catalogues. For a discussion of the early years of the Asia-Pacific triennials, see Caroline Turner, 'Cultural Transformations in the Asia-Pacific: The Asia-Pacific Triennial and the Fukuoka Triennale Compared', in John Clark, Maurizio Peleggi and T.K. Sabapathy (eds.), *Eye of the Beholder: Reception, Audience and Practice of Modern Asian Art*, University of Sydney East Asia Series, No.15 (Sydney: Wild Peony, 2006) pp. 221–243.

15. For example, *Zones of Love*, a touring exhibition of Japanese contemporary art, guest curated for the MCA, Sydney, by Judy Annear (1991–1992); *Mao Goes Pop: China post-1989*, enlisting the expertise of Beijing-based critic, Li Xian-Ting (toured Australia in 1990–1991); *Art Taiwan: The Contemporary Art of Taiwan*, involving curatorial adviser Deborah Hart, and editors Nicholas Jose and Yang Wen-I (1995); and (cross-culturally interlacing Asia-Pacific artists with Native American art), *Localities of Desire: Contemporary Art in an International World*, curated by MCA Chief Curator, Bernice Murphy (1994).

16. *New art from China: Post-Mao product*, curated by Claire Roberts (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1992).



ABOVE:
The author, Dr Caroline Turner, is currently heading an Australian Research Council funded project, with Dr Michelle Antoinette, on the rise of new cultural networks in Asia.

and collaborations. It is important to recognise here that the record of resource-development and professional initiatives has turned in recent years, and Australia has much to learn from Asian museums. The ICOM triennial Conference and Assembly in Shanghai (7–12 November 2010) meanwhile provides an important prospective gathering in our region to tap and share contacts (especially through the programs that will be incorporated under the leadership of ICOM's 31 International Committees for all specialist aspects of museums-sector work).

It may be stressed again that the Asia-Pacific Triennial exhibitions in Brisbane in the 1990s represented successive *editions* of an evolving national project, and engaged contributions from a very wide variety of Australians who formed the selection teams and undertook research and fieldwork in Asia. This was of singular importance as a professional development stimulus beyond the Queensland Art Gallery alone, as also was the large number of Asian (and Pacific) arts experts who became part of the project teams, wrote for the catalogues, and visited Brisbane (from many countries in the region) to participate in the opening week conferences, floor-talks and public events.

Financial assistance was provided to the QAG in the 1990s by a range of important supporters: the Australia Council, DFAT, and other national organisations and international partners contributing real and in-kind resources.

In the light of this history, and what was harvested cumulatively, it would be crucially helpful today to have a dedicated, funded series of exchanges similar to the international partnerships among museums which operated in the 1980s through ICOM, and the specifically Australia-Asia-Pacific partnerships (IAMPP) launched by ICOM Australia in the aftermath of the successful 1998 ICOM General Conference in Melbourne – and continuing today. We also need to increase the Asian and Pacific representation in all our conferences and forums in Australia – something Alison Carroll suggested more than a decade ago when writing about the Melbourne ICOM conference.^[17]

Museums do not necessarily need to follow government paths in this undertaking. The ways we engage can and should involve risk-taking. For example, although Australian governmental sources of support (Queensland government and Australian government) in the development of the APT projects was crucial, it was also understood – from the Gallery's mission vantage-point – that some kinds of art and artist-inclusions it sought would *not* be possible if government-to-government channels had any determining influence over *selection*. Such channels would have excluded many fine artists from the region whose work was about questions of social justice – as was the case with Indonesian artists who opposed human-rights abuses under the Suharto regime and brought such issues forward in their work (notably Dadang Christanto, whose work gained a remarkable impact on Australian audiences in the 1990s, and developed later through further projects that have expanded his

recognition in Australia to the present day).

Turning finally to youth challenges in the contemporary agenda for greater Asia literacy: we need to increase resources for young people to connect with the major developments happening in Asia, through increased education programs and school resources. The new national curriculum gives us an opportunity to coordinate many of our Asia-linked projects directly with what teachers want and need, to ensure that they have ready means to enrich learning programs with Asia-rich content. The APT projects in Queensland, assisted by special funding that enabled tailored programs to reach schools in other states as well as in Queensland, counted the direct engagement of youth audiences around new content among its most benchmarking and successful innovations. These youth programs have been expanded over the last decade and continue today as both a major component of the APT and one of the institutional priorities of the Queensland Art Gallery as Director Tony Ellwood has emphasised in 2010.^[18]

Drawing on all our institutions' programming resources nation-wide, in review, there are rich opportunities for connecting more with Australia's multicultural population in a myriad ways when putting together projects with our Asian counterparts. As Head of Asian Art in Sydney's state gallery, Jackie Menzies, has pointed out: there is a great reservoir of skills and knowledge in the Australian community, ranging from academics to immigrant artists, that can valuably be enlisted in developing new exhibitions and projects for presentation across the whole museums sector.

Within such a broad perspective of the social dividend possible, educational programs need to be a major focus of our conversations and of any national strategy developed. As Kevin Rudd stated at the Asialink Forum in May: 'The next generation of Australians will be great celebrators of this exciting cultural engagement.' [1]

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This essay has been peer-reviewed.

The author would like to thank the staff of the Queensland Art Gallery/ GOMA for generous assistance with images.

Citation for this article: Caroline Turner, 'Asian collaborations: networks, 'soft power' and the challenge of the contemporary', *Museums Australia Magazine*, Vol.18 (Issues 3&4), June 2010, Canberra, pp.14-19.

17. Alison Carroll, 'Ancient Cultures – New Worlds. Really?' *Museum National*, Vol.7(3), Museums Australia, Canberra, February 1999, p.22.

18. During the third 'Sites of Communication' symposium held at Queensland Art Gallery on the last weekend of APT6 (26-27 March 2010), QAG Director, Tony Ellwood, made a strong presentation on the Gallery's commitment to visitor engagement through all of its programs across the board, especially through the development phases of exhibitions. Meanwhile Deputy Directors Andrew Clark and Suhanya Raffel also have a strong creative commitment to these programs, including education, and the QAG now has a dedicated Asia Pacific research arm, The Australian Centre of Asia Pacific Art (ACAPA), established in 2002 (<http://qag.qld.gov.au/research/acapa>).

Queensland Art Gallery – Children’s Art Centre



ABOVE LEFT:
Thukral & Tagra’s Kids’ APT project *Hi! I am India* 2009, installed at the Gallery of Modern Art for ‘The 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art’ (APT6), 5 Dec. 2009–5 April 2010. PHOTO: Katie Bennett.

ABOVE RIGHT:
Thukral & Tagra with their Kids’ APT project *Hi! I am India* 2009, installed at the Gallery of Modern Art for ‘The 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art’ (APT6) 5 December 2009 – 5 April 2010. Photo: Natasha Harth, Queensland Art Gallery.

The Children’s Art Centre is nationally and internationally recognised for its diverse and stimulating range of programs, artist projects and exhibitions for children. These are designed to introduce young audiences to artists and their ideas in ways that are appealing to children.

Since 1998, the Queensland Art Gallery has presented children’s exhibitions featuring art works from the Collection and interactive projects held in conjunction with major exhibitions. These projects have included ‘The Silver Factory: Andy Warhol for Kids’ (for *Andy Warhol* 2007–08), ‘Yo Picasso Kids and the Contemporary Media Lounge’ (for *Picasso & his collection* 2008), and ‘The Met for Kids’ (for *American Impressionism and Realism: A Landmark Exhibition from the Met* in 2009).

One of the key focuses at the Children’s Art Centre is working with contemporary artists to develop projects, often held in conjunction with major summer exhibitions such as the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art or Contemporary Australia series. Through its collaboration with artists, the Children’s Art Centre aims to engage children with contemporary cultures across the globe, and to facilitate a first-hand experience of the many ways in which artists approach their work.

Since 1999, the Gallery has collaborated with more than 70 emerging, mid-career and senior contemporary Australian and international artists to develop projects and workshops, installations and activities

– both in the Gallery and online – for children and families. Artists such as Yayoi Kusama (Japan), Cai Guo-Qiang (China/USA), Bharti Kher (India), Yoshitomo Nara (Japan), Michael Leunig (Australia) and Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian (Iran) have been involved in these collaborations.

Major exhibitions featuring commissioned artist projects for children include the *Asia Pacific Triennial* series (1999, 2002, 2006, 2009), *Contemporary Australia: Optimism* (2008) and *The China Project* (2009).

With more than a decade of experience, the Children’s Art Centre is acknowledged as a leading provider of contemporary art for contemporary kids. Artists’ ideas as authentic and appealing means through which children can learn about art, and recognition of the significance of children’s experiences in the art museum, are key philosophies guiding the Children’s Art Centre. **■**

This commissioned text explaining the aims of the outstanding Children’s Art Centre facility at Queensland Art Gallery/GOMA for MA Magazine readers has kindly been supplied by Queensland Art Gallery Education staff. (Ed.)

Citation for this article: ‘Leading educational practice in children’s learning through art: Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) – Children’s Art Centre’ *Museums Australia Magazine*, Vol.18 (Issues 3&4), June 2010, Canberra, p.20.

China-Australia Art Gallery Management Program 2009: A report on Australia's ongoing museum interactions with China

Advancing professional exchanges with China

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Chinese delegation, with NGA Director Ron Radford AM (seated centre, front row) and staff representatives, Board Room of the National Gallery of Australia (22 June 2009). PHOTO: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.



Mrs XIE Rui (delegation leader from Chinese Ministry of Culture, Beijing); Mr KE Yasha (incoming Cultural Counsellor) and Ms LI Hong (outgoing Cultural Counsellor), Chinese Embassy, Canberra; and Bernice Murphy (National Director Museums Australia). Arrival foyer, National Gallery of Australia, 22 June 2009.



Seated L-R: Mrs WANG Xiufeng (Bureau of Cultural Industries, Ministry of Culture); Mr KE Yasha (incoming Cultural Counsellor, Chinese Embassy, Canberra); Mrs XIE Rui (Chinese delegation leader; Deputy Director, Bureau of Cultural Industries, Ministry of Culture, Beijing); Mr ZHOU Shunkai, President, Chongqing Academy of Chinese Painting and adviser to Ministry of Culture. National Gallery of Australia Board Room (22 June 2009). PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.



Shanthini Naidoo (Assistant Director, Development, Marketing & Commercial Operations), begins PowerPoint illustration supporting her presentation on DMCO programs at the National Gallery of Australia (22 June 2009). PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.

Bernice Murphy

The National Office of Museums Australia organised an important program of training seminars and site-visits for Chinese museum colleagues in 2009, with generous participation of some of Australia's leading museums and colleagues. This international project – enabling a 20-person Chinese delegation to experience training seminars in Australian art museums (state and national galleries) and several non-art museums – was the realisation of an idea first mooted with Museums Australia in 2008 through the Chinese Embassy in Canberra.

Preliminary discussion of a Chinese delegation's visit and training issues

Ms Li Hong, Cultural Counsellor at the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, Canberra, approached Museums Australia Director, Bernice Murphy, in 2008, regarding a possible museum directors' training program in Australia. She had been deeply impressed by two recent exhibitions in Australia showcasing Chinese cultural heritage: *The Great Wall of China* exhibition (2006–2007), curated by Dr Claire Roberts at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney (in partnership with curators at the National Museum of China in

China-Australia Art Gallery Management Program 2009: A report on Australia's ongoing museum interactions with China



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
Chinese visitors in-transit to lunch with a cross-section of NGA staff in the Sculpture Garden, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.
PHOTO: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Chinese delegation conducted to see components in storage of *The Aboriginal Memorial*, 1987-88 by Ramingining artists, Arnhem Land. The work was purchased with the assistance of funds from National Gallery admission charges and commissioned in 1987. This celebrated multi-part work's Indigenous significance is explained to guests by a Tina Baum, Curator Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art. Simon Elliott (Assisant Director, Curatorial & Education Services) is at far left. PHOTO: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Adam Worrall (Assistant Director, Exhibitions and Collections Services) explaining objectives of NGA exhibitions program development and realisation, and programs facilitating access to the Gallery's collections. Interpreter Cheng (Ivy) Yin is on his right. PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.



Beijing), and a small touring exhibition of Chinese jade.

It had impressed Li Hong that these exhibitions had revealed a range of skills and expertise in highly developed museum-quality presentation in Australia that she believed could be instructive for professional colleagues from China to study at first-hand, as an aspect of cultural and professional exchange. She commented further that she perceived Australia as a country close by in the region where Chinese directors and senior personnel could gain valuable professional development encompassing the levels of internationally attuned museum standards today, without having to travel as far afield as Europe or the USA.

In discussion about the possibility of training seminars and site visits for a delegation of colleagues from China, key questions were framed along the following lines: How do Australian museums exercise their skills and expertise in the preparation and presentation of international exhibitions, and the associated specialisation of staff in areas such as marketing and sponsorship, development and fundraising, merchandising, shops and other income-earning activities? How do they fine-tune their communication and education programs

to involve a variety of publics and audiences? How do they handle the development of restaurants, cafes, and other support services and facilities that enrich the public experience of museums today, and make them important institutions in the cultural life of cities, including providing crucial support to tourism?

Background on the Chinese context

The issue of internationally comparative standards for museums in China is sharply topical in a period where the Chinese government itself has mandated affirmative development to achieve the transformation of Chinese museums needed to equal highest levels in other countries.

Such a transformation is sought so that Chinese museums may take their place among the strongest museums of the world: preparing for outstanding travelling exhibitions received or loaned internationally; accomplishing the levels of collections presentation and services provided for both international and local visitors alike; advancing cultural awareness and identity through exhibition

RIGHT:
Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, Canberra; Deputy Director Kate Cowie begins presentation to Chinese delegation (23 June 2009).
 PHOTO: Courtesy Chinese Embassy, Canberra.

FAR RIGHT:
National Museum of Australia Director, Craddock Morton, welcomes Chinese delegation and initiates seminar with senior staff at the National Museum (23 June 2009).
 PHOTO: Museums Australia.



exchanges in culture and heritage; and not least, ensuring that museums are a crucial part of the cultural infrastructure to promote tourism in China.

The 'internationalisation' of museum practice and cultural facilities in China is therefore sought to achieve changes in the cultural sphere corresponding to China's dramatic development in the economic and industrial spheres. A greater public presence and dynamic impact is desired for China's museums and heritage facilities, to strengthen China's international relations and changing position in the world at large.

International Museum Directors Forum, Beijing, 2006

At an International Museum Directors Forum, held in Beijing in September 2006,^[1] Chinese museum directors, in company with six invited international speakers, discussed the current development of museums in China, and international standards and benchmarks for museums cooperating globally. Among various topics, there was a strong focus on training and skills development, desirable facilities and architectural consideration in new projects, increased public amenities and entrepreneurial awareness, education programs and the role of ethical codes of conduct.

Several forthcoming international events – then still-anticipated for China – were uppermost as signposts driving Chinese development in the first decade of the twenty-first century: notably the Olympic Games to be held in Beijing in 2008; the World Expo 2010 (1 May–31 October) in Shanghai; and to follow immediately afterwards (and utilising the same Expo facilities complex), the triennial Conference and Assembly of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), scheduled to take place 7–12 November 2010 in Shanghai. This last event is now imminent.

During the 2006 Beijing Forum, the Chinese National Committee of ICOM (ICOM China) stressed the importance of China's having rejoined ICOM in 1983. This move signalled a decisive aspiration by China to reengage with the international museums community, following a long period of disconnection from the West while China pursued independent development under Chairman Mao

Zedong and limited its international cultural relations to communist countries and Soviet Bloc networks.

While the thawing of relations with the West had begun slowly in the 1970s and 1980s, Chinese museum personnel were nevertheless attending to international developments from a distance by the late 1980s. For example, the promulgation by ICOM of its first *Code of Ethics* (ratified at the ICOM General Assembly in Buenos Aires, in 1986) had been noted by ICOM China, and the ICOM Code was translated into Chinese soon afterwards.^[2]

Since 1983, the Chinese Society of Museums had also ensured that delegates attended the triennial conferences of ICOM and other major professional meetings in the region. This increased participation of China had been consolidated by the election of Professor Li Xiangyi, at the Seoul ICOM General Assembly in 2004 (and again in 2007, at the subsequent assembly in Vienna), to the governing body of the international museums organisation headquartered in Paris: the sixteen-member ICOM Executive Council.

Meanwhile the positive wish of the Chinese museums community, organised nationally through the Chinese Society of Museums, to be more engaged with their peers internationally – and governmental support for such change – was advanced when the 7th ICOM-ASPAC (Asia-Pacific Regional Organisation) conference was hosted in Shanghai in October 2002. A key theme of that gathering of ICOM ASPAC delegates was one rising in ICOM's consciousness through the special advocacy of Asian and Pacific colleagues: the important values that animate the idea of *intangible cultural heritage*.^[3]

China was meanwhile taking great strides in extending the provision and impact of its museums. At the Beijing International Forum in 2006, Professor Zhang Wenbin (President of the Chinese Society of Museums and then-Chairperson of ICOM China) emphasised the comprehensive nature of museums' current expansion in China – both in scale and in changing objectives for their development. Before the Cultural Revolution, China had only some 365 museums. This number had increased to 1,013 by 1990, and the figure had reached around 2,300 by the beginning of 2006. Such changes represented an unprecedented upsurge of development within one country by world standards.

Zhang Wenbin stressed that this development was

1. Bernice Murphy attended the *International Directors Forum*, 16–18 September 2006, in Beijing, as Chairperson of the Ethics Committee of ICOM and among six international guest-speakers invited by the Chinese Society of Museums to give papers on international issues of relevance to Chinese colleagues. Her presentation dealt with ICOM's work on ethics since the 1970s, especially through the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*, and the relationship of codes of practice to museum standards of performance and public trust. Travel and hospitality by the Chinese Society of Museums are gratefully acknowledged. An earlier, short report by the author on the Beijing Forum was published in *MA's Magazine*: 'Chinese Museums: Transforming their mission and position', *Museums Australia Magazine*, Vol. 15(2), November 2006, pp.10–11.

2. Reported in paper by Zhang Wenbin (President, Chinese Society of Museums and Chairperson of ICOM China) to International Museum Directors Forum, Beijing, 16 Sept. 2006.

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also marked by a diversification in museums typology: from archaeology, natural science and industry museums to a proliferating number of history, community and art museums. There was furthermore an increased attention to the expansion of museums regionally across China, marking a shift from the previous concentration on major cities.

Meanwhile focusing on the capital, in Beijing: at the end of the 1970s, when China was beginning to open to the West, there were only some 30 museums in Beijing. By the end of the century the number had been increased to 100, with a total of 131 scheduled for realisation by the end of 2006.

By this time, however (as the Beijing International Directors Forum itself made clear in its program and invited speakers from abroad), China had moved its priorities from numerical expansion of institutions to qualitative improvement in facilities, training and public engagement of museums. As the twenty-first century unfolded, there were now conscious aspirations to embrace internationalisation of standards and people-centred values of service.



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT:
 ZHU Hongbin, Chinese Embassy Canberra, in front of the exhibition banner featuring a detail from Salvador Dalí's *The Ecumenical Council*, 1960, about to enter National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), 24 June 2009. The showing of the blockbuster exhibition, *Salvador DALÍ: Liquid Desire*, at the NGV Melbourne provided a valuable case-study opportunity for reviewing highest current standards of international exhibitions presentation.
 © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, VISCOPY, 2009.
 PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.

Kristen Eckhardt (Marketing) conducting a presentation on Marketing and Brand Strategy by the National Gallery of Victoria. PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.

Andrew Boyd (Corporate Partnerships), PowerPoint presentation on Corporate Partnerships Management within the National Gallery of Victoria (24 June 2009). Interpreter Cheng (Ivy) Yin is on his right. PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.

The total experience of NGV Melbourne staff presentations (on Development, Marketing, Commercial Initiatives - including NGV Store redevelopment - and Education and Public Programs) was most instructive from a 'Gallery Management Training' viewpoint, and deeply appreciated by the Chinese delegation.

Realisation of Gallery Management Training for a Chinese delegation in 2009

The overarching objectives of the training program across four Australian cities realised in 2009 were to strengthen and deepen professional cultural ties between Australia and China in the art museum field, building affirmatively on cultural links established during the long history of museum exhibition exchanges since 1975.

MA Council and ICOM Australia endorsement

Successive Presidents of Museums Australia – Patricia Sabine, from the Australian War Memorial, followed by her successor, Dr. Darryl McIntyre (CEO of the National Film and Sound Archive) – were unhesitatingly supportive. Museums Australia's National Council strongly perceived the value of such a project in cementing professional links engaging the Australian museums sector on a peer basis within the region.

Meanwhile ICOM Australia – the Australian National Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and a partner to Museums Australia – judged this proposal as a positive adjunct to its own ICOM Australia Museum Partnerships Program (IAMPP) in the Asia-Pacific region. ICOM-Australia Chairperson, Craddock Morton (then Director of the National Museum of Australia), readily offered the backing of his staff and facilities, as did colleague national institutions in Canberra.

3. *Seventh Regional Assembly of the Asia Pacific Organisation. Museums, Intangible Heritage and Globalisation, Shanghai, China, 20-24 October 2002: Final report.* – [Chungbuk, Korea]: ICOM-ASPAC, 2006. – [various pagings]. <http://icom.museum/b-reg.html> – accessed 30 May 2010.

RIGHT: Frances Lindsay (Deputy Director, National Gallery of Victoria) welcomes Chinese delegation to NGV and explains day's seminar program and presentations prepared by staff in NGV Board Room (24 June 2009).



BELOW LEFT: Caree Staples and Andrew O'Brien (joint presentation on Commercial Initiatives, Merchandising, and research and redevelopment of NGV Store -- including visual analysis of outstanding museum and gallery stores internationally). PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.



BELOW RIGHT: Michael Nation (Manager, Executive Office, Arts Victoria) greeting Chinese delegation on behalf of Victorian Arts Minister, National Gallery of Victoria, at Board Room lunch reception (24 June 2009). To his right, Dr Mae-Anna Pang (Senior Curator, Chinese Art), Bernice Murphy (Museums Australia); to his left, Cheng (Ivy) Yin (Interpreter), Judy Williams (Head of NGV Foundation), Andrew Boyd (Manager Corporate Partnerships), Frances Lindsay (Deputy Director) - foreground. NGV Trustee, Mr Jason Yeap (further right, out of view), greeted the delegation on behalf of the NGV Council of Trustees. PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.



Australian government support

The Australia-China Council, within the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, provided financial assistance through a grant in 2008 to enable Museums Australia's planning and coordination on the Australian side (although without any provision of overhead, staffing or management costs to MA; all funds were to be expended on the project's realisation and direct costs thereto).

Private sector support

Supplementing the government assistance made available, and Museums Australia's own investment of staff resources, the Gordon Darling Foundation generously responded to the idea of workshops and training for Chinese colleagues as compatible with the Foundation's interest in encouraging Asia-Pacific regional participation in its now well-established Museum Leadership Program in Australia (modelled on the Getty Leadership Program in the United States). A small but important supporting grant of \$5,000 was generously provided by the Gordon Darling Foundation.

Scheduling

During 2008, the China-Australia workshops training project was advancing, despite several delays in timing – particularly after the sudden impact of the 2008 Wenchuan earthquakes in southern China, causing the deaths of some 80,000 and wounding of around 130,000 people, with overwhelming physical devastation and savage economic losses in consequence.

The initial approach raised by the Chinese Embassy with Museums Australia had been to consider a first-phase delegation focussed on the science and natural history sector of museums, to be followed by a second venture (at a later time) to focus on art museums. However the switch in emphasis from *non-art and science museums to galleries/art museums* in the first instance was a change that evolved circumstantially, following continuing, unavoidable delays on the Chinese side, until the PRC government's financial priorities in remediating outcomes of the Wenchuan earthquakes had been resolved.

Meanwhile colleagues across the Australian museums sector contacted by Museums Australia remained prepared to assist, throughout progressive adjustments to time-frames. They indicated an impressively



LEFT:
Chinese delegation near entrance
to Melbourne Museum (Museum
Victoria), 25 June 2009 (Royal
Exhibition Building, 1880, at rear).
PHOTO: Marie Wood, Museums
Australia.

generous readiness to lend their staff and facilities as the primary resources for a series of training seminars and site visits to be realised.

The Chinese Society of Museums (CSM), in consultation with the Ministry of Culture in Beijing, meanwhile refined selection of a twenty-member delegation to visit Australia in June 2009, composed of fifteen gallery directors or regional cultural heads, and five administrative personnel representing interests of the Ministry of Culture within the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH).

The project realised: a four-cities itinerary (21–27 June 2009)

Bernice Murphy and Marie Wood, from the National Office of Museums Australia, accompanied the delegation through the Sydney–Canberra–Melbourne–Brisbane stages of the itinerary, along with a contracted interpreter, Ms (Ivy) Cheng Yin, from Melbourne.

The warmth of social engagement afforded by participating museums was repeatedly commented upon and appreciated by the Chinese delegation. The quality and extent of colleague-to-colleague interface provided by participating institutions, both in formal training situations and at a social level over lunches and morning/afternoon teas, ensured that the total experience was richly nuanced throughout by the most generous encounters, intellectually and interpersonally.

Meanwhile the range and detailed attention lent by senior staff in preparation of presentations to visitors (often supported by PowerPoint extension, utilising visual images to circumvent translation issues) ensured that the progressive value of the program unfolding in each institution across six days was nothing less than outstanding.

At every museum visited an expansive picture of Australia's museums-sector resources and capabilities was mounted. This was enriched progressively during an intensive week of comparative experience. The evidently high level of specialised modern buildings and facilities provision; the degrees of skills-development and focused managerial expertise displayed by senior staff; the specialised investment evident in the creation of a great range of finely tuned and strategically targeted services-provision for a broad public, both educationally directed and commercially informed: all these aspects contributed collectively to a powerful impact on the Chinese delegation visiting Australia (and indeed on senior Chinese Embassy staff in Australia, who will have ongoing carriage of fostering cultural contacts between Australia and China).

It must be stressed also that the progressive sequence of a week's museum training visits was structured to ensure that the Chinese delegation was well exposed to Australian culture, collections, history and life-ways in this country – including the importance of cultural diversity and the position of Indigenous culture, both in its contemporary continuity and historically.

One more impression that emerged strongly is worth reporting upon, and this was the striking impact of Australian museums' commitment to the learning experiences of children. China is well used to bringing children into museums, often in huge numbers that may seem dauntingly larger than our own schools-visit groups. However they often arrive in such volume that the format of engagement produces long crocodiles of continuously moving figures, and a rather generic experience is provided for all. The Australian Gallery Management program yielded new and diverse perceptions of childrens' learning in museums. School groups interacting with specific exhibits, and the

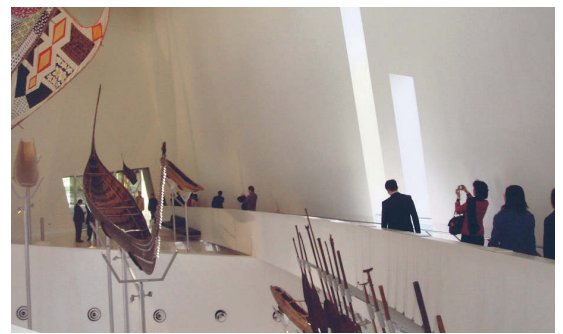
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
Dr Mae-Anna Pang (Senior Curator, Asian Art) in conversation with new Chinese Cultural Counsellor, Mr KE Yasha (Chinese Embassy, Canberra), over lunch in National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Board Room (24 June 2009). PHOTO: Museums Australia.

Visit to Heide Museum of Modern Art, Bulleen, outer Melbourne. Chinese visitors are shown the grounds with sculpture in-situ, after visiting the former house of John and Sunday Reed ('Heide I'), and preparing to visit the Australian Modernism exhibition on view at 'Heide II' (25 June 2009). PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.

Chinese visitors admire twentieth century Australian art in 'Heide II' building (24 June 2009). PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.

Tim Hart leading Chinese visitors through Pacific collection gallery, Melbourne Museum (Museum Victoria), 25 June 2009. PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.

Tim Hart (Director Information, Multimedia and Technology, Museum Victoria) welcomes delegation and begins tour of Melbourne Museum collection exhibitions and multi-media interpretation. 25 June 2009. PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.



degree of both staff attention and tailored provision for children's discussion and interactive learning in small groups, were keenly attended to whenever such encounters arose. Children's learning was a theme strongly commented upon by all and proved an unexpected feature of visitors' experience in retrospect.

After the delegation had returned to China (in late June), some informal emails sent back to officials in the Chinese Embassy in Canberra reported enthusiastic responses by delegates about the value of the training program in Australia. Outgoing Cultural Counsellor, Li Hong, in thanking Museums Australia and participating museums reported that, as she prepared

herself to leave Australia after some years in the country, this project had proved to be one of the highlights of her whole posting in Canberra. Coming towards the end of her time, it had proved a project in which she had invested strong expectations at a personal level – having raised the idea of such training being offered in Australia, and then steered its rescheduling through the vicissitudes of the Chinese earthquakes and delays. Li Hong was personally gratified by the outstanding success of the venture, marking the coda of her diplomatic posting, then about to end in forthcoming days.

Mr Ke Yasha (incoming Cultural Counsellor, having been relocated to Canberra after a cultural post in the

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RIGHT FROM TOP: Chinese visitors conducted through Children's Art Centre (CAC), Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA), by Kate Ryan, Queensland Art Gallery (26 June 2009). The CAC project by William Yan shown here within GoMA, for young people's learning, complements the main exhibition then on view in GoMA, *The China Project*, 28 March- 28 June 2009. (See 2 illustrations of this exhibition accompanying article by Caroline Turner on p.15 of present magazine.) PHOTO: Chinese Embassy, Canberra.

Installation view (detail) of title signage and Wang Wenhai's *Mao Zedong and Mao Zedong*, 2003, in 'The China Project', held at the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA), 28 March-28 June 2009. PHOTO: Ray Fulton, Queensland Art Gallery.

Julie Ewington (Curatorial Manager, Australian Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane) introducing tour of collection displays in QAG's Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) (26 June 2009). Associate Curator, Indigenous Australian Art, Bruce McLean (centre) accompanied the delegation, providing special guidance to the Indigenous collection displays. PHOTO: Museums Australia.

Julie Ewington (Curatorial Manager, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane) receives presentation from Chinese delegation (Mrs XIE Rui, Deputy Director, Cultural Industries, Ministry of Culture, Beijing) at conclusion of delegation's 4-city itinerary and Gallery Management Training program in Australia (26 June 2009). PHOTO: Museums Australia.

Chinese Embassy in London), on his part expressed appreciation for having experienced the best-possible, compressed cultural introduction in his new position. In a short burst of intensive travel and establishment of contacts with leading museums and galleries in four Australian capitals, Ke Yasha had already begun to assist in negotiation of future exhibitions raised through personal conversations. He had accomplished a strong orientation to leading Australian cultural institutions during his first fortnight in Australia. [1]

Bernice Murphy is National Director, Museums Australia, and has had ongoing contacts with museum colleagues in China through exhibition programs and related events since 1977. In recent years she taken leave and visited China twice to present papers at museum forums organised by the Chinese Society of Museums – as part of honorary service to museums internationally through ICOM.

Citation for this article, Bernice Murphy, 'China-Australia Art Gallery Management Program 2009: A report on Australia's ongoing museum interactions with China', *Museums Australia Magazine*, Vol.18 (Issues 3&4), June 2010, Canberra, pp.21-28.

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- Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- National Museum of Australia, Canberra
- National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
- Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, Canberra
- National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- Melbourne Museum, Museum Victoria, Melbourne
- Scienceworks, Spotswood, Museum Victoria, Melbourne
- Heidi Museum of Modern Art, Bundoora, Melbourne
- Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
- Gallery of Modern Art/GOMA, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

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- Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China
- Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Australia
- Australia-China Council, Department of Foreign Affairs, Australian Government
- Gordon Darling Foundation
- ICOM-Australia



'Strategic Thinking and Action' program, Mt Eliza Business School (2009)

Making time for strategic development

RIGHT:
Jane King, Executive Officer,
Museums Australia (WA)



Jane King

Thanks to the generous support of the Margaret Lawrence Foundation, I was recently able to attend the 'Strategic Thinking and Action' program, a three-and-a-half-day residential course held at the Mt Eliza Business School, Victoria.

The day-to-day management of a relatively small cultural body (the State Branch office of Museums Australia in WA), combined with on-going study, my own arts practice and family commitments, leaves

little time to devote to more reflective consideration of the longer-term future of my organisation, beyond the pressures of the next round of funding. Therefore the opportunity to spend several days in the company of a cross-section of like-minded people, moving from a preoccupation with the present to a focus on the future, was eagerly anticipated.

Participants in the program were from a wide range of organisations, drawn both

from within Australia and abroad. As people tasked with management and facing questions of change in their organisations, these colleagues represented the full gamut of our contemporary Australian economy: from mining, finance, health, agriculture, food, retail,

infrastructure and of course government, as well as two participants from arts and cultural organisations. Whilst there was much to learn from the other participants, it was gratifying also to be able to contribute meaningfully from my own cultural background.

The program facilitators challenged and informed us throughout the three days, utilising both our own examples and comparative anecdotes to illustrate their points. In small syndicate groups we worked on a hypothetical case study, and pulled together a Strategic Plan which was presented finally to the whole group on the last day (the presentation by the group I participated in being voted the winning plan by all participants in the final assessment).

The intensive and hands-on program at Mt Eliza has provided me with a series of useful tools and models with which to turn my experience now to my own organisation's long-term strategic development, particularly in clarifying our purpose, staying focussed and building on our strengths. Easy to say, but often difficult to stick to when being buffeted by the ebbs and flows of funding support!

The training program, however, has come at an ideal time in terms of my own organisation's growth and development. We are facing challenging times ahead in terms of long-term funding, and it is imperative that we are well informed, maintain a shared vision, and have good strategies in place to ensure that we are well positioned for the future.

To have been able to participate in the Mt Eliza Business School program through grant support, to a financial level that would have been beyond the resources of my own organisation to accommodate in our regular budgeting, was an outstanding opportunity for some pressurised strategic capability development, for which I am enormously grateful. **■**

Jane King is Executive Officer of Museums Australia (Western Australia). The MA-WA state branch office and staff are generously provided accommodation in the Western Australian Museum.

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It is imperative that we are well informed, maintain a shared vision, and have good strategies in place to ensure that we are well positioned for the future.

Web tales: a route map for revamping your virtual presence



ABOVE:
David Milne

David Milne

This article takes a slightly tongue-in-cheek look at things to do when planning to upgrade a museum website, with the help of some well known aphorisms and idioms.

Well we survived the experience of recreating the Queensland Museum (QM) website (<http://www.qm.qld.gov.au/>). And just like those first few hours inside a maternity wing, we experienced a mixture of pride and wonder at our new-born virtual offspring.

A few things learned along the way that may help other museums embarking on a similar journey are offered below.

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm

The new revamped website may not fall into the category of 'great', but it is without doubt a significant improvement on its rather static and unwieldy predecessor. A common and accurate perception gleaned through public consultation, before the first line of code was written, was that there were some 'pearls within' but they were difficult to find. After five or six mouse clicks you might have stumbled upon a good learning resource or an interesting research paper – but you'd be excused if you gave up. Peak Useability provided QM with valuable feedback derived from sounding out public views and this helped guide the development of the information architecture. The new website is underpinned by Sitecore (a content management system) which makes it easy to find and add new content. The time and money spent in initial consultation, and choosing the best CMS that suits your prime purpose, will bear fruitful dividends.

You can't lead anyone else further than you have gone yourself

The Queensland Museum was fortunate to have a Head of IMIT who had revamped three government websites before; and a web project manager was recruited specifically to be implementer-in-chief. An enthusiastic and well led team of foot-soldiers is imperative to forge. Build your web-development team around the talents and experience pool at your disposal, and consult with everyone from the ground upwards. Volunteers' views matter as well as the Chair of the Board.

If a man will begin with certainties he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts he shall end in certainties

There was a colossal amount of formal and informal debate and discussion at many levels amongst staff, external consultants, and the public about what we wanted the new website to offer. Consensus was often agreed readily, but strong opinions were also held about what should feature prominently. A hit-list

of desirable web-attributes (for example, intuitive user-friendly search engines) was made at the outset. However, the final 'look and feel' of the site 'evolved' over time as the web-development team received feedback from user-testing about various iterations, and became 'more certain' that staff and other stakeholders were happy.

Cut your coat according to your cloth

A sizeable investment was made to ensure that our revamped web-presence was as attractive, educative and inviting as the welcome given to physical visitors at the Queensland Museum. Generous sponsorship of the 'Find Out About' section and the inclusion of searchable collections was helpful too. Inevitably staff aspirations rose regarding the inclusion of innovative Web 2.0 and 3.0 features found in some of the world's leading, and well-funded, international museums. But including interactive social media platforms will have to be deferred until the new website has 'bedded down' and additional resourcing has been secured. Project scope creep is also a probability, as museum staff discover, and naturally want to include, more features. Strong negotiation skills with external web-project partners help to maximise what can be achieved with the financial resources available – whether this is A\$5000, \$50,000 or \$500,000.

Mediocrity finds safety in standardisation

This is a Frederick Crane quote and not my invention! The Queensland Government Enterprise Architecture (QGEA) policy mandates the use of a consistent information licensing framework across the Queensland Government. In developing the website, QM was also obliged to implement the Consistent user experience (CUE) standard. This government standard aims to deliver a common 'look and feel' and a consistent user experience. These policy intentions are laudable, but the culture of museums is unlike Housing or Transport departments. Museums need to attract and engage audiences in innovative ways. Smaller, independent regional museums may not have to comply with such stringent web-policies, and have greater license to exercise imagination and creativity as far as visual imagery and information architecture are concerned.

Planning without action is futile, action without planning is fatal

The development of the new website took more than two years to research, build, test and launch, and is testament to the collective efforts of many museum staff and the guidance of key external consultants. The scope and scale of the project required a raft of policy development, reviews, evaluations, consultation papers and implementation plans. Benchmark analysis is a useful way to begin and is not as complicated as it sounds. Pool your ideas about ten suitable

RIGHT: Screen capture of the main landing page of the new Queensland Museum website

website review criteria such as ‘availability of online educational resources’; decide on a ranking system (1-5); select six Australian museums and six international museums; and when the review and ranking are complete your team will have a clearer idea about what the strong features of your present website are, and what engaging features from other museums you would like to emulate.

The employment of usability consultants and their testing tools is invaluable to steer overall web development and to ensure that the ‘U’ is put back in user.

The development of the new website took more than two years to research, build, test and launch, and is testament to the collective efforts of many museum staff and the guidance of key external consultants.

Staff training should be a key part of pre- and post-website launch planning. Writing for the web is a different art-form from creating curatorial papers or exhibition promotion using traditional media. Web visitors search for, find, and read information in a distinctive and different way from acquiring information from books or magazines. Museum

staff also need training in writing and uploading new content to keep a website fresh, organic, and alive.

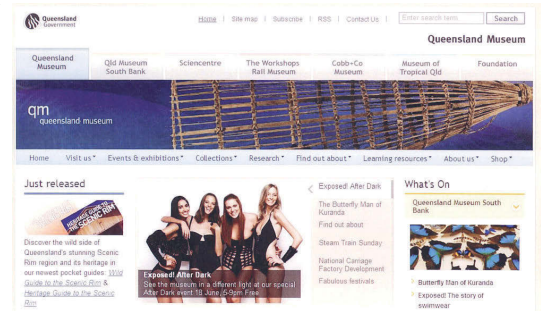
The secret of success is constancy of purpose

Data from twenty-six databases held on the State collection were migrated across to the Vernon collection management system. 40,000 collection records are now available to view online. Updating and integrating accession records is a vital activity with numerous database fields and millions of objects and artefacts to check. Managing this process requires rational thinking and ‘constancy of purpose’ to ensure effective data alignment. This started two years before the web-project began in earnest and is ongoing.

Small JPEG images of collection objects may be fine for collection managers to identify and locate an artefact on storage shelving, and to include in a searchable database. However, the general public is likely to want to see more when reviewing the collections online – for example, high-quality photographs and detailed artefact or specimen descriptors. As such, post-website launch refinements and image additions to collection records are potentially infinite.

The remaining work to finish in order to reach your goal increases as the deadline approaches

Bove’s Theorem is true. However good your master plan is, technological hitches are likely to arise and



may cause delays before they are resolved. Integrating the Vernon browser within the Sitecore interface was a technical challenge that the QM web-development team faced. Nonetheless, through a good deal of concerted and collective effort the new QM website was launched on International Museum Day as intended.

It ain’t over ‘til the fat lady sings

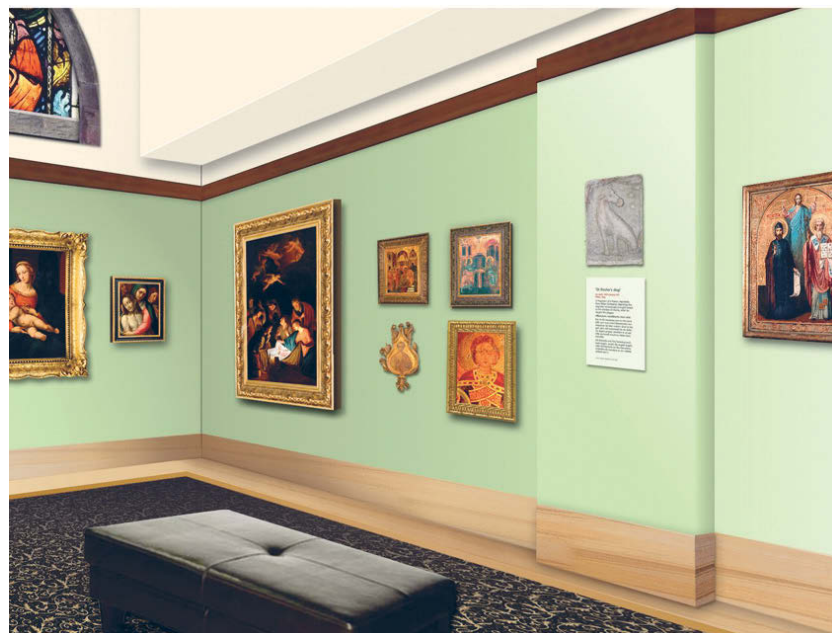
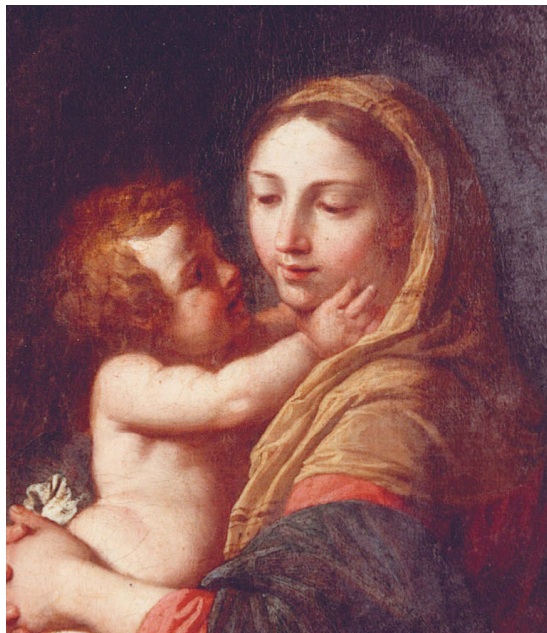
Well it ain’t quite over yet. Enabling collections to be viewed on-line is of enormous public benefit, but there are – mostly positive – follow-on ramifications. The public may want to see at first hand particular objects or specimens and perhaps add information about photographs and cultural artefacts. There are resource implications for curators to deal with an increase in public queries, and for conservators to prepare objects for research or exhibition viewing.

The Commonwealth government directive that the GLAM sector should digitise their collections and make them available to the public online is a demanding and exciting challenge to fulfil. The development of a digitisation strategy in partnership with other cultural and educational organisations is evolving at QM. There is now capacity within the architecture of the new website, as well as experience gained in the implementation process, to further improve visitors’ web experience. Greater opportunities for Web 3.0 interactivity and further sharing of on-line information about the significant state collections lies ahead. Then the fat lady can sing with gusto. **■**

David Milne is Manager of Strategic Learning at the Queensland Museum (www.qm.qld.gov.au). He has written about the use of social media, technology challenges in creating museum websites, and features of the new QM website on the Museums Australia website <maNexus>, and in CAN blogs.

Technical Providers	Collections Management System http://www.vernonsystems.com/ http://www.vernonsystems.com/
Public Consultation www.peakusability.com.au	Digital Asset Management http://www.fotoware.com.au/ http://www.fotoware.com.au/
Web Consultants http://www.readingroom.com.au/ http://www.readingroom.com.au	Loans database development (in-house) http://www.sql.org/ http://www.sql.org/
Content Management System http://www.sitecore.net/ http://www.sitecore.net/	Content Writers Queensland Museum Staff
Internal Search Engine http://funnelback.com/index.php http://funnelback.com/index.php	

AbaF provides business sector volunteers to assist museums



ABOVE:
Helen Kaptein

TOP LEFT:
Carlo Maratta, *Madonna and Child* (oil on canvas, nd).
Collection: Abbey Museum of Art and Archaeology, Caboolture, Queensland.

Carlo Maratta (1625–1713, Italy) was early influenced by Roman classicism (especially from Raphael). His mature style absorbed the greater chromatic richness and *chiaroscuro* (light-dark tonal contrast) of the late Italian Baroque. [Ed.]

TOP RIGHT:
Artist's impression of the proposed interior of the Abbey Museum of Art and Archeology, Caboolture; view of art gallery.

Helen Kaptein

Need help with a marketing plan? Human resources issues? Maybe your IT systems are in need of review? Are you developing or revising your business plan? Does your retail outlet require a new approach?

Running a successful museum or gallery brings a plethora of business challenges. If you have ever wished you could summon up an expert to help you meet them, then adviceBank might be able to assist. This free service, run by the Australia Business Arts Foundation (AbaF), connects business volunteers with arts and cultural organisations.

The Abbey Museum of Art and Archaeology in Caboolture, Queensland, called on AbaF when marketing manager, Suesann Vos, had the task of preparing a business plan. She was working on a funding submission to build a gallery for the museum's mediaeval art collection, currently in storage.

Suesann learnt about adviceBank through an AbaF workshop, and asked AbaF Queensland to identify a person with senior management experience to help prepare the business plan. AbaF suggested Trevor Robertson, an executive with many years' experience in leadership positions with organisations such as the Cricket Centre of Excellence in Brisbane, Cricket Australia and the International Cricket Council. Trevor knew of the museum and met with Suesann to discuss the project.

With Trevor providing information on the structure, format and contents, the end result was a solid business plan that the museum has used for many purposes and submissions. Later, when a vacancy opened up on the museum's board for a person with business acumen and governance experience, Trevor agreed to join.

Many business people have skills and experience that make them valuable resources to arts organisations. AbaF's volunteering services, adviceBank and boardBank, have connected hundreds of business volunteers with projects and board vacancies where they provide their expertise for free.

AbaF promotes private sector support for the arts. AbaF will discuss your business needs with you, and depending on availability, will seek to connect you with a suitable volunteer. Typical areas of need are business planning, marketing, human resources, information technology and public relations. (Currently, more volunteers are available in metropolitan areas.)

In the case of boardBank, AbaF works with arts organisations to establish exactly the skills-set that is required by the board, and then seeks to connect them with suitably skilled business people.

Several museums and galleries have used AbaF's services, but more could be taking advantage of these opportunities. AbaF's business volunteers won't do all the work that museums and galleries might need. However they will share knowledge and expertise that could lift an organisation or project to a new level, or save substantially on current expenditure.

Find out more or register interest at <http://www.abaf.org.au/volunteering> or contact your AbaF state office. **■**

Helen Kaptein has served as Cultural Programs Manager, Australia Business Arts Foundation (AbaF). She is moving on to a new career challenge after June 2010.

Australian curriculum development - update report

RIGHT:
David Arnold (Manager of
Education, National Museum of
Australia).



David Arnold

Australian national curriculum development is proceeding apace with the K-10 draft consultation documents for the first four subject areas – English, Mathematics, Science and History – currently being reviewed following the end of the consultation period in May 2010.

It is anticipated that revisions to each of these curricula areas will be completed by September/October 2010, to enable State and Territory education systems to begin implementation by the beginning of 2011. The changes will be rolled out over several years, but it is expected that significant implementation will be achieved by 2013.

The Museums Australia Education National Network (MAENN) provided detailed feedback on the draft National History Curriculum, including commenting specifically on matters such as the importance of site studies; the place of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander peoples in the draft document; lifelong learning as it relates to school learning; the importance of visual literacy considerations, and other themes.

Over all, MAENN is very pleased with the direction and

substance of the History curriculum development to date. We look forward to seeing the final version of the document and moving then to the next stage of helping to implement the new curriculum for all Australian schools.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is currently receiving feedback in relation to the senior courses (Years 11 and 12) for English, Mathematics, Science and History. Meanwhile the next three K-10 subject areas – the

Arts, Geography and Languages other than English – have also begun the development cycle process. MAENN will continue to be involved in providing feedback to those curricula development consultations in place – targeting the Arts, for example – where it feels it has an important role to play.

Stephen Heppell a distinguished speaker at the MA National Conference, 2010

Renowned learning and technology education consultant, Professor Stephen Heppell, will be speaking at the MA National Conference at the end of September. In his travels around the world discussing learning and technology, Professor Heppell often raises the issue: Now that technology can increasingly do what we want it to do, the real question is, what is it that we want it to do?

This question is very pertinent to museums as collections become increasingly digitised and museums exploit the expanding opportunities presented by social networking. In his address, Stephen Heppell will present his latest observations, ideas and challenges about where learning and technology are heading, and suggest how museums can make learning a more wholeheartedly and mindfully ‘delightful’ experience through the support of technology. **■**

David Arnold is Manager of Education, National Museum of Australia, Canberra. He is also President of MA's Education National Network (MAENN). He can be contacted at d.arnold@nma.gov.au

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Professor Heppell often raises the issue: Now that technology can increasingly do what we want it to do, the real question is, what is it that we want it to do?

Preserving heritage in regional Australia



ABOVE:
Dianne Dahlitz, Coordinator of the Community Heritage Grants program, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

RIGHT:
Kia-Ora Club, 1919, from the collection of the Royal South Street Society, Ballarat, Victoria. Collection item from successful CHG grant recipient, 2009, provided for Significance and Preservation Needs Assessments.



Dianne Dahlitz

Applications for Australian government-funded Community Heritage Grants received from regional communities have steadily increased in recent years. Of the 193 applications received in 2010, 117 (61%) were from community museums, galleries, local history groups, archives and libraries located throughout regional areas in all states and territories of Australia.

Since 1994, 736 projects across Australia have received more than \$3 million dollars in funding to undertake a range of projects: to establish national significance of collections; assess preservation needs; conduct conservation activity; and hold training programs. These projects have been supported to assist in the preservation of, and access to, collections held in a variety of institutions and circumstances across the country.

Significance Assessment

As the first step in a three-step process, a Significance Assessment is recommended. This assessment, usually undertaken by an historian or expert within the associated field, helps explain the meaning, significance and value of a collection or its component parts.

The study of the collection establishes its national significance and provides communities with knowledge and information to base decisions for future care and display.

Regional museums that have received funding to conduct a Significance Assessment in recent years include: the National Vietnam Veterans Museum (San Remo Vic); North Stradbroke Island Historical Society Museum (Qld); James Cook Museum (Cooctown, Qld); Forbes and District Historical Society Museum (Forbes, NSW); Mareeba Heritage Centre (Qld); Tamworth Powerstation Museum (NSW); and the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre (Longreach, Qld).

Of those organisations that have completed the project and submitted a Final Report, many have commented on how beneficial the assessment has been to the organisation and collection. The Significance Assessment report not only provides valuable information about a collection but also assists with decision-making about preservation and access issues, and is a useful tool for preparing further funding applications. The process often involves staff and volunteers working closely with the consultant assessor. Volunteers, in particular, can gain greater insight and understanding of a collection and feel substantially empowered to contribute to its care.



RIGHT:
Group portrait of CHG grant recipients (and workshop participants) at the Community Heritage Grants Awards Ceremony, 10 November 2009, in Canberra. Note presence (centre rear) of Ms Jan Fullerton, Director General of the National Library, and (on her right) Mr Craddock Morton, former Director of the National Museum of Australia, who presented CHG Workshop Certificates to all attendees.

Preservation Needs Assessment

The second step in the process is a Preservation Needs Assessment. This instrument looks at the physical condition of a collection and the suitability of current housing and storage facilities. It also makes recommendations for the development of a prioritised conservation program.

Once again, organisations claim that this step in the process is beneficial in highlighting goals in longer-term development and management of a community heritage collection. The assessor – a conservator who qualifies as a professional member of the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) or who has equivalent practical qualifications in their field – often works closely with staff and volunteers of an applicant organisation. A resulting report's prioritised recommendations for activities such as digitisation, conservation work, collection housing, and environmental control and monitoring, serve usefully as a basis for future management of the collection.

In recent years regional organisations such as Green's Gunyah Museum (Lockhart, NSW), Macrossin's Mill Museum (Uralla, NSW), Mannum Dock Museum of River History (Mannum, SA), Royal South Street Society (Ballarat, Vic) and Manjimup Historical Society (Manjimup, WA) have received grants to conduct Preservation Needs Assessments of their collections.

Comments from these organisations frequently express the value of such an assessment tool and its usefulness as a way of understanding the physical needs of collection items. Preservation activity and maintenance programs can then be based on the recommendations of the report that results.

While both these types of reports are important and valued, many regional museums are meanwhile keen to commence practical work that will enhance the preservation of, and access to, their collection. Once an organisation has conducted a Significance Assessment and a Preservation Needs Assessment, the next step is to apply for funding to conduct this activity.

Community Heritage Grants (CHG) program funding

Each year the Community Heritage Grants program receives applications to conduct conservation work on a wide variety of items in community-based collection. For example, funding has recently been granted to conserve cast metal items in the Cairns and District Chinese Association's museum of Chinese artefacts and to restore the Bounty Cannon in the Norfolk Island Museum.

Archival storage materials and equipment are also supported with Community Heritage Grant program funding. Mylar sleeves, archival boxes and data loggers, for example, all contribute directly to enhancing a collection's care.

Training

Training programs are strongly supported by the Community Heritage Grants program, particularly if such training benefits staff and volunteers across a range of organisations in a region.

Workshops in Disaster Management, Care and Handling of Collections, and Cataloguing of collections are encouraged. How such training can benefit many groups is demonstrated by the Textiles Conservation Workshop project organised by Arts Northern

Community Heritage Grants provide sustaining assistance across regional communities



ABOVE: Chinese fan. Collection item conserved by the Cairns & District Chinese Association's museum of Chinese artefacts – as part of a successful CHG grant application in 2008, awarded for conservation of metal items in the museum's collection.

TOP RIGHT: Australian Age of Dinosaurs, Winton, Queensland. Recipient of a CHG grant in 2008, to preserve and prepare collection items for relocation. PHOTO: Courtesy of National Library of Australia.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Kim Morris, from Art & Archival, conducting the Preservation Needs Assessment for the Jilamara Arts and Crafts Association's Tiwi art collection in the Muluwurri Museum, Melville Island. PHOTO: Courtesy National Library of Australia.

Rivers (NSW) in 2009 for 21 regional museums.

A major factor in setting up the Community Heritage Grants program, and for its continuance, has been a recognition that many of Australia's nationally significant collections are not held in the major institutions. Local, regional museums, galleries and archives hold important cultural heritage material and collections which, to ensure their preservation and future availability, need purposive support and professional guidance.

In addition to financial support received by successful applicants to the CHG program, first-time recipients are given an opportunity to access professional advice during the Preservation and Collection Management Workshops held in Canberra. Presentations and practical workshops are conducted by professional staff from the CHG partner institutions: the National Library of Australia, National Archives of Australia, National Museum of Australia and National Film and Sound Archive. Attendees can speak with people working daily with collections in these institutions, addressing issues such as preservation, digitisation and storage conditions.

Volunteers and staff from regional institutions are supported to travel to Canberra to attend such workshops and the awards ceremony. Not only do successful applicants experience the work of the large institutions in the nation's capital; in addition, strong collegiate relations are forged within the participant groups as each member commences the journey towards the completion of a successful Community Heritage Grants project.

The Community Heritage Grants Program is managed by the National Library of Australia. It is funded by the Australian Government through the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts; the National Archives of Australia; the National Film and Sound Archive; the National Museum of Australia and the National Library.

A major factor in setting up the Community Heritage Grants program... has been a recognition that many of Australia's nationally significant collections are not held in the major institutions.

The Community Heritage Grants (CHG) program aims to preserve and provide access to nationally significant, Australian cultural heritage material held by community groups across the country. Grants of up



to \$15 000 are available for preservation projects and training through community based workshops.

Community organisations such as historical societies, museums, public libraries, archives, Indigenous and migrant community groups which collect and provide public access to their cultural heritage collections are eligible to apply. **■**

Dianne Dahlitz is Coordinator, Community Heritage Grants, at the National Library of Australia (chg@nla.gov.au).

An annual weekend of training workshops for volunteers

RIGHT:
Museum consultant, Roslyn Russell, presenting on the challenges of interpretation - especially 'provenance' and 'significance assessment' of collection items, 'Working Spaces 2', 2008.



Glen Johns

'LET'S HAVE A WEEKEND OF WORKSHOPS' THE GATHERING CHORUSED IN 2005. It was the Museums Australia-Lachlan Chapter in action attempting to work out their coming year's training program. 'What will be the topics?', 'Where will we hold it?', 'Who will organise it?' and 'How much will it cost?' raced around the table. 'Why don't we invite volunteers from other volunteer-run museums?' chimed in another member. We settled for a feasibility study.

THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

A questionnaire was prepared and throughout 2006, we sought opinions from throughout the volunteer museums sector in New South Wales, as well as from people and organisations that serviced the sector.

Responses were very encouraging. We learned that volunteer museums wanted help primarily in the areas of significance, display techniques, oral history, costume conservation, digital photography and marketing.

Respondents were also vocal in stating what they did not want. 'No talking heads' topped the list. They wanted workshops that were predominantly hands-on, with participants leaving the workshop having carried out the tasks demonstrated. Presentation technology got a big thumbs-down too – definitely no PowerPoint!

Cost was a significant factor, with most respondents suggesting a fee around \$50 to \$80 plus accommodation costs.

ASSISTANCE

A venture like this needs seed-funds. This presented a problem because the Chapter didn't even have a bank account. We had included Museums & Galleries NSW in the Feasibility Study, and in discussions CEO Maisy Stapleton suggested we apply to m&gNSW for a grant.

The rest, as they say, is history. We are most grateful to m&gNSW, which has been our principal partner in (now) four annual Working Spaces events. In addition to annual seed-funds, the organisation has continued to offer a number of bursaries each year.

We have still to open a bank account. The National Office of Museums Australia has most generously looked after our finances each year, which removes that burden.

VENUE

The venue was easy. St. Clements Retreat and Conference Centre at Galong is just down the highway from Yass. On land 'squatted-on' by ticket-of-leave convict Ned Ryan, the building is steeped in history. Ryan's original house, The Castle, and associated land was bequeathed to the Redemptorist Fathers, who incorporated it into their new monastery. Converted in recent years by the Order into a conference centre, the monastery is situated in picturesque rural surrounds, just outside the village of Galong. It is the ideal place to host Working Spaces.

PRESENTERS

Only one major item remained. Where would we find suitable Working Spaces presenters? However Canberra was on our doorstep, so we asked the nation's keeping places for help. In a show of generosity, all said 'yes', offering some of the nation's most experienced cultural staff to share their expertise with our volunteers.

We are pleased to acknowledge the ongoing practical support of the National Museum of Australia, National Archives of Australia, National Gallery of Australia, National Library of Australia, Australian War Memorial, The National Science and Technology Centre (Questacon) and Museums & Galleries NSW. In 2010 we look forward to welcoming the Powerhouse Museum to the presentation team.

We are particularly grateful to Pip McNaught at the National Museum of Australia, who has a keen eye for a top presenter. Freelance museum consultant Roslyn Russell has always been unstinting with her help and encouragement also.

TITLE

All that was needed finally was an appropriate title. 'How about Working Spaces for Museum Volunteers?' All agreed.

2007

It was time for the trial run. We needed 30 people to fill three streams of three Working Spaces. We were soon oversubscribed.

Everything went like clockwork. Delegates wanted to know if they could return the following year, to participate in further workshops. *Working Spaces for Museum Volunteers* had become an annual event.

2008

Three streams of four Working Spaces were now offered and we could accommodate 46 registrants. The 'house-full' sign went up two months after registration opened. More than half of the delegates were return participants from 2007. Some museums increased their representation to two people; one sent four. New workshops included *Conserving Maps and*

Community Heritage Grants provide sustaining assistance across regional communities



Paper; Fundraising; Recruiting Volunteers; Museum Standards; Developing Public Programs; and Disaster Planning.

2009

The well-proven format had been established. Again more than half of the registrants had attended the previous year. A waiting list was established, because for the third year, *Working Spaces* was soon booked out. Sadly for those who waitlisted, nobody cancelled. Surveys indicated that many of the topics introduced in 2007 were still popular. New topics for 2009, however, included *Collection Registration and Management; Storage Conservation Solutions; Conserving Photographs; and Graphic Design.*

2010

Working Spaces 4 for Museum Volunteers will be held at St. Clements over the weekend of 15–17 October 2010. Earlybird registrations opened in mid-May. New topics added this year are: *Put Your Museum in the School Curriculum; and The Art of Writing and Winning Grants.* Meanwhile *Paper Conservation* and *Costume Conservation* have made a return listing.

2011

Next year will see the celebration of five years of *Working Spaces* weekend workshops for volunteers, and planning is already under way for a successful program. We look forward to welcoming friends and colleagues over the weekend commencing Friday, 14 October 2011.

KEEPING THE CYCLE ALIVE

The survey work is ongoing. Participants are asked to comment on all aspects of their *Working Spaces*

experiences. We also return to those who shared in our first study, as well as to others for their comments and suggestions.

Three topics – digital photography, significance assessment and display preparation – have been overwhelmingly requested in *Working Spaces* 1 to 4. They have been among the first working spaces to fill each year.

Working Spaces for Museum Volunteers is organised and managed on a not-for-profit basis by a committee of six volunteers. Members of the Lachlan Chapter come to our rescue when we get snowed under.

And our chapter training program? We arrange our very own special repeat of *Working Spaces* topics of course. **■**

Acknowledgments - Museums Australia (NSW) – Lachlan Chapter organisations:

- Boorowa & District Historical Society
 - Canowindra Historical Society and Museum
 - Cootamundra Heritage Centre
 - Cootamundra Local History Society
 - Cowra Museum and Historical Society
 - Forbes & District Historical Society
 - Gooloogong Historical Society
 - Grenfell Historical Society
 - Harden-Murrumburrah Historical Society
 - Temora Rural Museum
 - Yass & District Historical Society
 - Young Historical Society
- All photos: Elizabeth Masters.

Glen Johns is the Honorary Coordinator of Museums Australia (NSW) – Lachlan Chapter and a member of the *Working Spaces* Committee.

ABOVE LEFT: Appraising an object, in a 'Temporary Exhibitions' workshop session. Presenter Caroline Webber, Exhibitions Officer at the National Archives of Australia, admires the vintage toy train brought by John Speechley - 'Working Spaces 1', 2007.

ABOVE RIGHT: Museums Australia President, Dr Darryl McIntyre (CEO, National Film and Sound Archive), presenting Gloria Williams with a Workshop Participation Certificate, 'Working Spaces 3', 2009.

ICOM triennial Conference, Shanghai, 7-11 November 2010

ICOM and International events

The importance of the ICOM General Conference in Shanghai this year is sharpened by the fact that this peak-event Conference of ICOM as an international body occurs only once every three years, in conjunction with the General Assembly that elects ICOM's twelve-person Executive Council as the governing body of ICOM for the forthcoming triennium.

The ICOM General Conference and Assembly therefore represents a world 'gathering of the museum clans' triennially in a single city – through professional meetings of ICOM's specialist International Committees, incorporating representatives of its Affiliated Organisations, Regional Alliances and National Committees drawn from all over the world.

In addition to ongoing activities of the specialist International Committees, which stage their own collegial events and conferences in diverse cities and sites of the world in the intervening years, the staging of an ICOM Conference triennially will always take special advantage of opportunities to engage with the selected city, culture and museums of the host country. Much planning and anticipation has been gathering in recent years around the realisation of *ICOM 2010* in China (to take place in the early days of November, centralised in the new facilities vacated after conclusion of the world's Expo 2010 in Shanghai).

The host organisers of ICOM 2010 in China have prepared a series of events and tours, especially for the non-programmed day of the conference schedule that always allows delegates to get out and about away from the Conference venue. In addition a variety of post-Conference tours, taking in the wider riches of China's cultural heritage and museums nationally, has been prepared. Ed. 



Snapshot of ICOM

Created in 1946, ICOM is a non-governmental organisation, headquartered in Paris.

ICOM maintains formal relations with UNESCO, carries out part of UNESCO's program for museums, and has a consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council.

As a non-profit organisation, ICOM is financed primarily through its membership and support from various governmental and other bodies. Based in Paris, the ICOM Headquarters houses both the ICOM Secretariat and the UNESCO-ICOM Museum Information Centre.

At a glance

- **27,000 museum professionals of all disciplines, working in 155 countries**
- **115 National Committees**
- **30 International Committees**
- **17 Affiliated Organisations**
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- **4 Standing Committees**



Invitation to ICOM 2010 (Shanghai, 7-12 Nov. 2010) from ICOM China

Zhang Bai (Chairperson, Chinese National Committee of ICOM; Co-Chairperson, Executive Committee of 'ICOM

2010' Organising Committee) Photo: ICOM website, Paris.

Dear colleagues in Australian museums, On behalf of the Chinese National Committee of ICOM, I invite all members of the ICOM family and friends to attend the 22nd General Conference and the 25th General Assembly of ICOM in Shanghai, China, in November 2010.

China is one of the countries in the world which has the longest history and the oldest civilization with abundant cultural and natural heritages. On her vast land of 9,600,000 square kilometers, there are more than 400,000 historic monuments, over 2,500 museums and over 20,000,000 antiquities.

The ICOM General Conference in Shanghai in 2010 will provide museum people all over world with rich opportunities to enjoy China's history and culture, and also to experience a platform of professional dialogues to enhance mutual understanding, exchanges in expertise and cooperation across the museums sector internationally.

Mankind has been confronted with very serious problems, such as environment deterioration and cultural conflicts, since the beginning of the 21st century. Museums, however, may and can make special contributions in dealing with these tough issues. Therefore we expect that in addition to the rich program of meetings and site-tours organised by ICOM's International Committees for all specialist museum-disciplinary activities (from Education and Cultural Action, Art History, and Conservation, to Museum Security, Traveling Exhibitions, Ethnography, and Natural History, among others) the discussions on the general theme of the conference, 'Museums for Social Harmony', will produce some constructive results of far-reaching significance.

Your participation will surely make the 2010 ICOM General Conference, and its associated tours and social events, a truly memorable gathering for museum people in the 21st century. I welcome you all to Shanghai, China, in November 2010.

Zhang Bai
Chairperson
Chinese National Committee of ICOM

Heritage awards abound in Western Australia



ABOVE:
Winners of Western Australian Heritage Awards, 2010, through the Heritage Council of Western Australia. MA State Branch Executive Officer, Jane King (second from L, front row), accepted an award on behalf of Museums Australia (WA). The branch is specifically honoured in the 2010 Awards.

RIGHT:
Wheatbelt Museums and Heritage brochure, produced by Museums Australia (WA). This was part of the Regional Museums Galleries and Heritage series, produced as one of the MA-WA projects that was included in the State Branch's nomination and outstanding success in the Awards round this year.

Museums Australia (Western Australia) – MA (WA) – was recently announced the joint winner of the State Heritage Award for ‘outstanding contribution to heritage by a community organisation’.

The Western Australian Heritage Awards, presented each year by the Heritage Council of Western Australia, recognise outstanding commitment and contribution to heritage conservation, adaptive reuse and interpretation in Western Australia. The awards promote Western Australia’s unique cultural heritage through honouring both individuals and organisations whose work has resulted in significant achievements in the promotion and conservation of this rich cultural heritage.

The Honourable Minister John Castrilli MLA announced the 2010 winners at an event hosted by the Lord Mayor and City of Perth Councillors at Council House.

In accepting the award on behalf of the State Committee, MA (Western Australia) State Branch Executive Officer, Jane King, expressed the gratification of both Museums Australia and sectoral colleagues across the state that such recognition had been granted to the museums sector’s role in heritage preservation and communication:

Western Australia is proud of its diverse cultural heritage, and our museums and galleries are important

places where that culture is expressed. Our art, our stories, our history all unfold through the objects we collect.

This recognition by the heritage community for our advocacy and sectoral development activities is a wonderful reward for the unrelenting efforts of the past few years to raise public awareness of our cultural heritage, and our important movable heritage collections around the state.

Such efforts in Western Australia have included dogged advocacy for funding of the State’s collecting institutions, including the proposed new State Museum; and for support for regional museums and galleries. The advocacy of MA (WA) was instrumental in the establishment of the Regional Hub pilot in Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

MA (WA) also manages a year-round professional development program to improve the knowledge and skills of people working with the State’s collections in all situations where they are located; and it coordinates and promotes the activities of Museums and Galleries through the annual Museum and Gallery Week encompassing International Museum Day (18 May each year).

In contributing to the development and promotion of the sector, MA (WA) has produced a series of Regional Museum and Heritage brochures. The

latest of these, a Wheatbelt brochure, was launched in Museum and Gallery Week at Cunderdin Museum in May 2010.

Since the 1990s, the Western Australian state branch of Museums Australia has had a longstanding relationship with LotteryWest in administering and promoting the Interpretation of Cultural Heritage grants each year. This relationship includes realisation and staging of workshops, and facilitating one-on-one assistance to organisations undertaking projects that interpret Australia's unique cultural heritage – especially enhancing the particular local, state and regional contributions that flow into this larger sense of heritage shared by all.

Jane King has noted that various individual and institutional members of MA were featured promi-

The awards promote Western Australia's unique cultural heritage through honouring both individuals and organisations whose work has resulted in significant achievements in the promotion and conservation of this rich cultural heritage.

nently in the recent awards in Western Australia. These include the following:


Contribution to heritage of WA by an individual - Heritage industry

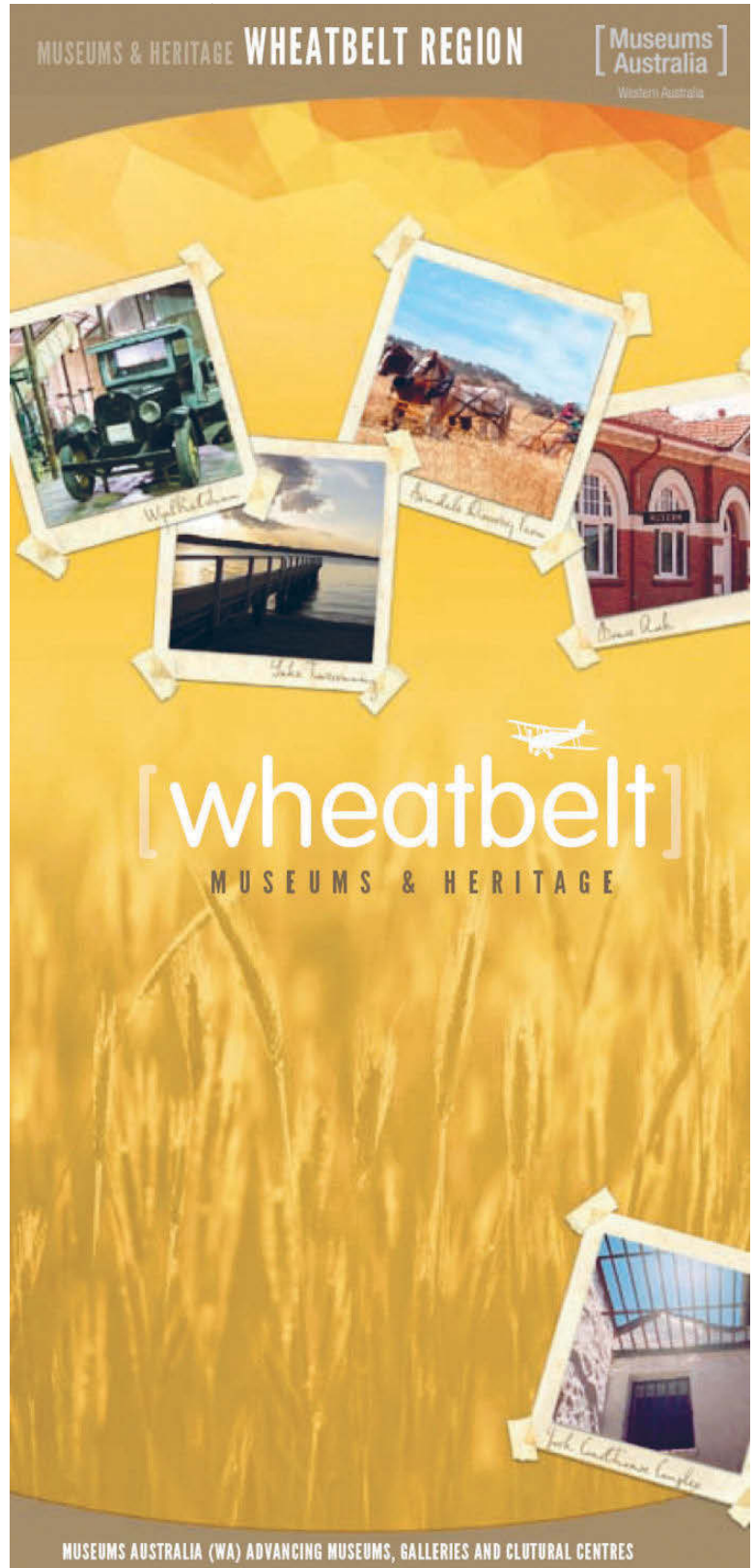
- Special mention: Nicholas Reynolds, Curator, Mandurah Community Museum.

Contribution to heritage in WA by an organisation

- Public or private organization - Winner: Rottneet Island Authority. Congratulations to Harriet Wyatt, Patsy Vizents, Helen Munt and the Cultural Heritage team.

Conservation and/or interpretation of a place on the State Register of Heritage Places

- Interpretation Winner: Fremantle Prison. Congratulations to Interpretation Manager, Luke Donegan.
- High Commendation: Connor's Mill (Toodyay). Congratulations to Curator Moss Wilson. [Ed.] 



A new museum near Shanghai awaits visitors to ‘ICOM 2010’



ABOVE:
Ningbo Museum, second level, with opening day crowds, 4 Dec. 2008. The overall shape combines elements of ‘mountain’, ‘water’ and the ‘sea’ beyond - with suggestions of a ship having come ashore, recalling Ningbo’s rich history as a seaport and the beginning-point of the ‘maritime silk route’ historically. The ‘tile wall’ feature is composed of ancient bricks and tiles from dismantled old buildings of the region.

Bernice Murphy

Ningbo is located just south of Shanghai, in Zhejiang province. It sits within the southern part of the Yangtze Delta, facing the East China Sea. One of China’s oldest cities, dating back to c.4800 BC, Ningbo was situated at the beginning of the maritime silk route historically. The maritime silk route was the counterpart to the overland silk road that (from as early as 200 BC and involving the silk merchants of Xi’an) threaded contacts and trade by camel caravans across central Asia, linking the East with the West through Constantinople.

Ningbo’s contemporary metropolis of more than two million people is separated from Shanghai by Hangzhou Bay. However Ningbo can be reached conveniently today by road from Shanghai, travelling a short distance across ‘the world’s longest bridge’ traversing Hangzhou Bay.

The striking new Ningbo Museum was opened with a grand ceremony on 4 December 2008. At the formal

conclusion of speeches, a jet-stream of tinsel streamers roared unexpectedly into the sky above the official party’s dais. It formed a cloud glittering dramatically in rainbow colours on a cool sunlit morning, descending over the large gathering while the official guests (including municipal officials, ICOM dignitaries and museum colleagues from the region) led a long procession of local people crowding excitedly into their new museum.

A ‘new Chinese model’ for museum development: the joint venture of city and district

Construction of Ningbo Museum (which began in 2004) had been targeted as a significant cultural project by Ningbo Municipality, answering the need for a substantial museum with facilities for changing exhibitions that has long been lacking in such an important historical precinct as Ningbo. Meanwhile



LEFT: Ningbo Museum's opening collection displays (detail). A water carrier (foreground) and scenes from Chinese social history are shown, utilising authentic architectural elements from the past to define spaces and convey the activities of interiors long vanished from contemporary social memory. Chinese museology incorporates mannequins of a realism and refinement in details that is unsurpassed in the world today.

the local government of Yinzhou District, within the greater Ningbo area, also had need of a historical museum to promote its own history and cultural development. In order to consolidate two parallel needs for new museums, a joint venture of the Ningbo Municipality and the district government of Yinzhou was undertaken as a partnership development to accommodate both aspirations in a single, comprehensive institution.

Located within one of the six districts of Ningbo, involving a 30,000 square metre building sited within a land area of four hectares, the Ningbo Museum cost 250 million yuan for its construction. It is jointly financed and managed by the Ningbo Municipal Government and the local government of Yinzhou, ensuring that the resources and interests of both municipality and district are shared in the operations of the museum. The decision to create a single, focal-point institution, located with a large local community footprint in an area of greater Ningbo, was adopted as a conscious strategy to 'avoid the duplication and waste of resources caused by similar museums being built by both a municipality and district within a common area'.^[1]

For its part, Yinzhou District now perceives Ningbo Museum as the first step in a longer-range plan to build '15 state-owned and private museums, to provide Yinzhou with a grand community

museum complex with regional cultural characteristics, promoting the progress of cultural heritage conservation' in the district's borders. Such a model of joint-venture cultural development and museum construction has already spread further in greater

What has emerged in the final physical form of Ningbo Museum has been configured as a manifesto of neo-nativism

Ningbo, since Ningbo Municipality has adopted a similar partnership with Zhenhai District, and has undertaken joint financing and construction of a new museum that will have a strong theme focused on the achievement of Ningbo businessmen, the so-called 'Museum of Ningbo Gang'.^[2]

1. Meng Jianyao, 'New Needs of the Times and New Values of Museums: Ningbo as a Case Study', paper in *Ningbo International Forum of Museums: Core Values and New Responsibilities of Museums in the 21st Century* (Ningbo, China, 4–7 December 2008).

2. Ibid.

Ningbo Museum: a new architectural style and an evolving museology in China



ABOVE:
Remarkable mannequins are employed to depict the dress and manners of past family life in imperial China (detail of scene showing a Chinese water carrier approaching a house across a small stone bridge). Photos: Bernice Murphy.

Ningbo's approach to its project and purposes

The Ningbo Museum's guiding ideas aimed to take advantage of its late-start opportunities in the evolving pattern of Chinese museum developments nationally. It targeted innovative solutions to three challenges identified for museums in the twenty-first century: to 'regain the wider role of preserving heritage rather than conserving collections'; to 'facilitate and promote the harmonious development of society'; and to 'help conserve the common heritage of mankind'.^[3] While addressing these broad needs, Ningbo Museum sought to utilise the potential of two other recent tendencies in museums' development and redevelopment internationally – utilisation of combined stakeholder efforts to achieve new projects, and the potential of 'civic museums' – while also seeking deep roots within the local region and its own developmental characteristics.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

Ningbo's pursuit of a new concept of neo-nativism in museum architecture

The impressive realisation of a distinctive architectural form for Ningbo Museum has arisen through a number of dynamics. It results from a conscious attempt to synthesise the challenge of innovation with the potential of China to forge a new vocabulary of forms and ideas within the repertoire of museum architectural models established internationally.

The Ningbo Museum's design sought to move beyond earlier Chinese models for 'heritage architecture' that held sway in the past, which favoured emulation of Chinese forms from antiquity. Design objectives were to forge a progressive path to create a new museum that would be both an important cultural institution and an architectural symbol of *evolving* heritage within the region. However the symbolic associations of the museum itself as a cultural form were addressed through reflection on the 'connotative



LEFT: The remarkable Baoguo Temple complex (13 km from central Ningbo) is situated at the foot of Mount Feishilin in Ningbo's district of Jiangbei. Its Grand Hall – pictured here on the right – is one of the oldest and best-preserved wooden structures in China, dating from the Song Dynasty. No extant wooden structure in China surpasses the extent of historical data it preserves, which has led to a UNESCO World Heritage listing. The skill and complexity of wooden construction and hand-crafted jointing techniques employed in the roofing systems and interiors of the Grand Hall – or 'beamless hall' – present a remarkable inventory of Chinese ingenuity in structural systems in wood. The building itself embodies an inventory of features for the historical and scientific study of Chinese architecture, and has withstood earthquakes for a thousand years.

culture' of the architecture and history of museums. The architectural solutions in Ningbo were guided by a quest for 'a combination of the outward shape and a uniquely defining balance between the three elements of nature, history and modernity'.^[4]

What has emerged in the final physical form of Ningbo Museum has been configured as a manifesto of *neo-nativism* – a new model of design for an innovative style for Chinese museum architecture of the future. Neo-nativism has been described as 'a design approach strengthening local characteristics and folk styles, rural taste and national characteristics'^[5] in a sensitive expression of all these elements.

However the concept of neo-nativism emphasises the importance of a flexible approach to the planning and design potential of a project. Its controlling ideas are 'never invariable'. Its very principles require innovative solutions within a specific situation. While adopting contemporary knowledge of engineering and construction, the approach also seeks to utilise local materials and methods as far as possible, adjusting design solutions to particular contexts so that the overall style that emerges will be conditioned by the local environment and history, even incorporating 'rich rural flavours'.

Many of these aspirations have lent an unusual character to the Ningbo Museum that is visible immediately on arrival. The impact when entering – and through further external walls at the second level encountered later – is dominated by a heavily rusticated *tile wall* built manually by some fifty craftsmen. The tile-wall feature of the architecture is composed of millions of

ancient, historical bricks and fired tiles recovered from Ningbo's demolition and relocation projects.

Such treatment animates continuity between different layers of Chinese history in surprising ways. It resonates concepts of respect for antiquity, conservation of rapidly vanishing traditions, makeover and re-use of historical items in the fabric of the building – while the museum itself 'becomes an historical exhibit once constructed'.^[6] It presents the actual materials of past buildings as archaeological elements of cultural heritage to be preserved, while embracing new technologies of construction and reformation of heritage in the present. The Ningbo museum has further recourse to strong metaphors in its architectural vocabulary as it unfolds.

The shape of Ningbo Museum is characterised by inter-connecting the rural elements of 'mountain', 'water' and 'sea' with a plane of simple, centralised triangular design. However, the architecture above the second storey introduces split forms and leans at an angle, emulating the abstract shape of mountains. This change in shape makes the whole architecture seem as if sliding southwards. North of the museum lies a field of water, so that the architecture bears the implication of a giant vessel that has just gone ashore. An outstanding characteristic of Ningbo Museum is its outer wall, which is constructed by the blending of a 'tile wall' concept and 'bamboo-canes formwork concrete'. Thereby the outer wall of formwork concrete is characterised by the texture of bamboo canes, which reinforces both natural elements and rural building-styles of the area.^[7]

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid. Comments are derived from both simultaneous translation of Meng Jianyao's paper presented at the Ningbo Forum, and a limited print-version of the paper in English as distributed. The quote is from the latter document, which was unpaginated.

Ningbo Museum: a new architectural style and an evolving museology in China



ABOVE:
A model housed inside the Grand Hall reveals the subtle interrelationship of buildings connected throughout the Baoguo Temple complex. It celebrates Buddhist aesthetics in a beautiful stepped-form progression near the base of a rising mountain. The temple complex provides a perfect counterpoint in architectural tradition, preserved a short distance away from the new Ningbo Museum, highlighting how the museum has both reflected upon and departed from that tradition in novel ways.

The first Development Foundation established for a museum in China

Ningbo city and Ningbo Museum have sought through this project to bring together a strategic combination of governmental and private-sector support, directed towards both building the collections and shaping the future resources of the museum. In pursuing the establishment of a Development Foundation – claimed as the first such foundation for museums in China^[8] – the Ningbo museum has targeted ‘a host of Ningbo-native persons’ and often ‘renowned collectors’, whether outside or within China (notably in Hong Kong), who have the enthusiasm and capacity to donate objects or financial support to the museum. Distinguished figures with a Ningbo background were approached to donate almost 10 million yuan to the museum, thereby securing the launch of its Development Foundation. Other native Ningboese with expertise or wisdom to support the museum’s development have also been enlisted – for example, distinguished former staff of the Palace Museum in Beijing, the Shanghai Museum, and other individuals who have strong connections with Ningbo, including figures from the business world locally and abroad.

The museum has also embarked early on projects of research, international exchanges, publications and special exhibitions – again often targeting the involvement of Chinese abroad and their resources, whether these be financial sponsorship, collection loans or gifts, or supportive networks for the museum generally.

New directions in museology evident in the Ningbo Museum

Forward to 2010: Ningbo International Forum of Museums (4–7 December 2008) was planned as a significant gathering professionally to celebrate Ningbo’s grand new museum, beginning immediately after its opening. The general theme was *Core Values and New Responsibilities of Museums in the 21st Century*, and among

various papers presented, representatives of the Ningbo Museum used the occasion to highlight the objectives and museological concepts behind its development. Various presentations explained the ideas that had guided Ningbo’s aspirations to achieve unique and innovative solutions in positioning the museum and its development locally, regionally, and indeed within China’s perspectives nationally.

The opening of the Ningbo Museum in 2008, within easy travel by road from Shanghai, in fact provided an important overture for China (and museums and partner-bodies locally) to review the changes occurring in Chinese museums that engage affirmative moves towards a more ‘international’ positioning of the nation’s museums globally.

China lacked a tradition of public museums for cultural reasons in its historical past – where the form of the museum had no place in China’s imperial traditions. Meanwhile the political history of the twentieth century witnessed turbulent contests over China’s political destiny, causing social upheaval, popular rebellions and finally a prolonged civil war. These experiences which engulfed China last century caused a wholesale rupture of historical legacies from the past, through the Communist revolution, Mao Zedong’s reign, and the convulsive effects of the Cultural Revolution.

In longer overview, where European museums had arisen as public institutions from former princely collections since the late eighteenth century – for example, with the public opening of the royal galleries of the Louvre in 1793, a few years after the French Revolution – China was handicapped by the lack of rich collections of past or foreign cultural heritage in the public domain. It was only after the dethroned Manchu emperor was expelled from the Forbidden City in 1924, and the Palace Museum created in 1928, that there was (at least potentially) a comparable public museum and focus for Chinese heritage from the imperial past available in Beijing. However as is well known, the Nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek eventually organised the

8. Meng Jianyao made this point in his paper on Ningbo Museum’s development, in a section entitled ‘Dare to pioneer’ - *ibid.*



removal of a great part of the imperial treasures from the Forbidden City to Taiwan, prior to their final defeat and retreat from the mainland in 1949.

Following the combined effects of a crisis in the historical preservation of China's past through the Cultural Revolution, succeeded by often equally drastic effects of development after Deng Xiaoping's 1978 mandate for economic reform and transformation of urban planning in the 1980s, many people within and outside China became anxious about the destruction of China's architectural past. There was dismay about the loss of cultural memory associated with the disappearance of traditional structures and architectural forms of past centuries, and the eradication of spaces of social expression they had defined and stoically 'conserved' through turbulent decades of change.

Many displays in the Ningbo Museum today r

In Ningbo, an emergent Chinese style of museology is evident in this still relatively new museum.

varied responses to such concerns. The museum has adopted a wide range of approaches, means and techniques of historical interpretation in the presentation of its collection (including loans) in a variety of galleries and displays. A broad repertoire of visual and other technologies is manifested in a succession of displays. These varying technologies of interpretation of history and heritage are deployed through an often remarkable synthesis of effects (or 'affects', as this would be termed according to a particular cast of museum theory in the West – which interprets the museum itself as an involuntary agency of political interests and forces at play within *all* aspects of interpretation, which is never simple, neutral,

disinterested or transparent).

Ningbo's museology emerges through the ways it relocates, simulates and synthesises objects and ideas. Authentic fragments of architectural structures of the past are reinstalled to frame settings for historical re-enactment. In recreating the settings of a past that has vanished from the memory of younger generations, China has evolved mannequins to unsurpassed levels of realistic evocation, with eyelashes and the texture and colour variations of skin simulating figures of eye-teasing verisimilitude.

It is as though history is being recreated for new generations to become bearers of a restored and rejuvenated cultural memory. A range of representational devices is deployed. Illusionistic murals occasionally burst through the actual rooms of the museum. This is a confident affirmation of Chinese tradition and history reclaimed at the moment when its authentic vestiges in the world have seemed all but lost.

In Ningbo, an emergent Chinese style of museology is evident in this still relatively new museum. It is a museology that is vivid and resourceful (ranging from mannequins enacting genre scenes in recreated domestic settings to a hologram of musical court performance on a small architectural stage). This museology is eager to engage, pleasure-giving and socially affirmative in its impulses to convey a sense of the rich heritage and many traditions of the Chinese people.

However these objectives are pursued in ways that re-set older impulses for receiving and transmitting that heritage. They take their stance not in the scholarly aesthetics, philosophical delectations or aloofness that defined the many forms of Chinese culture configured in the past. Instead the appreciation of Chinese heritage today is propelled forward in a newly outreaching drive to create museums that can gain a broad root-system within communities of social change today. ■

Bernice Murphy is National Director, Museums Australia, and has had ongoing contacts with museum colleagues in China through exhibition programs and related events since 1977. In recent years she taken leave and visited China twice to present papers at museum forums organised by the Chinese Society of Museums – as part of honorary service to museums internationally through ICOM.

Citation for this article, Bernice Murphy, 'Ningbo Museum: A new architectural style and an evolving museology in China', Museums Australia Magazine, Vol.18 (Issues 3&4), June 2010, Canberra, pp.43-47.



TOP: View of Grand Hall (R) in relation to grouped buildings rising behind, progressing up to the Scripture Pagoda (Tang Dynasty).

ABOVE: Ningbo International Museum Forum hall (5 Dec. 2008), with flags representing the countries of guest speakers. Banner announces forum theme: Core Values and New Responsibilities of Museums in the 21st Century.

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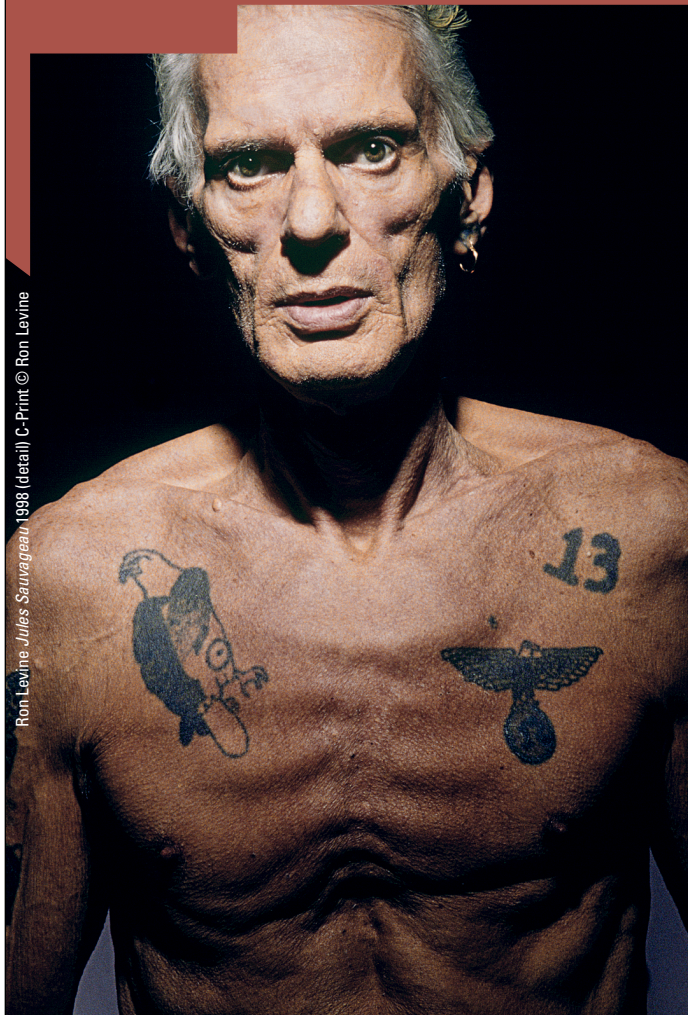
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