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Museums Australia *Magazine*





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When's my vote? (2004)



Emma [Emmilla] Mayner and daughters c1855 photograph, courtesy of Shirley Moore. Transported for 7 years in 1837 for being in possession of a stolen timepiece and shawl.

WOMEN

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TRANSPORTED

The lives of these women are not that far from us... they indelibly defined the Australian character and it is surely time their story – our story – is told.

Lord Mayor of Parramatta, Cr Paul Barber, 2008

FREMANTLE PRISON 9 APRIL – 3 JULY 2011

exhibition admission free www.fremantleprison.com.au (08) 9336 9200

This exhibition is supported by Visions of Australia, an Australian Government program supporting touring exhibitions by providing funding assistance for the development and touring of Australian cultural material across Australia.

This exhibition is a University of Western Sydney and Parramatta Heritage Centre Partnership



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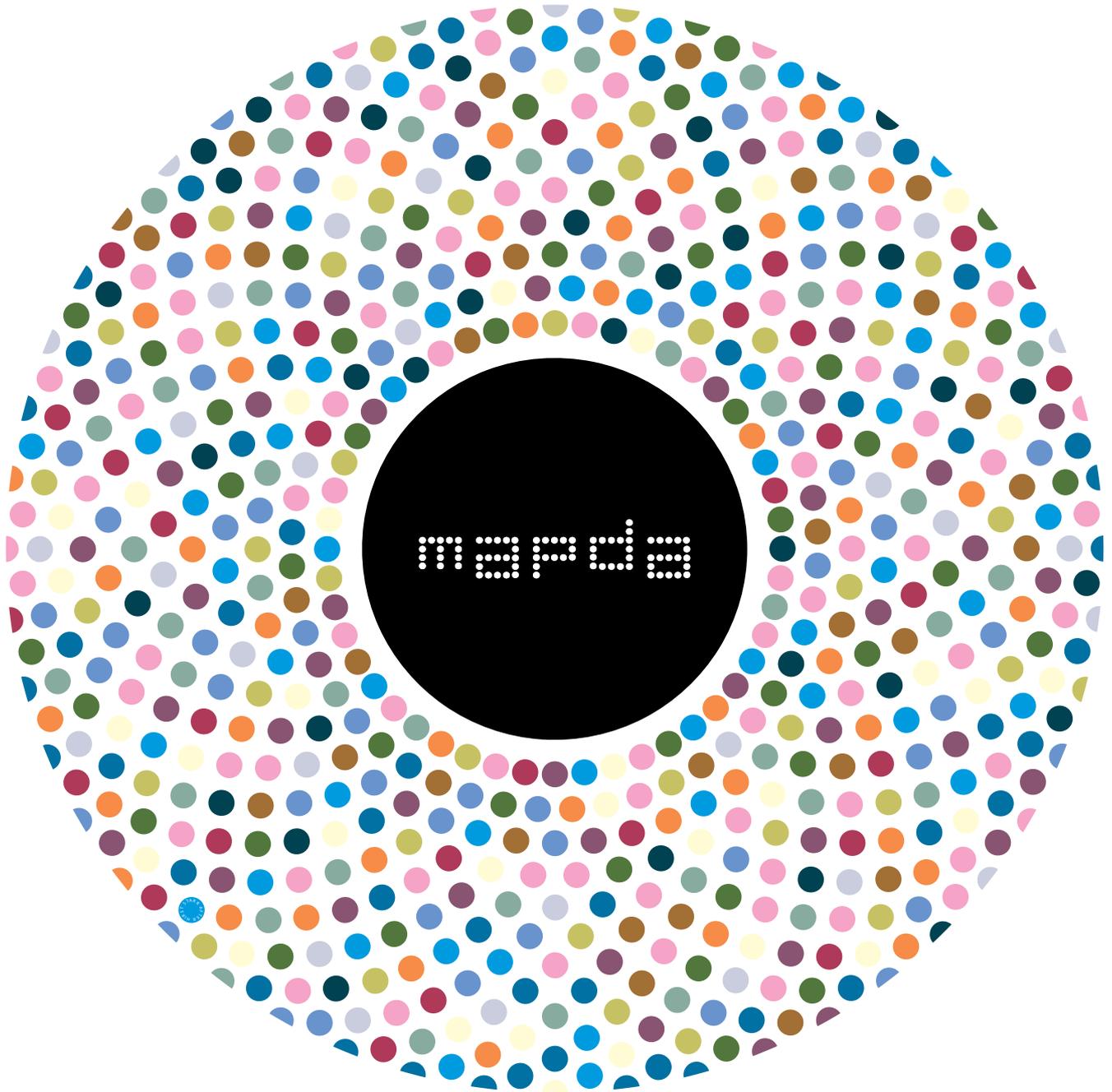
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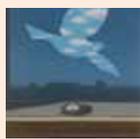


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cover image: Project team coordinating artist Douglas Adams in a finished possum skin cloak.

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President's message

It might be an appropriate time for federal, state and regional museums to act affirmatively in undertaking (or extending) oral histories of Australia's culturally diverse communities



Darryl McIntyre

In recent months television news has been dominated by issues concerning refugees. Mainstream media have extensively covered riots and disturbances at the Villawood Detention Centre, in Sydney, and the Christmas Island Detention Centre, and requests for a Parliamentary Committee Inquiry have been raised.

Meanwhile in February 2011, the Commonwealth Government published its updated Australian multicultural policy, entitled *The People of Australia*. The policy contains a foreword by the Prime Minister, as well as a message signed by the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, the Hon Chris Bowen, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Senator Kate Lundy. This latest policy statement contains a short history of Australia's multicultural society, acknowledging that one in four of our 22 million people were born overseas, and since 1945, some seven million people have migrated to Australia.

The latest policy statement projects four principles:

- The Australian Government celebrates and values the benefits of cultural diversity for all Australians, within the broader aims of national unity, community harmony and maintenance of our democratic values.
- The Australian Government is committed to a just, inclusive and socially cohesive society, where everyone can participate in the opportunities that Australia offers and where government services are responsive to the needs of Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- The Australian government welcomes the economic, trade and investment benefits which arise from our successful multicultural nation.
- The Australian government will act to promote understanding and acceptance while responding to expressions of intolerance and discrimination with strength, and where necessary, the force of the law.

Initiatives outlined in the latest policy include the establishment of the Australian Multicultural Council, and a national anti-racism strategy, strengthening access and equity, multicultural arts and festival grants, and multicultural youth sports and a partnerships program. The policy document is available online.^[1]

In view of the increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers who have been granted residency in Australia, and eventually Australian citizenship, it might be an appropriate time for federal, state and regional museums to act affirmatively in undertaking (or extending) oral histories of Australia's culturally diverse communities, so that we have a greater understanding of their decision to come to Australia as well as the cultural identities and values which they pass onto the next generation.

Museums could also document different communities' cultural heritage as part of this project.

Some museums such as the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, and the Immigration museums in Melbourne and Adelaide, have already done a good deal of work in this direction.

When I worked at the Museum of London (2003–2008), we undertook almost 600 oral histories with refugees who had entered the United Kingdom after living previously in three or four European cities, having moved to those cities from north Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. The oral history project was accomplished in collaboration with the Evelyn Oldfield Unit, the London Metropolitan University and a large number of London borough museums as part of the cultural diversity program managed by the London Museums Hub (the office of the Hub I also managed from within the Museum of London).

With a population of almost eight million people, London encompasses a large, culturally diverse population, as do a number of leading English cities further

1. *The People of Australia: Australia's Multicultural Policy (2011)* – available at: http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/multicultural/pdf_doc/people-of-australia-multicultural-policy-booklet.pdf

north. The Museum of London also documented many communities' cultural heritage, and in 2006 the museum staged a major exhibition, entitled *Belonging*, which explored the experiences, cultural values and identities of refugee communities. The museum undertook a large amount of work relating to social impact, and these studies were presented to the UK Home Office and the Department of Communities – with the results later utilised in their social inclusion policies and programs (following detailed discussions with the participating museums).

In March 2008, I convened and chaired an international conference on museums and refugees, which included speakers from Australia (Viv Szekeres and Carol Scott), as well as speakers from the UN Human Rights Commission, and other museums and cultural institutions in the UK, Europe, the USA and Canada. I have recently completed editing the nineteen conference papers and written an introduction, as well as editing the panel discussions and the question-and-answer sessions. The manuscript is now with the Museum of London and UNESCO, and should be published in late 2011 or early 2012 by UNESCO/Berghan and the Museum of London. It might be timely for the Australian museums sector to host a similar conference in this country.

Planning of the 2011 MA National Conference in Perth (14–18 November) is progressing well, and a Council working party and the National Office are pursuing liaison with the conference organisers in Western Australia.

We will also meet with the Cultural Diplomacy Branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to explore funding for an expert from the United Nations to speak about the situation facing museums in the Middle East, in view of the current political unrest across that region. Other speakers might be drawn from Africa, to speak about the museums situation in South Africa post-Apartheid, and reflecting on comparisons in museum developments since many African countries gained independence. A further theme might relate to strained financial and resource situations facing some museums in South-east Asia and the Pacific region, and the potential for enhancement of staff training programs and other forms of assistance in the Pacific.

The Museums Metadata Exchange (MME) partnership project is progressing well (led by CAMD), with 557 CLDs now uploaded and the remainder to be completed by early June 2011. An extra 50 or more CLDs are also being developed, to gather links with major regional museums in the CAN network, so that this information will not be lost in view of the Commonwealth's decision last year to cease CAN funding, and discontinue further development of the Collections Australian Network.

Some proposed academic workshops will be organised in May 2011 to enable feedback to the MME project on the part of university and other researchers. A meeting of the MME Steering Committee will be held in June, and I will keep MA members informed of progress. Meanwhile in mid-May I met with CAMD members (the Council of Australasian Museum Directors) and gave an update on MA activities and priorities. Finally, I will shortly be drafting a digital strategy and project management plan for Museums Australia, which I will circulate to the Council's Digital Working Group for comment. Following agreement on these documents, they will then be uploaded on the MA website.

The MA AGM is scheduled to be held at 5.30pm on Thursday 19 May 2011 at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra – immediately after the ICOM Australia AGM – and both MA and ICOM Australia will have held Council meetings earlier in the day.

I look forward to announcing and welcoming members of the new MA Council for 2011–2013, which will be settling into its governance duties by the time the next issue of the MA Magazine is published. A final expression of personal appreciation to all outgoing members of Council is due – some of whom come naturally to an end of service after the terms regulated by MA's Constitution.

To one and all, I express thanks for a period of dedicated service in the interests of all members of the national association in the period May 2009–May 2011. □

Dr Darryl McIntyre, FAIM
National President, Museums Australia

*** Stop press news:**

Announcement from the Office of The Hon Simon Crean MP, Minister for the Arts (19 April 2011)

Harold Mitchell AC to undertake arts review

The scope of the review will encompass 'private sector support' which, for the purposes of the review, will be defined as individual and business philanthropy, sponsorship and arts/business partnerships. Other facets of private sector support, including volunteering (such as corporate voluntary and pro bono work) and in-kind support to the arts sector, will also be considered.

It is expected this review will be completed by the end of October 2011.

Bringing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains back home



In March 2011, the United Kingdom's Natural History Museum, London, agreed to return to Australia 138 ancestral remains belonging to the Torres Strait Islander community.

It is not widely known, even within some Indigenous communities, that vast collections of ancestral remains and secret sacred objects are currently held in overseas museums. It is understood that around 900 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remains are held in overseas collections, mostly in the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, France and the United States. In the past these items were collected as items of curiosity and for the purposes of scientific study.

This is the single largest return of Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains from an overseas museum and is a result of eighteen months of negotiations. The return is a significant achievement, given the historical reluctance by some UK museums to consider de-accessioning of human remains from museums and research collections. It follows on from an earlier return from National Museums Liverpool of the remains of a young child from Erub (Darnley Island) removed 161 years ago.

Ancestral remains may include whole or partial skeletons and items associated with a burial, such as bark coffins. The removal of such remains and sacred items by collectors was often without the knowledge or consent of the descendants of the deceased, causing distress and cultural loss.

The Australian Government is committed to returning such items to their communities of origin. In a media statement welcoming the most recent return, Arts Minister Simon Crean said that repatriation is a key step towards restoring dignity and closing the gap between all Australians. Over 1000 ancestral remains

have been returned to Australia since 1990.

'The return of ancestral remains is extremely important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Australian Government is committed to assisting communities consult, plan and negotiate the repatriation of remains,' Mr Crean said.

In an indication of the Government's commitment on this issue, the Return of Indigenous Cultural Property program and the International Repatriation Program, have recently been brought together, and are now both administered by the Office for the Arts in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The Indigenous Repatriation Program supports the National Museum of Australia and seven state/territory museums to:

- identify the origins of all ancestral remains and secret sacred objects held by museums where possible;
- notify communities of ancestral remains and secret sacred objects held in museums;
- appropriately store ancestral remains and secret sacred objects if this is requested by communities; and
- arrange for repatriation where and when it is requested.

It is important to note that some Indigenous communities do not have the resources to take immediate custody of their ancestral remains or secret sacred objects. In these cases, museums hold the ancestral remains or secret sacred objects, on behalf of the community, with ownership being transferred to the community.

It is the clear intention of the Repatriation Program that museums enter into meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities regarding ancestral remains. Any decision over the return of ancestral remains (even when museums are holding them on behalf of communities) must only be made after conducting a culturally sensitive consultation process.

The Indigenous Repatriation Program is an example of a successful partnership between the Australian Government, state and Northern Territory governments, the museums sector and Indigenous communities. **■**

For more information visit:
www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/return

Citation for this article: [Office for the Arts – Indigenous Repatriation. The Australian Government], 'Bringing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ancestral Remains Back Home' *Museums Australia Magazine*, Vol. 19 (4), Museums Australia, Canberra, May 2011, pp. 11.

left: Kapua Gutchen, Torres Strait elder from Erub (Centre) is supported by Seriako Stephen, Chair of the Torres Strait Repatriation Working Group (Left) and Ned David, Deputy Chair of the Torres Strait Repatriation Working Group (Right). Image courtesy Indigenous Repatriation unit, Office for the Arts, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake



above: Possum drawings.

Debbie Abraham and Donna Fernando

Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake is a collaborative cultural revival project developed by the Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG), Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery, Lake Macquarie City Library and local Aboriginal communities.

The project was made possible through the strength of the relationship built up between the partners over the past eleven years. Together, the ARG and the Gallery have developed an innovative and comprehensive exhibition history, grounded in the authentic and respectful representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. Art practices from traditional communities as well as regional and urban areas are showcased, supporting both established and emerging artists.

In 2009, in response to the Apology to the Stolen Generations, a new stage in the relationship was reached. The exhibition *yapang marruma: making our way (stories of the stolen)* brought together contemporary practice, social history and personal stories in a

profound and life-changing project. It paved the way for the group to be able to consider reviving a cultural practice with confidence.

Cultural revival is a complex and sensitive issue, evoking myriad responses within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander circles across community, academic and political lines. Moreover, the need for revival in the first instance is loaded since it revisits the pain associated with political practices of the past such as forced removals, enslavement and massacre.

While acknowledging the causes and need for cultural revival, the ARG also had to balance an understanding of history, respect for those that went before them in the Lake Macquarie area – the Awabakal^[1] people – and the contemporary context in which the project was to be carried out.

An Aboriginal cultural revival project was entirely new territory for all. The process was launched with a weekend workshop at Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery, with Lee Darroch and Maree Clarke. The two women shared knowledge they have rediscovered and developed relating to the Yorta Yorta^[2] nation and its links with possum skin cloaks.

1. The Awabakal nation encompasses traditional lands of the Hunter region, New South Wales.

2. The Yorta Yorta nation's traditional lands 'lie on both sides of the Murray River, roughly from Cohuna to Albury/Wodonga. They include towns such as Echuca, Shepparton, Benalla, Corowa and Wngaratta, and extend northeastwards to just south of Deniliquin'. (From website of the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation: <http://www.yynac.com.au/maps.php>)



clockwise from top left:
Dawn Townsend.
Painting drawing with inks.
Selena Archibald.
Laura Fernando.

There is existing evidence that possum skin cloaks were made in the Hunter region. The ‘Hunter River Cloak’, collected by American explorer Charles Wilkes in the mid-1800s, is currently held by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, USA. The ARG’s members determined that the new cloak would not be any kind of caricature of the ‘Hunter River Cloak’. They were fully aware of the fine line between emulation and mockery of their ancestor’s creations, knowledge and practices – their borrowed knowledge.

The group also had to contend with contemporary ethical and moral issues surrounding conservation and protection of Australian native species. They had to find a way around the dilemma of whether a genuine Aboriginal possum skin cloak could be made without the makers using the traditional methods of capture and preparation of skins. In the end conservation won out, and skins were acquired from New Zealand, where possums are an introduced species; a huge pest but humanely culled.

To begin, a project team was established to ensure support and participation: artist Doug Archibald, project coordinator Donna Fernando, educators Cherie Johnson and Teagan Goolmeier. The next step, within the project team and participant group, was to set parameters for the process, the theme, the overall design restrictions, and the workshop schedules.

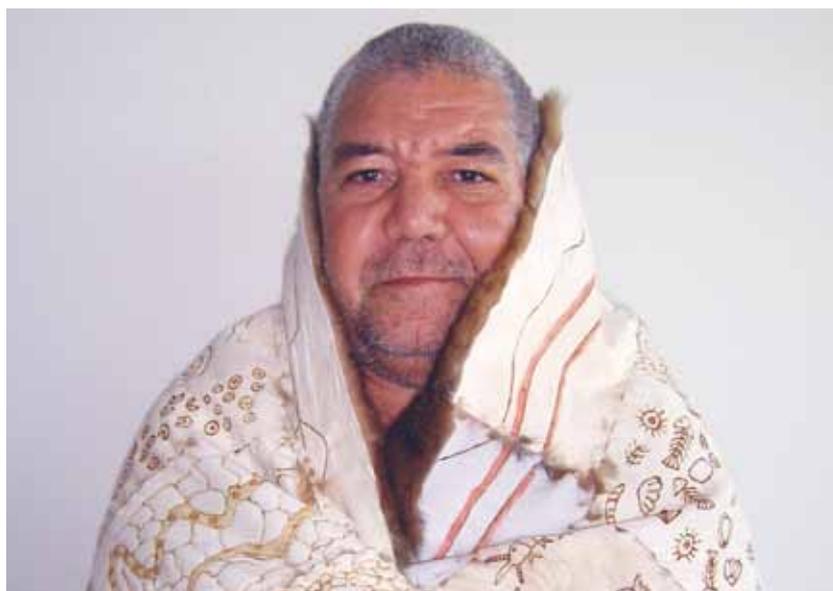
Water was selected as the theme for the cloak due to a number of factors. For one thing the gallery stands

on the shores of the largest coastal saltwater lake in the country, significant to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents. But more importantly, water surrounds the traditional Dreaming stories and is elemental to all Aboriginal people regardless of their place of origin. It also has endless design possibilities and sources in nature.

Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake began in earnest in October 2010 through community workshops, and was enhanced by a series of school workshops during November and December. Aboriginal primary and secondary school students from across the Hunter came to work with artist Doug Archibald, and to learn the traditional methods of decorating possum skins, making individual armbands and designing a whole skin as a group. Each of these schools’ skins was then box-framed for display in the final exhibition.

Community workshops continued into early January when the finished cloak, comprising 55 pelts,

Cultural renewal of tradition in Indigenous communities



was completed and sewn together by two Kamilaroi women, Selena Archibald and Louise Charles. Over forty local participants originally from all over eastern Australia came together and worked to design pelts based on either their own country and personal stories or well-known Awabakal Dreaming stories. The final imagery for the cloak drew on lakes, rivers, oceans, ground water, fishing, water animals and birds, and the collar panels feature Biame (the ancestral creator spirit), with outstretched arms embracing the cloak.

Designs were discussed and drawn onto paper templates before finally being transferred to the pelts,

trimmed into rectangular shapes to give the cloak a uniformity in structure. These designs were then burnt onto the pelt skins using a wood-burning tool, and coloured with locally sourced red and yellow ochres made into permanent dyes by binding with black wattle seed resin.

Ongoing education for communities and schools was a key component of the project. A diary was maintained to record the process so it could be emulated by other groups across the country. A comprehensive education booklet was produced, along with a travelling suitcase, or 'museum in a box', for schools and

clockwise from top left:

Project team coordinating artist Douglas Archibald drawing with the burning tool onto a possum pelt skin.

Materials used (ochres).

Project team coordinating artist Douglas Adams in the finished cloak.

Transferring drawing to pelt.

Louise Charles sewing pelts together.



libraries to use. This box contains examples of all of the elements used for the project along with complete lesson plans for all stages. An added bonus was the involvement of ABC Open in assisting to make a short film outlining the process.

The project has had a significant impact on the team, the participants and their families, and the local Aboriginal community. One participant remarked that being involved had really reconnected him to his culture.

Gallery visitors appreciated the unity of design, the colour and beauty of the cloak, and understood the significance of the revival of this – all but lost – cultural practice. As one visitor wrote: ‘My spirit lifted when I stood with the cloak.’

Frank Howarth, Director of the Australian Museum, was so impressed that he requested the *Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake* exhibition travel to Sydney and go on display at the Museum until 31 July. Members of the local community are justifiably proud of their achievement and of the acknowledgment outside of the region for their work and commitment.

The *Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake* project has restored and revitalised an enthusiasm for lost practice and the significance of cloaks in

contemporary life. It is neither imitation nor a vague rekindling of a sacred object from Aboriginal history. The project has stimulated a new generation to teach and pass on the practice of making cloaks, taking them off a pedestal and bringing them back to life, for the everyday.

Passion and pride not parody. 📺

Donna Fernando: Project Coordinator
Debbie Abraham: Director Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery

The education component of this project was partly funded through the Creative Education Partnerships ConnectEd Program supported by Communities NSW in partnership with the NSW Department of Education and Training; and partly funded through the State Library of New South Wales Library Development Grant Program.

Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery and Lake Macquarie City Library are supported by Lake Macquarie City Council.

Citation for this text, Debbie Abraham and Donna Fernando, ‘Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake: Cultural renewal of tradition in Indigenous communities’, *Museums Australia Magazine*, Vol. 19(4), Museums Australia, Canberra, May 2011, pp. 12-15.

above: Douglas Archibald (co-ordinating artist), Donna Fernando (project co-ordinator), Selena Archibald (artist), Cherie Johnson, Teagan Goolmeier (education resource developers), Debbie Abraham (Director, Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery).

Marnti Warajanga – we're travelling MoAD transforms community engagement with democracy



above: Greg Lissaman.
Image: Tobias Tiz

top: Museum of Australian
Democracy at Old Parliament
House

opposite (top): Winnie Coppin
comments on the Nyangumarta
native title determination,
Niyiyamarri Pukurl (Eighty Mile
Beach), Western Australia, 2009.
Image: Tobias Tiz. Writing by
subject.

opposite (bottom): Jack Dhu
comments on the Apology to the
Stolen Generations, South Hedland,
Western Australia, 2009. Image:
Tobias Tiz. Writing by subject.

Greg Lissaman

The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House (MoAD) is the only institution in Australia dedicated permanently to telling the story of our nation's democracy.

Located in one of Australia's most loved buildings, in the heart of the national capital's Parliamentary Triangle, the Museum of Australian Democracy links the past, present and future of Australian democracy, providing visitors with a hands-on cultural experience of Australia's democratic journey.

The new museum fosters national dialogue about issues central to our democracy. In developing programs to achieve broad and active public involvement, it has been faced with challenging questions: What content may be presented in exhibitions within the wide-ranging subject of democracy? How can a space be created in which all people feel engaged and represented, particularly when some may perceive the site of Old Parliament House as a symbol of disenfranchisement? And how may the public perception of the museum be shifted from being an institution shaped by politics to being more broadly concerned with the living process of democracy?

The museum's travelling exhibitions program plays a key role in addressing these questions, complementing the array of *in situ* exhibitions and ongoing programs offered to schools and the general public at MoAD's prime physical site in the nation's capital.

The Museum of Australian Democracy links the past, present and future of Australian democracy, providing visitors with a hands-on cultural experience of Australia's democratic journey

Engaging communities as partners in MoAD's mission

Significantly, the MoAD travelling exhibitions program has enabled the museum to connect with communities, and to share their stories of grass-roots democratic action. This process has actively involved members of the public as contributors to an exhibition's content. Communities have been able to initiate exhibitions and then contribute further to both their development and realisation.

Democratic principles guide the museum's collaboration with communities; therefore a light curatorial touch is applied to ensure that the voices of community partners remain at the forefront of a story. Travelling exhibitions are often complemented by public programs that further interpret what is presented and involve visitors in developing new content, often with a view to investing in the social capital of communities who help create particular exhibitions.

Through such a proactive and engaged approach, the museum is nurturing spaces beyond its walls in which communities can be a continuing part of national dialogue about issues relevant to them and all Australians.

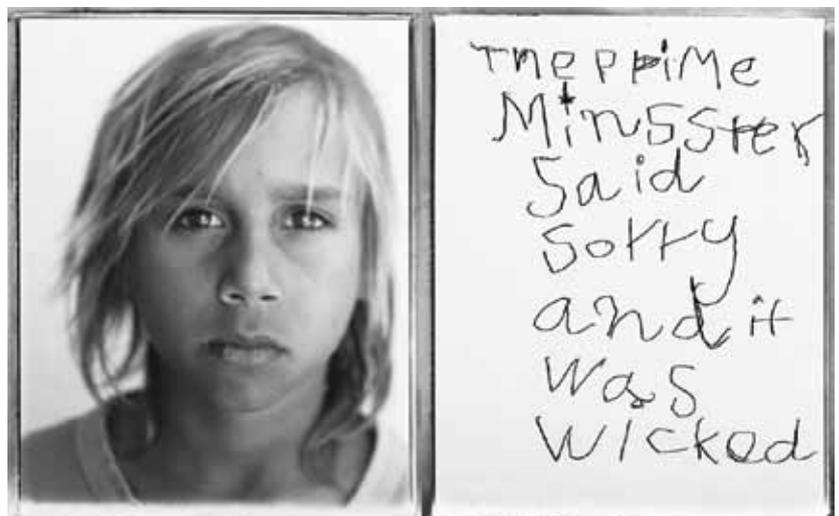
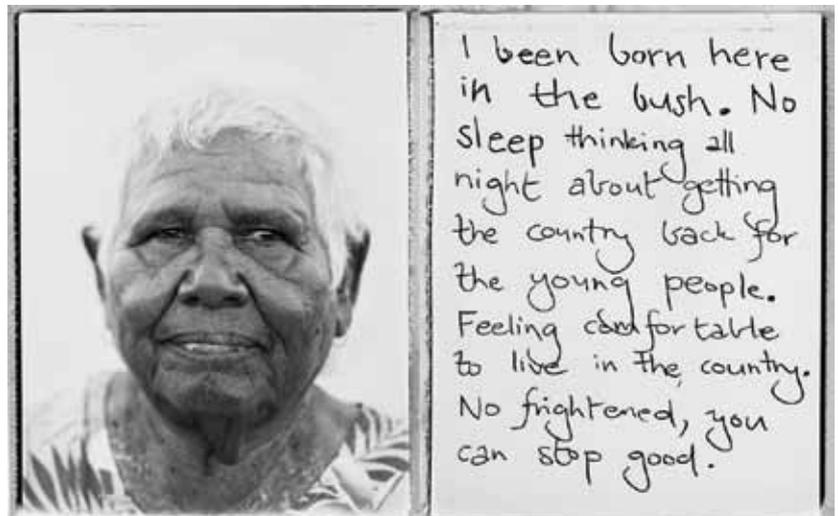
The MoAD travelling exhibitions program has enabled the museum to connect with communities, and to share their stories of grass-roots democratic action

Marnti Warajanga – we're travelling

In the lead-up to the museum's opening in 2009, MoAD was approached by Melbourne-based photographer, Tobias Titz, with a resonant exhibition concept. Tobias had been working with the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre in South Hedland, Western Australia, on an exhibition entitled *Right to be Counted*, which presented responses to the 1967 Referendum. The exhibition had already toured much of Western Australia, and Tobias proposed that it be presented at MoAD.

Since the fortieth anniversary of the Referendum had just passed, the museum wanted to explore options for expanding the curatorial scope of the project, and MoAD representatives travelled to South Hedland to meet the exhibition partners. In those early meetings the museum's exhibitions team learned of the rich democratic history of the people of the Pilbara. It was from this critical exchange of ideas and appreciation of contextual history that the exhibition, *Marnti Warajanga – we're travelling*, later emerged.

The exhibition on view at the Museum of Australian Democracy features Indigenous people of the Pilbara region telling the particular stories of their journey towards equality as Australian citizens. They bear witness in their own words to momentous historical developments that have occurred in their region, and reflect on their ongoing work for social and political change at a local and national level. Importantly, the exhibition also recognises the involvement of non-Indigenous people in this journey. Such an inclusive approach to the Pilbara story was at the request of the Indigenous contributors themselves, who are intensely aware and proud of their political achievements in collaboration with the wider community.



A key principle underpinning *Marnti Warajanga's* development was that the community was to be represented directly

Community involvement expanding the project's potential

In advancing the project, MoAD took aboard the task of raising national awareness: a recognition that, despite its scale and wide-ranging impact, the actual history of Indigenous political activism in the Pilbara was not widely known nationally.

Early in the curatorial process for developing *Marnti Warajanga*, it became obvious that the people of the Pilbara viewed the strike of 1946 as the most significant event instigating their political journey, and so this became the lead story of the exhibition. Pre-dating the renowned Gurindji strike by twenty years, the 1946 strike saw Aboriginal people walk off stations across the Pilbara in protest over lack of personal freedoms, poor pay (often only rations), and sub-standard living conditions – much to the surprise of station owners at the time, who did not consider such a determined decision and political protest by Indigenous people was possible.

The concerted action was indeed unprecedented. Determined to achieve equality, the strikers began to develop cottage industries of their own – including surface mining for tin – and eventually formed corporations that enabled financial independence.

A key principle underpinning *Marnti Warajanga's* development was that the community was to be represented directly, without a curatorial layer separating members' voices from the viewer. The role of the exhibition's curator was to shape and contextualise; nevertheless this process was to be guided by the people themselves contributing to the exhibition finally realised.

The Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre accordingly played a key role in the curatorial development process, assisting with community liaison, sourcing relevant information and providing essential advice with regard to cultural matters and the use of Indigenous languages.



Photo-portraits as the vehicle of first-person presence and narrative

Tobias Titz's photographic process upheld this principle similarly, resulting in thirty-four striking black and white framed portraits through which the subjects are presented directly addressing visitors to the exhibition. Tobias took the portraits over a period of three years, spending extended periods of time with communities across the Pilbara. Tobias affirms that providing a place where often long-buried stories can at last be told 'allows us to understand where we come from and how to move forward.' In his collaborative portraiture process, he invited subjects to write into a wet 'empty' negative on Polaroid film, to capture their own comments on major historical events occurring around and through them. Such comments thereby became an integral part of the portraits that emerged.

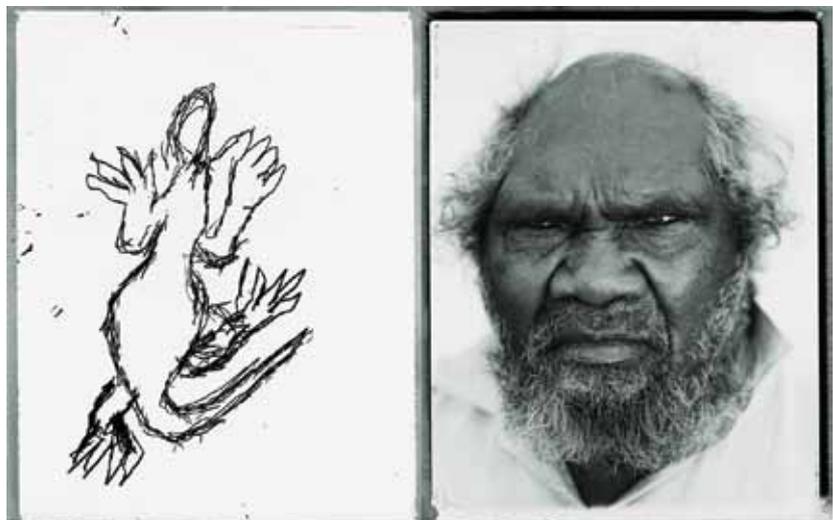
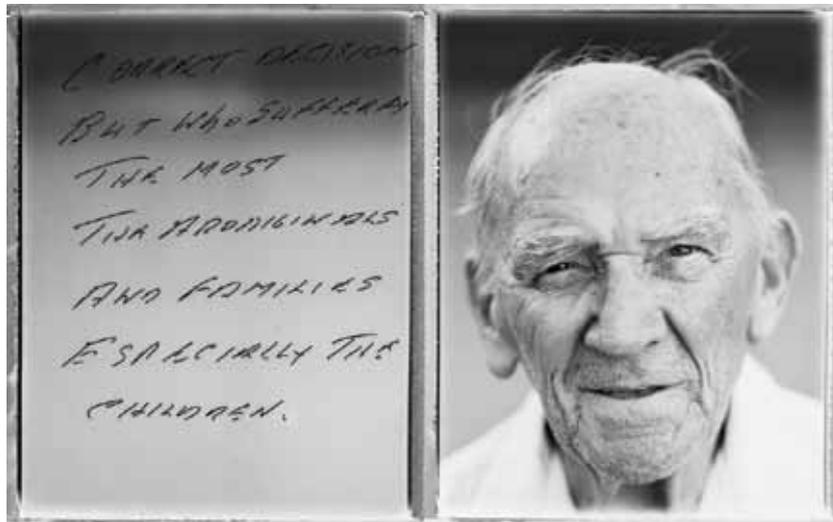
The *Marnti Warajanga* exhibition is structured to reflect the diversity and complexity of activism in the Pilbara, interconnecting key events such as the 1946 strike with long-term movements such as the recording and revival of Indigenous languages as a means of rebuilding cultural pride. The exhibition is divided into eight themes, each containing contextual historical information, personal stories, portraits with comments by their subjects, and filmed interviews.

above: Daisy Kadibil talks about her escape along the rabbit-proof fence, Parnngurr, Western Australia, 2009. Image: Tobias Titz. Writing by subject.

opposite (top): Arnold Carter comments on the 1967 Referendum, South Hedland, Western Australia, 2007. Image: Tobias Titz. Writing by portrait subject.

opposite (bottom): Yunkurra Billy Atkins paints a pangarra, Parnngurr, Western Australia, 2009. Image: Tobias Titz. Drawing by subject.

Tobias took the portraits over a period of three years, spending extended periods of time with communities across the Pilbara



Exhibition development embracing both research and opportunity

Part of the joy of developing *Marnti Warajanga* was the organic nature of the process. Growing out of a preceding exhibition, it already had many stakeholders and relationships, and community awareness of the project was positive and widespread. Consequently news of the new exhibition was received warmly, and people were remarkably generous with their further contributions.

Serendipitous opportunities helped shape the exhibition. The delivery during the development period of a positive native title determination near Nyiyamarri Pukurl (Eighty Mile Beach) enabled direct access to crucial people who were involved in that process; artists from across the Pilbara made a rare return to an arts centre in Parnngurr, coinciding with a team visit to Port Hedland; and Daisy Kaddibil, whose story of escape along the rabbit-proof fence was the subject of a film of this title by Phillip Noyce, was coincidentally visiting a community at the same time as the exhibition's photographer.

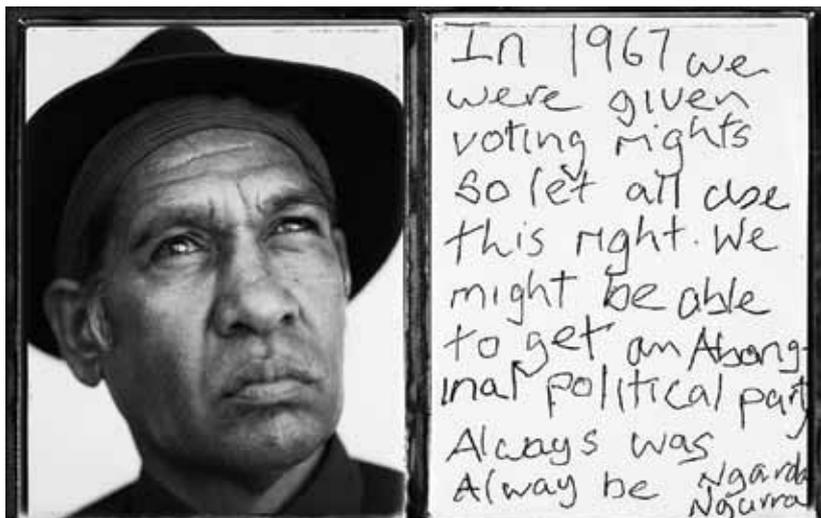
As is the nature of community projects, the complex web of relationships and histories yielded special opportunities and ideas. This character of community-inspired enrichment has continued into the travelling life of the exhibition, and has influenced the shaping of the museum's practice in developing community-based exhibitions in future.

Marnti Warajanga has also demonstrated the value of an organic process in which the unexpected is embraced. The lifecycle model for the museum's community exhibitions now includes extended development time to allow for opportunities to emerge, and an understanding that presenting a physical exhibition is unlikely to be the end of a community-engaging and continuing interpretative process. In fact, it was at the MoAD launching of the present form of the exhibition in Canberra that it was seen by BHP Billiton staff, and a chapter for its further development began.

This character of community-inspired enrichment has influenced the shaping of the museum's practice in developing community-based exhibitions in future

Sponsorship enhancing community cultural and economic benefits

BHP Billiton is now a critical private-sector supporter for a tour of *Marnti Warajanga* to Perth and the Pilbara in 2012, to share the exhibition directly with the communities who inspired it. The tour is also supported by the



below: *Alum Cheedy comments on the 1967 Referendum, Roeburne, Western Australia, 2008. Image: Tobias Titz. Writing by subject.*

opposite: *Bruce Thomas comments on culture and language, South Hedland, Western Australia, 2009 (Translation: 'Language, land, culture, people are one'). Image: Tobias Titz. Writing by subject.*

Australian Government through the National Collecting Institutions Touring and Outreach Program (NCITO), an Australian Government initiative to improve access to the national collections for all Australians.

A new travelling version of the MoAD exhibition will now be designed – specially tailored to withstand the harsh conditions of the Pilbara – while the existing version will continue to be available for hire by museums and galleries elsewhere across the country.

The three-month WA-purposed exhibition and tour will commence in Perth, in April 2012, and end in South Hedland, where the exhibition will be retained for long-term display in its originating community, presented by the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre.

Public programs enrich exhibition contents, touring and social impact

MoAD integrates public programs to accompany exhibitions with the intention of actively involving a broad and diverse public in contributing to the museum's content development. To achieve this on the Pilbara tour, a team including Tobias Titz will conduct photography workshops at each venue where the exhibition is presented. Through these workshops, more people in the communities visited will share their own stories and reflections through creating further portraits. These will be collated and published subsequently in books that will later be distributed to the communities involved.

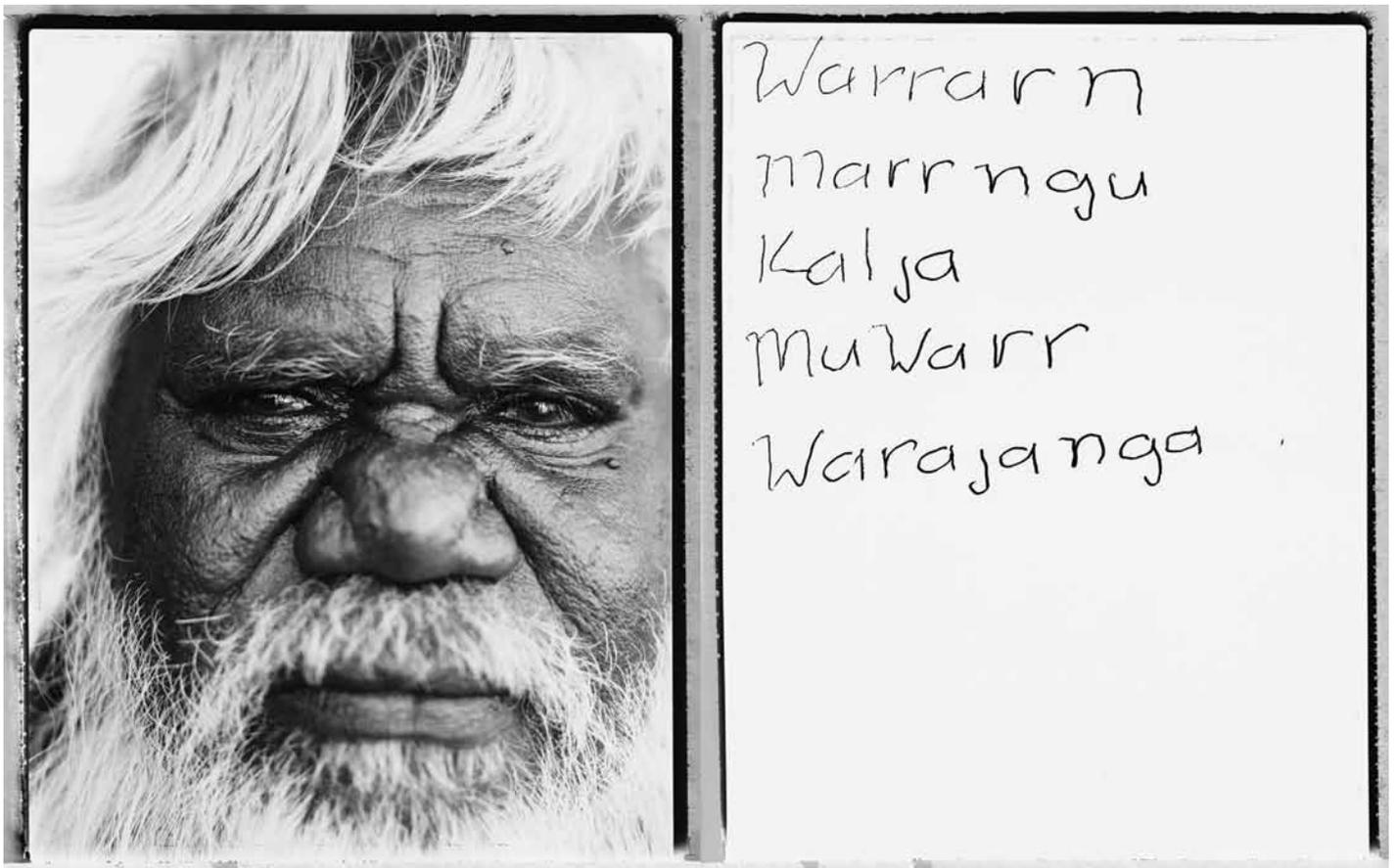
BHP Billiton is also funding research into the *Marnti Warajanga* project, to enable evaluation of the exhibition's direct impact on learning by Indigenous youth as well as broader cross-cultural understanding achieved across the Pilbara. The findings of this research will eventually be made available to the museums sector at large.

Employment opportunities on the 2012 Pilbara project

MoAD will engage a project team to coordinate and travel with the exhibition in the Pilbara, as well as to undertake the associated research. Positions for the 2012 Pilbara Tour, together with the associated research contract, will be advertised on the MoAD website and through Museums Australia in June 2011.

The main exhibition is meanwhile on display at MoAD at Old Parliament House until November 2011, and will be available for hire by appropriate presenters and museums nationally from December 2011. Visit the exhibition on-line: www.moadoph.gov.au/marnti-warajanga. Please direct any queries to: greg.lissaman@moadoph.gov.au. 

Greg Lissaman is the Exhibitions and Public Programs Manager at the Museum of Australian Democracy. A focus of his work has been developing and presenting visual art and theatre in the museum context.



Marnti Warajanga is a Museum of Australian Democracy travelling exhibition in association with the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre, South Hedland, and photographer, Tobias Titz.



TOBIAS TITZ
PHOTOGRAPHY



Australian Government
National Collecting Institutions
Touring & Outreach Program

The Lampang Temples Project, Thailand



top: The participants in the workshop represented Buddhist temples in the region. Far left in second row are Jo Wills and Jonathan Sweet. Photo: Ta, Chiang Mai University

Jonathan Sweet and Jo Wills

Since their founding in November 1946, both UNESCO and its NGO partner in the museum field, ICOM (International Council of Museums), have promoted the idea that museums offer a vital means of developing understanding between peoples across national and cultural borders.

By the early 1970s, Australian museum leaders including Eric Westbrook (Director of the National Gallery of Victoria 1955–1973) turned affirmatively to highlight the importance of our cultural engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. While Australia's fulfilment of this commitment has had a somewhat chequered history, the legacy of our best efforts is certainly evident in the work of many professionals in recent years.

One effective means of pursuing cross-cultural diplomacy through museum programs is through direct partnerships. The great benefit of a direct interchange approach is that it necessitates a high level of cultural learning amongst all participants — including

organisers. In the process of sharing specialisations and negotiating the design and operation of programs, the collaborators can informally learn from each other, and the potential is enhanced for new learning models to emerge. Moreover, professional and personal interchange may grow into longstanding relationships and provide the foundations for further initiatives and continuing innovation.

Collaboration is central to working across national and cultural borders. Employing this ethos, a Deakin University team undertook a pilot program to develop collections management training for Buddhist monks in Northern Thailand (this team included Dr Jonathan Sweet, Dr Jo Wills and conservator Susie Collis). Essential partners in the project were Chiang Mai University (Fine Arts Department), UNESCO Bangkok, the monks themselves, and community representatives of the city of Lampang, where the program was held.

The Lampang Temples Project, as it became known, was a six-day museology workshop that took place at Wat Pongsanuk, Lampang, in Northern Thailand (16–21 June 2009).

Cross-cultural learning opportunities enable museologists both to broaden their understanding of their discipline and enhance their own skills. The temples project challenged museology from the outset, because the Buddhist temples of northern Thailand are of course not strictly museums. In the Thai context, however, the temples are heritage sites that act as community centres and living repositories for community culture and memory – therefore a rich subject for museological exploration and reflection.

The Buddhist monks are custodians of a diverse range of material that has been donated by community members over time, only some of which is on display. The Lampang program was therefore designed to investigate ways to help these experienced cultural custodians achieve a level of confidence in museological disciplines, and to make informed decisions about the long-term management of the artefacts that are in their care. These include many items of aesthetic, spiritual and historical significance.

One of the challenges for Deakin staff working on this project was therefore to consider how to apply their own culturally formed learning to a new and different cultural context. This opportunity for the ‘trainers’ to reflect on cultural learning, and in so doing refine their own practice, was invaluable. It required recognising the specific cultural and spiritual needs of the participant communities, whilst integrating best-practice methods of museological knowledge into a flexible and engaging learning program.

After preliminary meetings and workshop preparation at the beginning of 2009, both Deakin and Chiang Mai University staff designed and delivered a museum training program for twenty-two Buddhist monks and ten Chiang Mai University post-graduate students. The program was designed to provide the participants with appropriate skills to manage and interpret significant cultural collections, compose a bi-lingual workbook and relevant resource materials, and to create an ongoing support network that participants could access following the workshop’s completion.

The planning began early in 2009, with Deakin University staff attending preliminary meetings in Bangkok, visiting temples in Lampang with staff from Chiang Mai University, meeting with consulate staff from the United States of America to secure additional funding, and discussing key learning needs and interests with local stakeholders. Information gleaned from this preliminary ‘reconnaissance’ phase provided vital contextual background and ensured that the needs of participants and local stakeholders remained central throughout the project as it was advanced.

The intercultural dialogue between Deakin and Chiang Mai university staff also ensured the best possible mix of culturally appropriate training that

In the Thai context the temples are heritage sites that act as community centres and living repositories for community culture and memory



met the needs of the participants. The diverse Buddha images and artefacts, as well as other community collections that are held within temples, are important to both monks and the broader community.

An understanding of how to approach long-term care of this material in its full social and spiritual setting – a rich context of intangible heritage values – is crucial to its ongoing conservation and management. As such, while the Lampang training was based on well-developed museum practices (collections management, significance assessment and object interpretation), it was mindfully designed to be conducted at a temple for monks directly responsible for the care of their collections in a living centre of both religious ritual and community cultural engagement.

top: During the workshop the monks were introduced to basic preservation techniques. Photo: Angela Srisomwongwathana

Regional collaboration and the preservation of cultural heritage

An understanding of how to approach long-term care of this material in its full social and spiritual setting ... is crucial to its ongoing conservation and management

right (top and bottom):
During the workshop the monks were introduced to basic preservation techniques.
Photo: Ta, Chiang Mai University.

The twenty-two Buddhist monks involved were of various ranks and ages, and they represented a number of temples in Northern Thailand, particularly in Chiang Mai, Lampang and Lamphun districts. The secondary participants were post-graduate students from Chiang Mai University, who were keen to develop their knowledge of museology.

These Thai students were critical to the project and contributed directly to its success. They became involved in many logistical aspects of the workshop and they worked alongside the monks, providing additional English language skills and some technical assistance. In some cases, these participants also provided important specialist knowledge, particularly concerning local approaches to the cataloguing of artefacts and the design of displays. This integration of local people and local knowledge into the program was therefore critical, and invaluable increased the ultimate benefits for all who participated.

The Lampang training program was designed to provide an understanding of an integrated approach to conservation practice. Participants were encouraged to see the preservation and interpretation of artefacts as a process requiring attention to a range of associated issues and involving a number of key activities. The many aspects of a designed learning process were introduced in tailored presentations, and then mirrored in subsequent practical exercises.

Participants were divided into groups at the beginning of the workshop, then completed activities using representative objects from temple collections, later incorporating the final group presentations. These presentations were lively and engaging. They demonstrated a keen understanding of the issues discussed, as well as displaying a fine sensitivity to the complexity of object significance and meaning. During the post-workshop evaluation discussion, the monks identified that the group projects, and the opportunity to work in a collaborative manner, were key strengths of the learning program.

The Lampang Temples Project was a pilot within the UNESCO Museums Capacity Building Program, a broader initiative in which Deakin University has provided specialist advice to identify a range of needs and priorities for museums and collecting organisations in the Asia-Pacific region, together with the development of relevant museum programs for intellectual learning and skills-acquisition.



The Lampang Temples Project strongly demonstrates the capacity of museum work to promote both the preservation of cultural material and the value of conducting local training in relevant environments, so that communities can reconnect and engage in new ways with their own long-held heritage collections. The project also provides a fine collaborative model for the advancement of mutual understanding and cultural engagement through museology in the Asia-Pacific region. **□**

Dr Jonathan Sweet and Dr Jo Wills are part of the Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific at Deakin University, Melbourne.

Citation for this article: Jonathan Sweet & Jo Wills, 'Regional collaboration and the preservation of cultural heritage: The Lampang Temples Project, Thailand', *Museums Australia Magazine*, Vol. 19(4), Museums Australia, Canberra, May 2011, pp. 22-25.



clockwise from top left:
Monks wearing white cotton
gloves for conservation work.
Photo: Ta, Chiang Mai University.

During the workshop the
monks were introduced to basic
preservation techniques. Photo:
Angela Srisomwongwathana.

Presentation of findings
concerning a palm-leaf manuscript.
Photo: Ta, Chiang Mai University.

Conservation analysis and
significance assessment of a palm-
leaf manuscript. Photo: Ta, Chiang
Mai University.

Why are there so many writers' house museums in England?



A house museum visit can well be understood as a ritual that reinforces national identity. It doesn't demand uniformity of belief, but nonetheless produces a sense of community

left: Abbotsford, home of Sir Walter Scott, near Melrose, Scotland. Scott's baronial mansion is set in an English garden – the dream home of a Romantic. Photo: Michelle Kelly.

Linda Young

aworth Parsonage, Jane Austen at Steventon, Shakespeare's birthplace, Dr Johnson's townhouse, Wordsworth's Dove Cottage... If you've ever thought there are *a lot* of writers' house museums in England, you're quite correct.

Indeed, writers' houses are by far the largest segment of a genre of house museum that commemorates the great and the good. They are augmented by the 'museumised'^[1] houses of musicians, artists, scientists, explorers, and other creative people, in a category that I call heroes' houses. It is the largest of several species of house museum, such as collectors' houses, houses preserved for the sake of architectural style or design, social history and other reasons.^[2]

What kind of heroes have their houses transmogrified into museums? How long does a house need to have been inhabited by a culture hero to qualify for museumisation? Why are there so many writers' houses, in comparison with the number of dwellings of other great persons?

Research into house museums in the UK, the USA and Australia leads me to argue that most museumised houses address national agendas. Here the values and myths of nation-states (and their microcosms of town or locality) are exhibited, and often exemplified in the personae of *culture heroes*.

A house museum visit can well be understood as a ritual that reinforces national identity. It doesn't demand uniformity of belief, but nonetheless produces a sense of community.^[3] Literature is especially powerful in expressing the idea of a shared national culture, thanks to the primacy of language as a national indicator.^[4] Furthermore, its products and its creators are widely, if vaguely, known by most speakers.

The sense of communion with famous literary figures and other national heroes that comes with the ritual of visiting a house museum suggests the essentially magical roots of such an experience. Applied to

1. This is an unfamiliar term in general speech, and a somewhat unwieldy one. However single-word alternatives are not readily available in English; the term is in use, at least partially, in museum circles; and the present article therefore employs the term throughout, with the single quotes dropped after its first instance. [Ed.]

2. Linda Young, 'Is there a museum in the house? Historic houses as a species of museum', *Museum Management & Curatorship*, 22 (1), March 2007, pp.59-77.

3. Ernest Gellner, *Anthropology and politics: revolutions in the sacred grove* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

4. Perry Anderson, 'Components of the national culture', in *English Questions* (London: Verso, 1992).

Reconsidering monographic museums

the maintenance of the secular nation, it hints that the modern world is much less disenchanted with pre-modern beliefs than sociologists once predicted.^[5] The ancient power of pilgrimage to sites associated with saints (whether formally or informally recognised) clearly underlies the phenomenon of current visitation to Jane Austen's house, not to mention John Lennon's childhood home.

The motif of pilgrimage frames a historical trajectory of acknowledging the great through an array of personality cults – with a chronological progression from saint to culture hero to celebrity. All three expressions of fame constitute cultural frames that museum managers need to take into account in presenting and interpreting heroes' house museums for contemporary audiences.

Addressing the question, 'whose heroes?', requires some preliminary observations. The process of house museumisation depends first on the survival of a house with some heroic association – and there isn't always a candidate available. The case of George Eliot provides a good example of this dilemma: no major houses of her life survive, though one she occupied for three weeks before her death is adorned with a London blue plaque.

So how long an occupation by a hero warrants museumisation of a house? The evidence ranges from a few months to an entire lifetime. Charles Dickens's birthplace demonstrates a case-study of the precarious striving that may be entailed in the quest for commemorative ritual. His parents moved from one small house to another in Portsmouth, months after he was born in 1812. Their second house, where he spent three years, was destroyed in the Blitz in 1941. Meanwhile there is another Dickens house museum – in London – where the already-famous and newly-married writer lived in 1837–39. The Portsmouth

birthplace was museumised in 1903; the London house in 1925.

Is either dwelling more meaningful than the other in appreciating or saluting Dickens's genius? There is no rational answer to this question – and its absence points to the fundamentally magical attraction of the houses of culture heroes. It takes a strong story and even stronger faith to initiate a hero's house museum. Both exist.

An exemplary specimen for reflection is found in the house-history of the famous historian, Thomas Carlyle, and his witty wife Jane, focused on their house in Chelsea. Thomas was an influential interpreter of the potent role of 'the hero' in shaping historical events, stressing the impact of great individuals on human affairs. Jane kept house, endured his other amours, and wrote letters that are still being published today.

When Thomas died, his housekeeper-niece transformed her inheritance of his Scottish birthplace, in Ecclefechan, into a shrine in 1881. Nearly fifteen years later, in 1894, a Manchester merchant, George Lumsden, discovered that the then-rundown Chelsea house was for sale. He later wrote of the evocative power that the fabric and site of a hero's dwelling may retain for fervent admirers:

I wished to see Carlyle's House because one of England's greatest men had lived and worked in it, the man whose influence upon my own life had been... determinative... To me whatever its state or circumstances, it was holy ground.^[6]

Lumsden's campaign to preserve the Carlyle house eventually found influential support, and it was soon opened by a Memorial Trust. In 1936 ownership passed to the National Trust, whose managerial expertise and

below left: Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford-on-Avon. The recent re-creation of the room in which Shakespeare may have been born is highly evocative. Photo: Donna Hansen.

below right: Dylan Thomas's writing shed, Laugharne, Wales. One of the fondest myths of house museums: 'as if [the resident] has just stepped out'. Photo: Kenny Hemphill (www.kennyhemphill.com).

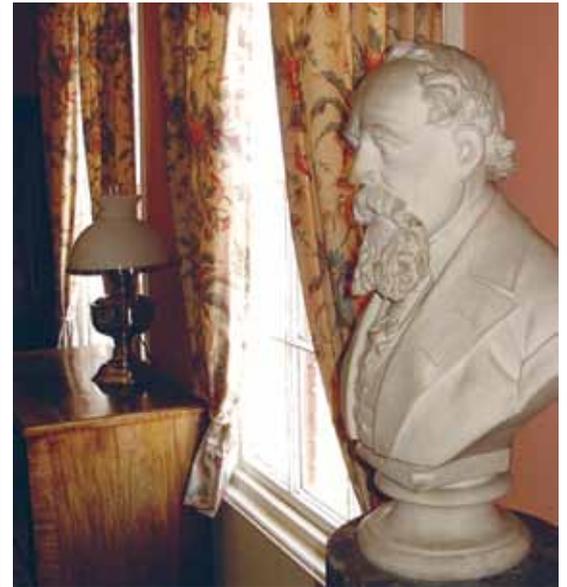


5. Karl Bell, 'Breaking modernity's spell: Magic and modern history', *Cultural and Social History*, 4 (1), 2007, pp.115-122.

6. *Illustrated Memorial Volume of the Carlyle's House Purchase Fund Committee* (London: 1896 [facsimile 1995]), pp.1-2.

right: Carlyle's House, London. The archetype of the Great Man's house museum, marked by a marble portrait by Charles Voysey. Photo: Jacqueline Banerjee.

far right: Dickens's Birthplace, Southampton. A bust of the adult Charles Dickens overlooks his (entirely re-created) birthplace. Photo: Roger Edwards.



economies of scale keep the house going today. Such a cautious estimate of management liabilities, however, did not prevent a 1984 gesture to acquire the house in which Jane Carlyle was born, in the Scottish town of Haddington. It proved to be an action motivated more by historical redress than practical wisdom: seeking better acknowledgement of the woman who maintained the great Thomas Carlyle. However Jane's house has not survived as a museum, having closed in 2004. Its short life emphasises that the making and maintenance of heroes is not guaranteed by house museumisation alone.

The story of the Ecclefechan and Chelsea Carlyle houses demonstrates the two routes to house museumisation: family dedication of a house to the public on the one hand; and committee acquisition, usually resulting in trust governance, on the other.

Sir Walter Scott's family created Britain's first (non-royal/non-aristocratic) house open for the public to commune with the spirit of the admired author, shortly after Scott died, in 1832. His gloriously Gothick pastiche, Abbotsford, located in the Border country south of Edinburgh, recreated the spirit of medieval Scots romance that suffused Scott's poems and novels. First opened was his study, gradually followed by the rest of the house – until his heirs eventually moved into a new house next door in 1850.

The process of direct transmission from hero's family into the public domain generally enables a large proportion of original house furnishings to remain *in situ*. Thus domestic items may take on a relic character, in 'original' settings, becoming objects of special veneration – the desk, the chair, the pen and so on. The degree of intactness of such assemblages also arouses another dimension of significance, as shifting evidence of historic taste and habit.

The committee-and-trust mode of museumisation began (and arguably reaches its peak) at Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-on-Avon. The house where the great man may have been born in 1564 had become a sacred destination for men of letters by the mid-eighteenth century. For a gratuity to the barkeeper of the pub that then occupied it, pilgrims could ascend to the 'birth room' and write their names on the wall; special visitors were permitted to scratch their names on the glass window.

When the Birthplace house came up for sale in 1847, a campaign developed to 'save' it for the nation as a shrine to the hero of English literature. A committee of gentlemen was successful in acquiring the house, via subscriptions and loans. They expected to hand it over to a government agency for ongoing management – however even in the nineteenth century, government agencies were shy of taking on unfunded assets.

Happily, two benefactors emerged to fund a substantial restoration of the house, and it opened as a self-conscious museum in 1864, the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth. The house became the core of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, formed as such in 1893. Over the years, The Trust acquired the houses of Shakespeare's daughter, granddaughter, mother's family, wife's family and the site of Shakespeare's own house built for his retirement but later demolished, as well as numerous other Stratford houses and open land. Thus the SBT came to control, as landlord, the amenity and security of the whole local environment.

The analogy of this scale and enterprise with a major religious site is evident, manifesting its different perspectives and roles for curator-'priests', visitor-'pilgrims' and local folk who make a living out of servicing the priests and pilgrims. 'Bardolatry' reigns at Stratford.

The Birthplace house itself now has a long history

of revisionism, addressing shifting visions of Shakespeare's significance, contemporary relevance, and appropriate management of the structure. The long gap between his actual lifetime and museumisation of the house means there is little relic material culture for collecting and display. Not until 1950 was the graffiti tradition banned, and furnishing for homely presence introduced, along with electric lighting and heating. The house was last revised in 2000, when Tudor colour and textiles appeared on the walls, and costumed guides began to introduce the everyday life of a craftsman family in sixteenth-century Stratford.

Shakespeare's fame as The Great Man of English Letters took shape as a pantheon of others came to be acknowledged by the mid-eighteenth century. Commentators like Dr Johnson established the first canon, adding Spenser and Milton as wings of a triad of greats; and gradually the greats of Johnson's own time were deemed suitable to join them.^[7]

The history of English literature that thus emerged – and its expanding prestige – has been traced first to the Scottish universities at the end of the eighteenth century, when young Scots needed educating in high literacy to make their fortunes in an English world. In London, the ancestor of University College London, the first secular university in England, began teaching the same kind of skills under the title Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, drawing on the great Elizabethan and Augustan writers, to prepare the sons of the upper middle-class for commerce and empire.^[8]

Reading emerged as one of the distinctive markers of the bourgeoisie, buttressed by the tastes of their women, who developed a vast appetite for poetry and novels. Nineteenth-century novelists took until the early twentieth century to begin their ascent into the elect of English literature, a subject at last acknowledged even by Oxbridge. However even more importantly, literature and reading emerged as preoccupations claimed to be particularly English, a national trait that demonstrated the calm, authoritative knowledge of the cultivated wing of the British Empire.

And so the argument returns: that writers' house museums developed as expressions of nationalist sentiment and pride. Two houses inhabited by the Scots poet, Robbie Burns, were museumised before World War 1, asserting the distinctiveness of Scotland within the United Kingdom. In the same period, houses of Milton, Wordsworth, Cowper, Dr Johnson and Coleridge opened.

There are at least fifty writers' house museums in the UK, and the species continues to thrive. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, houses opened that had been occupied by Agatha Christie, Elizabeth Gaskell, John Clare, the Sitwell siblings, and Dylan Thomas – whose boathouse writing shed was restored in 2003.

The imperial role of English literature has now declined, but the canon of greats persists in academe and, more influentially, in film. There is no doubt that the BBC TV series *Cranford* gave impetus to the preservation of Mrs Gaskell's house in Manchester – along with an endangered heritage listing for Regency villa style and the city's demand for tourism destinations.

English literature today is something of a cult interest, yet the role of its heroes in national identity construction is still strong. But what of other creative legends and their place in the national imagination?

Excluding several American heroes with British roots, I have identified about thirty non-writer hero house museums. Those established before WW1 commemorate, *inter alia*, Lord Leighton, artist; John Wesley, founder of Methodism; Samuel Compton, industrial inventor; and William Hogarth, artist. And those established in the immediate past ten years include John Lennon; William Morris; and Hugh Miller (Scots proto-geologist).

The variety of this list reminds us of the contingent factors of hero house museumisation. Requisites are a house, an advocate, and plenty of money. Some candidates fail to achieve all these conditions.

Edward Heath, British Prime Minister from 1970-74, bequeathed the house of his retirement, together with a modest collection of British art and £5 million to a trust when he died in 2005. The house opened in 2008, but closed in 2010, because it could nowhere near cover its costs. Heath proved not to possess an aura potent enough to attract sufficient pilgrims.

A further challenge in the management of heroes' houses arises through shifts in fashion. Shakespeare's Birthplace is secure; but Scott's Abbotsford probably needs all the charm of its Romantic design to bolster a largely diminished fame. Other cases, like George Bernard Shaw's house, have drawn ever fewer visitors since opening in 1951; and its custodian, the National Trust, may wonder if its significance today is less as the shrine of a literary hero than as a historical document of a modest twentieth-century house with intact interiors and contents.

English literature and its heroes' houses could seem almost anachronistic. Yet thousands of visitors continue to make pilgrimages to particular sites and dwellings, seeking to experience an aura of inspiration and be touched by a site of creativity with which they can identify as speakers and readers of English. The pilgrim-soul can still be moved! 

Linda Young teaches aspects of cultural heritage management at Deakin University, Melbourne. She is writing a book on the history of house museums.

7. Jonathan Brody Kramnick, *Making the English Canon: Print-Capitalism and the Cultural Past 1700 – 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

8. Franklin E. Court, *Institutionalising English Literature: The culture and politics of literary study, 1750–1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), ch.1.

Reconsidering monographic museums

‘Let the genius be presented *whole*, as life made & moulded him.’^[1] The Grainger Museum at the University of Melbourne



above: Belinda Nemeč

right: Percy and Ella Grainger in the Grainger Museum, 13 December 1938. Photographer unknown; silver gelatin print and ink. Reproduced courtesy Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne.

Belinda Nemeč

The University of Melbourne’s Grainger Museum is a rare Australian example of an autobiographical museum – that is, a museum of which the principal subject is the life and/or career of its creator.

Although all collecting by an individual is arguably an exercise in self-expression and identity-formation, not all such collecting is autobiographical. Most famous collectors’ house-museums – such as that of Henry Clay Frick in New York or Isabella Stewart Gardner in Boston – are autobiographical only insofar as all collections reveal *something* of the collector, particularly their aesthetic preferences, and all homes reveal *something* of their occupants.

Conversely, some highly personal collections, dwellings or environments arranged for the purpose of permanent display (such as the exotic Maison Pierre Loti in Rochefort, Poitou-Charentes; or Gabriele d’Annunzio’s monumental project, Vittoriale degli Italiani, overlooking Lake Garda in Northern Italy) were not originally dubbed ‘museums’ by their creators, but have subsequently become autobiographical museums.

Artists’ house-studio museums often tell us much about their subject, and in their own ‘words’ (that is, in the language of the subject’s own art). However the majority of these museums were established posthumously, by their heirs or admirers (Norman Lindsay’s home in Springwood is an exception, and can be considered an autobiographical museum).

Although ‘autobiographical’ is a convenient term by which to identify these museums or collections as a genre, the analogy with the typical book-length, chronologically composed autobiography is not always a close one. Some of the museums bring to mind a diary or journal; some are more like a memoir; while others (such as the Christian C. Sanderson Museum, in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania) resemble a scrapbook – a miscellany of items, anecdotes and



vignettes, with no clear chronology; others again have the atmosphere of a memorial or even reliquary. However all these examples are linked through a genre of museums that is intentionally *autobiographical*, albeit expressed in diverse and idiosyncratic ways.

The Grainger Museum, located within the University of Melbourne, preserves material evidence of the multi-faceted life of the Melbourne-born composer Percy Aldridge Grainger (1882–1961). The catalyst to the establishment of the museum was the suicide of Grainger’s mother, Rose, in 1922. Percy’s and Rose’s relationship had been unusually close, and her death was a terrible shock to her almost-forty-years old son, which led Percy to feel that he, too, might soon die.

1. Percy Grainger, Letter to Cyril Scott, 6 June 1944. Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne.

Grainger was familiar with house museums and ... considered he was equally deserving of a museum devoted to his life and achievements

He wrote vividly of his devastation: 'I am all in life that remains of my beloved mother, & I wish to live so as to make her as sweetly remembered as possible [...]. You understand the general need of bringing out everything [...] that, together, could place me a[s] Australia's 1st great composer & make Australia & my mother's name shine bright.'^[2] Percy Grainger's plans at that stage included two museums: one in his own house in New York, and one in Melbourne.

In the early 1930s Grainger proposed to the University of Melbourne (because it was located in his 'birth-town') that he would pay for the construction and upkeep of a 'Grainger Museum' on the campus. The university provided the land, while Grainger paid for the building, briefed the architect, donated the exhibits, recruited, paid and supervised the curators, and met the running costs during his lifetime.

The remarkable breadth and diversity of Grainger's interests are reflected in the size and variety of his collection of letters, scores, musical instruments, books, pictures, garments, ephemera, furniture, decorative arts and other materials that over his lifetime he accumulated or deliberately acquired. The museum became a significant element in Grainger's long campaign to position himself for posterity as a major international modernist composer, and as Australia's 'first great composer'.

Grainger's museum has characteristics of the archive, the library and the museum. The collection includes the most trivial as well as remarkable, intimate items – including those relating to his sado-masochistic flagellantism.^[3] Even Grainger's idiosyncratic methods of cataloguing his correspondence were autobiographical, embodying a hierarchy based on the degree of closeness of the personal relationship between Grainger and the correspondent, or their significance in his eyes. For example, letters from 'Servants to RG [Rose Grainger], PG [Percy Grainger], EG [his wife, Ella Grainger]', were grouped together under one catalogue number, as were 'American (not closest) friends to PG, EG' and letters from 'RG to British (not special) friends'; meanwhile each correspondent who was personally close or important to Grainger—such as his fellow students from Frankfurt, Rudyard Kipling, and his Museum's curator Richard Fowler—was given his or her own catalogue number.



left: Exterior of Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne

Grainger was familiar with house museums and memorials to literary and musical 'geniuses', and – believing that as he, too, was a genius – considered he was equally deserving of a museum devoted to his life and achievements. He was particularly inspired by visiting the childhood home of one of his favourite authors, Mark Twain, which had recently opened as a museum in Hannibal, Missouri.^[4] However Grainger wanted to ensure the interpretative direction of the institution dedicated to his life and work: he sought the agency and immediacy of autobiography, not the distance of posthumous biography.

The advantages of first-hand involvement Grainger grasped directly, writing in 1956 that museums 'should be done while the composers themselves are still alive & able to provide information that outsiders don't know.'^[5] 

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2. Percy Grainger, Letter to H. Balfour Gardiner, 3 May 1922, in M. Gillies and D. Pear (eds), *The All-Round Man: Selected Letters of Percy Grainger 1914–1961* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp.55–60.

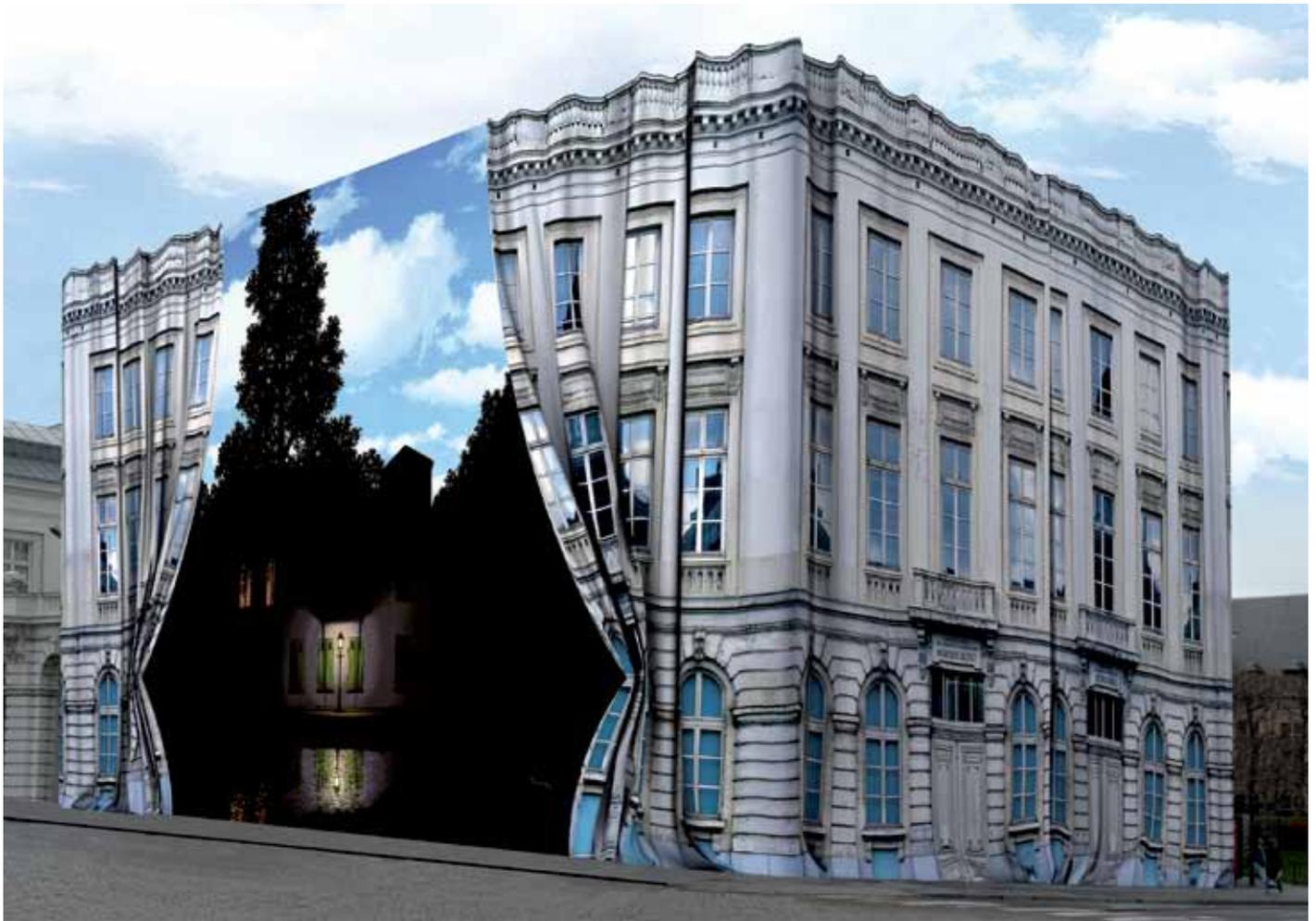
3. David Pear, 'The Passions of Percy', *Meanjin*, 62 (2), Melbourne, 2003, pp.59–66.

4. Percy Grainger, Letter to Clara Aldridge, 25 April 1939. Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne.

5. Percy Grainger, Letter to Elsie Bristow, 3 April 1956. Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne.

A new museum devoted to a single artist in Europe

The dominion of light (and silence)



Annette Welkamp

The easy accessibility of the images in René Magritte's paintings is deceptive. They seem obvious: an apple, a dove, a pipe. The viewer recognises them, yet doesn't. House and street lights are on for the evening, but the sky above is bathed in light.^[1] A naked female form is composed only of long golden tresses, breasts and a vagina. Like knowing the words to a U2 song, but never quite understanding what Bono is on about, Magritte's creative language arouses immediate recognition but its meaning remains elusive. This imbues his works with an enduring aloofness that paradoxically encourages sustained engagement.

The Magritte Museum opened last year in Brussels, and with this development the vital role of René Magritte (1898-1967) as one of the key artists of the Surrealist movement is reclaimed. Many also declare him to be the most important Belgian artist of the twentieth century – although the position of his compatriot, the later visionary and anti-authoritarian artist, Marcel Broodthaers, cannot be denied. The links between the two are strong.^[2]

The Magritte Museum has grown out of a partnership between the Magritte Foundation and the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (RMFAB). Between them these two institutions have amassed the most substantial collection of the artist's works world-wide. Given Magritte's role as a bridge between the academy and contemporary art, it is fitting that the museum bearing his name itself lies physically between the wings of old and new art, in a series of three conjoined buildings that together interconnect the RMFAB museums (the Museum of Ancient Art, Museum of Modern Art, Wiertz Museum and Meunier Museum) and the new Magritte Museum.

The ambience of the display spaces spontaneously emphasises the stillness of the worlds conjured by the paintings. It is gloriously quiet in the Magritte Museum. This sense of complete detachment from the hustle and bustle of the outside world is reinforced by the 'second-skin' box forms that have been installed inside the nineteenth-century neo-classical building, and which therefore hide its internal structural details. That the box's walls are painted black focuses an even more concentrated attention on the art in the room.

The curators of many a blockbuster exhibition could

above: The Musée Magritte before its opening, covered with a giant canvas depicting the artist's painting, *Empire of Light*, 1953-54.

For the use of *L'Empire des Lumières*, 1954
© Charly HERSCOVICI, with his kind authorization c/o SABAM-ADAGP, 2009.
For the decorative tarpaulin © GDF SUEZ.

1. René Magritte, *Het rijk der lichten / The Dominion of Light / L'Empire des Lumières* 1954, oil on canvas, 146 x 114 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, © Charly Herscovici c/o SABAM Belgium 2003 / [SABAM]
2. Marcel Broodthaers, Museum of Modern Art, Brussels, 27 July to 26 September 2010. The RMFAB also houses the world's strongest collection of this artist's work.

A new museum devoted to a single artist in Europe

right: René MAGRITTE,
The Return 1940, (Le Retour)
oil on canvas, 50 x 65 cm
© Charly HERSCOVICI,
with his kind authorization
c/o SABAM-ADAGE, 2009

learn from the sophisticated installation employed here. The generous amount of air around each painting enhances its presence, intensifying its sense of *gravitas*. Even when paintings are paired, there is still a good deal of quiet space left between them. This gives one time to meditate and absorb, without the distractions of further paintings, interpretive labels or supporting works intruding upon the experience of concentrated attention that the paintings themselves command.

Spread over three levels, the museum display is essentially chronological. The first wall as you enter each gallery presents an easily digested, illustrated chronology. This points to key moments in the artist's creative development and highlights influences from his private life, including the people he associated with, and modifications in his political positions as well as key events – such as when he acquired a new camera. These tri-lingual panels provide just enough information to get one started in each section. Again: air circulates, enabling concentration of mind and eye.

The 'breathing space' around Magritte's works is further enhanced by the clever device of separating the support material from the paintings. In each gallery the finished works are hung to the left and in the centre of the room, with a band of the generally smaller reference material hung to the right. These items are predominantly presented in long, low, continuous vitrines set into the wall.

Presentation of the advertising graphics Magritte designed, together with the small sepia photographs taken by him, provide valuable insights into the compositions of some of his paintings. One in particular shows Magritte simply standing outside on an apartment balcony, between two partially open doors, the top half of which are glazed. His reflection in one is therefore tantalizingly severed at the waist in the right-hand door, whereas we can quite clearly see his whole body standing beside it to the left. These paradoxical visual prompts and games are similarly evident in the short films the artist made, which are also on display.

The RMFAB owns the single largest collection of Magritte's work held anywhere, which makes a museum such as this possible – although there is clearly a small number of long-term loans included in the display. Such a surfeit enables the Magritte Museum to highlight the strong links between the creative richness of the artist's paintings and the drawings, gouaches, posters, advertising works, and photographs in the collection. Including such a range of material in the long-term display provides a rich resource for unravelling the iconography and stylistic development of Magritte's paintings. For those who can read French, there is also correspondence from the man to fellow artists, which clearly provide amusements – as was witnessed when one visitor read out the contents to his associate, both laughing and enjoying the story.

Magritte was also keenly interested in words, and their ambiguous relation both to objects and to themselves. *Ceci n'est pas une pipe (This is not a pipe)* is one of the most recognisable images in modern art, although few would readily identify its artist/author. In homage to this love of language, the support walls



in the galleries are adorned with what the Museum calls Magritte's ABCs. These include statements such as "*the common ordinariness of all things is a mystery*" and "*I don't have the feeling that I am 'adding' to the world*"; the question, "*Where would I get what I am adding if not in the world*"; and the assertion, "*all my work results from a feeling of certainty that we do indeed belong to an enigmatic universe*". The intertwining of images with texts in the displays is carefully achieved in these galleries – unlike so many exhibitions where interpretive statements about the experience of viewers are patronising or superfluous.

The Magritte Museum now takes a place alongside other important biographical museums devoted to the work of single artists, such as the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and the Rodin Museum in Paris. It aims to become a leading international skills-centre for the research, transmission and presentation of the life, thought and work of René Magritte. This focus will be enhanced by the close association with the other important collections nearby. In the RMFAB the contemporary visitor also has easy access to broader Belgian tradition and other earlier works (no doubt also accessible to Magritte), and will encounter the art of his contemporaries, as well as that of others who came after him and perhaps those he influenced.

René Magritte spent most of his life in Brussels, and the domestic nature of his iconography, combined with a world-wide interest in his paintings suggest that this city – which also provides the headquarters for the European Union – is the perfect backdrop and home to a complex body of work that is both realistic and illusionistic in a subtle interplay of contents. **□**

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Musée Magritte Museum, 1 Place Royale, Brussels, Belgium
www.musee-magritte-museum.be

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Reviewing the impact of receiving a national museums award

Narryna Heritage Museum, Hobart – the updraft after a national award!



above: Samuel Dix
right (from top):

Secretary/Treasurer Roger Steedman (Left) with then Minister of Heritage and the Arts, David O'Byrne.

Narryna Heritage Museum, a handsome Georgian house set among elegant old-world gardens, is located just a short walk from Salamanca Place in Hobart Tasmania.

Manager Samuel Dix during filming for ABC's The Collectors

Japanese documentary crew filming at Narryna.

Samuel Dix

Winner of the 2010 ABC Radio National Regional Museums Award for a museum with an operational budget of less than \$150,000

Hanging in the front entrance to Narryna Heritage Museum in Hobart there is a small plaque inscribed 'Museum of the Year Award 1983, Best Museum – Open, Museums Association of Australia Inc.' By chance I stumbled across the ABC Radio National Regional Museum Awards 2010 on the Internet, reminding me of a forerunner program held in 1983, and decided to enter.

What inspired us to submit in 2010? There is always the desire to achieve recognition in the field in which we work, and this aspect was a strong driver. However as the new Manager of the Narryna museum, I viewed the opportunity as touched by a good omen – since it was clear that we had not won a national award for this volunteer-run heritage institution since the year I was born.

Despite natural optimism, winning a category section in the ABC Radio National Awards did come as a shock finally when it occurred. The actuality of recognition is always different and stronger than its anticipation

Since 2009, Narryna has taken steps to break beyond the usual constraints surrounding small museums and to establish itself as a leader in the targeted areas of education, conservation and management. Narryna has accordingly gained a presence on the Internet, with our own website, and begun working through social media networks such as Facebook. These progressive developments have more than doubled the number of schools visiting the physical site in the period.

There has been an influx of youth volunteering their time in the running of the museum. A strong partnership with the Australian National University has been established. And Narryna has subsequently realised an on-site course in Managing Small Museums and Heritage Places (in January 2011), with the event booked out.

Narryna now has a total of five postgraduate students presently working within our heritage house that provides the home and focal point for the museum's presence in Battery Point, Hobart. There are three students completing their honours projects on different aspects of the collection from the University of Tasmania, and one Masters Student from the Australian National University. Recently a further student from the Australian National University won a scholarship to undertake her PhD on Narryna's textile collection – the first in-depth examination of one of the nation's finest period costume collections.

These various activities and developments obviously contributed to our receiving the award for the ABC Radio National Regional Museum Awards, 2010 – in the category for a small museum with a modest operational budget, permitting limited staff employment. However what have we gained from winning the award?

Through the ABC's attention and the national impact achieved for a community-based institution, Narryna has experienced its busiest season in more than twelve



Reviewing the impact of receiving a national museums award

right: Participants of the ANU and Narryna Managing Small Museums and Heritage Places Course

far right: ANU Students at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Conservation Lab during the Managing Small Museums and Heritage Places course held in January.



years. We have suddenly caught the attention of local political leaders for the first time, who have subsequently visited the museum and even mentioned our achievement in the Tasmanian parliament. We have had media attention in the local newspaper, including a number of interviews on local commercial radio.

Narryna has captured further national and local attention through the ABC television program, *Collectors*, where we now feature quite regularly on this program as either a reference body for items researched; as a site back-drop for filmed broadcasts; or in supplying objects for presenters' panel discussions. Narryna has also fast-tracked a working relationship with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, with the promise of managerial support, conservation of its materials, and further developmental opportunities through cross-promotion.

The greatest influence so far has clearly been through the ongoing benefits that proceed from public recognition. Having the competition sponsored and promoted by ABC Radio National, and drawing on industry partnership support from Museums Australia: both these recognised bodies, well known throughout Australia, ensure the ABC Award has strong impact and credibility with the general public.

When visitors now entering our museum see the ABC award displayed, and realise that this was won in a national competition organised through cooperation of two prestigious organisations, a community-based museum gains enormous recognition and reinforcement of its efforts in conserving historic heritage. The 2010 ABC Award has assisted us to advance our case for more local resources for support in Tasmania, since we are now considered by the media as an 'award winning museum'.

Whenever Narryna is cited on radio or television, we are regularly branded with the tagline, 'the award winning Narryna Heritage Museum'. This has also become a valuable aid in raising awareness within the wider Tasmanian heritage community: no longer do our collection, location and programs confine us to a small historic precinct in Hobart alone. Our enhanced position within networks promoting state and national tourism objectives is also unquestionable – which further increases our potential of community



service with an economic yield locally.

Since the ABC Award was made, our museum has been able to strengthen its education commitments. Narryna and the Australian National University are now discussing plans for different courses to be run through the historic house, not only for students in tertiary courses but for museum professionals from around the country. We are in the development stages of creating an online, and hopefully print-version, journal arising directly from the research currently being conducted about Narryna as a house-museum. And we are close to receiving funding to construct a purpose-built conservation facility for the museum's large and nationally significant textile collection.

The national awards by the ABC for three successive years have definitely bolstered the image of small museums to their local communities across Australia, while also enhancing their importance to the wider public. Too often small museums are omitted from the tourist and cultural heritage trails taken by both visitors to a State and to regional or local areas. Yet the great array of smaller institutions across Australia serve a community cultural and economic purpose far beyond being a mere storage facility of historic objects and cultural items. These small institutions have a front-line role to play in the conservation of memory and heritage in their communities, and in the promotion of shared history, identity and pride.

These awards have proved in a very public way that small museums are just as valuable as large institutions; that they fit into a national picture of heritage care and public service in which all bodies, large and small, have a place on the map nationally. The ABC Awards have demonstrated that modest-scaled institutions can prove their worth and demonstrate their capacities to reach far beyond the image generally associated with a small museum.

We too can achieve great things within the heritage sector and provide improved services for our communities spread far and wide across the country. **□**

Samuel Dix is Manager of the Narryna Heritage Museum, Hobart.

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Hot Science, Global Citizens

Fiona Cameron and Teresa Swirski

On 9 July 2009, world leaders at the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate (MEF), in Italy, declared: ‘Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time’.^[1] The evolving role of the museums sector, in response to the climate change challenge, is the focus of this article.

Museums have the potential to become reflexive and creative agents amidst the ‘hotly’ contested contemporary debates surrounding climate change communication and action. The world-wide repercussions of climate change cannot be ignored by the museums sector, nor its multi-party stakeholders including ‘global citizens’, government and business. This provides the context for a research project around which the present article revolves. The project adopts:

[...] an interdisciplinary approach to develop new knowledge about what constitutes effective action around climate change, and how it can be represented and debated in local and global public spheres. It also looks to the museum sector – natural history, science museums and science centres – to play a role as resource, catalyst and change agent in climate change debates and decision-making, as unique public and trans-national spaces where science, government, industry, society and NGOs can meet, where knowledge can be mediated, competing discourses and agendas tabled and debated, and where action might be activated.^[2]

What are the reflexive and creative approaches that museums can take towards climate change interventions? Framing museums as ‘sites of complexity’^[3] is proposed as one means. In doing so, this article highlights features of an Australian Research Council international linkage project, ‘Hot Science, Global Citizens’: the agency of the museum sector in climate change interventions’. This project incorporates museum studies literature stemming from its inquiry, presentations at a recent parliamentary briefing, and a symposium.

Museums as reflexive agents

A strong theme emerging from the research project is the idea of museums as reflexive agents for climate change interventions. Reflexivity corresponds to the notion of ‘liquid museums’,^[4] which suggests a dynamic and fluid approach towards institutional and organisational practices. With regard to reflexivity, museums are viewed as ‘cultural brokers’,^[5] who continually negotiate and mediate amongst various, diverse and interconnected networks. Similarly, this reflexivity presumes a process of emergence: ‘[A] common world must be assembled through chains of human and nonhuman actors. Cosmopolitics is this

work of assembling a shared world in all its ideological diversity’.^[6] From a reflexive perspective:

[A]ll participants have crucial roles to play, not simply in understanding issues like climate change, but also becoming part of a single better-informed, more complex and flexible community that is humanity’s best hope for coping with whatever the future throws at us.^[7]

The theme of reflexivity was also apparent in ‘Hot Science, Global Citizens’ project findings presented at a parliamentary briefing held on the 21st March 2011, at Parliament House, Canberra. Presentations at the briefing spanned the following ideas or topics: *dispositions to change* (Associate Professor Brett Nielson); *the need for non-linear communication* (Professor Bob Hodge); *public opinion trends* (Professor David Karoly); *the mediating role of community media* (Dr Juan Francisco Salazar); *Australians’ views on climate change policy and processes* (Dr Fiona Cameron, Dr Ben Dibley and Dr Anne Newstead); and *collaborative problem-solving* (Professor Lyn Carson and Dallas Rogers). Research findings on all of these topics indicate purposive next steps to advance action on climate change:

A small window of opportunity exists to avoid the worst scenarios. A global response is needed, with agreed frameworks for action. Current policy approaches have proven inadequate. Assessment of risk, prevention and mitigation is dominated by science, industry and government, which have not attended sufficiently to community practices and social and cultural contexts. Gaps between science, society and culture continue to limit government and industry capacity to engage with communities to broker high quality, culturally intelligent, socially robust policy and innovative solutions to climate change.^[8]

Continuing this reflexivity theme, in a public lecture entitled ‘Re-Structuring Climate Policy for a Partisan Era’, Mike Hulme (Professor of Climate Change, University of East Anglia) discussed a dynamic, or reflexive approach towards dealing with the issue of climate change. The following quote indicates his current framing of both critical questions and tasks for positive action:

I suggest that our ultimate goal is not to ‘stop climate change’. We have mistaken the means for the end. Our goal is surely to ensure that the basic human needs of the world’s growing population are adequately met; that we move towards a development paradigm where we are living within our techno-ecological means and not beyond them; and that our societies are adequately equipped to withstand the risks and dangers that come from a changing climate – distinguishing whether those risks and dangers are natural or not is hardly the point.^[9]

1. The Guardian newspaper, UK (2009). Declaration of the leaders of the major economies forum on energy and climate. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/jul/09/climate-change-g8> (accessed 8 April, 2011).
2. Cameron, F. R. (2011a). Parliamentary briefing introduction. <http://www.hotscienceglobalcitizens.net/index.php/parliamentary-brief> (accessed 8th April, 2011).
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Museums as reflexive and creative agents for climate change interventions

Translating this approach into a framework for museums' action would include an active commitment to raising public awareness, not simply providing information and data passively from the side-lines of public debate. A reflexivity framework would propose a more 'engaged' process by which museums become a dynamic public resource: pursuing a more active role in critically interpreting scientific information, in proposing climate change as a social and cultural issue beyond a simplistic mitigation imperative and progressively analysing the challenges of climate change, both better formulating dialogic processes with diverse audiences while 'channelling' organisational practices more purposively.

Reflexivity has become a key issue for museums in relation to their mission of public service. There are critical challenges for museums today to promote more informed dialogic processes around climate change as an idea, as a phenomenon and for formulating more diverse governing options and different types of interventions.

Museums as creative agents

Another strong theme emerging from the research project findings is the idea of the museum performing as a creative agent in climate change intervention and adjustment. The potential for museums to foster creativity about ways to live in the world differently amongst citizens is highlighted in the following goal of public service: '[T]o develop citizen capacities for living creatively with the opportunities and threats posed by climate change – as both physical reality and social discourse' and in formulating robust policy as an articulation of social new futures.^[10]

Creativity was also a theme at the Sydney 'Hot Science, Global Citizens' symposium (5–6 May, 2011). This event drew together the research team and a range of international speakers to discuss climate change, culture and creative agency – speakers included international museum consultant Elaine Heumann Gurian; Dr Emlyn Koster and Wayne LaBar of the Liberty Science Center, Jersey City, USA; and Giles Lane, Director of Proboscis, London.

Creativity is the means by which the museums sector can engage with its multi-party stakeholders – citizens, government and business. Museums always need to be attuned to new and innovative ways to communicate knowledge, which potentially informs multi-party stakeholders' actions and behaviours:

Institutions have the potential to operate as attractors, as part of a group performance and as actors along with other agencies in mapping out the social world, and relations of the physical to human futures.^[11]

Professor Mike Hulme, in his keynote speech at the Sydney symposium, also spoke of the prospect for harnessing our imagination, novelty, creativity and innovation in relation to climate change.^[12] Creativity in communicating scientific and environmental knowledge accessibly has become a vital capability for the museums sector to employ in public engagement with climate change intervention and adjustment.

Conclusion

Rapidly changing knowledge and complex environmental, cultural and political issues require a shift in the role of museums towards becoming 'liquid', mobile and adaptive, within a range of climate change governmental responses orchestrated around this important issue of our time.^[13] Museums need to become more reflexive and creative agents, in response to 'one of the greatest challenges of our time.'^[14]

Further information can be found at the following link: <http://www.hotscienceglobalcitizens.net> [1]

Dr Fiona Cameron is a Senior Research Fellow at the CCR. She researches and writes on museums and contemporary society in two fields of interest. The first examines the agency of the museum sector in public culture in the representation of 'hot' topics, most recently climate change. The second investigates digital technologies and museum collections. Fiona is the lead Chief Investigator for the ARC Linkage project, 'Hot Science Global Citizens, the agency of the museum sector in climate change interventions'.

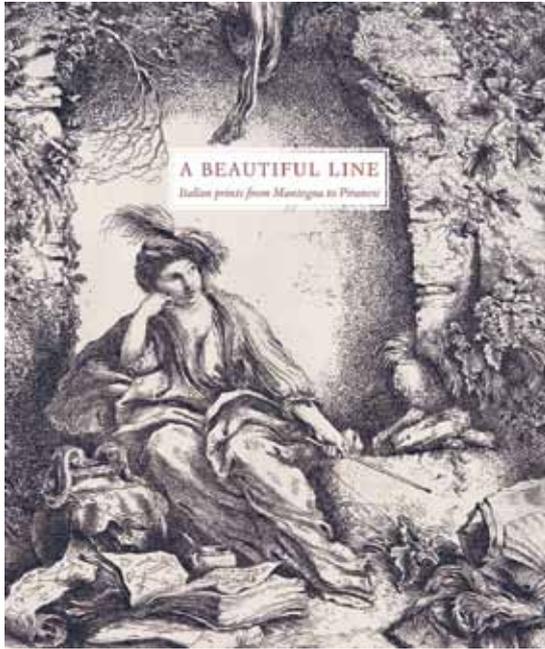
Teresa Swirski is a research assistant currently working on the ARC Linkage project, Hot Science, Global Citizens: the Agency of the Museum Sector in Climate Change Interventions. She is a PhD candidate at Macquarie University and is near completion of her thesis entitled: *Fostering Third-Generation Creativity within Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment: A Complex, Social-Ecological Worldview*. Teresa's research interests include creativity, education, design, social innovation, sustainability, organisational studies and complexity theory.

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10. Cameron, F. & Deslandes, A. (2011). Museums and science centres as sites for deliberative democracy on climate change. *Museum and Society*, Special Issue: Hot Science, Global Citizens, op.cit.
11. Cameron, F.R. (2011b) 'From mitigation to complex reflexivity and creative imaginaries – Museums and science centres in climate governance', *Museum and Society*, Special Issue: Hot Science, Global Citizens, op.cit.
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14. Cameron, F.R. (2011b) 'From mitigation to complex reflexivity and creative imaginaries – Museums and science centres in climate governance', *Museum and Society*, Special Issue: Hot Science, Global Citizens, op.cit.

Book Reviews

Book Review: *A Beautiful Line and Angels & Aristocrats*

Anne Kirker

A trans-Tasman view of the richness of historical prints in our major art collections

As far-flung colonies of the British Empire, Australia and New Zealand built their fledgling art collections from European art that showed a desire to imitate the grand collections of the northern hemisphere.

While it is often stated that original *prints* more often than not were acquired in place of a particular artist's *painting* (and sometimes sculpture) this should not lead us immediately to judge such works on paper as ancillary to what was perceived – as Justin Clemens points out – as 'the main game'.^[1]

The first publication under review here – Maria Zagala's beautiful (literally 'gilt-edged') catalogue, *A Beautiful Line: Italian Prints from Mantegna to Piranesi* – produced for an exhibition of the same name last year at the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA) clearly demonstrates the independent *authority* of the printed image in its own right. Furthermore, the depth of the Italian print holdings in Adelaide is such that, from more than 2,000 items available in the collection, a choice of 135 prints was made to elaborate upon the visual culture of Italy, from the Renaissance through to Rococo times.

Such breadth of representation of whole traditions in art is virtually impossible for a single institution to encompass through its holdings of unique paintings; it is only conceivable to achieve such scope through the more diffuse reproductive traditions of prints and editions of works on paper.

Clearly, prints were made and collected during the period under review for a range of educative purposes.

As 'multiples', they served to inform people of artistic styles and forms; to convey important scientific and geographic knowledge; to satisfy a rising audience for religious and mythological subjects; to commemorate grand historical events; and in time they expanded to include landscape and erotic studies along with other images of broader social appeal. However the word 'educative' needs to be tempered when confronted by the work of those artists who made the art of the drawn or incised line into something far more than a merely didactic picture.

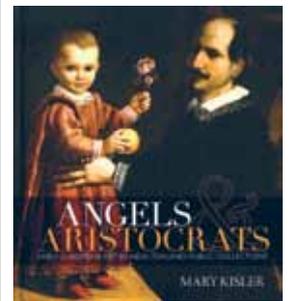
To my mind, engravings by Mantegna and Marcantonio Raimondi (who raised 'reproductive' printmaking to a high level of sophistication, as did Cornelis Cort with his interpretations of paintings by Zuccaro and others); the chiaroscuro woodcuts of Ugo da Carpi; the etchings of the Carracci brothers and those of Tempesta; the sheer inventiveness of Callot in tapering his etched line so that it looked like a quill and ink drawing; the feathery lightness of Della Bella and of Castiglione; and lastly the Venetian views of Tiepolo, and Piranesi's grand visions of imaginary prisons: all are significant works of art in their own right. This is why it makes sense to continue interpreting histories of published artists' prints – especially those made prior to our current century, when medium-specific narratives have steadily become less tenable.

The fascinating stories that pertain to this field in art collecting, and the enthralling power of the black and white print to allow for intimate engagement by viewers, are harvested through this fine publication from the AGSA, with its enlarged details of certain prints and cross-references to drawings also to be enjoyed in the state collection in Adelaide.

Who cannot be enchanted by light-hearted subjects such as Callot's *commedia dell'arte* actors, or amazed by Bonasone's *Last Judgement*, engraved on copper from his black chalk drawings after Michelangelo's monumental Vatican fresco? And for those of us who enjoy print connoisseurship, there is the set of six rare impressions of Della Bella's *Entrance of the Polish ambassador into Rome 27 November 1633* (rare because these are prints made before the publisher's details were added).

In short, Maria Zagala's text skilfully draws in those readers who are already captive to the technical and conceptual intricacy of so-called Old Master prints; meanwhile through her informative but unpretentious writing, she reaches out to engage new audiences for the rich territory of prints and their collection historically.

The second publication, *Angels & Aristocrats*, reveals on the other hand how encyclopaedic collections of early International art were well nigh impossible goals for collections in the Antipodes. This difficulty notwithstanding, the publication does show how single works may attain a greater degree of scholarly appraisal and personal appreciation when the 'riches' of collections – in this case New Zealand's public collections of early European art, and paintings in particular – are not overwhelming in their numbers or range. This means



top: Anne Kirker.

above: *Angels & Aristocrats: Early European Art in New Zealand Public Collections*, by Mary Kisler, Auckland Art Gallery / Toi O Tamaki in association with Godwit publishers, Auckland, 2010, NZ \$75 hb; ISBN 9781869621353

left: *A Beautiful Line: Italian Prints from Mantegna to Piranesi*, by Maria Zagala, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2010, NZ \$45 pb; ISBN 9781921668012

1. Justin Clemens, 'Seeing old works with new eyes: Adelaide's impressive collection of prints', exhibition catalogue review, Australian Book Review, No.326, Nov. 2010, p.18.

Book Reviews

that a greater audience for the display of individual works is assured, and more likely in well-appointed gallery spaces with good lighting - with fewer artworks in the full extent of an institution's holdings being left to languish for years in 'the stacks'.

There is also wisdom in this very fine publication's evaluation of key items, along with others of great interest, *collectively* across a suite of institutions in New Zealand – that is, including holdings from public galleries in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Whanganui - in an exposition that spans some 400 pages. Belonging to a geographically small country, such centres can be reached relatively easily by car, if not by air, across New Zealand/Aotearoa's two main islands.

The book is dedicated to English art historian, the late Peter Tomory, an inspirational director of Auckland City Art Gallery in the 1960s and co-author of the summary catalogue *European Paintings Before 1800 in Australian and New Zealand Public Collections* (The Beagle Press, 1989) – by which time Professor Tomory had moved to pursue a new academic career in Australia (having been founding professor of art history at La Trobe University in the early 1970s).

Mary Kisler carries on Professor Tomory's New Zealand-based scholarship today, firstly in writing the history of collecting 'Old Master' paintings (and to a lesser extent sculpture and works on paper) in New Zealand. Furthermore she manages through her art historical sleuthing and the assistance of colleagues in the institutions concerned, as well as from experts in Australia, Britain, the United States and Europe, to write a marvellous account illuminating the extent and quality of the treasures to be found in New Zealand collections today.

Angels & Aristocrats is therefore meticulously researched and well illustrated in colour, with informative additional notes and plates at the end. It is written in an accessible style (often quite provocative) as the significance of various subjects and their times is progressively revealed.

I admire the way Mary Kisler does not shy away from inserting less-well known artists into the general history of European art that most of us have been schooled in (following Ernst Gombrich and others); with determination and researched judgment, Kisler deftly writes the achievements of lesser known figures into the main narrative.

What this means is that for the thirty or so painters we readily recognise (for example, of the Italians: Veneziano, Bordone, Giordano, and Guido Reni; from The Netherlands: Rosa, Hobbema, Santvoort, and Cornelius Johnson; of the French landscapists, Claude Lorrain; and a host of English portraitists, from Lely and Dobson, Highmore and Ramsay, to Gainsborough, Reynolds and Romney): there are meanwhile included many artists that belong generally to a 'school', are relegated to the category of 'attributed' authorship, or carry names that barely gain more than a mention in encyclopaedias.

However this is not to deny lesser-known artists' importance as authors of uncommonly fine works in their own right, and/or as conveyers of significant subject treatments, here coordinated in chapters headed 'Religious Art: Visions of Faith'; 'Landscape Painting: Views Seen and Imagined'; 'From Narrative to Genre: A Theatre of the World'; and 'Portraiture: Gilding the Lily'.

The first chapter, for instance, highlights the markedly different interpretations of the *Madonna and Child Enthroned* via Italy's Marco d'Oggiono in the fifteenth century, and Benvenuto Tisi, known as Garofalo, in the sixteenth century. The second chapter elucidates the subtle entwining of the contrary visual traditions of The Netherlands and Italy in a synthesis of artistic styles rendered through Jacob de Wet the Younger's *Gideon and the Angel* and *Italianate Landscape*, as also in works by Lucas van Uden and David Teniers II in the seventeenth century.

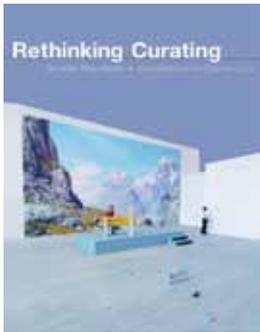
'A Theatre of the World' meanwhile includes the gloriously animated painting on wooden panel of *A Village Fair* by Pieter Brueghel the Younger, and in a different emotional register, Salvator Rosa's dark-toned *A Cavalry Battle*. Both these pictures are in Auckland, where the chapter is able to remind readers of the so-called *Fuseli collection* of thirty-seven water-colour drawings by the eighteenth-century Romantic artist that is the envy of public collections covering this period anywhere in the world.

Angels & Aristocrats is not only a triumph for the author and publisher, but also deserves distinction for the way this book provides an engrossing and wide-ranging narrative of the history of European art on public display in New Zealand. It is the type of volume that is indispensable to art museum goers in that country, and indeed in Australia. In both countries the generosity and foresight of individual benefactors has been a crucial element in establishing and maintaining the links with Europe's artistic inheritance.

I thoroughly recommend these two publications, not least as a corrective to our now rather over-determined bias of commentary and exhibitions directed towards art that is deemed 'contemporary'. For as the Conclusion of *Angels & Aristocrats* cannily makes clear, artists from the 1960s onwards *have* clearly gone back to the Old Masters –for genuine inspiration and development of diverse ideas as much as for any wish to parody them within avant-gardist ruptures of the past in pursuit of new works of the moment. **□**

Dr. Anne Kirker is a New Zealand-born writer and art curator based in Brisbane. She is also an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Queensland College of Art, Brisbane.

Book Review: *Rethinking Curating: Art after New Media*



top: Suzanne Bravery.

above: *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media*, by Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2010.

Suzanne Bravery

This collaborative and timely 354-page hardback publication has been written with some enthusiasm and care, a goodly amount of knowledge and a great deal of affection. As one in a series of books designed to provide a public forum for research and debate, and assist in understanding current trends and thinking, this conscientiously researched publication earns a place on the library shelf. Although inclined to read as a textbook on the rise of new media from 2000–2008 and the challenges posed to curators, the conversational style – with chapter sub-headings as apt discussion starters – acts as a history and guide through digital technology and art. Indeed, it is the ability to dip in and out of this publication, and use the ideas and many supporting examples as the basis for discussion and further exploration of the topic-that-won't-go-away, that makes this publication a valuable study and resource.

As an early analytical work on the subject of 'behaviours of new media art and how they present challenges to curatorial practice' (p.34), it is interesting that the publication is printed rather than in digital form. Perhaps this is to enable access for those who want to know more about this unfamiliar and increasingly engaging territory, and to ensure that the tools are available for an informed dialogue. It is a handbook of intergenerational change, recording the precursors and paths to new art, and the challenges for curators in understanding and interpreting art in a digital age – digital art that is able to be constructed and reconstructed, that exists either within the traditional 'white cube' of the gallery (or museum) or outside this space, or on a lap top in a lounge room.

The book is in three parts:

I Art After New Media-Histories, Theories and Behaviours, II Rethinking Curating-Contexts, Practices and Processes. and III Conclusion

Based on the authors' extensive curatorial work in a wide range of contexts, drawing on 'a generous accumulation of community knowledge and experiences' (p.xiii), and designed so that it has 'crystallized a certain cultural moment not with abstract theory, but with an almost exhaustive cataloguing of actual experience by a community of practitioners, *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media* is more than a compilation of history and technology, of creativity and context. It is ultimately a subversive and passionate argument: '[I]t's not a book about new media, it's about art; it's not a book about curating new media, it's about rethinking curating.' The study mobilises its argument by directly employing new media as its reference framework and contemporary example. The practice of curating is described 'critically in terms of *how it works*' ...in response to behaviours of new media [and] art in particular contexts, not just museums and not just exhibitions' (p11).

Rethinking Curating is designed to link the contemporary art world, whether institutionalised or alternative, to the curator; and to encourage her/him to rethink and challenge their own practice in terms of changing

environments, technologies, or new media, as well as giving the curator the tools and confidence with which to do this. So the text is not only about *art* after new media; it is also about *curating* after new media, and works through the challenges and benefits offered in this new landscape.

Very little is written about curating and even less said in collegial gatherings, so this publication is most welcome. As with any policy or procedures, any strategic plans or report recommendations, it is important that the content is reviewed. It is just as important that the content and the *process* – the behaviour of the curator, in a sense – is reviewed to ensure its freshness and relevance. Whilst Steve Dietz (himself a curator) claims in his Foreword that 'if we read this book...we may lead a more upstart and blissful life' (p.xv) – and this is a praiseworthy intention, since 'new media' is just that for this generation of curators, but will be historical for the next – this pitch did not really encapsulate the feeling that stayed with me. We all obviously need to embrace the digital age so that it can be understood as it is, one in a series of movements in art history, but one that we are living in right now as it evolves its distinctive character and features.

Full of definitions, of histories and art forms; a work that constantly asks and then answers its own questions, quoting from expert and contemporary sources and more importantly, practitioners: this copious survey uses case studies as accessible support material.

A product of the Curatorial Resource for Upstart Media Bliss (CRUMB) for curators of art, this is a collective enterprise whose members have shared their knowledge aptly in a digital age: on discussion lists, at symposia, in workshops or through interviews on the CRUMB website. CRUMB's research is supported by the University of Sunderland, resourced through substantial funding from the Arts and Humanities Council of the United Kingdom, and bolstered by Sarah Cook's postdoctoral post through a Fellowship from the Leverhulme Trust. The authors readily acknowledge this as a collaborative publication.

Thirty-one pages of extensive printed and electronic references follow the Conclusion. Readers are encouraged to further their knowledge and understanding of both new media and ways of curating it.

My small criticism of *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media* touches on an aspect that is an inevitable consequence of its project and methodology: as clearly stated at the outset, this publication results from a collaborative and co-operative effort – as is curating itself – and the number and styles of individual voices harvested, whilst bringing a necessary and welcome freshness to the text, also occasionally undermines its coherence. □

Suzanne Bravery is former General Manager of Programs and Services, Museums & Galleries NSW, Sydney, now at Grainger Museum, Melbourne. She is a member of the National Council of Museums Australia.

A United Voice for Arts and Culture in WA



Jane King

On 26 October 2010, I stood before a crowd of arts and cultural leaders, business people, artists, a smattering of government folk, and the Minister for Arts and Culture. It was the AGM of the WA Arts Federation and I was presenting the 2010 Financial Report, my last official act as Treasurer. As I finished and asked for my report to be accepted, I looked around the room. It was one of those moments that we know will be important in the future, but difficult to appreciate at the time.

The event marked the official launch of the WA Chamber of Arts and Culture, the state's new representative arts body providing an independent and cohesive voice for the sector. The Chamber is the first of its kind in Australia, and – I like to think – reflects WA's entrepreneurial approach to problem-solving.

The path to the launch of the Chamber was long and circuitous, and not always easy. However as lobby and advocacy groups grow and respond to their environment, so too the Chamber has evolved through the co-operation and collaboration of several groups working towards a common vision and goals.

The resources boom of several years ago had highlighted fundamental community and economic imbalances in WA, including shortages of workers, the emergence of a two-speed economy, and a recognition of the need for Perth to become a more liveable city, with improved amenities enriching the experience of both its civic heart and suburban centres.

The Chamber evolved from the WA Arts Federation and the WA Cultural Chairs group, convened through aBaF^[1] – bringing together an informal group of cultural board members, many of them influential business people. The Arts Federation was essentially a peak body for the sector, enabling arts organisations to come together to discuss common problems, and in particular to present a united face to government. I am gratified by the fact that Museums Australia WA was one of the founding members in 2006, along with Artsource, the Film and Television Institute, Country Arts WA, WA Music and several other bodies.

The Federation espoused several basic principles that have positively been continued on in the character of the new Chamber. One of these is equal representation. From the smallest community arts organisation to the largest state company, all organisations and individuals are treated equally, pay the same membership, and have the same voting power.

Another important factor in the Chamber's evolution was a key piece of research undertaken in 2008 by the Committee for Perth,^[2] supported by Lotterywest, and with input from the Federation and aBaF, amongst others. 'A Cultural Compact for WA: a 10 year Challenge – Phase 1 Perth', was the outcome.

This research was important for two reasons. First, it was arguably the first piece of solid research on the value of arts and culture in making Perth a more liveable city. Second, and equally important, the process of consultation involved several large-scale forums where hundreds of participants from arts and cultural organisations, individual artists, members of the public, business people, state and local government,

city and regional people, were all able to voice their views and concerns. The side-effects of this process were in the many new connections made, and the realisation that a strong arts and cultural sector was important for the whole community. The desire for Perth and WA to have a world-class arts and culture sector to match our growing reputation as an economic powerhouse gained traction.

At this time, the relationship between the Federation and the Cultural Chairs group was developing, and the Federation President was invited to join the Cultural Chairs. This move laid the groundwork for the many and often lengthy conversations, proposals, suggestions, and ideas that emerged: together making up a common vision for a strong, thriving and dynamic cultural sector. Once it was agreed that our future would be stronger in collaboration rather than separately, things moved quickly. Some constitutional changes; a general meeting; the agonising over a suitable name; and we were finally on our way to officially launching the Chamber of Arts and Culture WA.

My own involvement has grown over the past four years, firstly with the Federation as a representative of Museums Australia, then as a board member, and in more recent years as treasurer. At the AGM in October I was honoured to be elected to the inaugural board of the Chamber, one of seven elected positions, which – together with the five appointed positions – make up the 12-person board.

I have the great fortune to take up this position with a group of fellow arts leaders and artists for whom I have enormous admiration and respect, and from whom I have learned so much in recent years. My colleagues also include high-profile business and community leaders led by Mr Sam Walsh, the CEO of Rio Tinto; Mr John Langoullant, Oakajee Port and Rail; Ms Janet Holmes a Court; Prof Margaret Seares; and Ms Helen Cook, of KPMG.

The first few months of operation have involved a lot of groundwork, including establishing a secretariat. We now have several working groups that are collating information on a range of issues, particularly cultural infrastructure concerns, and there are plans for a comprehensive members survey. We have maintained the wide involvement of both cultural chairs and general managers by establishing two distinct committees that meet regularly and are open to all members.

Importantly, the WA Chamber of Arts and Culture has had several high-level discussions with government. The Chamber is committed to working with partner organisations, such as the Committee for Perth and aBaF, to realise our vision for arts and culture in WA.

Needless to say there is a strong expectation that the Chamber will make a difference! It is a big challenge, but one that I think all are equal to. There is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come.

For further information and membership details, see the Chamber website: www.cacwa.org.au 

Jane King is Executive Officer of Museums Australia (Western Australia).

Citation for this article: Jane King, 'A United Voice for Arts and Culture in WA: WA Chamber of Arts and Culture', *Museums Australia Magazine*, Vol. 19 (4), Museums Australia, Canberra, May 2011, pp.42.



top: Jane King

above: New Board members: Jude Van Der Merwe (Artsource), Sam Walsh (Rio Tinto), & Helen Cook (KPMG) at the AGM in October 2010. Photo: Dave Higgins

1. aBaF (Australia Business and Arts Foundation) www.abaf.org.au

2. Committee for Perth www.committeeforperth.com.au

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Join us in 'exploring the possibilities' of culture, arts, heritage, environment, recreation and tourism and the diverse ways in which they define our position and place; in engaging with the past, where we are right now and into the future.

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