

source

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 4 SUMMER 2019/2020



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

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SPECIAL FEATURE IN THIS ISSUE

Judith Hickson writes on
Seizing the Zeitgeist: Capturing the Spirit
of our Times in a State Social History Collection
Pages 12 – 20

WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE A DONATION TO MUSEUMS & GALLERIES QUEENSLAND to assist us in supporting Queensland's museums and galleries?

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calendar :

■ Touring Exhibitions | M&G QLD

■ *Dissonant Rhythms*

Ross Manning

Latrobe Regional Gallery, VIC
26 October 2019 – 5 January 2020
Bank Art Museum Moree, NSW
24 January 2020 – 14 March 2020
Lismore Regional Gallery, NSW
24 April 2020 – 14 June 2020

■ *Legacy: Reflections on Mabo*

Maitland Regional Art Gallery, NSW
9 November 2019 – 26 January 2020
Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, NSW
7 February 2020 – 22 March 2020

■ *Manggan – gather, gathers, gathering*

Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Melbourne Museum, VIC
16 August 2019 – 26 January 2020
Port Pirie Regional Art Gallery, SA
7 February 2020 – 15 March 2020
Nautilus Art Centre, Port Lincoln, SA
1 April 2020 – 6 June 2020

■ *Reasonable & Necessary: prints and artist books by Artel Artists*

Artspace Mackay, QLD
18 October 2019 – 19 January 2020
Emerald Art Gallery, QLD
4 February 2020 – 22 March 2020

■ *Safe Space*

contemporary sculpture
Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, QLD
7 December 2019 – 2 February 2020

■ *Some people are stories*

Vincent Serico
Pine Rivers Art Gallery, QLD
8 November 2019 – 18 January 2020
Matthew Flinders Gallery, Bribie Island Community Art Centre, QLD
9 March 2020 – 5 April 2020

■ *USE*

Banana Shire Regional Art Gallery, Biloela, QLD
25 November 2019 – 28 January 2020
New England Regional Art Museum, NSW
7 February 2020 – 3 May 2020

■ *YOU ARE HERE 2 (The Incredible Lightness of Being)*

Susan Lincoln
Warwick Art Gallery, QLD
9 January – 16 February 2020

■ Training and Professional Development | Sector Development Events | M&G QLD

■ Workshop

The Object of Labels – Writing Interpretive Text for Exhibitions

When: 21 February 2020
10:00 am–1:00 pm
Where: Supreme Court Library Queensland, Brisbane
Cost: \$60, \$55 Concession
Details are on page 9 of this issue of *source*.
Registrations will open 22 January 2020.

■ Workshop

Securing Funding

When: 11 March 2020
Where: Mount Isa Civic Centre
Details are on page 10 of this issue of *source*.

■ Series of Collection Management Workshops

Topics: Collection Management, Preventive Conservation and Disaster Preparedness, and Significance Assessment
When: May and June 2020
Where: Rockhampton, Gladstone and Biloela
Details are on page 10 of this issue of *source*.

■ Networking Event **Trivia 2020**

When: 28 May 2020
Where: Museum of Brisbane
More information will be available in 2020.

■ Events | Other Organisations

- **Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) National Conference**
Creating the Future: Trust. Diversity. Imagination.

Dates: 18–21 May 2020
Venue: National Convention Centre,
Canberra, ACT
<https://amaga2020.org.au/>

about us :

❄ **M&G QLD Office Closure** **December 2019 | January 2020**

M&G QLD's office will be closed from 5:00 pm on Thursday, 19 December 2019 until 9:00 am on Monday, 13 January 2020.

We wish you all the best for a happy and safe festive season and look forward to working with you again in 2020.

■ M&G QLD farewells Deannah Vieth



On 15 November, M&G QLD Staff and Board sadly said farewell to our Training and Professional Development Manager, Deannah Vieth who, after eight years, is moving on to an exciting new opportunity as Public Programs Team Leader with Ipswich City Council's Libraries.

We thank De for her remarkable commitment to both the Company and the sector, and for her passion and hard work. De's quirky sense of humour will also be greatly missed in the office.

We wish her every success in this new role.

sector development :

- **M&G QLD's Mentorship, International Fellowship & Internship Program launches at the end of January 2020**

As reported in the last edition of *source*, M&G QLD will be launching its *Mentorship, International Fellowship & Internship Program* at the end of January 2020.

The program supports paid staff and volunteers in public, not-for-profit museums and galleries located in Queensland to access expertise in cultural institutions within Australia and overseas for the purpose of professional development.

Potential applicants will be required to contact either M&G QLD's Executive Director or General Manager to discuss their Expression of Interest between 28 January 2020 and 28 February 2020 (please do not make contact regarding the program outside of these dates). Start looking for guidelines and application forms on the M&G QLD website at that time.

This program is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

■ Visits to Museums and Galleries in Queensland by M&G QLD Staff

M&G QLD staff members visited the following museums, galleries and cultural venues in Queensland during October to December:

- Presented at the Arts Ablaze Conference, Kooralbyn.
- Attended opening of the exhibitions, *Dia Li: The Familiar Strangers* and *Transient Journals* by Adriane Strampp at Jan Manton Art, Brisbane.
- Attended opening of *The Thin White Duke, The Black Captain & Other Big Wigs* exhibition at Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Bowen Hills, Brisbane.
- Viewed the *Brisbane Portrait Prize 2019* at the Brisbane Powerhouse, New Farm.

- Visit to Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art exhibitions, *Margaret Olley: A Generous Life; Quilty; Shirley Macnamara: Dyinala, Nganinya; and John Mølviq: Maverick.*
 - Visit to Gympie Regional Gallery exhibition, *Stopping Time: Material Prints from 3000 BC to Now.*
 - Visit to Redland Art Gallery exhibitions, *Legacy: Reflections on Mabo and Wetland Wander.*
 - Visit to the exhibition, *Threadbare: The art of experimentation*, at Pine Rivers Window Gallery.
 - Visit to *Moreton Bay Region Youth Art Awards* at Pine Rivers Community Hall.
 - Visit to Outback at Isa, Mount Isa.
 - Visit to Mount Isa Underground Hospital and Museum.
 - Visit to the Cloncurry Unearthed Visitor Information Centre and Museum.
 - Visit to John Flynn Place Museum and Art Gallery, Cloncurry.
 - Visit to Mount Isa Civic Centre.
 - Presented at the Indigenous Art Centre Alliance Conference at Mossman Gorge, and visited the Ylanji Arts Centre, Mossman Gorge, North Queensland.
 - Visit to Logan Art Gallery.
 - Attended launch of the Museum of Lands, Mapping and Surveying, Brisbane City.
 - Attended opening of the exhibition, *Simon Degroot: Flat Monuments*, at Jan Manton Art, Brisbane.
 - Attended opening of Anne Wallace's exhibition, *Strange Ways*, at QUT Art Museum, Brisbane.
 - Attended launch of the Queensland Military Historical Society at Fort Lytton, Brisbane.
 - Visit to *Side Effect* exhibition at Onespace Gallery, Highgate Hill, Brisbane.
 - Visit to the Ipswich Historical Society.
 - Visit to the Ipswich Soldiers Memorial Hall Museum.
 - Visit to the RAAF Amberley Aviation Heritage Centre.
 - Viewed the Queensland College of Art Honours graduate exhibition, South Brisbane.
 - Visit to Museum of Brisbane exhibitions, *New Woman* and *High Rotation*.
 - Visit to Ipswich Hospital Museum.
 - Visit to Adderton: house & heart of mercy exhibitions, *Short, careful steps* by Helen Earl; *Catherine, Ellen, Florence, Jane* by Megan Seres; *A Fierce Hope, Object she has at Heart, Wonderwall* by Rachel Burke; and *Our Working Hearts*.
 - Visit to *Pith: Elizabeth Willing* at Caloundra Regional Gallery.
 - Visit to Miegunyah Historic Homestead, Bowen Hills, Brisbane.
 - Visit to Newstead House, Brisbane.
- exhibition touring and development program :**
- **Expressions of Interest sought for two new touring exhibitions**
- M&G QLD is seeking expressions of interest for two new touring exhibitions.
- ZOONOSSES**
- ZOONOSSES is a unique touring exhibition by Nicola Hooper. Through drawing and lithography, Nicola uses fairy-tale iconology and rhymes to explore concepts surrounding zoonoses (animal diseases that can infect humans). The exhibition



Top: Nicola Hooper, *Tularaemia (rabbit fever) zoonotic wallpaper*, 2018. Hand-coloured lithograph, digitally printed.
Above: Nicola Hooper, *Giant Flea (detail)*, 2017. Hand-coloured lithograph, digitally printed on foam board, 130 x 140 cm.
Images courtesy of the artist.

ZOONOSES explores how we perceive certain animals in the context of fear and disease.

Nicola is a Logan-based artist with a background in design and illustration. Lithography and drawing became integral to her studio practice whilst she completed a MAVA and MAVA (Hons) at Queensland College of Art in Brisbane. She is currently a Doctoral Candidate and was awarded a GU Postgraduate Research Scholarship to undertake her doctoral studies.

Nicola has undertaken a number of residencies; her most recent at the Tanks Arts Centre, Cairns, under the watchful eye of master printer, Theo Tremblay. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and is held in public and private collections.

ZOONOSES includes artworks created in January 2019 during a studio stay at Black Church Print Studio in Dublin, while Nicola researched the Celtic myth 'Concerning Cats' by Lady Francesca Wilde in her book *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland 1887*. Nicola re-tells this story, making associations to the zoonosis 'Toxoplasmosis'. The works are all created using hand-coloured stone lithography including artist books, prints, wallpaper and a mobile. There are four wallpaper designs which can be used in a variety of sizes and applications at your gallery.

ZOONOSES is available from 2021–2023. If you are interested in this exhibition for your venue, contact Bonnie Melrose at M&G QLD on P: 07 3059 9747 or E: bonnie.melrose@magsq.com.au (Tuesdays and Thursdays). The Expression of Interest document and List of Artworks can be found on the M&G QLD website at <http://www.magsq.com.au/cms/page.asp?ID=10566>

Jay Younger: *Demagogues and Megalomaniacs*

M&G QLD, in partnership with Onespace Gallery, QLD is seeking expressions of interest for an exciting new touring initiative, *Demagogues and Megalomaniacs* by Jay Younger.

According to Jay, "This photographic series takes politicians as its subject matter and is created using smoke and mirrors". It is a concept borrowed from the magician's practice of distracting an audience with reflections and a burst of smoke.

The purpose motivating the *Demagogues and Megalomaniacs* series is to question the absurdity of neo-liberal and despotic political leaders in our national and global arena. This series employs satirical photomontage drawn from popular



culture with Bush, Reagan and Thatcher, Pauline Hanson, Clive Palmer, Trump and Kim Jong-Un as its abominable targets.

Jay Younger is an artist and curator and is currently Professor and Visual Arts Program Director at the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Brisbane. Jay's work has been exhibited extensively both in Australia and overseas. Her work has been included in national survey exhibitions at the major state galleries and her photographic works are represented in major public collections throughout Australia including The Australian National Gallery, Queensland Art Gallery, The Art Gallery of South Australia, and Artbank.

Jay Younger: *Demagogues and Megalomaniacs* is available from 2021–2023. If you are interested in this exhibition for your venue, contact Andrea Higgins at M&G QLD on P: 07 3059 9746 or E: andrea.higgins@magsq.com.au (Mondays to Fridays). The Expression of Interest document can be found on the M&G QLD website at <http://www.magsq.com.au/cms/page.asp?ID=10596>

Image: Jay Younger, *Trump* (detail), 2018, archival inkjet print, 110 x 110 cm, Editions 1–8/8. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace Gallery, Brisbane.

training and professional development program :

■ M&G QLD Standards Review Program

Congratulations to the participating organisations in Mount Isa and Cloncurry for completing M&G QLD's 2019 Standards Review Program.

Participants have worked hard throughout the year to submit a number of activities, and on-site visits were conducted in late October with Reviewers. These visits were an opportunity for the Reviewers to meet participants, tour the museum or gallery, view achievements by the organisation to date and to offer practical advice. There was also a planning activity undertaken during the visit.

The 2019 Standards Review Program participants were:

Cloncurry Unearthed Visitor Information Centre and Museum



Cloncurry Unearthed Visitor Information Centre and Museum is located in the Mary Kathleen Memorial Park in Cloncurry, North West Queensland. Discover stories of Cloncurry and the surrounding district through objects in the museum. Learn the story of the mining towns of Mary Kathleen and Kuridala, which were left abandoned following closure of the mines.

Discover the story of Dr David Harvey-Sutton, who was an inspirational community leader for more than 50 years. Read letters to home written by Ernest Henry, the founder of Cloncurry who discovered copper in the region.

The museum features a gem, rock and mineral display that has been acknowledged as the most comprehensive collection in Australia. See photographs and objects related to explorers Burke and Wills. Explore the outdoor displays including steam engines, farming and mining equipment and a unique rail ambulance.

What the Standards Review Program has meant for the museum:

'The Standards Review Program has definitely provided us with good knowledge and understanding on how to go about the correct procedure in collecting museum items, cataloguing and where to look and access documents and templates.'

'Knowing we are not alone and that we have continuous ongoing support is reassuring.'

Image: Jim McCann and Christine Ianna, Reviewers with Gail Wipaki (centre), Cloncurry Unearthed Visitor Information Centre and Museum. Photo: Leisha Walker, M&G QLD.

John Flynn Place Museum and Art Gallery



Located in Cloncurry, North West Queensland, John Flynn Place Museum and Art Gallery tells the founding story of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) and Reverend John Flynn's commitment to better living conditions, particularly medical care, for remote Australia.

Along with celebrating the tenacity of Flynn, learn about Alfred Traeger, genius inventor of the pedal radio; Dr Alan Vickers, the first permanent flying doctor; and Reverend Fred McKay, second Superintendent of the Australian Inland Mission and RFDS.

Explore four levels of displays on the people and passion that brought about the 'world's first air ambulance' and the technology that made it possible. From pilots to patients, doctors to reverends – see and hear the trials, tribulations and successes.

What the Standards Review Program has meant for the organisation:

'The Standards Review Program has provided us with solid building blocks to better support our museum. The experience has been invaluable in gaining the knowledge and confidence to preserve and promote our collection through correct cataloguing procedures and policies, and how to maintain and preserve our vision for the future.'

Image: Reviewers Maggi Solly and Justin Bishop, with Robyn Jacobson (centre), John Flynn Place Museum and Art Gallery. Photo: Deannah Vieth, M&G QLD.

Mount Isa Underground Hospital and Museum



Step back in time at the Mount Isa Underground Hospital and Museum to visit two heritage-listed Queensland icons! Greeted by passionate volunteers, you can be guided and amazed by

their love of local history on a tour, or you can self-navigate the site during opening hours.

Start your tour at the Beth Anderson Museum. Moved from the heritage-listed, now abandoned, mining township of Kuridala, the building served as the hospital in Mount Isa for many years. It holds an abundance of medical equipment which will make you happy to be living in the 21st Century.

Experience the coolness of the Underground Hospital which was constructed during World War II in response to potential air raids. The Underground Hospital is unique as it's the only one in Australia and it was built during a war as a civilian defence structure. It has been restored over a number of years and reopened in 2001 for visitors to marvel at.

Walk through the only surviving tent house which was built in the 1930s in Mount Isa and see what temporary housing was like for miners and their families. These tent houses were built by Mount Isa Mines as an investment in employee welfare.

What the Standards Review Program has meant for the museum:

'As a new committee we started with a lot of passion, drive and enthusiasm. We knew that we needed a clearer vision for the museum and to implement policies and procedures to ensure the sustainability of the museum for future generations.'

'The opportunity to participate in the Standards Review Program came along at exactly the right time. We knew there was more that we could do (that we needed to do!) and the program gave us all the tools and resources we needed to start making that happen.'

'It was encouraging to identify the areas where we were doing well. It was equally reassuring that we had identified areas to improve. With a clear plan we now have the confidence to make that happen.'

Image: Reviewers Maggi Solly and Jim McCann, with Erica Shaw, Mount Isa Underground Hospital and Museum. Photo: Deannah Vieth, M&G QLD.

Outback at Isa



Outback at Isa is known as the cultural heart of Mount Isa. The centre incorporates the Mount Isa Regional Gallery, Isa Experience Heritage Display, Riversleigh Fossil Centre, Rodeo Hall of Fame, Hard Times Mine Tour, Outback at Isa Café, Outback Park and Visitor Information Centre.

The Mount Isa Regional Gallery is located upstairs on the first floor of the facility and presents a variety of exhibitions from local and regional artists featuring painting, photography, pottery, Indigenous art, mixed media, and more. Entry to the gallery is free.

The Riversleigh Fossil Centre features fossils uncovered in the Riversleigh World Heritage Area, a UNESCO World Heritage Site situated 285km from Mount Isa. The Riversleigh Area is Australia's most famous fossil location, recognised for the series of well-preserved fossils deposited from early Miocene to more recent geological

periods. Explore the dioramas and walk through the rainforest display showcasing life-sized interpretations of some of these uncovered mammals.

The Isa Experience shares the history of Mount Isa through artefacts and stories. Learn about the many cultures that form the town, mining history, minerals found in the local area, and rodeo history.

What the Standards Review Program has meant for the organisation:

'The Standards Review Program was invaluable in identifying how strengths could be built upon, weaknesses and gaps discovered and rectified and where resources are best utilised. The program provided an invaluable network of contacts for support and information.'

Image: Justin Bishop and Christine Ianna, Reviewers at Outback at Isa. Photo: Leisha Walker, M&G QLD.

The organisations, their programs and their significant collections are to be acknowledged as an integral and valuable part of the history, identity and culture of their communities. Museums and galleries add social and economic value to their communities by contributing to:

- Life-long learning and personal well being;
- Social inclusion and tolerance for diversity;
- Employment, tourism, civic branding, creative economies;
- Regional regeneration;
- Building social, capital and community capacity.

M&G QLD thanks all 2019 participants and the Reviewers who dedicated their time voluntarily.

Reviewers who brought their pro bono expertise to the needs of the organisations throughout the year were:

- Justin Bishop, Art Centre Manager, Wei'Num Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders Arts and Crafts Corporation;

- Christine Ianna, Conservation and Museum Consultant;
- Jim McCann, Museum Consultant;
- Maggi Solly, Museum Consultant.

Standards Reviewer biographies and a full profile for each participating organisation can be found at <http://www.magsq.com.au/cms/page.asp?ID=5520>

■ REPORT **Networking Event with Emerging Professionals**

M&G QLD, in partnership with Museum of Brisbane, presented a networking event designed for Emerging Professionals on 29 November 2019.

This event was an opportunity to meet the Queensland representative for Australian Museums and Galleries Association's Emerging Professionals National Network, and tour the *New Woman* exhibition at Museum of Brisbane with Curator, Miranda Hine.

New Woman features artwork from significant and ground-breaking Brisbane women artists over the past 100 years and Miranda shared stories of working on the exhibition and provided insights into its development.



Curator, Miranda Hine, presenting a tour of the *New Woman* exhibition at Museum of Brisbane. Photo: Leisha Walker, M&G QLD.

UPCOMING EVENTS

■ ***The Object of Labels – Writing Interpretive Text for Exhibitions***

When: Friday 21 February 2020

Time: 10:00 am–1:00 pm

Where: Supreme Court Library Queensland, Level 12, Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law, 415 George St, Brisbane

Cost: \$60 General, \$55 Concession (resources and morning tea provided)

Concession includes Public Galleries Queensland Members, Australian Museums and Galleries Association Members, Students, Volunteers, Pensioners

Registrations are limited to 2 people from each organisation. Registrations will open 22 January 2020. Check the M&G QLD website at that time.

This workshop will provide participants with the knowledge, skills and confidence to write effective interpretive text, exploring both the theory and practice behind good labels. The presenter, Samantha Littley, will cover topics including:

- Why write labels – the purpose of interpretive text;
- Considering your audience – how visitors use labels;
- Label hierarchy – introductory text panels, themed panels, object labels – and what to include on each;
- Writing labels that work – tips to engage interest;
- Accessibility – writing for diverse audiences.

The workshop is an opportunity for attendees to participate in practice-based learning, share their own experiences and contribute to a conversation about how to write labels that visitors want to read.

Participants are asked to bring a label that they think is either an effective, or ineffective, example of interpretive text, and come prepared to discuss why.



Top: **Samantha Littley** presenting at *The Object of Labels 2019 workshop*.

Above: *The Object of Labels 2019 workshop* at Logan Art Gallery.

About Samantha Littley

Samantha works independently as a writer and curator, and is a Masters candidate at the Centre for Art History and Art Theory, Australian National University. From 2003 to 2008, she was Curator of Australian Art to 1970 at the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, where she curated the retrospective *Making it Modern: The Watercolours of Kenneth Macquenn*, and oversaw the rehang of QAG's Australian Art galleries, which opened together with GOMA in 2006.

As Curator at The University of Queensland Art Museum (UQ Art Museum), her exhibitions included *Peter Hennessey: Making it Real* (2015) and *Second Sight: Witchcraft, Ritual, Power* (2019), the outcome of a partnership between UQ Art Museum and UQ's Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH).

■ **2019 Securing Funding Workshop**

When: 11 March 2020, 9:00 am–5:00 pm

Where: Mount Isa Civic Centre, 19 Marian St, Mount Isa

This workshop aims to increase capacity to secure funding by providing opportunities to:

- Speak face-to-face with funding bodies;
- Learn about alternative sources of funding;
- Find the right source of funding for your project;
- Improve application writing skills.

Past participants have found previous workshops to be very valuable, saying the workshop has given them:

'Confidence to apply for a 'successful' grant with a strongly developed skill base.'

'Confidence to tackle tasks, especially budgeting.'

'Networks, contacts to ring, list of funding bodies, greater confidence in budgeting and an appreciation of procedures.'

'Better understanding of the application processes. The large number of opportunities available to apply for grants.'

Speakers and funding body representatives will be announced in early 2020. Keep an eye on the M&G QLD website for details.

■ **Series of Collection Management Workshops**

Topics: Collection Management, Preventive Conservation and Disaster Preparedness, and Significance Assessment

When: May and June 2020

Where: Rockhampton, Gladstone and Biloela

The Community Heritage Grants (CHG) program provides grants of up to \$15,000 to community organisations such as libraries, archives, museums, genealogical and historical societies, multicultural and Indigenous groups. The grants are provided to assist with the preservation of locally owned, but nationally significant, collections of materials

that are publicly accessible including artefacts, letters, diaries, maps, photographs, and audio-visual material.

The types of projects supported include:

- Significance assessments of collections;
- Preservation needs assessments of collections;
- Conservation activities and collection management; and
- Training workshops.

In 2019, 60 grants were awarded, totalling \$378,440. The following Queensland organisations were successful in their applications:

- Cassowary Coast Regional Council: \$12,380 for four Collection Policy, Handling and Disaster Preparedness Workshops;
- Empire Theatre Projects: \$10,000 for twelve Digitisation Workshops;
- Rockhampton Art Gallery: \$10,290 for Purchase of Archival Storage Materials;
- Sunshine Coast Council, Cultural Heritage Services: \$13,630 for Purchase of Archival Storage Equipment (compactus) for the Bankfoot House Heritage Precinct Collection;
- Tablelands Regional Council: \$11,000 for three Collection Policy and Management Training Workshops;
- Trustee for the General Douglas MacArthur Brisbane Memorial Foundation: \$4,500 for Preservation Needs Assessment of the MacArthur Museum Collection.

M&G QLD was also successful in its application for \$6,610 for a Skills Development Workshop series in Collection Management, Significance Assessment, and Preventive Conservation and Disaster Preparedness. This series of free workshops is to be delivered in Rockhampton, Gladstone and Biloela in May and June 2020.

More information on the workshop series will be available in early 2020.

The Community Heritage Grants program is funded by the Australian Government through the National Library of Australia; the Department of Communications and the Arts; the National Archives of Australia; the National Film and Sound Archive; and the National Museum of Australia.

sector news :

■ Rockhampton Regional Council announces the name of its new art gallery

In late November 2019, Rockhampton Regional Council announced that its new art gallery will be named Rockhampton Museum of Art. The name was chosen after wide public consultation.

The gallery will open in 2021 in Quay Street, next to Customs House. The existing gallery on Victoria Parade will remain open while staff prepare the collection for the move.

This project is funded by the Australian Government and Queensland Government in association with Rockhampton Regional Council.

■ Edith Cuffe awarded Centenary Medal

Congratulations to Edith Cuffe, Director of the Abbey Museum of Art and Archaeology, Caboolture, who has been awarded the Centenary Medal from the The Royal Historical Society of Queensland.



The award honours the service to the Discipline of History in its many forms, with particular reference to the Research, Preservation and Promotion of the History of Queensland.

The medal was designed and commissioned by Emeritus Professor John Pearn AO and was struck by National Medals. The medal is in the gift of John Pearn, a Councillor of the Society and of Mr Greg Faux of National Medals. It was first bestowed in the Centenary Year of the Society in 2013.

■ Australian Age of Dinosaurs and Queensland Air Museum recognised at the Queensland Tourism Awards

The Australian Age of Dinosaurs was awarded gold in the Major Tourist Attractions category at the 2019 Queensland Tourism Awards in early November. The Queensland Air Museum at Caloundra on the Sunshine Coast was awarded gold in the category of Outstanding Contribution by a Volunteer or Volunteer Group.

■ Qantas Founders Museum recognised at the Outback Queensland Tourism Awards



Qantas Founders Museum won the Cultural Tourism award at the 2019 Outback Queensland Tourism Awards ceremony held in Winton in early November.

■ Abolition of the federal Department of Communications and the Arts

The federal government has announced that the current Department of Communications and the Arts will be rolled into a new Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications from February 2020. The move has met with widespread criticism from the sector. See M&G QLD's eNews, 11 December 2019, for more information. The eNews is published weekly and will continue to provide updates – you can sign up at www.magsq.com.au

SEIZING THE ZEITGEIST: Capturing the spirit of our times in a State social history collection

Judith Hickson

Judith Hickson, Curator, Queensland Stories Culture and Histories Program at the Queensland Museum, presented a paper on *Collecting for the Future* at M&G QLD's 2019 Conference, *Opening Doors*, held in Cairns in September. This article is based upon Judith's Conference presentation.

As an 'accidental' curator who came to work in museums through serendipitous circumstance, I am always conscious of the privileged position I hold and of the responsibility that my workplace places on me to help make our world a better place.

I am also a procrastinator – a psychological tendency which I'm sure many of you might identify with, but most would view as a negative trait. Recently, however, I was surprised to learn of some rare individuals who are what is termed 'pre-crastinators'. When faced with a task or assignment, these unusual people tend to begin immediately in order to complete it as soon as possible.^{1 2} This might intuitively seem to most of us to be an ideal way to go about our work ... or is it?

Surprisingly, researchers at the Wharton School's Organizational Psychology department have found that, although pre-crastinators overwhelmingly experience a sense of satisfaction and achievement in completing a task early, the ideas or results they come up with are often more conventional and less imaginative than those of procrastinators.

In fact, recent research shows that procrastinators, who tend to let their minds wander and allow time for discovery and reflection, frequently arrive at more original ideas and creative solutions to the same task or problem. Classic examples of procrastinators are Leonardo da Vinci who, scholars estimate, took over fifteen years to complete the Mona Lisa³, and Martin Luther King, whose 'I Have a Dream' speech was adapted and rearranged from combinations of many of his earlier speeches. Anecdotally, Dr King is believed to have been re-writing the speech up until the moment he delivered it.⁴

So why is this research important, and why should we consider procrastinating?

In the world that museum professionals work in today, the ground on which we base our understanding of what a museum is constantly shifts and evolves. We are attempting to cope with a bombardment of competing ideas and values about what a museum is, or should be, and new standards of museum practice require us to reflect on the broader changes that are happening within today's society and world.

Former anthropologist, Professor of Museum Studies and organisational theorist, Dr Jay Rounds, believes that the emergence of new paradigms from a slow process of incremental understanding and change will result in a creative and surprising re-imagination of the field of museum practice that will help define and make sense of what we and those around us do next.⁵

For me, writing this paper has also been a journey of incremental discovery and understanding, so

I'd like to share with you what I've learnt along the way.

Confronting the past

First, and what might seem obvious to some but is often ignored in conversations about contemporary collecting, to understand the present we must first examine the past.

In order to identify the paradigm shifts that have occurred in museums over time and to engage with rapidly evolving ideas and new thought processes, we need to know where we have come from and how and why certain practices and ways of thinking have evolved.

In the past, social history collections, including those of Queensland Museum, were built around a collective, shared cultural experience based on structures of colonialism and Western supremacy. Objects belonging to Aboriginal and Indigenous cultures were collected as 'ethnographic' or 'anthropological' artefacts, and arranged in mass displays alongside geological and biological collections such as this display prepared for the Queensland Annexe of the London Exhibition in 1873:



In this display, little value was placed on identifying the former owners of these objects, their personal lives, or the historical and social contexts in which they were made or used. Distinguishing collections in this way helped perpetuate the idea that these cultures were no longer living or continuing their traditions.

These practices underpin challenges to the whole idea of museum neutrality – from how collections were acquired to where museums today choose to spend their time, their money and their influence.

And, of course, this all ties in to the recent important work on 'decolonisation' that is taking place in museums across the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia where staff are tackling the challenge of decoupling their institutions from ideas founded on pre-eminent, Eurocentric values and authority and to replace them with narratives that reflect diversity and 'that expand perspective beyond those of the dominant cultural group'.⁶ This year, Queensland Museum will launch its Reconciliation Action Plan, the first of museums in Australia to include an apology for past practices which have been identified as inappropriate and are considered unacceptable today.

But, for this moment, let's return to the past ...

Together with the Museum's biodiversity and anthropological collections, its social history collection grew haphazardly. The first items which could be described as social history objects were relegated to a section with the imaginative title, 'Curios, Machinery, Weapons and Furniture'. Among these were a pair of 'Hindoo' bracelets, a leather water bottle from 'Soudan', an ivory pagoda from China and a collection of Egyptian pottery – the types of objects which suggest that locally-owned or produced objects or artefacts were not considered especially significant or interesting.⁷

In the first twenty-five years of the Museum's existence, fewer than two hundred objects came into the social history collections. Over time this collection has grown, shaped and nurtured by the collecting passions of various directors and curators, to number over 45,000 objects. However, what is especially important to note – for reasons I will elaborate on a little later – is that only a small percentage of the Museum's collection is, or ever will be, displayed – with the vast number of objects being kept in stores, requiring increasingly expensive management, conservation and storage capacity.

A new age, a new paradigm

In 1975, Jan Jelinek, Czech museologist and former President of International Council of Museums, wrote:

*'A backward glance at museum development shows that museums only fully develop their potential for action when they are fully involved in the major problems of contemporary society. Museums are institutions intended to serve society and only in this can they continue to exist and function.'*⁸

Though the idea of contemporary collecting is relatively new to Queensland Museum, in the world of museums, contemporary collecting is not new – it has a long history and has been spoken about and approached in many different ways since the 1970s, when collecting underwent a paradigmatic shift with the formation of Samdok.



For those who haven't heard of it, Samdok was an innovative collaboration between a number of cultural history museums in Sweden who recognised a need to focus on, to collect and to conduct broad qualitative research on objects and stories relating to contemporary, as opposed to past, history. Samdok's intention was not to ignore the past but to use contemporary collecting as a way to describe social and cultural processes that emphasised the importance of both the historical and contemporary contexts.

To achieve this goal, Samdok's members set about collecting objects from everyday life, most famously the domestic interiors of entire houses, including, yes ... even the dirty dishes.



At the same time, researchers investigated and documented the history and meaning of these objects in the context of their owners' lives, a process that imbued the items with a relevance, richness and importance that had previously been missing from past social history collections. In the 1970s, revelatory ideas like Samdok reverberated with museum curators and collectors around the world. And, of course, in this decade of momentous world change, Sweden was rocking the world in other ways as well ...



As we know today, an object's provenance and the contextual information surrounding it has come to be recognised to be as important as the object itself. At that time, it was seen as a refreshing and innovative approach to museum work. However, this model of collecting which was discontinued in 2011, but to which all current forms of contemporary collecting owe an allegiance, has been problematic for most other museums who have aspired to follow in its footsteps. Getting contemporary collecting right is difficult and time-consuming as museums deal with underfunding, understaffing, rapidly diminishing storage capacity,

problems of profusion (the over-abundance of material in social history collections) and of constructing sustainable collecting policies which clearly delineate the boundaries of where, how and what curators need to focus their attention on in the face of complex, constant and fast-evolving social, political and environmental contexts.

Essential to this discussion is the importance of approaching our work within a framework of moral imagination and courage – to confront the deepest questions facing humankind – who are we, where do we come from, why are we here. Taking time to reflect in this way is vital to the work we do in museums – indeed, in any specialised field of work, where we find ourselves in an echo chamber of opinions and ideas that are similar to our own – most of which are museum-centric, framed around corporate agendas and structures and offer only a poor reflection of the reality of the world outside our doors.

At this point in time in our globalised, technologically challenging world, museums more than ever need to engage with the most pressing issues facing ourselves, our communities and humanity today – climate change; identity politics; press freedom; human rights and freedoms; social, economic and marriage equality; violence against women; mass migration; homelessness – remembering that many of the people who make up our audiences consist not just of intellectuals, scientists or a homogenous middle-class culture, but are often those who themselves are victims of these very circumstances.

According to today's leading museum educators and thinkers, the future of museums requires us to reconsider what our role will be in the twenty-first century, especially in relation to emerging trends which define the zeitgeist: climate change and social cohesion – or, put simply, justice.⁹

For us to go beyond our cognitive biases, to be able to represent the 'real' world, to interact with and understand people from different backgrounds with different opinions, different views ... before it's possible to fully understand what our roles might be as collectors of contemporary culture in these disquieting times, we need to confront deeper questions – 'just who are we?', 'what do

we stand for?', 'what motivates us?', 'what are the values that guide our daily lives?' Above all, to consider, 'what does it mean to be human?', and especially, 'what does it mean to be human now?'

So, keeping all this in mind, I'd like to share with you how these deeper considerations have informed and continue to shape the approach I take to my work.

Old imaginings, new communities

The social history collecting policy we are guided by at Queensland Museum clearly outlines the Museum's mandate to collect objects and stories of significance to Queensland's history, its people and environment. As a State institution, Queensland Museum's sphere of collecting embraces almost two million square kilometres and a diverse population of five million, of which, in 2016, four percent was made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, about thirty percent were born overseas, while the most common ancestries for the remaining sixty-five percent identified as of Australian, English, Irish, Scottish and German origin. Of course, these statistics don't reflect the many Chinese and South Sea Islanders, Afghan, Italian, Russian, African, Middle Eastern, South American, Asian and Indian peoples whose families have called this their home for generations.

In 1983, political scientist and historian, Benedict Anderson, developed the concept of an 'imagined community'¹⁰ to describe the way nations and states are, what he called, socially constructed communities, imagined by a group of people who all consider themselves as part of that group. This is not to say that nations and states are fantasies, but that, as Craig Calhoun, former director of the London School of Economics points out, the way they become real is because everyone imagines them that way.¹¹ While this idea received little attention in museums in the past – themselves artefacts of the nation state and constructions of national and state identity – it makes sense today to think outside these currently accepted paradigms of bounded place and space in the context of the kind of contemporary collecting we need to think about today.

Imagined Museums

Prior to colonisation, the place we know today as Queensland didn't exist at all, but was a space imagined in multiple complex and different ways by the Indigenous peoples who then lived here. In the popular imagination of its colonisers, Queensland came into existence as a bounded geographical entity, a new spatial reality, with one heterogeneous population, excluding its Indigenous occupants, in 1859.

At the same time, Queensland Museum, as I mentioned earlier, became an important institutional vehicle to convey and to reinforce the idea of Queensland in the imaginations of people who lived within its designated borders. Following the publication of 'Imagined Communities', which identified museums as playing a key role in the shaping of national, state and local identities, Anderson's distinctive arguments have proved enduring and significant to the field of contemporary collecting and to questions of identity and future directions that museums around the world are grappling with today.

Museums in Sweden today, as in the past, are playing a leading role in shaping a cosmopolitan and global re-imagining of Sweden's cultural identity, at the same time promoting the idea of global citizenship. Museums such as Gothenberg are increasingly focussing on issues like global trafficking, climate change and migration, putting forward ideas, even in their pre-history and archaeological collections, which challenge the notion that Sweden was ever a place.¹²

And at Queensland Museum today, there is increasing recognition within our organisation that our audiences are both global and local; that our collections and exhibitions need to look outward to reflect the cultural, environmental and demographic shifts that are taking place around the world; and that to stay relevant in the twenty-first century we need to attract more diverse communities and populations, most especially those communities right outside our door.

How is this happening? Well, in a very fundamental way, this has refocussed my and others' commitment to work with, not simply for, individuals and communities, to respect

and recognise that they are the holders of their own truths and cultural knowledge and this is a fundamental challenge to accepted notions of the authority of the museum or the curator as 'expert'.¹³ These are principles that can be applied equally to either individual donors or to communities and, because they are mutually beneficial, they're able to reframe relationships formerly based on power to ones of collaboration and trust.¹⁴

This way of working has been especially important in the collections we're attempting to build in collaboration with groups such as refugee and human rights groups, environmental activists, marriage equality advocates, community service and social justice organisations.

As mentioned earlier, dealing with a profusion of objects and lack of storage space are two of the biggest issues confronting not just Queensland Museum but all collecting institutions. One way we've dealt with this has been to focus on just a few of what we consider to be the most pressing issues facing us as part of a globalised world today. The list includes climate change; mass migration (refugees and asylum seekers); Indigenous and human rights; marriage equality; public health; homelessness.

As an example of the approach we're developing, we've recently begun a conversation with an organisation which offers sanctuary, regular social activities and basic facilities and services to the most vulnerable of Brisbane's residents. Two years ago, this organisation instigated a project in which they gave digital cameras to fifty homeless participants to capture life on the streets through their eyes. Our aim in establishing links to this organisation and its patrons is to display these photographs at the Museum – to collect stories and objects from some of the participants to build a collection through which homeless people themselves are curating their own powerful stories of life on the streets. And while this is an undeniably local story, involving people who live on the fringes of Brisbane's Southbank cultural precinct and inner-city areas, it is also deeply connected to global stories encompassing the waves of refugees, migrants and displaced persons who have found themselves homeless

and at risk in places where they came seeking welcome and shelter.

We've also been working with an environmental activist group to collect and document their lives and activities. Because we're not always able to be in the places where they are active, we've enlisted their help in collecting objects to tell the stories that they see as most important to them. We've also delegated collecting tasks to other staff throughout the Museum, including visitor services officers, even members of our executive. Given the current lack of curatorial staff, this is a wonderful way to actively involve other staff in building our collection and give them a greater sense of pride and belonging to the work we do. Their help, expertise and, often, fresh perspectives, enrich our work and is very much respected and appreciated.

Our aim is not just to collect objects, but to build trust and reciprocity by forming deeper bonds with the people involved in these causes and organisations. This is done by attending events like street marches, court hearings, film and information evenings, public gatherings, festivals and by volunteering for community groups and for a homeless outreach service. We also try to stay in regular contact by phone or email to keep people up-to-date with what we're doing and what's happening with their collections, and to reassure them that they and the things they've donated are important and haven't been forgotten. As you can imagine, this takes up time and can be challenging.

The other major challenges we face are distance and perspective. Because the Museum is situated in a capital city in the State's most populous region, there is a danger that our perspectives can become Brisbane-centric and for what we collect, for example, on climate change issues, to reflect a 'metropolitan elite' view of the world. A recent example of the antagonisms that can manifest from lack of understanding and empathy could be seen in the anger and resentment expressed by Central Queensland mine-workers and businesses towards anti-Adani activists.

Being a social history curator means that our work is fundamentally 'socially' engaged – it

is about working with and for other humans to collect, research and exhibit the objects and stories that represent their everyday lived human experience. Even so, understanding the issues faced by people in regional and remote areas and being able to reflect their views can be difficult in the face of my own beliefs about a fossil fuel-free future as essential for human survival. We need to remind ourselves that, at a basic human level, we all share common concerns for our families, our lives and our livelihoods and that it's important that their voices are respected and represented among the objects and stories we collect.

An increasingly important aspect of the objects we collect is their potential to tell, not just one, but a number of different stories. Identifying an object with multivocality is not a new concept but is both critical to and a clever way to address profusion. An example of this is a display cabinet which has recently been approved for acquisition. The cabinet was the brainchild of a local Rotary Club in 1976 to provide a local response to the global problem of raising awareness about polio vaccination programs. Inside the cabinet are sixty small dolls in the traditional costumes of their home countries, which were sent from participating Rotary Clubs around the world.



Source: Queensland Museum

With this striking object, we have a story with potential for interpretation as a remarkable local/Queensland initiative of global consequence and with significant potential to help combat

misconceptions, misinformation and disinformation about polio. The object will also tell a fascinating yet extremely important story at the intersection of science, medicine and society which emphasises the contributions of individuals and institutions from across the globe to advance knowledge, improve medical treatments and eradicate communicable diseases throughout the world. On a broader level, and perhaps more importantly, the success story of the eradication of polio throughout the world has the potential for extrapolation to include other communicable diseases, especially measles, which is on the rise throughout the world through lack of understanding about the potential severity of the disease and through the proliferation of anti-vaccination messages through the internet and social media.

The Future of Museums / Museums of the Future

Finally, given the current focus on climate change and reducing fossil fuel consumption and the mounting problem of waste, especially plastics, should we consider collecting 'stuff' at all?

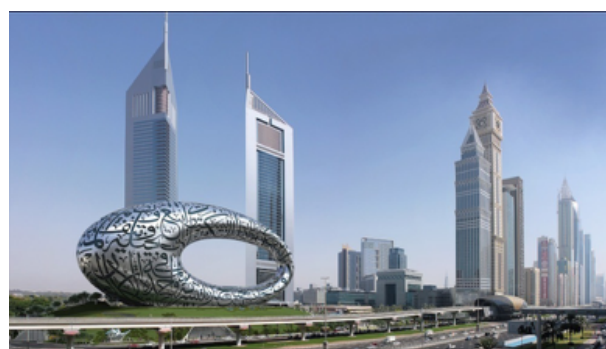
Carbon Ruins is an exhibition which looks back at the 'fossil age' and imagines a 'future where a transition to a post-fossil fuel society has already happened'.¹⁵ The exhibition was produced by Climaginaires, a multidisciplinary group of scholars from a number of European and British universities exploring socio-cultural transition to a post-fossil fuel society.¹⁶



Carbon Ruins: an exhibition of the fossil age.
Climaginaires research project, 2019.

For example, one display addresses the impact of air travel on climate change, using a frequent-flyer card to explain to visitors that a social movement of concerned citizens urged people to boycott air travel, forced new taxes on airlines, and made frequent flying obsolete; another display explains the demise of the hamburger.

And have you ever considered what a museum with no collection, no collection staff and no collections policy might look like?



Situated in one of the most extreme climates, the Museum of the Future is currently under construction in Dubai. According to the Museum's Executive Director, Lath Carlson, the government has urged the Museum to take a strong position on climate change mitigation and so climate change is the major focus of a more immersive and technology-driven storytelling experience that the Museum will provide when it opens. Carlson sees storytelling, not traditional artefacts or text, as fundamental to delivering an emotional, immersive, intellectually impactful experience for Museum visitors.¹⁷

Virtual worlds, virtual museums ...

And as a final point – in today's world, growing public demand for museums to provide augmented and virtual reality is undeniable, setting up an unparalleled challenge to the relevance of objects. One of the most recent virtual reality experiences attracting international attention is *Carne y Arena*, literally, *Flesh and Sand*, a 2017 immersive, virtual reality experience produced by Mexican director, Alejandro González Iñárritu, which situates the viewer virtually among a group of immigrants fleeing towards the Mexican border

where they are stopped by a United States border patrol.¹⁸

Carne y Arena premiered at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival as part of the official selection and was the first virtual reality project ever to be featured at the festival. The difficult subject matter of this experience carries a strong political message and is a way to convey the physical and emotional understanding, including intense fear and vulnerability, of the immigrant experience. Bringing experiences like this into museums offers ways to create new narratives of engagement and strengthen our cultural storytelling collective.

Studies into these experiences have shown that people's perceptions and actions within virtual worlds can directly affect their perceptions and actions in the physical world. If these virtual voyages can lead to attitudinal and behavioural changes in the physical world, they might also allow for a different and more compassionate human understanding of other worlds and other lives.

To conclude, I'd like to leave you with these key messages:

- Allow time to think and reflect.
- Examine the past.
- Reflect on the deeper questions – 'know thyself'.
- Remember your responsibilities to yourself and the wider world.
- Contemplate the future.
- Focus on now – BE BRAVE.

In writing this paper I was inspired by the research and ideas I have drawn from the following scholars:

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Sara Wyatt, *Rainbow II*, 2011.

Reduction relief print, edition 6/6, 505 x 405 mm.

Courtesy of the artist and Artel.

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