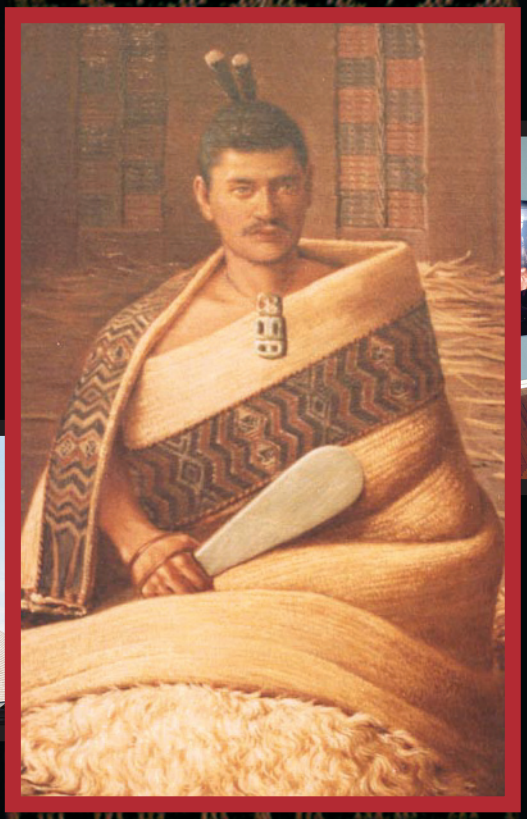
te ara — journal of museums aotearoa November 2002

te ara



journal of museums aotearoa

volume 27 issue 2 november 2002

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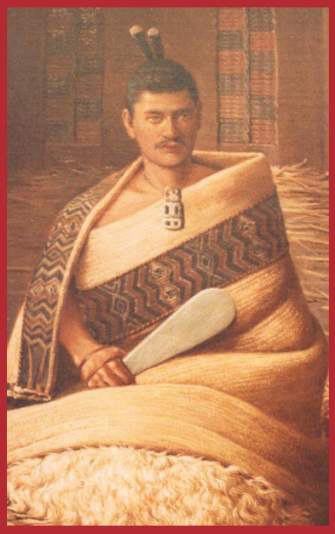

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te ara – journal of museums aotearoa

Formerly New Zealand Museums Journal

te ara: journal of museums aotearoa
is published twice yearly by Museums Aotearoa
Te Tari o Nga Whare Taonga o te Motu
The Museums of New Zealand Incorporated

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ISSN: 1175-835X

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Editorial

This second issue of te ara – journal of museums aotearoa continues our mission to document the development and thinking within New Zealand museums and art galleries and to respond to interests and concerns of our readers. Feedback from our inaugural issue has prompted us to present some different themes and types of writing. The articles this time provide a more representative geographical spread; the art collections, too, get more attention. By including a natural sciences topic with a historical slant on ornithological collecting, we kill two birds with one stone – answering requests for collection-focused items and museum history. The innovative practices and policies evolving around the country can provide ideas and insights applicable to other institutions, while we can all share in the successes of award-winners such as the Rotorua Museum of Art and History.

We know that there are articulate, and, dare we say, opinionated people out there in museumland. Three of them, all both participants and observers, have taken the opportunity to air their views. Will anyone challenge or support them?

Time for a health check?

The sector continues to experience a period of unprecedented growth and expansion. The park for this activity may have been the long gestation of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, triggering, among other larger scale developments, Auckland Museum's first five year construction phase (1994-99) and new wings at Otago Museum. Since the mid 1990s there have been numerous projects, small and large, mainly funded with capital from Lottery, Environment and Heritage and Community Trusts, while the Regional Museums Capital Fund has helped a select few.

Several high profile projects will open soon. Christchurch's new art gallery, Puke Ariki in New Plymouth, the Eastern Southland Gallery in Gore, to name but three. Central government is again making significant capital grants to the Auckland Museum's Stage Two plans (2003) and to the Canterbury Museum's redevelopment. It is tempting to see the museum sector's contribution to national GDP being made entirely through the construction industry, rather than the oft-touted tourism market.

How appropriate is it to focus on tourism income when pointing to museums' contribution to the wider economy? There is no doubt that the ability to attract and keep tourists in a community is one area where museums can score positively. But just how much can be directly attributed to a museum? Other than Te Papa and Dunedin City Council, what authorities have undertaken studies which can demonstrate clearly the economic impact of museums and art galleries. Can our readers offer examples or comments, constructive criticism or awful warnings?

What makes a sustainable museum? What makes a museum sustainable? And, more tellingly, who makes a sustainable museum? This brings us back to those many new museum buildings and refurbishments. Can they all be sustained? Many will need new or increased operating funding. Where will it come from? Can museums continue to count on their local authorities for core operating revenue?

Most museums are now generating some income from their own museum-led initiatives, in many cases depending on tourist dollars. What is happening in museums in localities where tourists rarely venture? Similarly, isn't over-dependence on international visitors somewhat risky these days? Tourism has always been at the mercy of external factors beyond its control – "the Asian crisis", 11th September 2001, the Bali tragedy, all spring to mind. If museums are here for the long haul – and most museum missions will make some reference to preservation and conservation – what are the factors and strategies for healthy longevity?

Isn't it time to take the pulse of the whole sector?

Some items submitted for this issue have been held over until Issue 28 (1). They are not time dependent, and will be equally relevant in 2003. To have more articles than space is encouraging for an editor. It signals the range of interesting work and debate within our sector, and a desire to share and air.

Contents

The Tales Behind the Birds

Natural history specimens have stories to tell through the circumstances in which they were collected and the lives of the people who collected them. Brian Gill relates the stories behind a selection of birds from the Auckland Museum collection.

Auckland Museum began collecting birds from its inception in 1852 and a century-and-a-half later its bird collection of 12,000 specimens tells a story through the lives of the collectors and the lengths they went to obtain birds. It is often a story of remote places and of the passion of the men who got there, collected birds, prepared those birds and packed them for carriage home. The museum's foreign birds – 2,500 from around the world – frequently tell an exotic story of danger, hardship and disease.

Victorian and Edwardian collectors

The museum's oldest New Zealand bird specimens are fragments of moa eggshell collected by Walter Mantell as a young man in 1847 and 1852. Mantell emigrated to New Zealand in 1839, at the age of 19, and eventually became a member of Parliament. He was the son of Gideon Mantell, a physician, who reported the fossil teeth from Sussex, England, that later became famous as among the first dinosaur remains to be so recognised.

Auckland Museum's oldest surviving New Zealand stuffed birds were bought around 1856 from the collector and taxidermist Mr I. St John of Nelson. St John must have been one of the few taxidermists in the young colony, and his birds were desperately needed by the new museum, which at that stage occupied two rooms in a farm cottage on a site that is now part of the Auckland University city campus. From initial consignments of more than 40 birds, five or six have survived to the present. Even this was lucky, for in 1859 a task of the current honorary curator was "the removal and condemnation of several specimens of birds, which had decayed beyond all remedy".

Nineteenth-century missionaries in faraway places often found diversion in natural history. The Wesleyan missionary, the Rev. George Brown, worked in Samoa and then in 1875 led a new mission in the Bismarck Archipelago, east of New Guinea. He sent many specimens of Melanesian birds to the British Museum, but Auckland Museum also benefited: 100 bird skins were purchased by special subscription in 1876.

In 1879 the museum purchased 110 bird skins from Andrew Goldie, a 39-year-old Scotsman living in New Guinea. Goldie was a naturalist, explorer and merchant based in New Guinea from 1876 until his death in 1891. He discovered gold near Port Moresby in 1878, which led to a small gold rush, and he owned Port Moresby's first general store. Many of his birds may have been collected by an assistant called Carl Hunstein, an albino German, who in 1888 was drowned by a tidal wave while collecting on the west coast of New Britain.

Another New Guinea explorer-naturalist of the 1870s was the Italian Dr Odouardo Beccari. He and a compatriate were the first Europeans to explore the interior of western New Guinea, and Auckland Museum has two Beccari birds from this region: a kingfisher and a pitta collected in 1875.

The Scotsman Henry Forbes, Director of Canterbury Museum from 1890 to 1893, lost an eye while a student at university. In 1885 he published A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago, a detailed account of his travels in the Dutch East Indies – now Indonesia – part of the time accompanied by his new wife Anna. Forbes complained of the hostility and "absurd and petty jealousy" of J.G.F. Riedel, Dutch Resident at Amboina, in obstructing Forbes' travels to certain islands. Riedel was himself a bird collector, and Auckland Museum has nine study-skins from the Celebes (Sulawesi) obtained by Riedel in 1875.

Some bird collectors were aristocrats. Auckland Museum has seven birds from Malacca (in Malaysia) that seem to have belonged to the Duke of Genoa in Italy. Other collectors were wealthy industrialists, like Henry Seebohm, the Sheffield steel magnate, who built a collection of 20,000 birds between about 1870 and 1895. One of his birds, a crow collected in Siberia in 1877, found its way to the Auckland collection.

The Austrian hunter and taxidermist, Andreas Reischek (1845–1902), lived in New Zealand from 1877 to 1889, travelling around the country collecting bird specimens and ethnographic artefacts. Auckland Museum desperately needed a taxidermist to prepare birds for display, and after much fund-raising, was able to employ Reischek for two years. A South Island saddleback is still on public display (in the "Origins" gallery), performing its educational role some 120 years after Reischek collected and prepared it.

A notable German ornithologist of the 19th Century was the appropriately-named Dr Otto Finsch, who was employed at various times by museums in Leiden and Bremen. In 1881 he visited New Zealand, and presented Auckland Museum with 24 hummingbird skins. The museum mounted these on twigs, with a similar number obtained by exchange from Canterbury Museum, to form a spectacular massed display. The South Island Pied Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus finschi) is named after Finsch, and the Brown Creeper or Pipipi was at one time placed in the genus Finschia, also named in his honour.

Between about 1875 and 1905, Auckland Museum's curator, Thomas Cheeseman, corresponded prolifically with museums and collectors around the world to arrange major exchanges of specimens. Of special interest were exchanges with the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., in the period 1886–1892, that yielded hundreds of bird skins for Auckland Museum. These were mostly fully labelled and tell a spectacular story in themselves. Many were collected in the "Wild West" during a time of Federal Government exploration, often by army personnel at frontier outposts. Many labels carry the names of lengthy expeditions, such as the "U.S. Northern Boundary Survey 1874" and "Explorations and Surveys West of the 100th Meridian". Ornithological collecting in the pristine wilderness was an antidote to loneliness and boredom.

Of the Smithsonian collectors represented among the Auckland Museum birds are several well-known ornithologists of the day, like Robert Ridgway (a curator of birds at the Smithsonian) and Elliott Coues (a U.S. Army surgeon). Coues' contemporary, Henry Henshaw, collected more than 13,000 specimens in North America. Coues and Henshaw once raced each other, and found that each could prepare a sparrow

AN EARLY NEW ZEALAND DIORAMA: A 'HABITAT GROUP' OF SPOTTED SHAGS INSTALLED AT AUCKLAND MUSEUM 1914–15. MANY OF THE BIRDS WERE COLLECTED ON RAKINO ISLAND, HAURAKI GULF, BY THE MUSEUM PREPARATOR L.T. GRIFFIN.
PHOTOGRAPH: AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

skin in under two minutes. With frivolity there also came danger. Robert Shufeldt (a scholar who published an article in 1918 on the osteology of our kea) drowned in the Ohio River near his home, and Charles McKay drowned in Alaska. In the Dakotas in 1864, Sergeant John Feilner galloped ahead of his column in his eagerness to collect, and while dismounted at a stream was surprised by Sioux warriors and killed.

Edward Nelson is said to have alleviated somewhat the climatic hardships he endured in western Alaska by paying Eskimo women to sleep in his wet clothes so the garments would be dry by morning! Major Charles Bendire (1836–97) joined the U.S. Army at 18, fought in the Civil War, became a renowned Indian-fighter and won promotion for gallantry. He spent around 20 years in the western territories collecting birds and their eggs. Some of his study-skins at Auckland Museum came from places like "Fort Custer" and "Fort Klamath". Theodore (Teddy)

Roosevelt (1858–1919), who inspired the teddy bear, was a hunter, collector and conservationist. As Governor of New York he closed down factories that used bird feathers in the fashion trade. During his presidential term (1901–9) he achieved more for wildlife protection than any previous president, creating numerous national parks and reserves. He gave his bird collection to the Smithsonian, which is how nine of them came to Auckland Museum.

In 1878, Thomas Bell, with his wife Frederica and young children, had themselves put ashore on the uninhabited and unclaimed Sunday (Raoul) Island in the Kermadec group, about 1,000 km north-east of Auckland. In their attempt to settle the island they faced loneliness, drought, storms, robbery, food shortages, and plagues of rats. They clung on until 1914, by which time their children had increased to 10. Bell visited Auckland occasionally, and from 1888 to 1890 he sent bird skins and eggs to Cheeseman. Roy Bell, one of the children born on the island, sold 103 bird skins from the Kermadec Islands to the museum in 1911. Roy later lived on Norfolk Island from where he provided further specimens.

W. Hawkins several times visited the Chatham Islands in the early 1890s to collect birds, at least 18 of which survive at Auckland Museum. His letters to Cheeseman tell of his difficulties in getting to some of the smaller islands because of bad weather and the boatmen who "want a fearful sum before they will let their boats start & if the weather should prevent us from landing they forfeit the money at once & want the same money again before they would start again." A month later he wrote: "The Maories have stopped me from going to the rocks where the crowned shags live. They have got a title from the Land Court for them & refuse to let me go there ..." Finally, back in Christchurch, he pleaded: "Would you kindly forward whatever the birds are worth as I'm rather short of cash & am in the Doctor's hands."

Twentieth Century collectors

J.C. McLean (1871–1918) managed the family's large sheep station in inland Poverty Bay. Between farm work he found time for nature photography and natural history observations. McLean joined Herbert Guthrie-Smith, a fellow run-holder, on ornithological expeditions. The latter described his friend's imperturbable temper. On a trip to Stewart Island, waist deep in water chilled with melted hail, and with a rising river to swim, McLean was still able to confirm a pair of Kokakos in the flooded scrub. Guthrie-Smith noted: "I acknowledge he beat me there. If I had seen a Moa I should have let it pass ...". McLean drowned attempting to cross a flooded river near his home. His important collection of birds' eggs was presented to Auckland Museum in the 1930s.

Another important New Zealand egg-collector was Geoffrey Buddle (1887–1951), who built a large collection between the 1900s and the 1940s. Because the eggs were carefully numbered and documented they now form an important part of the Auckland Museum reference collection. Like McLean, Buddle was a pioneering New Zealand nature photographer as well as a collector. He trained as an engineer, and during the First World War was sent to Gallipoli with the Royal Engineers. He survived that, and was sent to France. For his part in hastily building a bridge while under fire he was awarded the DSO. Then he was badly gassed, and regained his health only after much convalescence.

For two summers, beginning 1929–30, Robert Falla (1901–1979) served as assistant zoologist on Sir Douglas Mawson's British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research (B.A.N.Z.A.R.) Expedition, with responsibility for bird studies. He had been honorary ornithologist at Auckland Museum, and this was made a permanent position after Falla's Antarctic work. Falla brought to the museum the large collection of B.A.N.Z.A.R. birds (skins, spirit specimens and eggs), which were obtained under difficult conditions, and which, because of their precise documentation, are very important scientifically.

On Kerguelen Island, Falla took a chick from a sheathbill's nest and placed it in a cardboard box. The parent sheathbills – birds related to gulls – followed him on foot, and while Falla was investigating a petrel burrow they dragged the box away and released the chick. Science prevailed over sentiment, however. The chick was needed for the collection so Falla retrieved it. Falla went on to become director of the museum in Wellington, and through his lectures, radio talks and popular writing, perhaps New Zealand's best-known ornithologist.

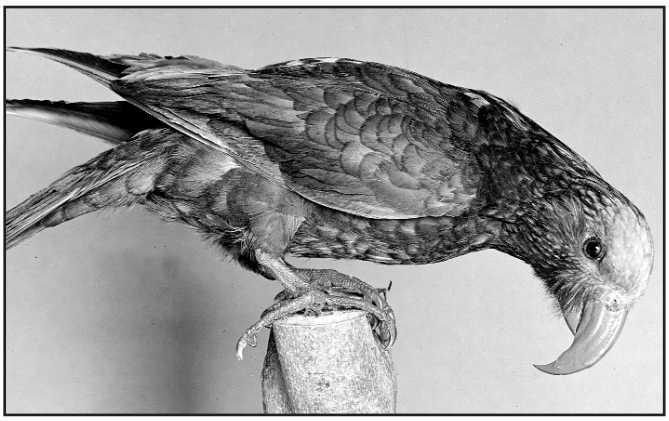
Sir Gilbert Archey (1890–1974), onetime director of Auckland Museum, built up a large collection of moa

bones during the 1930s with assistance from Sir Frank Mappin, A.T. Pycroft and Sir Carrick Robertson. This group of friends amassed the bones by travelling by boat and car to what were then fairly remote areas: limestone caves in the Waikaremoana and King Country areas, and sand-dunes at Doubtless Bay, Northland. Archey used to work on these bones until late at night in a small museum room over a disused lift-shaft. This research culminated in the publication of a monograph on moas in 1941.

A.R. Hughes, honorary New Zealand government agent in Colombo, Ceylon, made a representative collection of Sri Lankan birds between 1930 and 1932, and presented it to Auckland Museum. Another enthusiastic amateur naturalist was A.T. Pycroft (1875–1971), who wrote a nature column for the Auckland "Star" from 1927 to 1936. In 1932, while staying on the island of Malaita in the Solomon Islands he made a collection of birds that now forms part of Auckland Museum's important Pacific Islands collection. As a young man, Pycroft had the distinction of having eaten a huia. Skilled in taxidermy, he had been sent a huia for mounting. After skinning it he handed its body to his landlady and asked her to cook it.

Several times while sorting Pacific birds my eye was drawn to skins from the Solomon Islands that were exquisitely prepared. All were collected by J.E. Green, and when I asked Graham Turbott, former director of Auckland Museum, I learned that Capt. Josiah Green had been on active service with the U.S. Army on Guadalcanal during World War Two. He had been a preparator at a Californian museum, and so, amid the horrors of the jungle war, he had collected and prepared birds as a path to sanity. He met Graham during rest and recreation in Auckland, and so presented his birds to Auckland Museum.

Only the proper documentation of the birds allows the stories to be told. Auckland Museum continues to record the collectors' names, when known, against the birds we receive, mostly in ones and twos after crashing into windows or being found dead by the roadside. Even today we have some frequent collectors – conservation officers, park rangers, students, researchers – who understand the importance of the bird collection and take the trouble to save specimens for us. So the collecting goes on, and one day these birds too may tell a story to future generations through the names of their collectors.



A MOUNTED KAKA COLLECTED BY ONE OF THOMAS CHEESEMAN'S FAMILY IN THE WAITAKERE AREA, 1878. PHOTOGRAPHED BY WILLIAM BEATTIE SENIOR C. 1900. TAXIDERMIST UNKNOWN. PHOTO: AUCKLAND MUSEUM B13559.

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BRIAN GILL is Curator of Birds at Auckland Museum. He has written several books including New Zealand's Extinct Birds (Random Century, 1991) and New Zealand's Unique Birds (Reed, 1999).

The Art of Matchmaking

Last year Alexa Johnston had a gift of a job. She puts Jane Legget in the picture about an art distribution assignment.

In 2001, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) decided to recall some of their fine art works from high commissions, embassies and consulates, they called in Alexa Johnston to guide their next steps. With 59 paintings to distribute to public collections throughout New Zealand, she had a head start. Her productive years as a curator at the Auckland Art Gallery meant that she was familiar with most of the art galleries and museums, but she had also worked on exhibitions involving art by all the artists represented, and had even known many of these artists personally. Now a freelance curator and writer, Alexa had the right blend of knowledge and experience, together with the necessary independence and credibility.

Why was MFAT disposing of these works at this time? It will come as no surprise to learn that money had something to do with it, although the government was not disposing of them to realise their value as economic assets. None of the government's overseas mission buildings can really provide museum standard care for works and the valuation exercises, which are regularly undertaken for audit and insurance purposes, showed 59 artworks were considerably appreciating in value. Moreover, MFAT's budget is required to cover a capital charge, which, in the case of these art works, was increasing each year. It was time to rethink the future of the holdings in the interests of good stewardship.

The 22 artists represented included Frances Hodgkins, Colin McCahon, C.F. Goldie, Toss Wollaston, Evelyn Page and Milan Mrkuisch – a venerable roll call. Recognising that it held a nationally important collection of New Zealand art, but one which few citizens ever had the opportunity to see, MFAT sought advice widely. It was the Prime Minister who saw the opportunity for the public galleries and museums of New Zealand to develop their collections by being gifted the returning works. The chief executive of the national museum, Dame Cheryll Sotheran, suggested the appointment of an independent commissioner to ensure that this was done professionally.

The Commisioner's mission

Given the title of Commissioner, Alexa Johnston had to devise an equitable process for dispersing the paintings to destinations where they would be appreciated, cared for and shown, and where they would fit with the collecting directions of the host institutions. MFAT and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage endorsed her approach, which was structured and thorough.

Drawn from the Museums Aotearoa list, 64 museums and galleries known to have art collections were invited to put their names forward for consideration. They would be obliged to demonstrate that they had an active collection exhibition programme; adequate storage and stewardship; and c. $1000–$2000 as a contribution towards transport costs. If awarded any works, they would be required to acknowledge MFAT as their former holder, and make a commitment that, if at some future date the institution wanted to deaccession them, they would be returned to MFAT.

Having all been sent a list of the artists, but not the titles of the individual works, 28 museums replied, of which two expressed narrowly defined interests, which were not represented by MFAT holdings. Having considered all the collecting policies, Alexa went on the road. She had made it her mission to achieve a fair geographical spread around the country. She spent two months visiting all the interested museums and galleries, meeting with staff, viewing the collections, inspecting the facilities. Curators were frank about the strengths and weaknesses of their collections and operating environments, but Alexa returned impressed by the vitality and the professionalism within the sector. The only disheartening aspect was the extremely limited, and in some cases non-existent, purchasing budget of some local authority funded institutions.

It was clear that several authorities still do not appreciate that a museum cannot depend solely upon gifts for collection development; a gallery's dynamism comes from visionary collecting.

After lively discussions poring over photographs of the works, the curators and directors came up with a list of three preferences, supporting their institution's case with accounts of any links between their collections and locality and the artists and subjects of the available paintings. In the end each receiving institution was generally awarded its first or second choice, and on average each received two works of art.

New homes in New Zealand

The overall goal was to ensure that these significant artworks would have a good chance of being seen once they reached their new homes. Using the collecting plans and policies, Alexa was able to identify works which would complement current holdings, fill gaps or otherwise fit the explicit collection directions of the museums and galleries.

It was also possible to achieve a personal objective – to orchestrate a few real home-comings. The Forrester Gallery in Oamaru had long yearned for one of Colin McCahon's North Otago paintings. Now they will have one which coincides perfectly with the regional focus of the collecting policy, a real gem which will take pride of place in the collection. Te Manawa is gaining a work by Pat Hanly, Palmerston North's local boy. East Southland Gallery in Gore, which is becoming a focal point for works by Ralph Hotere, is acquiring four more. However the most satisfying "family reunion" was the allocation of two works from the embassy in Washington. These are both portraits by C.F. Goldie of Hariata Rewiri Tarapata of Nga Puhi. One will join the Lindauer portraits of her husband Paora Tuhaere, paramount chief of Ngati Whatua, in Auckland Art Gallery. The other is returning to her own whenua to the Whangarei Art Museum in the Far North.

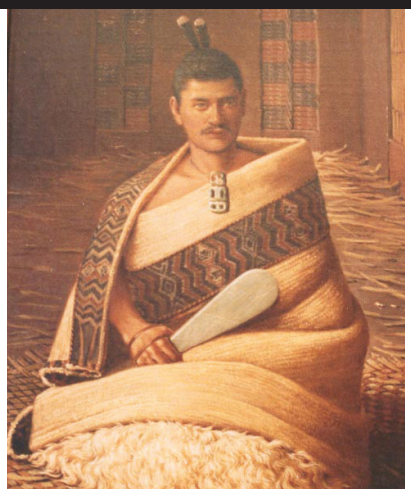
There was special pleasure in the allocations to the far south and the far east. Southland Museum and Art Gallery has established regular programmes connecting artists with southern shores, typically those more distant, such as Stewart Island and the Subantarctic Islands. Southwards seemed the right direction for Richard Killeen's Welcome to the Southern Seas. As she notes in her Commissioner's report, "Although Killeen was doubtless concerned more with the warm Pacific as a place of discovery, the work will look well in the deep south". Meanwhile on the East Coast, Tairawhiti Museum is a popular haunt for Gisborne's polytechnic students. Its contemporary Maori art collections are its strong suit, so the museum is delighted to receive its first Ralph Hotere, Requiem L1, a somewhat sombre work from 1973. Its other new acquisition is in a lighter mood – Philip Clairmont's Table with Objects, an oil on canvas from 1976.

While most of the works have now been allocated, not all have reached their new homes. To avoid leaving gaps on embassy walls, the artworks are returning to New Zealand on a schedule that fits with MFAT. Half have already reached their new homes; the others will come within the next two years.

O.E. for artworks?

What is going to replace them? MFAT is refreshing its holdings with works by new and emerging artists. This demonstration of the government's commitment to developing the creative sector has many benefits. By providing a showcase for today's artists overseas, MFAT gives them international exposure and a prestigious addition to their curriculum vitae. New Zealand enhances its image abroad for cutting edge creative excellence and attracts active interest in our contemporary art scene. Fully aware of the high quality of purchase decisions of MFAT's earlier advisors, MFAT is confident that the new selections will be equally well-judged. Input into acquisition decisions comes from three sources. Mary-Jane Duffy is MFAT's Works of Art Advisory Officer, a permanent position responsible for the Ministry's holdings in Wellington and overseas. Ian Kennedy is also involved in his role as Director of the Information and Public Affairs Division. The third party is the City Gallery in Wellington, whose staff provide advice under a contractual arrangement. As a non-collecting institution there is no conflict of interest. MFAT's purchasing budget is small and there is continuing dialogue about current and future holdings.

In any year, MFAT gives priority to new properties and premises undergoing refurbishment. The trend for open plan offices is good news for sculptors –



MAORI CHIEF

MAORI WOMAN

there is less wallspace available. In selecting the artworks, MFAT is always mindful of the requirements for good stewardship. Physical conditions can be very different from New Zealand, with humidity especially hard to manage. The cultural environment can also determine where an artwork spends its OE. How long the OE lasts will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Unfinished business

There are still two artworks outstanding – in both senses of the word. Homes have yet to be found for a pair of unnamed portraits from Washington. These are works by L.J. Steele painted in oil on linen and dated 1910. Despite circulating photographs of the handsome young Maori couple to a number of archives and collections beyond those already involved, no one has been able to identify the sitters. MFAT is still hoping that their identities will be discovered, so that they can be allocated to a suitable collection. The same criteria as before will apply and the Commissioner will recommend a public collection to receive these portraits once enough information has been found.

A happy outcome

The opportunity to act as both matchmaker and Lady Bountiful in New Zealand's museum scene is extremely rare. Alexa Johnston has received nothing but positive feedback from the institutions lucky enough to benefit from these gifts from MFAT. The artists can now update their listings of the public collections which house their artworks, while retaining the kudos of formerly being represented in the MFAT holdings. Some of today's artists will gain both economically and in terms of international profile from the new purchases which will be exhibited in the government's overseas outposts.

Perhaps most heartening of all for readers of this journal, the Commissioner found in New Zealand's galleries and museums levels of energy, commitment and collegiality which bode well for our cultural collections.

After completing a Masters degree in Art History from the University of Auckland, Alexa Johnston spent nineteen years as a curator at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki and was Principal Curator from 1990 until 1997. She organised many major exhibitions and publications for Auckland Art Gallery, and is now a freelance writer and curator.

This article draws mainly on an interview with Alexa Johnston and the project report which is available on the website of the Minstry of Foreign Affairs and Trade: www.fmat.govt.nz. Supplementary information came from Ministry staff.

Any reader who can identify the unallocated portraits should contact Mary Jane Duffy at the Ministry on Mary-Jane.Duffy@mfat.govt.nz

Into the Void...

Susan Brooker and Daniel Smith venture into uncharted territory – New Zealanders' experience of internships

Prompted by the Canadian internships described in the last issue, we offer New Zealand perspectives on three differently organised internship experiences, two in art galleries (Susan's) and one in a museum (Daniel's). We aim to provide food for thought and encouragement to New Zealand institutions to explore the possibility of offering internship positions in the future.

Daniel: Museum realities include shifting boxes, entering data and cleaning dust and grime. It's an odd reversal: while studying at university, you itch to roll up your sleeves and tackle actual collections, yet, once at work, you crave a juicy intellectual challenge. On reflection, it isn't all mindless labour. In fact you realise how much you internalise during the Museum Studies Diploma, and how this arms you for dealing with daily museum issues; suddenly you are in fact the reflective museum professional they claimed you would be.

Susan: Museum professionals may view internships with some trepidation: who has time to supervise an inexperienced staff member for an extended period; who will account for resources required for an extra project; how will an extra body be physically housed? We all operate under high-pressure workloads with limited resources; some may view the 'burden' of an intern as outweighing the practical benefits. As someone who has undertaken two personally and professionally beneficial internships I am advocating the positive aspects of internships to institutions and students alike, with luck allaying fears that may lurk in the minds of colleagues.

I encountered the concept of internships in American museological literature. Formally structured internships are a mandatory part of many US Museum Studies courses. In 1997, following an application for a three-month student internship at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, Italy, and with the help of Creative New Zealand, I set off for my overseas internship.

La Collezione Peggy Guggenheim, part of the growing Guggenheim 'empire', has one of the highest museum visitation rates in Venice. Student interns are the main interface with the public, selling tickets, taking bags, guarding the collection, giving talks, working in the museum shop, and occasionally for the Registrar and Public Relations Officer. There is an after hours schedule of research, short presentations, seminars and excursions. Over seventeen years the internship programme has taken on graduates, predominately from the USA and Europe. During my placement I worked alongside students from Mexico, Croatia, Poland, Germany, Belgium, Finland, England, Scotland and the USA.

The internship structure ensures that the museum and the students both benefit from the programme. The museum acquires young and enthusiastic new staff members each month who are keen to learn and prove themselves to the Guggenheim. The interns receive a small stipend and the museum is freed from the usual employee overheads, such as pension schemes and the like. In turn the students, typically recent graduates with little practical experience, learn about the daily operational aspects of an art museum in a truly international atmosphere. The mundane nature of many tasks undertaken is far outweighed by the opportunity to work in a prestigious institution with significant art collections; meet students from all around the world with similar interests and future career paths; and gain from the organised seminars, lectures and visits to surrounding institutions, all funded by the Guggenheim. I came away from the experience as a strong advocate for the mutual benefits such a scheme offers.

Daniel: Emerging blinking into the light after honours history papers followed by a year of Museum Studies, I landed a paid internship at Canterbury Museum. Having applied unsuccessfully for a technician's position, I was offered an internship instead. This six-month (extended to eight) full-time, project-orientated contract focused

on collection management (like many of the Canadian internships). I inventoried the Antarctic Collection, uniting object information with object location on the museum database. A hectic one-year diploma course allows no time to experience this sort of museum activity; although fairly basic, this work nevertheless presents its own challenges. Compiling a good list is a dying art – and I became a quick convert to more technological solutions.

I experienced at first hand the difficulties of human history classification systems (in this case Chenhall's Nomenclature). Intellectually I knew what to expect, but in practice applying the system to large collections such as Canterbury's ethnology and archaeology holdings was quite different from my hypothetical imaginings. Relating an American classification to objects of New Zealand or Pacific origin involved maintaining consistency and accuracy when the two seemed mutually exclusive. In my very next job I walked straight into this same problem (although with a different classification system). This time I had experience on my side.

So this is my first point: Museum Studies graduates are hungry for workplace experience that will thicken their résumés. While entry-level jobs generally ask for some previous experience as well as the qualification, there are few opportunities here to take that first step along the career path. Internships can point the way.

Susan: On returning to New Zealand I opted for an internship as part of my Master of Arts, Museum Studies, because I knew it was a unique opportunity to turn abstract theory into concrete experience within the New Zealand context. I also anticipated I would be able to demonstrate my commitment to my chosen field of study to potential employers. Massey's 'Advanced Research Practicum'(ARP) in Museum Studies allows students to engage in project work by spending an extended period in a public institution. The ARP guidelines are quite clear. They aim to provide a collaborative learning experience that encourages reflective practice. 'The candidate, museum mentor and academic supervisor work together to ensure opportunities for the application of theory and the practice of skills, to provide occasions for critical analysis and reflective thinking, and to facilitate personal and professional growth.'

The internship is somewhat formally managed. It is the university staff, not the student, who propose the internship to the institution. Once an agreement has been reached a meeting is organised, formal contracts are drawn up, roles and responsibilities are clearly identified. Regular meetings with an elected 'museum mentor' are scheduled; these are indispensable opportunities for the candidate to discuss issues arising from professional life during their residency.

My twenty-week internship took place at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki in 2000. My tasks were to document the exhibition development process operated by the Gallery and to develop an exhibitions manual to incorporate policy and procedures for the production and management of exhibitions. I assessed the exhibition development process against museological literature to identify disparities between theory and practice. The research strategies employed to achieve these objectives encompassed personal observation and practical involvement. I was included from start to finish in the planning process of an exhibition chosen as my case study.

The internship had several outcomes. For myself, I gained a sound understanding of the wide-ranging roles and multifarious tasks in exhibition development. I also had the luxury of thoroughly researching the exhibition-making literature while participating in the process. I established lasting collegial relationships from this positive experience. Occasionally I felt somewhat isolated as an intern trying to fit into the workplace culture. It was difficult to summon up the courage to approach busy staff for information, but this too was a learning process. Afterwards, I was offered a short term contract which was, of course, the best outcome I could have hoped for.

The Gallery gained an extra pair of hands that could be applied to a variety of practical tasks as required. The Gallery's exhibition development process was documented from proposal through to its evaluation phases and compiled into a usable, written format. Additionally, it received a copy of the accompanying research report on the process, with insights into the perceived strengths and weaknesses of its exhibition development framework.

Daniel: A well managed internship between completing the diploma and finding more permanent employment offers a segue into professional life. It helps to cement theory and praxis, melding discourse

with practice, ideals with work-day realities. By a "well managed" internship (this is my second point) I mean that the intern has the opportunity to begin and complete a project which offers appropriate challenge, learning curve, and level of mentoring. Ideally there should also be activity beyond the project factored into the working week for the intern to gain holistic experience. Emerging from the internship, the newly formed museum professional can thus claim to be truly "job-ready".

Just being in the museum environment is a good experience. I was able to enjoy Canterbury Museum's collegial atmosphere where staff willingly shared their areas of expertise. For me, practice ricocheted back into theory, helping confirm the analytical poverty of mandarin applications of theory on the museum, where practice and the realities of the museum environment are not a factor of that analysis.

Susan and Daniel: For graduate students, an internship is a grounding experience, a solid underpinning for a future career. For institutions, internships offer the possibility for flights in new directions. Interns arrive with fresh perspectives sparking new ideas. They are (or should be) conversant with up-to-date literature and thus, by the end of their internship, well-placed to offer informed views. As museum studies graduates who have invested time, money and brain cells in getting formal training in our chosen careers, we observe a vacuum 'out there'. In other professions career paths are straighter, and can often be travelled smoothly within the one company. As readers will know, there is no well-charted route for getting started in New Zealand museums and galleries.

Most museum studies or other graduates seeking a position in a gallery or museum may well feel a little "atomised" (to misapply Miles Fairburn's term). For the first few years or so, often the best you can expect is one temporary contract after another, perhaps peppered with some volunteering (and then what to live on?) as you slowly accrue enough experience to get a permanent job. With few 'assistant' positions available, it is rare for recent graduates to be mentored into their roles. While cash-strapped institutions use short contracts to offset skinny staff budgets, we worry that this floating period is likely to lengthen. If so, there is a risk of losing knowledge, not just in terms of good practice or skills, but also of losing the opportunity for experienced professionals to pass on to new entrants their knowledge and craft about conditions and situations that are unique to New Zealand. These "culturally specific" insights become more precious when we consider that most museum literature and teaching tools are from North America or Britain. Internships can be an investment in the future of New Zealand museums, channelling the development of New Zealand specific museum expertise. If Canadian interns (funded by Youth International Internship Programme) were to become another way of solving museum workload problems, then this risk is intensified, because any knowledge passed on to them will leave these shores.

We hasten to add that this is not intended as a parochial retort to a "Canadian invasion", nor do we wish to denigrate the interns themselves. We see this as an issue of professionalism, and maintaining (or even raising) standards in our country and hope that New Zealand institutions embrace New Zealand Museum Studies interns with equal enthusiasm.

For future possibilities, organisations such as Museums Aotearoa and Te Papa National Services (perhaps using Te Ara as a forum?) might work together to support national internships as an investment in the arts and heritage sector. We hope that universities continue to offer students internships as a vital part of their Museum Studies programmes and we encourage students to actively pursue this option. Most of all, we hope that museum staff can be generous with their time and knowledge and value their role as mentors for future generations of museum professionals.

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Both authors wish to acknowledge the support that they received as interns from their respective host institutions.

This issue of Te Ara introduces a regular section of peer-reviewed articles. These are likely to be more academic contributions which explore more theoretical or historical perspectives. Joanna Cobley's thought-provoking feminist research raises significant issues for all museum workers, not just women employed in the sector.

The Feminisation of Museums in Aotearoa New Zealand

Introduction

In 1992, Jennifer Evans[1] conducted a survey on women employed in the museum profession in Aotearoa New Zealand. Evans indicated that while women comprised 47 percent of the sector they held only seven percent of director or deputy director positions (1992: 21). Further, only one Maori woman, the late Mina McKenzie, had ever reached a museum director position in New Zealand. Evans (1992) observed the persistence of a "glass ceiling" limiting women's advancement in New Zealand museums. Ten years later, we can list a number of women who hold positions of power in the New Zealand museum world, playing an important role in shaping prospective women's career paths in the museum profession.[2]

At first glance, women appear to be reaching positions of power within the museum sector and there are apparently continuing prospects for advancement since Evans' 1992 survey. However, women in general still hold positions other than that of directors, such as middle management, in addition to junior and senior positions in areas of collection management, conservation, curatorial research, exhibition design, visitor research, and public programmes. This variety on the one hand suggests museums' openness to employing women in a wide spectrum of roles. Significantly, such variety of roles within the museum is also indicative of the phenomenal growth of the sector in both New Zealand and internationally since the late 1960s.

The enlarged importance of customer service work[3] can partly account for both the growth of museums and the overall increase in women's employment in museums. Because service work is often considered a female-dominated area, the implication of the amplified service orientation of museum work has led to its devaluation, or decline in status (Reskin & Roos 1990; Nesbitt 1997). I write as a former museum professional and as a feminist researcher. Overall, my research interest is on the "human experience" of radical organisational transformation on the museum profession in New Zealand since 1984.[4] It is my intention to personalise the effects of radical economic and structural change on the museum sector. These changes were brought about by the economic policies of the fourth Labour government in office from 1984 until 1990 and the drive was continued from 1990 to 1999 by the National government. However, as museums, like most public sector organisations, have undergone radical economic and structural change, it is also important to situate my analysis within this broader framework. In this article, I use feminisation theory to describe two trends: the increase in the number and ratio of women employed in museums and the devaluation of the status of the profession.

1 Jennifer Evans' study comprised a survey of women working in the museum profession in New Zealand in 1992. From the responses provided by 125 women, Evans built a profile of women working in museums.

2 Dame Cheryll Sotheran was until recently the Chief Executive Officer of Te Papa, Priscilla Pitts is the Director of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery and the Otago Early Settlers Museum, and Paula Savage directs the City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi. In the regions, Helen Telford directs The Suter Te Aratoi O Whakatu in Nelson, Julie Catchpole directs Te Manawa: Science Centre, Gallery and Museum in Palmerston North, and Sharon Dell directs the Whanganui Regional Museum.

3 In this context, customer service work involves education, public programmes and marketing initiatives, which promote the museum to its broader community, including tourists.

4 This article is based on a chapter from my PhD thesis, The Museum Profession in Aotearoa New Zealand: a case study in economic restructuring and investigating the movement towards feminisation, in Gender Studies at the University of Canterbury. As a feminist researcher I am interested in exploring and analysing individuals' subjective experiences within a broader political, social and economic context.

The Influx of Women Employed in the Museum Sector in New Zealand

Drawing from New Zealand Census data in the 30-year period 1966 – 1996, the museum sector not only grew but also the gender balance has changed from being clearly a male-dominated sector in 1966 to a sector in which by 1996, 55 percent of its employees were women. Importantly, at the same time, more women were employed in the labour market overall. Factors contributing to women's overall increased participation in the labour market particularly since the1970s are better access to higher education and work training opportunities for women, and anti-discriminatory legislation such as the introduction of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act (EEO) in the public sector (Ministry of Women's Affairs 1992). In the 1980s, increased economic pressure within the household[5] combined with "greater social pressures on women to be earners have heightened their work commitment and ambitions to success in their careers" (Bradley 1999: 9). This trend is most noticeable for younger women, who, in contrast to generations before them, have better access to education and expect to work (Walby 1997). This is most evident from tertiary educated women who have obtained employment into high status professions such as law (Chiu & Leicht 1999) and arguably, museums.

US feminisation theorists Paula Nesbitt (1997: 27) and Barbara F. Resin and Patricia A. Roos (1990) argue that factors such as changes in the market and labour conditions, provide the conditions for women's entry into an occupational group and/or sector. When a traditionally male dominated sector experiences dramatic growth, the demand for labour is met by admitting previously excluded groups such as women (Reskin & Roos 1990: 42). Table 1 below shows both men's and women's participation in the workforce and the museum sector in New Zealand from 1966 – 1996. Museum sector employment covers all positions including "cultural", such as director, curator, educator, exhibition designer, conservator, and collection manager, as well as "non-cultural" positions including administration, security, catering, visitor reception and building services. Women's rate of participation in the museum sector was slightly higher than the overall workforce, increasing from just under 35 percent in 1966 to 55 percent in 1996.

A notable change occurred in 1991, when at the height of economic restructuring there was a significant decrease in the total number of jobs in the workforce in New Zealand. Interestingly, men experienced most of the job losses and women experienced proportionally less, a trend indicative of the market shift from a manufacturing-based to a service-based economy (Ministry of Women's Affairs 1992). There was some decrease in the number of jobs in the museum sector and again, men experienced most of the job losses.

As my primary focus is on museum professional positions, I need to illustrate the pattern of increase

	Workforce					Museum Sector				
	Number			Percentage		Number			Percentage	
Year	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1966	745,595	280,444	1,026,039	72.7	27.3	131	70	201	65.2	34.8
1971	784,969	333,866	1,118,835	70.2	29.8	172	82	254	67.7	32.3
1976	865,098	407,235	1,272,333	68.0	32.0	213	144	357	59.7	40.3
1981	862,134	525,087	1,387,221	62.1	37.9	576	261	837	68.8	31.2
1986	890,334	609,087	1,499,421	59.4	40.6	555	450	1005	55.2	44.8
1991	795,069	605,334	1,400,403	56.0	43.2	495	441	936	52.9	47.1
1996	890,010	740,802	1,630,812	54.6	45.4	587	718	1305	45.0	55.0

Table 1: Employment in the Workforce and the Museum Sector in New Zealand According to Gender, 1966-1996[6]

Year	Number			Percentage	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1966	31	0	31	100.0	0.0
1971	36	10	46	78.3	21.7
1976	53	26	79	67.1	32.9
1981	60	30	90	66.7	33.3
1986	117	108	225	52.0	48.0
1991	159	141	300	53.0	47.0
1996	197	223	420	46.9	53.1

Table 2: Employment of Museum Professionals in New Zealand. According to Gender, 1966-2001

in both the number and ratio of women in such positions rather than overall employment in the museum sector. Following the Standards and Classifications of Occupations (Statistics New Zealand 1975, 1992 and 1995), which ostensibly only classifies "curator," it usefully creates a distinction between positions in the museum sector that are classified as "cultural-based," or "museum professional," and "non-cultural." Another useful factor for my discussion on museum professionals relates to how the classification of "curator" is blurred and includes actual curators but also "clumps" together other cultural-based positions such as directors, conservators, museum educators, public programmers, and collection managers. Unfortunately it excludes exhibition designers. In Table 2 and Figure 1, I draw from Statistics New Zealand census figures from 1966–2001,[7] according to their occupational category "curators," but use these figures to inform my discussion on the broader category of "museum professional."

Both Table 2 and Figure 1 show the dramatic growth in the number of museum professional positions overall as well as the level of women's placement in these positions. Within 35 years we can see a noticeable shift in ratio between men and women employed in museum professional positions in New Zealand. In 1966 there were 31 museum professional positions, all of which were held by men. However, in 2001 women held 301, over half of the museum professional positions.[8]

Prior to the late 1960s, although women were employed in museums this was not in significant numbers (see Taylor 1994). Women's employment in museums throughout most of the 20th century until the late 1960s reflect what Reskin & Roos (1990: 39-42) describe as the "queuing theory" in that women were employed when there was a shortage of sufficiently qualified men. For example, British history curator Gaynor Kavanagh (1991: 45) observed that between the two World Wars women's involvement in the museum sector increased primarily because of male conscription; women were needed to fill the positions rapidly vacated by men. R.K. Dell (1965: 15), writing about the Dominion Museum in Wellington, noted a similar development and once established, this tendency continued.

From the late 1960s, museums broadened in their number and scope and thus required more staff (Kavanagh 1991: 45; Wittlin 1970). With efforts to democratise museums, such as improving access and targeting diverse and under-represented audiences, the role and importance of visitor-oriented services like education and public programmes have also increased (van Mensch 1989: 13; Wittlin 1970: 187). Given that museum education, like the education sector in general, is considered a woman-dominated field (Taylor 1994: 12; Wylie 2000) we can make some connection between the increased importance of museum education and women's increased employment in museums.

Since the 1980s, under the new economic framework museums in New Zealand, like other public sector organisations, have become more commercial in both policy and practice. Although museums continue to collect, research and preserve cultural heritage, they have been required to adopt internal organisational structures to ensure that they were able to sell their "products" – the museum

5 Household is referred to here in the broadest sense of the term.

6 Source of information is from Statistics New Zealand labour market documents for the years 1966, 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, and 1996 respectively; details listed in References.

7 Source for 2001 Census results have been taken from www.kiwicareers.co.nz (26 October 2002).

8 Certainly since the establishment of the Museum Studies Programme at Massey University in 1989 the majority of students, approximately 75 percent, have been women (David Butts, e-mail communication, 26 October 2002). Weber (1994:33) notes a similar trend with museum studies courses in the US.

experience – to the museum "customer." The museum's potential to attract tourists is valued by the current Labour government as indicated by increases in government funding for regional museums (www.kiwicareers.co.nz, 26 October 2002).

Post economic restructuring, service work in the tourist and leisure industry, and arguably museums, involve mediation between the service provider and the customer. Cultural theorist Lisa Adkins (1995: 7) argues that the "quality of the social interaction" between the service provider and the consumer becomes part of the product and the "cultural expectations of consumers" regarding how service is delivered in turn shapes "employment relations within the industry." Service work requires staff to provide for the customer's needs through emotional, nurturing, care-taking roles. Moreover, the service worker's performance – which includes their gender, age race, dress, and behaviour – becomes part of what is sold (Adkins 1995: 8). Interestingly, women carry out much of this work (Adkins 1995: 8).

The customer service work model has created a radical shift for the museum profession. Beyond the information kiosks and museum shop, various specialist museum staff work in teams to produce exhibitions with broad appeal (Macdonald 1998: 120). Crucial is the ability to produce exhibitions that are fun, factual and friendly. In some instances a lack of expert knowledge in the exhibition subject area is considered a useful starting point from which to create an exhibition that promotes "public understanding" and provide customer service (Macdonald 1998: 120-121). As a result, museum workers have been redefined from that of an "expert" to someone who serves as a "cultural facilitator" or "interpreter," a role seen to enable the public to have better access to the museum's resources and services (Macdonald 1998: 120). Despite the continual growth of the museum sector in New Zealand there is still a limited number of jobs available. In addition, staff turnover is low (Pattillo 1997; www.kiwicareers.co.nz, 26 October 2002) and an assumption that there is a high level of job satisfaction for museum professionals exists. In the next section I consider how this assumption is slowly eroding as evident by a decrease in work conditions and increases in workplace dissatisfaction, both considered factors of feminisation.

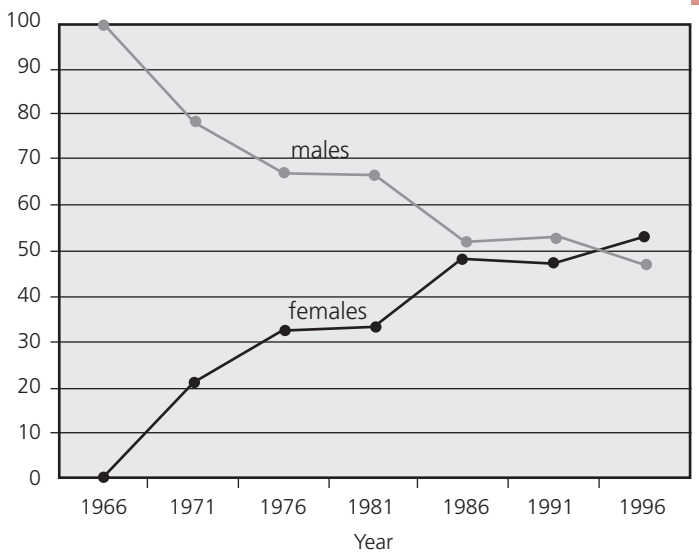

Figure 1: Percentage Distribution Between Males and Females Employed in Museum Professional Positions in the Museum Sector in New Zealand, 1966-2001

The Devaluation of Museum Work

The process of feminisation includes a decline in work conditions, such as increased workloads requiring long hours for low levels of pay (not covered in this article). Feminisation also includes a decline in the value of the work itself (Reskin & Roos 1990). In recently feminised occupations and/or sectors such as clerical work, retail, catering, the health and education professions (Bradley 2000: 75), and legal profession (Chiu & Leicht 1999), workers are reportedly experiencing high levels of stress and with this, stress-related illness (Bradley 1999: 217). This has the effect of increasing levels of workplace dissatisfaction (Chiu & Leicht 1999).

On the one hand, "exploitative" labour conditions such as long hours and low pay[9] are not new to those working in museums and cannot be solely attributed to feminisation. The term "life style choice" is often attached to museum work. Curator Claire Regnault describes her work on a career-based website:

> Officially it's 8:30 – 5:00, but most people in the industry do more than that. It is a lifestyle type of job; in order to be successful you can't [...] just turn up to work and go home and not have to think about it any other time (www.careers.co.nz, 22 July 2002).

Underlying Regnault's words is the notion of how the museum professional's passion, loyalty and enthusiasm for their work overrides these less favourable labour conditions, such as long hours. In order to be "successful" the long hours are required and because of these professionals' commitment to museum work the long hours for low pay can be sustained. This is further exacerbated by a strong tradition in museum literature, which argues that altruistic ideals (Weil 1990: 77) or the intrinsic worth (DiMaggio 1988: 29) of museum work attracts and holds people to museums rather than the pay or conditions of employment. On the other hand, the effects of economic restructuring and the management ethos of efficiency and accountability have taken away the life-style perks associated with museum work; in particular the sense of professional autonomy has eroded under the ethos of "measurable outputs" (McKinlay Douglas 1995). In turn, some resistance to "exploitative" employment conditions in the museum sector both in New Zealand and internationally has become increasingly evident. As noted earlier, I was motivated to examine the "human experience" of the radical transformation of museums, a debate that, with the exception of Heumann Gurian (1995), is marginalised in museum literature. In order to understand the processes of feminisation, attention needs to be paid to such experiences. I draw from three recent examples cited in the media, which capture some of the concerns raised by museum professionals both in New Zealand and internationally that are suggestive of feminisation. As noted earlier, although feminisation involves sector growth, which includes the increase in numbers and ratio of women employed in the sector, feminisation is not solely restricted to gender. Feminisation also involves radical economic and structural changes. As museums have been transformed from a research-led institution into a market-led service provider, in turn, the workplace culture has also altered. In the three examples which follow, we can see how museum professionals have experienced and/or perceived a loss in their professional autonomy under the new workplace culture where factors such as long hours and low pay are viewed as a decline in work conditions and increasingly the passion and commitment of museums professionals to their work is eroding.

April 2000

In the year 2000, as the Director and Board of Trustees announced plans for expansion and organisational restructuring, unionised staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York went on strike. Those involved in the strike were white-collar professional employees, such as curators, educators and librarians. The majority, 70 percent, were women, and predominantly "young, recent college graduates […] headed for professional careers in the arts" (Davis-Packard & Marks, 8 January 2001).

MoMA staff believed they were underpaid for their qualifications; they worked long hours and felt exploited. They wanted to maintain their benefits, which included health insurance and pension plans (Robbins, 8 January 2001). In the words of a MoMA striker, a museum photographer since 1977:

Most of us accept lower salaries to do this work. I love the place. I love being part of something bigger than me, of putting on a show of beauty that people enjoy (Robbins, 8 January 2001).

It appears that the low level of pay could continue to be tolerated by the museum photographer, for as he states, "it's not the money. The sacred cow is health coverage" (Robbins, 8 January 2001). A lack of a public health system in the US combined with high costs of health insurance makes health coverage an essential part of employment terms and conditions particularly if one's income is low. MoMA staff were also concerned that the proposed expansion project and organisational restructuring programme would lead to job losses, and combined with the proposed reduction of employee benefits, they felt they were "being asked to sacrifice their livelihoods to help pay for the cost of the museum expansion" (Whyte, 8 January 2001) thus adding to a sense of insecurity. British writer, Harriet Bradley (1999: 217) comments that factors such as reductions in staff, operating budgets and increased job insecurity – increasingly common under the new management model – can contribute to a decline in work conditions. In this instance, through strike action, MoMA staff successfully protected their employment conditions.

Significantly, the MoMA strikers were not only fighting to improve their work conditions and benefits, they were also setting out to "change the

way their industry operates and perceives" museum professionals per se (Anonymous, 8 January 2001). The "MoMA problem," according to one staff member, was the mismatch between the "ideal" of exhibiting and educating and the economic "reality" requiring museums to be more business-like or corporate (Anonymous, 8 January 2001). Some museum professionals believe the market model caters for "popular appeal" at the expense of the museum's core functions (to research, collect, preserve and exhibit). Unfortunately, in some circumstances "problems" which stem from this conflict in purposes has been construed as a "problem" pertaining to certain museum staff rather than the management model and workplace culture adopted by the museum.

28 October 2001

On the front page of the Sunday Star Times, Jillian Lloyd, described as Te Papa's top art curator, took a half-million dollar employment suit against Te Papa. Lloyd claims that she was forced to resign from Te Papa, citing excessive workloads and stress-related health problems. Whilst Lloyd stated that she clearly supported the museological ideals that Te Papa was instigating she felt that the overall work culture of Te Papa was difficult. Cheryll Sotheran, the Chief Executive Officer of Te Papa was defending against Lloyd's claim. According to Sotheran, Te Papa was a "cut and thrust" and "spirited" organisation. Sotheran's primary concern was with "quality of performance" and "issues of concept or programme delivery." Sotheran claimed that Lloyd had only made complaints to management about her pay. Significantly, Sotheran believed that Lloyd, like some other curators, simply "had difficulty working within the new culture of the museum" (Laugesen 2001).

Lloyd's case is complex, but points to a decline in the status of museum professional work, particularly the curatorial role. It seems that the new "cut and thrust" work culture of Te Papa requires a flexible and subservient staff, who operate under a culture of fear, within limited, sometimes unrealistic, budget and time constraints, and with little infrastructural support from senior management. Clearly Lloyd is outlining a decline in workplace conditions and an erosion of professional autonomy. She noted little institutional recognition of her expertise and inappropriate allocation of resources to undertake her work tasks, which, in turn, undermined her professional credibility. Further, due to an overall decline in work conditions, such as tight time constraints and increased work pressures requiring longer work hours, Lloyd had suffered from stress-related health problems. In contrast, Sotheran, an advocate of the "cut and thrust" management culture, believes that Lloyd and other curators have not adapted to sharing their status as "knowledge workers" in the new museum. To Sotheran, the curator's status had not lessened to any extent, but rather other positions in the museum, such as marketing and public programmes, have been elevated to similar importance.

Lloyd's case is extraordinary in terms of not only speaking out against the work culture of a high-profile organisation, but also by arguing that under the new management model, the generic skills of flexibility and teamwork were considered more valuable than the specialised knowledge held by curators. The status of curatorial services are systematically devalued through a culmination of complex factors. Examples include limited resources, a lack of mandate to delegate or take on responsibility and management with little or no operational knowledge of museums overruling curatorial practice. These factors contribute to a declining sense of autonomy and increased levels of work-related stress.

As noted earlier, working long hours for low pay was usually accepted by museum workers due to institutional loyalty and passion for their work. However, since the introduction of the new management model, further encroachments of declining work conditions and a lack of respect or value for the curatorial role have made positions such as Lloyd's untenable.

18 September 1999

In 1999 the Otago Museum in Dunedin was undergoing extensive change. This involved not only the refurbishment of the museum building and the upgrade of exhibition spaces but also subsequent reorganisation of staff roles. An "inordinate number of staff resignations" (Gibb 1999) drew the attention of the Public Services Association (PSA), the labour union for public sector employees in

New Zealand. The PSA suggested that "poor staff morale" and "work related stress" were contributing factors to the high level of resignations (Gibb 1999).

The Director of the Otago Museum, Shimrath Paul, acknowledged that the "demands of the museum redevelopment project were contributing to the busy workload" for museum staff. His view was that, like most organisations undergoing change, staff resignations were common (Gibb 1999). Paul further argued that high levels of staff resignations were not extraordinary and more likely to be a coincidence rather than a direct result of low staff morale.

Obtaining museum work in New Zealand can be difficult, and as noted, the sector is small and the turnover of positions is low (Pattillo 1997). Museum professionals usually resign only when they have secured employment elsewhere, and there is no clear indication that this was the case for the Otago Museum workers. Further, due to the high level of passion and commitment museum professionals are reputed to have towards their work, it requires exceptional circumstances, as in the case of the Otago Museum, for staff to tender their resignation.

Conclusion

Perhaps high numbers of staff resignations during a period of organisational restructuring are normal. Maybe some museum professionals are having problems adapting to the "cut and thrust" spirit of museums like Te Papa, believing their work conditions have dropped, including a decline in professional autonomy. It is possible that museum professionals remain passionate about their work but at the same time wish to maintain a certain standard of living, as shown through the actions of the MoMA staff strike. These three cases discussed above are all examples of the impact that radical organisational transformation can have on staff. Each reflects in its particular way the process of feminisation. Such factors include increased workloads and hours which have contributed to stress-related illness, a decline in employment terms and conditions which have led to staff feeling frustrated and undervalued by senior management, and an increase in workplace dissatisfaction. These factors although subjective and difficult to measure warrant further analysis particularly as more women are entering the sector.[10] Significantly, from a feminist perspective and from the point of interest in the museum sector it is important to resist the idea that the a devaluation in the status of museum work is directly related to the increase in the number and ratio of women employed in the sector.

Authors Note:
I wish to thank the reviewers for their invaluable and timely comments, Val Melhop for acting as a critical reader and Jane Legget for editorial support.

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9 Drawing from Statistics New Zealand figures, the median income for "museum professionals" in 1996 was $37,700 for men and $26,800 for women (Ministry of Cultural Affairs & Statistics New Zealand 1998: 25-26).

10 Qualitative data, such as interviews with museum professionals about their work is one method of obtaining such information.

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The Art Museum in Our Age

Maria Brown considers today's enthusiasm for building and remodelling art museums and presents her own analysis.

The wave of changes that took place in museums around the world in the 1990s had its most concrete expression in a building boom that included the construction of new museums and the renovation or remodelling of old ones. Although many of these projects culminated with openings in the years 2000 and 2001, the flood of changes and its accompanying building boom are far from over. Indeed, they do not show signs of ending in the near future, at least not in New Zealand.

Many of the changes reviewed here can be seen as responses to the abundant, to put it mildly, criticism coming from academics. From the late 1970s the museum as a cultural artefact has attracted much academic attention. This fascination is explained by a cultural critic in the following terms: "the museum is an attractive object of study: it requires interdisciplinary analysis, it has the debate on aesthetics at its core, and it is essentially a social institution." (Bal, 1996:201). Perhaps more importantly, the changes in museums also respond to the demands to attract an ever-growing number of visitors. It would seem, then, that both the demands on museums and the responses to them relate to larger cultural trends present in 'our age', in our time.

It may be easier to analyse the implications and the impact of the changes occurring in the museum world if we divide these changes into two categories or levels. First, changes have occurred at the physical level: typically, the modifications to the architectural frame that surrounds the museums' objects have resulted in institutions that are more functional, more contemporary looking, and more open to the urban spaces in which they are located. On a second level, changes have occurred in what might be called, for want of a better label, the narrative level. This latter type of change has to do with the texts that frame the objects on display.

Physical Level

Regarding the physical level, most of the developments seem to have at least one common factor, the opening of the museum space to the exterior. The austere and enclosed spaces of museums had been criticised for creating an environment outside time and divorced from real life. In a seminal essay on the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach wrote: "In MoMA you wind through a series of narrow, silent, windowless white spaces. These rooms have a peculiar effect… You are in a 'nowhere,' a pristine blankness, a sunless white womb/tomb, seemingly outside time and history". (Duncan and Wallach, 1978: 43). In a similar vein, Brian O'Doherty pointed to one of the reasons for this isolation: "The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is art. The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself". (O'Doherty, 1986: 14).

In an age when the narratives of modernism and its claims to aesthetic universal values have not only been challenged, but also to a large extent discredited, the places consecrated to the display of art respond with large windows that seem to establish a dialogue with life as it happens outside the museum. A rather extreme case of this tendency is the Musée National d'Art Moderne housed in the Centre Pompidou in Paris. When it re-opened its doors in January 2000, the public found the permanent collections displayed in an area much larger than that they had occupied until 1998, and much more open to the surrounding cityscape, visible now through the glass walls that enclose the collections on three of the four sides of the museum building.

This openness, however, does not necessarily establish a dialogue with contemporary life and culture. Rather, the newly built or re-built museums seem to be transferring the attitude of contemplation previously reserved for objects classified as works of art to the entire visual environment of the visitor/viewer, including the urban landscape visible through the windows. Interestingly, the location and the shapes of these openings to the exterior follow the same aesthetic and logic that orders the objects in museums. It is as if the external views had been incorporated into the displays. It may well be, then, that the new museums have not entered into a dialogue with contemporary life and culture. Instead by adopting particular features of that life, which are visually attractive, they have added variety and a certain up-to-the-minute quality to their appearance. In this way, the museum in our age distances itself from the image of an isolated, dead place and instead shows life as it is happening, but at a safe distance and suitably framed through its windows.

Perhaps the changes in appearance are not only a response to the criticism coming from academics, but also to the demands of a public who now expects to find varied and, if possible, active experiences, within the museum. It is pertinent to remember here the almost prophetic writings of Rosalind Krauss, who in 1986 wrote about the postmodern museum without walls: "during the time that contemporary production in painting and sculpture has taken on this almost universal relation to pastiche, an extraordinary outpouring of new museum buildings has occurred. And it can be argued that among them are the beginnings of a new architectural type that is responsive to this reconfiguration of the museum without walls." (Krauss, 1986: 157).

For Krauss the post-modern museums were buildings with open spaces and vistas, where one can see and be seen, where one experiences several works and areas at the same time, in which "visual movement is a constant decentering through the continual pull of something else, another relationship, another formal order, inserted within this one in a gesture which is simultaneously one of interest and of distraction."(Krauss, 1986:158). Arguably, distraction is the key word in this

MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND TE PAPA TONGAREWA, FOYER AND INFORMATION DESK.
COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND TE PAPA TONGAREWA (CT.009961/28).

paragraph. The vistas offer to the museum visitor distraction, in the sense of entertainment. The new museums provide much more than opportunities for the contemplation of artworks. In this they are similar to the shopping mall, another characteristic institution of our age that, not by accident, both Krauss and Fredric Jameson call the era of 'late capitalism'. (Jameson, 1991). In the shopping mall the consumer is offered endless possibilities for gratification and distraction. Of course, there is nothing extraordinary in finding parallel developments in cultural practices that address basically the same audience. Many individuals who visit art museums divide their leisure time among museums, shopping malls, tourist destinations, and other alternative entertainments.

Museums and the tourism industry are becoming increasingly interdependent, at least in the opinion of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. She explains this phenomenon in terms of social changes that have brought to bear the pressures of the market on museums: "As changes in funding require museums to increase visitation even further, tourism increasingly defines the kind of experience that museums try to produce." (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1997:95). Interestingly, as an example of this assertion, the writer points to the information

presented at the temporary Visitors' Centre open during the building of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, in which the new museum was described as a place "that is alive, exciting, and unique". "Exactly what tourism markets", Kirshenblatt-Gimblett added (Ibid). In a way, it is possible to locate Te Papa within this trend for vistas and the offering of a tourist experience that incorporates the attractive surroundings as one more of the museum's attractions (see photograph).

In an age that increasingly applies the 'market' paradigm to diverse sectors of the public sphere, educational and cultural institutions find themselves more and more subject to the discourse of economic efficiency. According to this discourse, institutions are expected to pass the 'test of the market', that is, to demonstrate their relevance by attracting enough customers to be financially self-sufficient. A significant part of the renovation projects in old museums has to do with facilities that allow the flow of large numbers of visitors and with providing space for commercial activities. With growing audiences that see museums as tourist destinations or as shopping malls, it makes sense to offer the visitors/customers the opportunity to do some shopping and in the process generate much needed income for the museums[1]. For instance, both the Great Court at the British Museum and the space under the pyramid at the Louvre house shops and restaurants. The outcome of such enterprises, however, has proven difficult to predict. While the shopping mall at the Louvre is a commercial success, the disappointing results of the Great Court have contributed significantly to the dire financial situation of the British Museum.

Narrative Level

The way the narratives of art are presented in museums has also provoked much reflection and subsequent changes. The typical art historical narratives that organise the display of many museums have been criticised for constructing a monolithic representation of culture, which focuses on the artistic production and values of the dominant groups and does not admit alternative worldviews. The exclusion of the art of indigenous peoples from many art museums is a notable example of this phenomenon.

One of the most visible changes in this area has taken place at the Louvre. Since the 1930s French artists and intellectuals had repeatedly called for the inclusion of indigenous art in the cultural narratives of the Louvre. The critics finally succeeded, and among the new spaces opened at the Louvre in 2000 is a wing dedicated to indigenous art from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. It is not clear, though, whether this exhibition will be a permanent part of the Louvre, or whether the works will be transferred to the new museum of 'primeval' or 'primordial' arts when it opens in 2004. In any case, the new space celebrates diversity and represents a step in the direction of inclusiveness, which is now embraced as a goal by many museums.

The adoption of a meta-narrative level to frame the objects displayed at London's Tate Britain is also indicative of developments in the search for more pluralistic representations of art. Rather than giving their version of the history of British art, the curators who designed the current hanging at the Tate Britain recount what others have said on this subject in the past. In the process, they highlight how certain concepts have changed through time and also remind the visitor that their own exposition is just one view among many possibilities. The floor map, for instance, introduces the new displays in this way:

"Some rooms focus on the work of a single artist, while others consider some of the ways in which Britain has been shaped and re-presented through decades, or even centuries, of changing relationships between the visual arts and society. These displays do not constitute a single, definitive narrative history of British art. Instead, they present the different views of the changing place of Britain in the world, and the ways in which art has contributed to the formation, or questioning, of ideas of 'Britishness'."

Room 9, 'Making British History', is a good example of how the meta-narrative approach at the Tate Britain attempts to make clear the constructed nature of a concept such as 'national' or 'British' identity. A paragraph in the introductory panel reads: "This display focuses on artists' use of subjects from British literature and history from 1770 to around 1900, and the role played by such images

1 It is of course an interesting question, outside the scope of this article, to ponder to what extent the public service mission of art galleries and museums is compatible with addressing the needs of their visitors as customers and not primarily as citizens.

in popular perceptions of national identity". In this context, works of art are presented not as part of a narrative of the progress or evolution of British art, nor as emblems of British identity, but as objects with diverse uses, one of which has been to serve as illustrations or embodiments of certain characteristics that defined an alleged British identity at particular times.

The adoption of this more complex and comprehensive narrative framework seems to be part of a cultural climate characterised by the suspicion and questioning of master narratives, a cultural climate in which representations that include a plurality of points of view are particularly valued. Surely, it is not a coincidence that the Tate Modern and the MoMA now routinely indicate the name of the curators who write the information panels, further emphasising that these are particular views and not definitive texts beyond questioning. The abandoning of chronological hanging at the Tate Modern and the MoMA may be also be seen as a reflection of the present cultural climate, which rejects displays that produce linear views of the history of art moving in a direction defined as 'progress' from a specific point of view.

This is just a sample of some changes that are occurring in museums, but the building boom has not ended and no doubt it will bring more developments. The Musée d'Orsay in Paris is undergoing major renovations to be completed by the end of this year. The MoMA closed its famous building in Manhattan to undertake a major building project that will see its size doubled by 2005. The Guggenheim is preparing to find the funds to build a new Gehry museum in New York. And the public in Toronto will be treated to two new projects, one by Libeskind at the Royal Ontario Museum and the other by Gehry at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Closer to home, Christchurch will open its first publicly funded art gallery building next year. Also scheduled for opening in 2003 is Puke Ariki, the new Taranaki Museum and Library in New Plymouth. Stage two of the completion project continues at Auckland Museum Te Papa Whakahiku, while the redevelopment project at the Suter Te Aratoi o Whakatu in Nelson is steaming ahead. New initiatives at Lake Tekapo and the East Southland Art Gallery in Gore, among others, ensure that the momentum of the museum boom in New Zealand will extend well into the future.

Germain Bazin, witnessing a museum boom in the 1950s and 1960s, concluded that he was living in the museum age (Bazin, 1967). More than thirty years later, seeing that constant changes and developments are now the norm in the museum world, we might be tempted to conclude that art galleries and museums wishing to maintain their position as relevant social institutions engage in continual transformations that both reflect and shape the cultural ideals of our age.

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The Forum and the Temple: Greenwich's The Price of Tea and Te Papa's Virgin in a Condom

Mercedes Maroto Camino examines contrasting institutional responses to controversial exhibits.

The various notions about collecting and displaying that inform the development of the cultural heritage industry in the last decades underline the changing relationship between communities and museums. From the 1960s, and, especially since 1980, there have been significant shifts in the environment in which museums operate and in their displays. In spite of these shifts, many historical museums, especially in Europe, still fulfil an openly celebratory function, as can be seen in their selection of exhibits and the figures raised to the level of cultural icons. But even in these more conservative displays, the items selected to recreate these heroes, the captions that are used and the rationale behind the selection increasingly show their adherence to the new ideas, including a welcome sensitivity to issues of gender and ethnicity.

The differences among museums and their approaches to display have been the focus of much interesting work. Writing in 1971, Duncan Cameron distinguishes between two contrasting stances: the traditional vision of the museum as a temple and the emerging idea of the museum as forum. As temple, Cameron writes, the museum "fulfils a timeless and universal function" (201). In contrast, as forum, the museum is to be seen as a place for "confrontation and experimentation" (198).[1] These different approaches towards collecting and displaying and the relationship of museums to their communities are the focus of my study of two recent controversies. These outcries were provoked by an exhibition hosted by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in 1998, Pictura Britannica, and by the reorganisation of the Trade and Empire Gallery at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich in 1999.

New Zealand's Te Papa and Greenwich's National Maritime Museum are devoted to the preservation and display of items related to the "nations" that support them economically and ideologically. These "national" museums started to appear in the nineteenth century in Europe as celebrations of the deeds and wealth of their nations.[2] Before the 1960s, the selection of items on display used to be governed by what was taken as a neutral and non-obtrusive process (Cf. Alpers). According to this model, criteria for assessing "art" were assumed to be universal and "objective," though it was obviously elitist, ethnocentric and masculinist.[3]

The selection of displays, events and people that museums present has been increasingly opened to public consultation and scrutiny. As a consequence, many museums are today more "domesticated" than they used to be. This "domestication" can be seen by the museums' inclusion of household items and feminine artefacts, such as embroideries and cooking implements, as well as by their increasing accountability and responsiveness to the society on whose support they depend. Museums today display items that some time ago would be considered merely ordinary, and would not be thought of as artefacts worthy for public exhibition. These items are sometimes shown not so much for their artistic value, though they may not lack it, but because they are ways of reflecting (on) the community within which the museum aspires to feel integrated.

1 Cameron further explains that "the forum is where the battles are fought, the temple is where the victors rest. The former is process, the latter is product" (199).

2 As Evans remarks, "What we now recognize as the modern public museum … was invented, in the period from the mid-eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries … for the purposes of celebrating and dramatizing the unity of the nation-state and to make visible to its public the prevailing ideals embodied by the concept of national culture" (6).

3 Karp has observed that: "The alleged innate neutrality of museums and exhibitions, however, is the very quality that enables them to become instruments of power as well as instruments of education and experience" (14).

4 In the internet section on "Who we are," the Museum explains that: "Te Papa will engage New Zealanders in the exploration of their cultural identity and the natural environment through the exhibitions and other programmes focused on New Zealand."

FIGURE 1: TANIA KOVATS, 'VIRGIN IN A CONDOM'.
COURTESY: ASPREYJACQUES, LONDON

New Zealand's Te Papa has been successful in engaging the community to discuss its displays, even though the first of these debates was not what the museum initially intended.[4] Outcry surrounded the exhibition of a small statue entitled Virgin in a Condom by Tanya Kovats (Fig. 1), which was part of the exhibition of young British artists entitled Pictura Britannica. The interesting dimension of the debate generated by this artwork is not that some Christians would consider it to offend their beliefs but how their stance gave fuel to some politicians and right-wing citizens. Many among these charged against the disrespect for the "unfashionable minority" of discontented Christians and contrasted it with the museum's approach to displaying Maori artefacts.[5] These critics backed their stance with their right as members of the community and as taxpayers to influence or dictate what the museum should display and how to do so.

Among the copious correspondence received by newspapers in March and April 1998, the following are representative examples. Under the title "The Papa – Our Place?", M. English criticises the direction of the Museum and questions whether Te Papa is really a forum for all New Zealanders. Regarding the Museum's decision to keep the exhibits in place, English believes that: "Those who made this decision have made it more their place – on their terms." Ian and Barbara Jones take the point further by censoring the Museum's then-chief executive, Cheryll Sotheran, who, they think, "should seriously consider resigning."[6] The then-National Member of Parliament John Banks demanded that Sotheran be prosecuted. And in a piece entitled "The Museum of Lady Godiva", Frank Haden's attack became personal when he called Sotheran a "bossette … [who misrepresents] the way we are." Haden also considers the museum not worthy of such a label: "it provides so much disinformation that it no longer qualifies as a museum."[7]

This outcry can be compared with the debate taking place one year later at London's National Maritime Museum when, to coincide with the millennium celebration in Greenwich, the museum redisplayed its galleries using private funds as well as money from the National Lottery. The criticism of the museum's rearrangement was focused on what some saw as a questioning of Britain's past imperial glory represented by the displays in the Wolfson Gallery, which is devoted to the thorny subjects of Trade and Empire.

Greenwich's Maritime Museum has always been deeply connected with Britain as a maritime power and, thus, as a colonial empire. The extent of this militaristic view is summed up by Donald Horne's allusion to the museum as having been made up of "conquest halls" (71). This was the stance from which those working in the new arrangement, led by curator, Dr Nigel Rigby, and then-director Richard Ormond, sought to distance the museum so as to make it more inclusive of the various cultures that are part of today's Britain.

The changes undergone by the museum showed a broader look at emigration, as perceived from below deck, as well as an open acknowledgement of the role of slaves and the colonised in the construction of Britain's imperial glory.[8] This broadening was criticised as a negation of good, traditional British values. As with Te Papa, the public reaction was voiced in various newspapers, with the criticism channelled mostly via the Daily Mail and Daily Telegraph.

5 In another letter, T. D. Hurliman wonders: "if we will see a Maori artefact displayed in the museum covered in a condom" and criticised what he sees to be the museum's "double standards." The decision taken by the museum to maintain the items in the display also fuelled the complaint of the leader of the Christian Coalition Party, Rev Graham Caphill. For Caphill, the museum has "double standards," as seen by the fact that: "When it comes to Maori spiritual values, great care is taken to avoid offence and maintain protocol."

6 These words are echoed by P. M. Ryder, who affirms that: "We do not want a public forum … Cheryll Sotheran and the board members should be sacked and replaced by fairer-minded people." Also, a group calling itself "Te Papa Watch" was set up following the protests with the objective of holding the museum management accountable.

7 Haden's personal attack displays his misogyny and becomes especially distasteful and vulgar when he alludes to Lady Godiva's "bare-buttocked ride on a white horse" and goes on to say that: "Cheryll Sotheraan can hardly be expected to match that. She's the right shape, but I don't think she can ride a horse."

8 The museum's position is summed up in the following caption in the Gallery: "The slave trade was part of a global trading system. British products and Indian goods were shipped to West Africa and exchanged for slaves. The slaves were taken to the Americas in return for sugar, tobacco, and other tropical produce. These were then sold in Britain for processing into consumer goods and possible re-export. In this way, the inhuman but profitable trading cycle continued."

The critics of this display noted that the role of the Royal Navy in the fight for abolition was only represented in some smaller exhibits and not given the relevance it deserved. Also, they censored the references to the English merchantmen being prominent in the slave trade[9] and noted the undue emphasis on the hardships endured by millions of Africans across the Middle Passage.[10] Their view is neatly summed up by Tom Pocock's article published on the Mail on Sunday entitled "Was Britain's Empire So Evil?" In this article, Pocock describes the Commonwealth as an "old comrades association" and misses an empire where for "any young man" opportunities were plentiful. His words are worth quoting in full:

> The politically correct Trade And Empire gallery ... defiles our heritage ... it is time ... for the Empire to strike back. ... In the gallery beyond, it would seem that the principal activities of the British abroad was the dispossession or enslavement of indigenous peoples ... As one who remembers the Empire before it became the old comrades' association of the Commonwealth, I did not recognise what I saw. I remember when any young man, no matter what social or economic level he found himself at, could think of almost any sort of career almost anywhere in the world within the British Empire. ... But what a legacy the British have left. The democracy ... thrives in India. The basics of law, education and medical care were laid down by the British, and English is the common language in regions once compartmentalised by many tongues.

Critics of the museum's approach thus saw that the overt presentation of relationships of production and domination was nothing less than an attack on British values and their very idea of nation. In this vein, Stephen Bush charged that: "The new displays at the museum are all of a piece with other attempts to deprive the British people of any aspect of their history in which they can take justifiable pride. The suborning of the school curriculum is a current example of the attempt to deprive our children of their national identity." Likewise, Edward Kean writes: "The disgraceful exhibition at the Maritime Museum gives the clear message that we should be ashamed of our past." These criticisms corroborate the claim made by Jessica Evans regarding the mystification of the notion of Britain's origin:

> Conservative values ... are rooted variously in the idea that the national past is an Edenic point of origin from which we derive our present identities as members of a homogeneous nation ... [T]he rhetoric of "a nation's inheritance" precisely reproduce[s] the mythical idea that Britain is composed of a single culture, in which the narratives of those others who do not fit into this culture (be they chambermaids of the country house, or the slaves who underpinned the British shipping trade and are absent from most maritime museums), and whose very presence is testament to a history of conflict, are either romanticized or sanitized as a discrete moment of error in the past? (4, 5-6)

The bitterest response was provoked by a wax-like composition entitled The Price of Tea, which was the first item seen by visitors on entering the gallery (Fig. 2). This work encapsulates the view that tea drinking was underlined by colonial exploitation by having a well-dressed upper-crust lady (who was associated by the public with Jane Austen) depicted next to a table with a porcelain tea service. A black, manacled hand rising from a cargo hatch showed the part played by slaves, thereby suggesting that trade in tea and sugar was intertwined with slavery.

Obviously, most of those rejecting the position taken by the Museum identified themselves with the well-dressed lady and not with the slave or any of those producing the porcelain or the tea. They opposed the foregrounding of labour and slavery in what many would prefer to see as a "neutral" Victorian ritual devoid of political undertones. These critics of the display thus saw it as an inadequate representation of "their" past and questioned the meaning implied by the display of these relations of production and domination. This debate is underscored by what Karl Marx describes as the fantastic objectification of commodities, where the relationships of production are all but silenced. As James Clifford interprets it, "The objective world is given, not produced, and

9 Sir John Hawkins is presented as 'the first recorded English slave trader and began his slaving voyages in 1565. He described capturing 200 Africans 'by the sword, and partly by other means.' He was joined by his young kinsman Francis Drake, who also started his career in the slave trading "industry."

10 The caption reads: "Between the 16th and 19th centuries, more than twelve million Africans were transported across the Atlantic to work as slaves in European-owned plantations. By the 1660s Britain was the leading European slave-trading nation. British ships carried around 3.5 million slaves to the Americas. It has been estimated that nearly 500,000 of these slaves died in transit. Many more perished in the hellish conditions of the plantations. The slave trade was part of a global trading system. British products and Indian goods were shipped to West Africa and exchanged for slaves. The slaves were taken to the Americas in return for sugar, tobacco, and other tropical produce. These were then sold in Britain for processing into consumer goods and possible re-export. In this way, the inhuman but profitable trading cycle continued."

thus historical relations of power in the work of acquisition are occulted. The making of meaning in museum classification and display is mystified as adequate representation" (61).[11]

Critics of The Price of Tea and the approach of the Trade and Empire gallery chose to disregard the fact that many British citizens today are direct descendents of past slaves. Maya Jaggi sums up the position of those British citizens in an article in The Guardian entitled "Casting off the shackles of history: Black Britons have a right to see their heritage justly represented," Here, Jaggi argues that:

> Cultural heritage is widely seen as an embodiment of the spirit of a nation, part of the cement of national identity for what is, after all, an "imagined community" ... The display of heritage has always been linked to wealth and power, to dominant views of history. As Orwell wrote: "Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past". Britain's—particularly England's—mythology has been of a white core culture linked to an unbroken national tradition; homogeneous, hermetic, impervious. ... Yet a selective amnesia purges "foreign" elements from memory, absorbing without acknowledgment, writing them out of the country's idea of itself ... the new Wolfson trade and empire gallery ... dares to link the genteel luxury of a 19th-century drawing room to forced labour ... It is a right of citizenship to see yourself reflected in what the nation preserves and values.

Curator Nigel Rigby defended his approach to the selection of exhibits and the captions used by alluding to the increasing number of visitors and the positive feedback received in the surveys handed to the public in the gallery. The then-director, Richard Ormond, also tried to counter the attack by emphasizing the role of museums as sites of debate and the intention to distance the museum from the imperial outlook of previous eras. The Daily Telegraph published Ormond's response, where he wrote that:

> [C]ritics ... would have us play Rule Britannia for the umpteenth time ... The "Trade and Empire" display ... does not aim to be a "History of Empire" ... perhaps the principal measure of its success is the fact that it has been ... the source of continuing debate. That is what museums and their interpretation of important subjects should be about.

FIGURE 2: 'THE PRICE OF TEA'
COURTESY OF NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM (GREENWICH)

Ormond's words bring home the debate about the role of museums in social construction. Indeed, the public responses to the displays at Te Papa and the Maritime Museum give us some interesting insights into the changing role of museums and the notion of what a collectible is and who makes the relevant decisions. This new perspective upon the past and its influence on the present contrasts with or complements the "earlier views of museums which saw their roles primarily in didactic terms" (Bennett 490).

In the two cases mentioned above, collecting and displaying are publicly sponsored activities, and collections are largely maintained as signs of national identity and communal ratification[12]. The museums' directors see it as part of their duty to preserve and show items that may help reflect and construct the identity of their community, while being, at the same time, culturally sensitive to the possible offence caused to other cultures. Such accountability to their "nations" is accompanied by the zeal to maintain sensible relations with other powers that may be trading partners and good sources of funds for the tourist industry. This often influences the presentation of deeds that might have been celebrated chauvinistically in the past and are now often depicted with a greater degree of sobriety.[13]

11 Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach have analysed the architecture, decoration, and context of what they call "universal survey museums." For Duncan and Wallach, these displays "claim the heritage of the classical tradition for contemporary society and equate that tradition with the very notion of civilization itself." This, they see to be "part of the process of legitimating the modern state" (qtd. Lavine and Karp 3).

New Zealand's Te Papa offers a good example of a national museum that sees its role as a forum for its society and attempts a high degree of communal partnership. Te Papa, a Maori name that is translated as "Our Place," opened in 1998 declaring its mission thus: "The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa is a forum for the nation to present, explore, and preserve the heritage of its cultures and knowledge of the natural environment in order to better understand and treasure the past, enrich the present and meet the challenges of the future" (Museum of New Zealand).

Te Papa has overtly defined its role as a community forum in which to question what a museum should or should not display and how to do it. Also, Te Papa has striven to incorporate Maori in their decision-making processes and consulted with iwi since the Project Development Board for the museum was set up in 1988.[14] In its present form, the museum intends to include Maori ways of displaying Maori artefacts even if, along the way, it has conflicted with the contradictions inherent in homogenizing the culture and selecting its speakers. Te Papa has therefore placed itself as forum in the debate between the pedagogical and the "interactive" approaches to displays by presenting its role, in part, as that of what Dominque Poulot defines as the "ecomuseum." In Tony Bennet's words, the ecomuseum is a:

> [vehicle] for discovering and shaping a sense of community, of a shared identity and purpose ... The ideals of the ecomuseum thus constitute an explicit break with, and critique of, the "top-down" model of museums which sees museums as having a responsibility to instruct their publics in favour of a more interactive model through which the public, transformed into an active community, becomes the co-author of the museum in a collaborative enterprise. (490)[15]

In contrast to the museum as forum that Te Papa embraces, the mission of the National Maritime Museum is: "To display and interpret the Museum's collections within public exhibitions and to provide value-for-money services and facilities for the well-being and enjoyment of the visiting public" (Qtd. Caird np). This illustrates the conclusion of this paper that the differences between these museums' conception of social responsibility is best summed up in their adherence to their missions, and that this is seen clearly in the divergent outcomes of the debates.

Te Papa staunchly defended and maintained its position as a forum for debate, a view presented by museum curator, Ian Wedde, in these words: "the museum has to be available for the expression of divergent and controversial views … Otherwise it simply is not going to be serving its purpose in the community as a place to debate and as a place where disagreement can be managed."[16] By way of contrast, concern about value-for-money and sponsorship was one of the likely influences in the National Maritime Museum's nervousness concerning the response to the displays in the Wolfson Gallery. In his article, "Empire show arouses pride and prejudice," The Guardian's John Ezard observes that: "Several trustees have voiced concern about the controversy. So has Lord Wolfson, whose charitable foundation gave 'a substantial contribution' towards the gallery's six-figure costs … Senior staff now plan to change the Wolfson trade and empire gallery slightly to meet some of the criticisms."

One of the casualties was the introduction of a panel to partition the corner where a film made up of various segments allusive to the British Empire is shown.[17] More importantly, The Price of Tea was

12 Hall has cogently argued that: "It has been the main function of national cultures … to represent what is in fact the ethnic hotch-potch of modern nationality as the primordial unity of 'one people'; and of their invented traditions to project the ruptures and conquests, which are their real history, backwards in an apparent seamless and unbroken continuity towards pure, mythic time … The nation-state was never simply a political entity. It was always also a symbolic formation—a 'system of representation'—which produced an 'idea' of the nation as an 'imagined community', with whose meanings we could identify and which, through this imaginary identification, constituted its citizens as 'subjects' (in both of Foucault's senses of 'subjection …')" (38).

13 Again in this Te Papa ranks itself as a post-colonial and post-modern museum with a great degree of sensitivity towards "the other," whereas no French person entering the display of Nelson at the National Maritime Museum fails to feel offended by the shows of guillotine and the recorded cries of mobs cheering the executions.

14 According to Ngapine Allen, "the Museum of New Zealand invited elders of the Rongowhakaata to Wellington to discuss the future of Rukupo's house, Te Hau ki Turanga … The elders agreed for the house to be exhibited in the new museum" (152).

15 Bennet is using here Poulot's definition of the ecomuseum as an entity "concerned with promoting the self-discovery and development of the community" (75), which "aims not to attain knowledge but to achieve communication" (76). Poulot adds that "the ecomuseum searches, above all, to engage … its audience in the social process" (78), which is interpreted by Bennet's statement that: "its focus is on everyday rather than on extraordinary culture" (490).

16 Tania Kovats' response to the controversy also emphasises the role of museums and art works as sites for social debate. Kovats indicates her choice of the Virgin Mary to be informed by the fact that she is "the most significant female archetype in Western culture … an extremely important mother figure and of enormous influence in the definition of female identity." The condom, she writes, "is a symbol of protection, literally a life-saver in the current climate of HIV awareness." Kovats concludes that her work's "context is the art gallery or museum which … have to function as deposits and containers for often difficult or complex works of art."

removed and replaced by a figurehead reminding visitors that Britain outlawed slavery in 1807. Thus, the museum missed an opportunity to give a resounding voice to a section of the population it purports to represent.[18] James Clifford's words on this particular subject provide a good commentary to close this paper: "Until museums … bring a wider range of historical experiences and political agendas into the actual … planning of exhibits and the control of museum collections, they will be perceived as merely paternalistic by people whose contact history with museums has been one of exclusion and condescension" (448).

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17 The film is accompanied by a poem written and read by Guyanese-born poet, John Agard. The caption about this exhibit reads as follows: "The main soundtrack of the film is a personal view of empire by the Guyanese-born poet John Agard, who has lived in Britain since 1977."

18 Hooper-Greenhill's observation of the presence of "busts of 'negroes'" in Clandon's house is relevant in this context. Hooper-Greenhill notes that their presence, which was meant to indicate how the Onslow's family fortunes originated, suggests that: "European humanism constructed its values through exploitation and exclusion" (141). She also remarks that: "These references are probably invisible to many who visit Clandon Park," who are mostly white British subjects (141).

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Fellowship of the National Maritime Museum (Greenwich, London).

The Birth of Modern Times

Seán Brosnhan and Peter Read report on a Dunedin exhibition where the museum and the academy meet.

Social history exhibitions have come a long way in New Zealand museums in recent years. Standards of presentation have risen ever higher while issues of inclusiveness and accessibility have generated new interpretive approaches. These efforts have been well rewarded. Social history is emerging as a major drawcard, bringing new visitors into the museum environment. The burgeoning tourist market has also made it clear that such displays, focused on what makes New Zealand and its diverse communities distinctive and different from other parts of the world, are major assets for local museums.

Yet some historians seem rather disapproving of the museum contribution to history-making. They speak disparagingly of the 'lowest common denominator' factor, the 'dumbing down' of history for general consumption. Sometimes such criticisms are well justified. But if museum history-making is to offer more than just a cartoon version for the masses, how do historians and museums bridge the gap between the academy and the general public? Is it possible for 'serious' history of the academic variety to make it in the museum environment? Do museum visitors want to hear what the university historians have to say anyway? Can historians present their findings in ways that can be understood by a general museum audience?

Exhibiting history

A recent exhibition at the Otago Settlers Museum in Dunedin was an attempt to meet these challenges. The Birth of Modern Times: Dunedin's Southern Suburbs 1890-1940 traced the changes in society and everyday life that characterised the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in suburban Dunedin. The exhibition was based on the results of the University of Otago's "Caversham Project". In 2001 its leader, Professor Erik Olssen, was awarded the Te Rangi Hiroa Medal by the Royal Society of New Zealand for his work on the study. In gaining this honour, the Caversham Project itself was acknowledged as the biggest project in social history or historical sociology in New Zealand and Australia and one of the largest in the world.

Yet for all its national and international acclaim, the results of the Caversham study had previously been shared almost exclusively with academics. The irony of a study of a working class community being presented in ways that would prove virtually impenetrable to a working class audience was not lost on the researchers. An approach to the Museum followed and a partnership between the academics and curators sought to recast the Caversham Project as a social history exhibition for the community. In doing so neither party wished to destroy the integrity of the historical research, but they aimed rather to translate the major findings into an accessible public form.

Few museums should have been better placed for such a task. The Otago Settlers Museum is New Zealand's oldest museum of social history, founded in 1898 expressly to record the story and preserve the artefacts of Otago's pioneer Scottish settlers. This mission broadened in the late twentieth century to encompass all of Otago's peoples and the material evidence of their lives. A large and diverse collection therefore existed to support the Museum's exhibitions and displays. Nonetheless the scope of the Caversham Project and its intensive examination of gender and class in the southern Dunedin suburbs proved problematic to convey.

For one thing the Museum collection was surprisingly lacking in material directly connected with working class southern Dunedin and its institutions. The weakness of past collection documentation also made it difficult to identify artefacts whose provenance tied them to residents of the southern suburbs. Many of the subjects covered by the original research, and integrated in to the exhibition brief, were outside the range of subject matter previously covered by museum displays. Images, artefacts and ephemera associated with such topics as poverty, menstruation, sex education, delinquency – all included in The Birth of Modern Times – were little represented in the collection.

Indeed our search reinforced how partial the representation of ordinary life becomes in museum collections. This reflects the winnowing effect of time itself, as well as the assumptions of donors and curators working together to create the material record of our past in museum collections. A notable example for this exhibition was the lack of a working man's lounge suit in the costume collection. The lounge suit had become a practical multi-purpose work wardrobe for men by the late nineteenth century. They wore it everywhere, in the garden and at leisure, as well as to work. Given the thousands of working men who inhabited Dunedin's southern suburbs, there must have been an abundance of such suits made, sold and worn in the area. Yet not one had survived to be preserved in Dunedin's social history museum.

Making connections

Perhaps the strongest part of the exhibition was the richness of the photographic images. Hundreds of photographs and illustrations were used and these became the main engine of the interpretation. This matches popular approaches to history-making. Whenever we made contact with local institutions or groups, seeking loans of historic material for the exhibition, their automatic response was to look for their photographs. Notwithstanding that we asked for 'things', not images (since we had already completed our photographic research by this time), in every case people automatically offered us their old photographs first. Everybody, it seems, relates history to photographic images. For a mass audience there is no more potent device for communicating the past.

The Birth of Modern Times included a number of features to enhance personal connections with the subject matter. A section of the 'Caversham Database' – the core of the university research – was available and searchable. This allowed visitors to locate and track anyone who lived in the study area through their entries on the electoral rolls. A selection of historic maps, a backgrounder to all the street names of the area and a monster aerial photograph of the whole of the south Dunedin Flat in 1948 also facilitated visitors' identification with the subject matter. With these points of personal reference, visitors were able to place themselves and their families in the wider historic interpretation. Everything presented from the academic study thereby gained some resonance with individual stories.

SPORTMEN FROM KENSINGTON IN SOUTH DUNEDIN SAMPLE THE NON-ALCOHOLIC REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE AT WAI-RONGOA SPRING.
COURTESY: OTAGO SETTLERS MUSEUM

The visitor response to this exhibition suggests that museum visitors can cope with 'serious' history. Academic research, suitably 'translated', can work in the museum environment. Perhaps the key is to enable visitors to make meaningful connections with displays. In this case the opportunity to 'plug into' the story was a major attraction for those with direct family links with southern Dunedin. Strangers to the area, meanwhile, could also make links through the every day experiences of working life, health and clothing presented in the exhibition. Old film footage, oral history excerpts, and biographies of representative individuals all help visitors engage with the nitty gritty of past lives in Dunedin's southern suburbs.

In the three months of the exhibition period over 7,500 visitors paid to see The Birth of Modern Times, over two thirds of them Dunedin people and a noticeable increase in the normal number of museum visitors drawn from the local community. In response to its popularity the exhibition will live on in another form: it is set to appear as a 66 page booklet, designed as an ideal Christmas present for anyone with a connection to Dunedin's southern suburbs.

Seán Brosnahan and Peter Read work as curators at the Otago Settlers Museum, since 1988 and 2000 respectively. Peter was previously employed at the West Coast Historical Museum in Hokitika. Both history graduates, they also gained Museum Studies diplomas from Massey University.

A Look into Truth's Mirror

Linda Tyler reflects on the exhibition of the permanent collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery curated by Tony Green, Emeritus Professor of Art History at the University of Auckland. It opened in Dunedin on 20 July 2002.

GALLERY VIEW OF 'TRUTH'S MIRROR, THE NEW DISPLAY OF THE PERMANENT COLLECTION AT DUNEDIN PUBLIC ART GALLERY.
COURTESY: DUNEDIN PUBLIC ART GALLERY

Renowned for the minor masterpieces of European art bestowed by generous benefactors such as the de Beers[1] and Archdeacon Smythe, the Dunedin Public Art Gallery collection of 8,000 items has in recent years become the focus of considerable attention in the local and national media. Stemming from a restructuring decision which made historical curator Peter Entwisle redundant in April 2000, concern for the fate of the collection reached fever pitch with street protests, an investigative television programme[2], newspaper articles, editorials and numerous letters to the editor. Director Priscilla Pitts quickly refuted the suggestion that the restructuring would lead to the art gallery's "being given over to cutting edge contemporary art" with concomitant mothballing of the permanent collection. In her statement to a special meeting of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Society in December 1999 (where the membership voted to freeze acquisition funds until they felt that the gallery's activities were adequately focused on the management, use and display of the gallery's permanent collection), Pitts stated that "staff restructuring will release sufficient annual funding to enable us to commission consultant curators with specialist expertise to undertake research into specific areas of the collection and to develop exhibitions and publications based on the collection." She went on to amend the city council's annual plan for 2000-2001 with the requirement that not less than 40% of designated exhibition galleries be committed to displays from the permanent collection. Excellent exhibitions drawn from the decorative arts collections by Margery Blackman (textiles) and Peter Wedde (ceramics) resulted, but Truth's Mirror is the first exhibition of fine arts from the collection by a specialist curator. It replaces Power, People, Place, a chronologically organised collection exhibition of 220 works selected by outgoing curator Peter Entwisle which had been running since early November 1999.

Traditionally the Dunedin Public Art Gallery has used its decorative arts collection to create a sense of period in the galleries where the paintings were hung. This reflected the curatorial belief that chronology is not a tool of art historical interpretation but an objective reality built into the fabric of art works and into the awareness of the artists who created them. Treasures of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, the main text on the collection, written by Peter Entwisle in 1990 to function as a catalogue for the eponymous exhibition, orders the collection by date of acquisition. In contrast to these approaches, and in keeping with the "splice and dice" of recent exhibition making practices internationally[3], Truth's Mirror orders highlights from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery collection thematically. Taking its title from a little-seen Pre-Raphaelite painting depicting a personification of Truth peering into a mirror, the

1 The de Beer collection of 172 items including 50 Japanese prints, 77 Old Master prints, 5 modern prints and 24 drawings and watercolours as well as six nineteenth century and modern paintings arrived in 1982. Esmond de Beer had earlier given the Italian Renaissance Madonna and Child by Machiavelli to mark the 100th anniversary of the founding in Dunedin of the family firm, Hallensteins.

2 Backchat, 12 September, 1999

3 For example "Making choices" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Tate Modern's display groupings of Still Life/Object/Real life, Nude/Action/Body, Landscape/Matter/Environment and History/Memory/Society.

exhibition is intended to "reflect the continually changing and often contested claims among artists to the truth; the conventional truth to appearances, the truth to underlying universal form; the truth to the flatness of the pictorial surface, the truth to social realities, the truth to self and to authentic expression with the brush", according to curator Tony Green. By not setting itself up to tell the one true story of the history of art or the history of this collection, what Green effectively manages to do is provide the assembled works with what Andre Malraux described in The Imaginary Museum as "an enigmatic deliverance from time." In the process, he unearths previously unexhibited works and reinvigorates a collection more often deployed to provide a lockstep march through a preferred view of history.

Early landscapes and portraits with depictions of 20th century women in interiors are juxtaposed in the first room, with the magnificent Petrus van der Velden Otira landscape (purchased in 1893 two years after it was painted) appropriately sharing wall space with Salvator Rosa's swashbuckling Rocky Landscape with figures and Turner's romantic Dunstanborough Castle. Figure painting predominates in the next room with the devotional Italian altarpieces and Madonna and Child compositions seguing into secular images of women. Connections are there to be made by the viewer visually rather than spelled out in labels – Fiona Pardington's soft focus close-up of a throat ringed with love bites entitled Choker invites comparison with a Japanese print exploring the erotic potential of a courtesan's neck. In the small wing gallery, genre grouping is abandoned, and the sensitive media of drawing, watercolour painting and photography, dictate the necessary lowered light levels. Green makes the most of Archdeacon Smythe's gift of a thousand British watercolours and drawings in a dense hanging. Despite the media based selection, there are still instructive pairings such as Rita Angus' Lake Wanaka 1938 with its foregrounded skeletal tree and Ando Ichiryusai Hiroshige (1797-1858) Mt Fuji seen through a landscape with trees a lake and houses, a print from Charles Brasch's 1973 bequest. The last gallery groups nineteenth and twentieth century paintings into the genres of landscape, still life and abstraction so that subtle relationships between historical and modern traditions can be staked out. Next to Blaise Desgoffes' exact arrangement of antiquities and draperies, Philip Clairmont's 1981 still life can be seen as an innovative outburst running parallel with a founding tradition, functioning in a similar way to Richard Long's rocks on the floor in front of Monet's waterlilies at the Tate Modern.

Critics of a thematic hang either believe that it dumbs down the art it presents, or they feel that the thematic telling of multiple stories runs the risk of confusing a non-specialist audience. Peter Entwisle through the vehicle of his weekly Dunedin art column "Art Beat" in the Otago Daily Times has taken the latter approach, describing the exhibition as disastrous. His main complaint is that the short introductory texts on the wall of each room do not lead the viewer to find particular contrasts, or explain varieties of truth: "Visitors could be forgiven for thinking they've been conned. Where exactly are the different contrasts the labels talk about? Which works represent the different kinds of truth? What merit do any of these have anyway?"[4] According to Entwisle the exhibition just wants to "shock the bourgeois" by "hanging things together in horrible clashes" and unrealistically expects the visitor to come armed with art historical knowledge. Rather than being too arcane, however, the exhibition creates a context which helps any visitor to answer questions about art work such as "Why does it look the way it does? Why did the artist choose to do it this way?" without resorting to the core explanation of a chronological hang. Truth's Mirror allows that artists may also be reacting to what an artist did centuries ago, or to what younger artists are doing at the same time. Using the genres as coatpegs, it opens up interpretation of the Dunedin public's favourite paintings, without foreclosing on meaning through explanatory labels. As such, the exhibition represents a welcome creative rethinking of the permanent collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, which will continue to excite interest and controversy throughout its lengthy installation.

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4 Monday, 5 August 2002

Signs of the Times at the Buried Village

Walter King describes a different approach to interpretive signage in the shadow of Mount Tarawera.

New panels are currently being prepared to interpret the grounds and excavated sites of the Buried Village of Te Wairoa, Rotorua. This site opened to the public in the 1930's and is owned and operated through a family trust

The ten signs in the shape of open books and mounted on top of cast concrete plinths will be strategically placed among the 15 excavated archaeological sites. Designed to represent the pages of a travel diary or journal, the panels will effectively feature 'letters home' from a young English tourist, Margaret Fell, who is on her O.E. and honeymoon in New Zealand. Margaret's letters to her family in England present an account of what she found following the devastating eruption of Mount Tarawera (June 10, 1886) that buried Te Wairoa village.

Margaret is a fictional character, developed to provide more personal human insights into the natural disaster and its aftermath. The concept has been developed by Chris Currie, an exhibition designer who previously worked at the Rotorua Museum of Art and History and is very familiar with the local history. He believes it is the emotional and descriptive content and style of her writing, conveying her fictional memories that will help visitors appreciate and understand Te Wairoa's unique Maori and European settler heritage, to fully understand how life was after the eruption, especially from a contemporary tourist's point of view. The site managers stress the importance for people experiencing the heritage site today to be able to orientate themselves through careful use of images. They can gain a better sense of life before and after the cataclysmic events of 10th June 1886 and identify with the experience of their tourist predecessors.

Like many tourists, the Margaret character had journeyed from Ohinemutu, (Rotorua) to stay in Te Wairoa village – a staging post and early tourism resort that offered accommodation, meals, transport, entertainment and Maori guides to the famous Pink and White Terraces within nearby Lake Rotomahana. Since hearing of the devastating news the fictional visitor is prompted to recount her experiences of the people she met and the culture and nature of this, to her, strange and exotic land.

While no attempt is made to hide the fact that Margaret Fell is an imaginary visitor, whose "letters home" form a composite descriptive narrative, the label texts are based on sound research from various contemporary accounts and archaeological finds.

Margaret's letters are presented beneath a curved polycarbonate top – onto which the text and images have been printed – with text reflecting the writing style of the day, together with selected black and white photographs, contemporary newspaper clippings, a leaf or sprig of dried flowers and small other ephemera of travel circa 1886.

The Buried Village has applied to the New Zealand Historic Places Trust for 'heritage area' status, and with the completion of a Section 18 form, there are plans to re-excavate various sites including the Rotomahana Hotel, allowing visitors to view a 'real live dig' following a volcanic eruption.

Walter King is the marketing manager at the Buried Village. He would welcome feedback on the effectiveness of these interpretive panels from readers of Te Ara who visit the site. The Buried Village is open every day except Christmas Day.

Extract from the fictional letters of Margaret Fell, July – November 1886

August 1886

Dear Mother,

Looking back, it seems like a dream, one that I will try to recapture for you. Could I have sensed what lay ahead for the people of Te Wairoa? All I can do now is write about it so we will all remember.

Our honeymoon trip has a special poignancy now. After days of travel dear Walter and I arrived at Te Wairoa, the gateway to the terraces, on May 21st 1886, eager to see the wonders of the area.

The beauty of the lakes and native bush we had passed through on our coach trip from Ohinemutu (the Maori village on the shores of Lake Rotorua), distracted me from the dust that had crept into simply everything I owned! As we clattered to a halt outside the Rotomahana Hotel we were surrounded by a laughing group of young Maori children, eager to carry our bags – for a small fee.

But let me describe to you my first impressions of Te Wairoa village – so sadly changed now. The road ran alongside a lively stream, we travelled past an old mill, and soon we came upon dwellings and cultivated fields. There was a mix of European and Maori houses, two rather impressive hotels, both two storeyed, and a hall as well as one or two stores. There were around 150 souls living here, around 120 of them Maori I believe.

I have enclosed clippings from a newspaper breaking the dreadful news of the eruption on June 10th 1886.

Your loving daughter

Margaret.

Recent Constitutional Changes at Whanganui Regional Museum

David Butts, Sharon Dell and Rangi Wills

provide an account of the genesis of the new bicultural governance structure in Wanganui

Setting the course for bicultural governance

Between 1990 and 1996 the establishment acts of the four metropolitan museums, Auckland Museum, the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Canterbury Museum and Otago Museum, were revised. It was not until the passing of the Auckland War Memorial Museum Act in 1996, and the subsequent establishment of the Taumata-a-Iwi, that there is any evidence of innovation in the representation of tangata whenua. By the mid 1990s a number of regional museums, including Tairawhiti Museum, Nelson Provincial Museum and Whanganui Regional Museum, had begun to address the issue of Māori representation at the governance level. There is now a range of governance models operating at the regional level in New Zealand that reflect local responses to the issue of Māori representation within museum governance. It appears that these changes in Māori representation within the governance arrangements in general museums have not been accompanied by similar changes in Māori representation in the governance arrangements of art museums, except in the case of a small number of combined institutions (e.g. Te Manawa and Tairawhiti Museum).

Introducing the Whanganui Regional Museum

The purpose of this paper is to provide an outline of the recent constitutional changes that have occurred at Whanganui Regional Museum. Wanganui Public Museum was established by Declaration of Incorporation under the Public Libraries Act (1875) in 1892 and the museum was opened to the public in 1895. The museum was established by the people of Wanganui to provide a home for Samuel Drew's large private collection of natural history specimens and taonga Māori. The collection of natural history specimens, taonga Māori and foreign ethnology grew rapidly. Consistent with museum practice of the time a large proportion of the collection was on public display. By the early 1920s the facility was no longer adequate to house the rapidly growing collection. A new museum was built in 1927 and considerably extended in 1968. During the 1970s the museum gained a national reputation for its natural history dioramas and the Māori Court displays, particularly with international tourists. The appointment of Brian Henderson as director in 1983 marks the transition to a fully professional regional institution and the major redevelopment of collection storage and collection documentation. Today the institution is known for its commitment to developing innovative community projects. The major challenge facing the institution in the next decade is the redevelopment of the museum facility.

When the museum was established, the constitution provided for a Board of Trustees of fourteen people. The board was elected from Society members at an Annual General Meeting. No specific provision was made for Māori representation on the trust board. It was not until the appointment of Te Hekenui Whakaraka as a Māori Associate Member at the Annual General Meeting in 1939 that a Māori member of the trust board was appointed. Since that time there have been Māori on the museum trust board as either associate members or elected members. While many Māori families have gifted and deposited taonga in the museum for safe-keeping, a small group of families (Hipango, Takarangi, Metekingi) have maintained a relationship with the museum through several generations as members of the trust board and kaitiaki of taonga deposited in the museum.

Heading in new directions

In 1995 the Wanganui District Council, in its role as the museum's primary funder, gave notice that it required a governance and management review. The District Council was concerned that the governing body should adequately represent the rate-paying

community. A governance working party was authorised by the 1995 Annual General Meeting. While little progress was made during 1995-6, in 1997 Trust Bank Wanganui Community Trust provided a grant to underwrite a strategic planning process. The project was extended to include a review of governance arrangements and a project manager was contracted to facilitate the activities of the working party. Two working parties were established. The Governance Working Party was established in September 1997 and was made up of representatives of communities of interest as identified by the board. Within a short time it was realised that this was not an effective way to engage Whanganui iwi in the governance reform process. A Māori project manager was contracted to facilitate a hui-a-iwi to decide how iwi could best participate in the process. The hui-a-iwi, held in April 1998, mandated Te Roopu Mahi mo ngā Taonga to represent tangata whenua interests in the governance redevelopment process.

Professor Whatarangi Winiata had been invited to speak to the hui-a-iwi at which Te Roopu Mahi mo ngā Taonga had been established. He had outlined the Raukawa or Mihinare governance model that has been adopted by the Anglican Church. This model had been endorsed by the hui-a-iwi and Te Roopu Mahi mo ngā Taonga recommended this model for discussion at its first meeting with the Governance Working Party. In October 1998 the Joint Working Party recommended this governance model to the Whanganui Regional Museum Board and the proposal was formally adopted at the Annual General Meeting in November 1998. In December 1998 the recommendations were presented to the Wanganui District Council which expressed some disquiet and asked for the recommendations to be reviewed. The Joint Working Party and the Board undertook a review of the recommendations including further consultation with the community and with museum members in particular. Following this consultation, minor changes were made to the proposals and a draft constitution was prepared to be presented to the Museum Society at the Annual general Meeting in November 1999. The AGM adopted the proposals in principle and instructed the board to proceed with the establishment of the new trust. Over the next 15 months the documentation and legal work was completed and the Whanganui Regional Museum Trust was established in February 2001. A final resolution at the Society's AGM in March 2001 authorised the transfer of assets, including the collection, to the Whanganui Museum Regional Trust. This transfer took place at a special ceremony on the 1st of July 2001.

The Principles of Governance require that the governance of the museum will be conducted in such a way that:

1. The principles of partnership and two cultures development will be interpreted in the manner of the Mihinare[1] model of governance.
2. The Joint Council will respond to stakeholders' needs, interests and views without compromising other principles.
3. The strategic direction, goals and objectives pursued by Joint Council are consistent with the values and principles agreed by the community.
4. Accessibility to the Museum's collection, programmes and activities is optimised.
5. The physical and cultural well-being of items in the collection is maintained and enhanced.
6. The rights and interests of owners of items in the collection shall be recognised
7. International declarations and conventions such as the UNESCO Declaration on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), and the Mataatua Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1993) will be recognised. The Joint Council will be guided by recognised codes of ethics and professional practice.
8. The institution and its purpose are maintained into the future.

1 The Mihinare model of governance has been successfully adopted by the Anglican Church. It is based on the principle of partnership embodied in the Treaty of Waitangi and was devised by the Raukawa Trustees in the 1980s

The new governance model

The trust deed of the Whanganui Regional Museum Trust provides the most authoritative and comprehensive account of the museum's governance model. The governance model has three component parts: the Tikanga Māori House, the Civic House and the Joint Council. Each of the two houses elect members to the Joint Council. Where decisions are decided by a vote at Joint Council there must be a majority of the representatives of both houses supporting the motion for it to pass. Decision-making at Joint Council level must be consistent with the Treaty of Waitangi and result from adequate consultation between the partners.

The governance model is founded on this Constitutional Principle:

The principles of partnership and two cultures development arising from the Treaty of Waitangi will be fully implemented in the museum.

In the partnership of two cultures development, the objects of the museum shall be as follows:

1. To enhance understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of the Whanganui region and its place in the world.
2. To develop a collection by holding, collecting, preserving, documenting and managing objects of natural and cultural significance to the Whanganui region.
3. To facilitate the sharing of the stories of Whanganui and its place in the world by providing exhibition, education, research and advisory programmes.

The Tikanga Māori House is inclusive of the tangata whenua groups that have traditionally maintained strong whanaungatanga links with one another and have interests in taonga held by the Whanganui Regional Museum. Any person who can whakapapa to these hapū/iwi is deemed to be a member of the Tikanga Māori House. The Tikanga Māori House is inclusive of the autonomous tribal collectives of the Patea, Waitotara, Kai Iwi, Whanganui, Whangaehu, Mangawhero, Turakina and Rangitikei Rivers. Each iwi/hapū in this region appoints two representatives to the Tikanga Māori House Board. The Tikanga Māori House Board selects six Joint Council members from representatives of the following iwi/hapū : Ngā Rauru, Ngāti Apa, Mokai Patea, Ngā Paerangi, Whanganui whānui and Tamahaki. The Tikanga Māori House meets once a month and the minutes of these meetings are circulated to the members of the Civic House. The museum director attends meetings of the Tikanga Māori House.

The Civic House includes all those people or groups who have an interest in the governance of the museum. An electoral college process is used for the selection of the Civic House Joint Council members. The electoral college consists of representatives of Whanganui District Council (2), other territorial local authorities (1), the Museum Society (3), cultural heritage organisations (1), natural heritage organisations (1), educational organisations (2), Queens Park partners (The District Library and Sarjeant Gallery) (1), and the business community (1). The electoral college selects six people to represent the Civic House on the Joint Council from people who have been nominated by members of the community. The Civic House meets once a month with the director in attendance. Minutes of the Civic House meetings are circulated to members of the Tikanga Māori House.

This new governance structure has been in operation for one year. The trust deed requires the Joint Council to undertake an independent review of the governance process at the end of the second year of operation. Both the Tikanga Māori House and the Civic House have completed the processes required to appoint new members to replace members who have resigned at the end of the first year.

Setting the strategic priorities together

The Joint Council has identified three strategic priorities for the museum. The present museum facility was built in two stages, the first in 1927 and the second in 1968. Neither building complies with modern earthquake standards; some parts require strengthening to comply with local authority bylaws. There are also issues of size, functionality and access for the disabled that need to be remedied. The Joint

WANGANUI PUBLIC MUSEUM (NOW WANGANUI REGIONAL MUSEUM) SHORTLY AFTER ITS OPENING IN 1892.
COURTESY: WHANGANUI REGIONAL MUSEUM.

Council has identified the complete redevelopment or rebuilding of the facility as a mid-term objective. The second priority is to focus on the revision of the institution's policy framework. Priority has been given to the revision of the Collection Management Policy. Museum staff have presented a report to the Joint Council documenting existing policy. In response to this it was determined that priority should be given to the development of a Taonga Māori Collection Policy. This initiative has been developed in partnership with Te Papa National Services and is known as the Ngā Pae Tata project. It is designed to improve documentation of the taonga Māori collections and to develop a policy framework for the care and use of the collection. The first stage of this project has been completed.

The third strategic priority is the redevelopment of the public galleries. This project, called Whanganui Stories, is designed to provide a framework that will integrate the human and natural history of the region and place the museum collection in an international context. Although there had been progress made with this project before the Joint Council was formed, the Joint Council wants the project to be recommenced involving the various communities in the region in the development of the conceptual framework.

Cementing relationships

The recent acquisition of the Partington Photograph Collection has demonstrated the strength of the growing relationship between tangata whenua and the museum. These nationally significant images of people and places on the Whanganui River were taken around 1900. When they were offered for sale by auction there were Whanganui people who objected to the way in which this was done. The museum facilitated a process that brought together interested parties in Whanganui who were interested in returning the collection to the region. Although the museum was unable to contribute significantly to the cost of returning the collection, the institution was seen by tangata whenua as the most appropriate repository. This collection cost $138,000 and was purchased with grants from the Whanganui River Māori Trust Board, other Māori trusts and incorporations and the Whanganui Community Foundation. This collection was formally welcomed into the museum with a powhiri on Sunday 21 July 2002.

The creation of a new governance structure signals a new phase in the life of an institution such as Whanganui Regional Museum. However, there is also a strong sense of continuity in the care of the collection, development of public programmes and maintaining relationships with those Māori and Pākehā individuals and families who have had associations with the museum, in some cases over several generations. Members of the Whanganui Regional Museum Society have actively supported the museum for 106 years. What is new is the formal relationship that now exists at the governance level between the museum and tangata whenua. It is important to note, however, that the new governance arrangements have not supplanted the traditionally strong relationship between the museum and Putiki marae – in fact parties to the governance reinforce the importance of this relationship. Relationships with a range of community stakeholders have also been strengthened through the new governance arrangements. The benefits of these new relationships will emerge slowly and, most noticeably, from the strategic priority projects that have been outlined above.

David Butts is Programme Co-ordinator, Heritage and Museum Studies, School of Maori Studies, Massey University, Palmerston North. He is currently writing a doctoral dissertation on Maori Participation in Museum Governance. David is also a trustee of the Whanganui Regional Museum.

Sharon Dell has been Director of the Whanganui Regional Museum for the past seven years. She moved to Wanganui from the Alexander Turnbull Library where she was Assistant Chief Librarian and Keeper of the Collections.

Rangi Wills represents Whanganui iwi on the Tikanga Maori House and is Chair of the Joint Council (a position that rotates between the Chairs of the two houses). He was a member of Te Roopu Mahi mo Nga taonga and is currently chair of the Putiki Marae Committee.

New Maori Policy Initiatives at the Auckland War Memorial Museum

Danny Tumahoi introduces the updated Kaupapa guiding policy and practice at the Auckland Museum

E nga reo, e nga mana, e nga karangatanga o te motu, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa. E mihi ana ki a ratou, e hinga mai nei, e hinga atu na, e hinga mai ra, haere, haere, haere, haere whakaoti atu. Ratou ki a ratou kua whetu rangitia, tatou ki a tatou te kanohi ora, kati kua ea.

Last year was very exciting for the Taumata-a-Iwi at the Auckland Museum and 2002 is proving to be even more so as the Museum reaches out boldly beyond its four walls back into the communities that have served it over the past 150 years. Maori have perhaps given more to the Auckland Museum than most. Our symbols of identity, taonga, together with the remains of tupuna, were captured by museums as a result of one and a half centuries of colonisation. During these turbulent years Maori continued to give more than they ever received, eventually supporting Aotearoa New Zealand through two world wars and its urban development. But at what cost?

Today's generation of Maori are mostly urban dwelling, living away from their tribal communities and the value system upon which our people have survived and flourished for millennia. Although ancestral estates are now either covered in pasture and forests or concrete and tarseal, the symbols once attached to them, taonga, still survive and remain accessible to our young through today's museums. But because our young people have become separated from their homelands, they struggle to grasp the deeper meanings of taonga such as those held in the Auckland Museum.

Thus the Auckland Museum is now seeking to overcome this breakdown in traditional knowledge networks by developing new strategies that will allow taonga and dislocated urban-raised kin to again engage with the communities from where they originated. I am proud of the Auckland Museum taking this step and demonstrating the courage to put all its communities, especially those who have given so much, at the forefront again. With conversation comes understanding, but only if we can speak face to face.

To facilitate this process the Taumata-a-Iwi and the Auckland Museum Trust Board recently entered into a new way of working together. After literally going back to basics, new governing policies were developed and then adopted and implemented on 6 December last year. The Kaupapa, the framework within which the Taumata-a-Iwi discharges its responsibilities to Maori, has evolved over the last four years, and is now strengthened by formal Guiding Principles that describe how the Museum Trust Board and the Taumata-a-Iwi will work together on Maori issues. This governance shift signals a greater level of understanding and awareness throughout the museum of the responsibilities associated with: taonga and the collections; the land on which the Museum stands; and the visitors to the Museum, especially Maori. Flowing out of this are Maori operational policies that permeate, and are integrated with, all aspects of the Museum's operations.

Today the Taumata-a-Iwi is pleased to welcome people to the refurbished Museum, and is confident that the recent changes, together with the forthcoming Stage II building programme, will go a long way to ensuring that the Auckland Museum is considered by all visitors to be an excellent resource and heritage destination. We look forward to the challenges ahead, as we work together to implement these policy initiatives.

Nau mai, haere mai, piki mai, kake mai, whakatau mai

Te Puna (Danny) Tumahai is Chairman of the Taumata-a-Iwi, the advisory body established under the Auckland War Memorial Museum Act 1996.

AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Guiding Principles for the Trust Board's Relationship with the Taumata-a-Iwi

Introduction: To continue to foster a beneficial relationship as envisaged by the Auckland War Memorial Museum Act 1996, the Trust Board and the Taumata-a-Iwi acknowledge the following:

1. The Trust Board acts in the interest of the Museum at all times.
2. The Trust Board exercises trusteeship over the Museum / Te Papa Whakahiku, and all treasures and trusts within its care.
3. The Trust Board recognises the spirit of partnership and goodwill envisaged by the Treaty of Waitangi.
4. The Trust Board recognises the principle of mana whenua with regard to Te Papa Whakahiku and its taonga.
5. The Trust Board recognises the principle of mana whenua in making appointments to the Taumata-a-Iwi.
6. The Trust Board and Taumata-a-Iwi have trusteeship obligations toward nga iwi o te motu.
7. The Trust Board will seek advice from the Taumata-a-Iwi on ways of ensuring that the Board's policies relating to:
   a) Custodial policies and guardianship of all Maori taonga of whatever kind and tribal source;
   b) Staffing policies, including taking affirmative action in recruitment and training programmes, which will lead Maori people into professional careers in New Zealand's culturally integrated museums;
   c) Display policies, including presentation of Maori taonga to the public in a culturally appropriate and informative manner; and
   d) Development policies, including protection of both the substance and status of Maori taonga in any Museum plan; give proper regard to Maori values, and those matters provided for in the Treaty of Waitangi.
8. The Trust Board recognises the right of the Taumata-a-Iwi to give advice on all matters of Maori protocol.
9. The Trust Board recognises the value of a direct relationship with the Taumata-a-Iwi, and will encourage hui where that is identified as being appropriate.
10. In giving effect to its special relationship with the Taumata-a-Iwi, the Trust Board recognises the following principles:
    a) The right of the Taumata-a-Iwi to advise the Trust Board;
    b) The principle of partnership;
    c) The principle of Trusteeship;
    d) Active protection to ensure physical and cultural safety;
    e) Resolution of past misunderstandings.
11. Where the Trust Board requests or the Taumata-a-Iwi provides formal advice to the Trust Board, that request or advice shall be in writing and shall clearly state:
    a) the grounds for that advice;
    b) any alternative means or options required or available;
    c) whether, and on what basis, recommendations are to be made; and
    d) the implications of not accepting the advice.
12. The Trust Board recognises that the Tumuaki Maori Director has a dual role with respect to the Trust Board and the Taumata-a-Iwi:
    a) as a member of executive management reporting through the Director to the Trust Board;
    b) as a provider of services and advice to the Taumata-a-Iwi, and consulting with it on such other matters as are delegated to the Tumuaki Maori from time to time by the Director.

AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

TAUMATA-A-IWI: KAUPAPA

This Kaupapa sets out the principles upon which the Taumata-a-Iwi will discharge its responsibilities to Maori.

The Auckland War Memorial Museum is governed by the Auckland Museum Trust Board. The Board's duties, functions and powers, and its responsibilities to ten statutory objectives are set out in the Auckland War Memorial Museum Act 1996. Paramount amongst its responsibilities is the trusteeship and guardianship of the Museum, and its extensive collections of treasures and scientific materials.

The Museum's Act also provides for a Maori Committee known as the Taumata-a-Iwi. The Taumata-a-Iwi is founded upon the principle of mana whenua (customary authority of and over ancestral land), and comprises Ngati Whatua, Ngati Paoa and Tainui.

The Taumata-a-Iwi is responsible for the provision of advice and assistance to the Trust Board in a series of matters set out in the Act. The Taumata-a-Iwi acts in a trustee role in representing the interests of Maori and advising the Trust Board on matters of custodial policy and guardianship of taonga (Maori ancestral treasures) and any whakapakoko, uru moko and koiwi (indigenous human remains) held by the Museum. They are also required to advise the Trust Board on all Maori cultural aspects concerning Museum's wahi tapu (shrines, ancestral spaces set apart), staffing, display, visitor, marketing and development policies.

(The Taumata-a-Iwi's first Kaupapa was adopted by the Auckland Museum Trust Board 7 October 1998)

PRINCIPLE I: THE RIGHT TO ADVISE

The Auckland War Memorial Museum Act 1996 empowers the Taumata-a-Iwi to give advice on all matters of Maori protocol within the Museum and between the Museum and Maori people at large. Museum policies will reflect the aspirations of both Treaty partners by acknowledging that existing and proposed policies will be reviewed by the Taumata-a-Iwi, and recommendations to the Auckland Museum Trust Board will be made accordingly.

PRINCIPLE II: PARTNERSHIP

Both the Auckland Museum Trust Board and the Taumata-a-Iwi will act reasonably and in the utmost good faith by observing and encouraging the spirit of partnership and goodwill envisaged by the Treaty of Waitangi. The Trust Board recognises the Taumata-a-Iwi's cultural responsibility to wider Maori regarding any implications of mana Maori (lore of the Maori) as measured by mana whenua and associated obligations of manaakitanga (providing hospitality to visitors) or kaitiakitanga (cultural management and protection of taonga and resources) including Maori cultural, intellectual and commercial property rights, and will seek advice and direction in all such cases as they arise.

PRINCIPLE III: MAORI EXPECTATIONS

The Museum recognises the right of all Maori to expect the Taumata-a-Iwi, on their behalf as the recognised kaitiaki of the Museum, to

(i) monitor the management – custody, care, display, accessibility and development – of their taonga within the Museum

(ii) facilitate repatriation of all whakapakoko, uru moko and koiwi

PRINCIPLE IV: ACTIVE PROTECTION

The Taumata-a-Iwi will provide advice to the Auckland Museum Trust Board, and the Trust Board will protect the Taumata-a-Iwi by ensuring the rights of Maori in the Museum are protected, in kaitiakitanga terms, by:

(i) safeguarding mana whenua and the lore of Maori

(ii) safeguarding the tapu (spiritual restrictions) of the Museum's war shrines

(iii) providing appropriate management – custody, care, display, accessibility and development – of all taonga

(iv) providing all staff and visitors with a culturally safe environment

(v) taking affirmative action in recruitment, training and educational (primary, secondary and tertiary) programmes, which will lead Maori people into professional careers in New Zealand's culturally integrated museums.

PRINCIPLE V: REDRESS FOR PAST MISUNDERSTANDINGS

The Auckland Museum Trust Board acknowledges that there may be misunderstandings from the past related to taonga that need to be addressed and that there is a responsibility to seek advice from the Taumata-a-Iwi, and to:

(i) objectively explore and assess each example as it comes to light

(ii) put in place practices that minimise and eliminate future needs for redress.

Aratoi – Masterton's New Look Museum

Andrew Langridge visits the updated Wairarapa Museum of Art and History

From the street, Aratoi, the newly redeveloped Wairarapa Museum of Art and History, is an imposing timber bunker. The new building, designed by the Studio of Pacific Architecture, is connected to a relocated 1878 church which now forms the Wesley Wing. From the inside, the buildings work well as a unified whole; from the outside, the two structures simply appear to be adjacent, forming a courtyard that doubles as a Marae Atea. The museum's focus seems to be determinedly regional and determinedly bicultural, so the incorporation of two traditional community spaces, marae and church, into the design of the building is symbolic of its aspirations.

The grand Wesley Wing was a curiously appropriate space for its current gesture of community commitment, an expansive display of art from Wairarapa schools. I was immediately captivated by the vision of a mauve-faced Cyclopean girl with an inverted dolphin smile, mysteriously entitled "Dancing Dot" by its creator, Ariana McKinley, age nine.

The old church is impressive, but, with its abundant natural light, is probably not well suited to many of the museum's potential exhibitions. The display space in the new building no doubt has better environmental control, but it is not capacious, and there is already evidence of competition for wall space, with various corridors being given over to micro-exhibits, often photography-based.

The density of display found in these transitional spaces is even more pronounced in the museum's discovery room, a small classroom into which has been poured, it seems, an entire natural history museum. The effect is disorienting and at times chaotic, but it does have a certain cabinet of curiosity-style charm, with every conceivable space filled with something of interest.

The display is aimed at children, and much of the material has been displayed to encourage interaction. Open this cupboard and you find a gaudy shrine to a shark's jaw; push this button and hear the ionosphere's greatest hits; look through these lenses to see a cool stereographic aerial photo of the Wairarapa. There's plenty for kids to discover here, but I don't envy teachers trying to manage their classes in so tiny a space.

The main gallery of the new building is of a good size, however. When I visited it was divided in two, with a new exhibition about to open at one end while the iwi-based Rangitāne Tangata Rau: an exhibition of contemporary art continued at the other. The artworks on show covered a broad range in terms of both media and accomplishment. Student work sat alongside examples of traditional craft; poetry mingled with painted kites and piupiu.

For me, the most impressive work was Shane James' History, a sly riff on cultural exchange and the museumification of history. James has carved a musket form from wood, which is housed in a glass case and boasts a steel label that concentrates an explosive history into a cosy museum taxonomy:
Name: Musket
Location: Horowhenua
Date: 1819
Collector: Ngati Toa
Presented by: Pakeha

This ambitious and intelligent artwork points up a regrettable oddity of Aratoi. For a self-declared Museum of Art and History, the emphasis in terms of content was resoundingly on the former. With the opening of its new show, All Boxed Up, the museum's three largest spaces will all be devoted to art exhibitions. Natural history has a room of its own, but something is still missing: there is more human history to be found in Shane James' subversive fake than in the rest of the museum combined. This may well be a resourcing and collection issue, but it is something that Aratoi will sooner or later have to come to terms with in order to fulfil the clear, bold regional and bicultural aspirations embodied in its architecture.

Dr. Andrew Langridge is a Concept Developer at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

Rotorua Museum's Glittering Prizes

Achieving accolades in today's highly competitive tourism sector is no mean feat for a museum, as Greg McManus tells Jane Legget.

Rotorua Museum of Art and History has plenty to celebrate after winning the Tourism Industry Association's Best Heritage Attraction award for the third year running. This enviable record is testimony to a wholehearted commitment from staff and volunteers for their museum to be the very best that it can be.

Greg McManus' appointment as director in 1997 heralded a radical shift in emphasis. The 1908 building is Rotorua's much photographed icon, the Edwardian Tudorbethan Bath House in Government Gardens. Much photographed, yes, but not enough visitors were crossing the threshold. Although Rotorua has been a tourism destination for a century, this was not reflected in the museum's attendance figures. What was needed was a higher profile locally and nationally, and some serious attention to marketing, but without losing sight of its traditional museum responsibilities and purpose.

A programme of progress

With new exhibitions such as Taking the Cure in 1997 and refurbished galleries devoted to Te Arawa and Tarawera in 1998, the museum was signalling the dynamism which has been driving it ever since. Revising the admissions policy was an early priority, introducing free entry for locals (whose visits went from 5,000 to 30,000 in the first year) and a set ticket price for out-of-towners – now $10.00, and $3.00 for their children, with no hidden extras.

These positive achievements gave the museum team the confidence to enter the tourism awards in 1999. They were up against stiff competition in the category for Best Heritage and Culture Attraction – this was, after all, Te Papa's first year of operation. Selected as finalists, the museum staff, rather than congratulating themselves on this huge achievement, were disappointed not to win. This just stiffened their resolve to take the honours next time. By 2000 initiatives such as Rotorua Stories – the interactive cinema experience – and the restoration of the Blue Baths were rewarded with two separate awards: the Best Heritage Attraction and the Tourism Innovation Award. The Maori Battalion exhibition helped the museum towards the 2001 Best Heritage Attraction, and this year's achievement has been equally satisfying, if not more so.

Museum under the microscope

So how exactly does the process work? Greg and his team found that it has evolved over the past four years. The focus is on the whole organisation as an effective business operation. The 25 page application is designed for mainstream tourism industry operators and requires details of all facets of the heritage attraction. The financial records are separately audited by a financial judge, while the integrity of the application portfolio is verified by an on-site assessor's visit. Greg and his management team were grilled and asked to provide evidence of aspects of their operation which had intrigued or concerned the assessment panel. Sound administrative records, including audited visitor figures, help here, but more important is a well-trained staff who know their organization, its products and services, its visitors, and who share a common purpose.

This year the Tourism Awards used a version of the Baldridge programme for Business Excellence, tailored for the tourism industry. It involves a thorough examination of the business along seven dimensions, firstly by the organization itself and then by the external peer assessors from the wider tourism sector. There is a complex scoring formula. Rotorua Museum did very well on leadership and vision, pretty well on customer service and marketing, human resource management, research and analysis and business strategy and planning. Business process was the one area identified as a relative weakness. Each year the museum has been able to act on the feedback to improve its products, services and operations.

Impacts of the award

The museum has gained in diverse ways from this close scrutiny. Apart from the benefits of independent insights into its business, the museum's overall direction is now aligned more closely with the local tourism market, without sacrificing its special responsibilities as a local community heritage asset. In preparing its case for the awards over four years, the museum has improved its customer service, learned more about its visitors, streamlined some of its business processes, developed its staff, reviewed its strategic partnerships, and refocused its income generation activities. Customer focus and a shared understanding of marketing objectives have been critical. The well-developed team spirit meant that staff were all behind the efforts to win and the initial disappointment in 1999 served only to redouble determination to succeed next time.

The workplace culture at the museum has apparently been transformed, although not without its casualties. Staff unable to "buy into" the change of style no longer work there. Some chose to leave; others were let go. Staff numbers have trebled in five years, and a "family feel" has emerged. Characteristics sought in recruitment include the capability to do the job, but the ability to fit in and the desire to be a vital part of the enterprise are regarded as equally important. An excuse for a staff party is always welcome; winning these awards is cause for real celebration.

Within the local tourism scene the museum has gained both profile and respect. It is now an established fixture on the tourist menu, taken seriously by tourism operators in the hospitality industry and "rival" attractions. They are pleased to undertake joint marketing ventures with the museum. The rebranding exercise has turned the idea of the museum as a wet weather attraction into a positive strength, while for many first time visitors to the area, a trip to the museum provides a context for the other sights such as Tarawera and the geothermal attractions. New strategic partnerships have been cemented, for example with the Royal Lakeside Novotel Hotel, Whakarewarewa and the Buried Village. Annual visitor figures now exceed 100,000, up by 250% in five years. Greg McManus is the first to admit that being located in the heart of a long established tourism destination with no other museum in direct competition, provides opportunities with tourist businesses which are available to very few New Zealand museums.

For the Rotorua District Council, the museum is now a "flagship department". Justifiably proud of the tourism sector's recognition of the museum's excellence, the council is equally happy to boast that each year the museum has improved its ratepayer satisfaction rating in the annual NRB survey, so much so that with an 80% approval rating it heads the field in the local authorities benchmarking exercise.

Still a museum at heart

So much for the tourism context, but what about the traditional functions and purpose of the museum? Despite its tourism focus, the museum remains true to its traditional mission. Its staff have engaged actively in museum sector organizations. Its facilities for mainstream museum functions have also improved. The temporary exhibition galleries have been refurbished to standards which satisfy the requirements of loan exhibitions. Currently Colin McCahon works from Auckland Art Gallery attract local visitors and tourists alike, excited by the lively fine art programme. Off-site, a purpose-built collection store eliminates concerns about the sulphurous atmosphere. Rotorua residents are using use their museum and its catering facilities regularly, bringing their families and friends from out of town.

The museum regards tangata whenua and local residents as primary stakeholders in its collections and activities, and works hard to build and maintain productive community relationships. Strategic alliances with Maori-run tourism attractions are starting to be productive for all parties.

A passion for winning

While the tourism sector is undoubtedly very competitive, Greg McManus would encourage other museums to consider taking part in these awards. The chance to take a long hard look at your museum through a tourism business lens is of huge value. And winning can lead to many positive spin-offs.

Striving for continuous improvement and confidently developing collections, exhibitions and staff are ingredients in a proven recipe for success. With plans for further innovations, including an extension to the building due to open for its centenary in 2008, we can be sure that Rotorua Museum will be in the hunt for glory again before too long.

Jane Legget interviewed Greg McManus, Director of Rotorua Museum. Previously he was Director of Gisborne Museum from 1995-97, and Head of Curatorial Services at The Science Centre & Manawatu Museum (now Te Manawa).

Details of the awards are available on the Tourism Industry Association website: www.tourismawards.co.nz

The Poetic Museum: reviving historic collections

Julian Spalding
Prestel, London
ISBN 3 7913 2678 3
Price not reported.
Reviewed by Louis Le Vaillant

A Ferguson tractor was recently driven into the Auckland Museum. A small machine that moved from the back of a truck trailer, through a side door and into a large gallery to be part of the Sir Edmund Hillary: Everest and Beyond exhibition. It is one of three that Hillary and his team, the Old Firm, used on the International Geophysical Year Antarctic expedition in 1957 – 8 when he managed to trump English adventurer Vivian 'Bunny' Fuchs to the South Pole by two weeks. It is a startling machine, and it was a remarkable experience to see and hear this farm tractor rev up and move on its way. How does this relate to Julian Spalding's recently published The Poetic Museum, a farsighted tract for museums now and into the future? Quite a lot really.

In this book, there seems no area of current museum practice that Spalding leaves unexplored. Spalding examines all aspects of museum work from why we need to collect, how do we interpret, why conserve, who tells us what to see, who administers what and, of course, are museums relevant?

As an ex-insider Spalding, who has served as Director of the Glasgow Museums and Galleries, was founder of the Ruskin Gallery, Sheffield and of the Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art, exposes our museological habits for better and for worse. He pleads for urgent reform in order for museums to remain attractive to a wide-ranging public. Each chapter addresses a different theme: truth and authenticity, the limits of collecting, asserting the place of the museum – provoking in the reader an apparently complete understanding of what museums do and can do. As you begin to believe in his strident polemic, your belief is then torn asunder as he proceeds to shred his previous position.

Spalding's main treatise is a plea for the 'poetical' museum – one that still resonates with objects that evoke feelings, not just demonstrate scientific fact; and that these objects be allowed to flourish without the restraint of the many imbedded and restrictive museological acts we have trained our profession into believing in, and thus repeating. His argument rests on his belief that museums are a repository of knowledge (although knowledge itself is a shifting field) and that this should be cherished. While Spalding does not ask for a return to the old taxonomies or typological structure of museums (and when did you last see one of these?) he proposes that truth and wonderment must be encouraged by whatever methods necessary to maintain our collections and audiences in the future. Always at the centre of his argument is the object itself.

While he may have over-emphasised the tyrannies of many western museum practices, he also acknowledges many of the new Holocaust museums as exemplars of how fact and feeling, objects and thoughts, can become compelling models for his envisioned poetic museums. Ken Gorbey is also commended for his work at the Jewish Museum, Berlin.

What does this have to do with Hillary's Ferguson tractor? We laugh at it (Hillary does too!) because it is so frighteningly small and clumsy. And for that brief moment, even if you can't understand why or how someone could climb to the top of the highest mountain, you can begin to grasp the magnitude of the folly of adventure and the necessity to risk all. This is what Spalding desires, with or without interpretation: objects that are redolent of all our innocent enthusiasms, and for museums to cherish them wisely because of this.

Louis Le Vaillant is currently Curator – Applied Arts, Auckland War Memorial Museum. He worked at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth before holding the position of Curator / Director at the Fisher Gallery, Manukau City.

Yes, but what does it mean?

It used to be that you just looked at objects. Now museums want to explain it to you as well – at length.

Galvan Macnamara adjusts his glasses and considers museum labels

I went to the Voyagers gallery at Te Papa particularly to revisit the William Hodges' paintings that I remembered with affection from the time they were on view in Auckland in the early 1960s. The paintings were all glazed but still behind a barrier rope. The A4 labels were flat on the vertical wall surface and impossible for me to read with bifocals. I asked one of the finger printed minders if I could step over the rope and read the words.

LABELS WHICH HAVE STOOD THE TEST OF TIME: THE TANGATA WHENUA GALLERY AT TE MANAWA, PALMERSTON NORTH.
COURTESY: TE MANAWA

I had just been upstairs to see Taiawhio, the exhibition of contemporary Maori art, and the labels there were equally difficult to access. Apart from focal length, I had the added problem of dramatic light change between often close objects – my eye couldn't accommodate such quick light changes. (N.B. this is science, not judgement) Neither could I read labels that had been placed as second thought on vertical faces of cases in areas of really low light.

Buzzing about labels

Labels have been a wasp in my hair for ages and I decided that I wanted to talk about them. So I visited lots of places to see what I thought of their labels, which made me reconsider what labels in museums are for anyway.

Labels surely must present a careful layering of information so everyone who ventures into an exhibition can assimilate a small easily accessed amount of information to complement their confrontation with the original objects. A reminder that museums are not, and should not be, books is pertinent here. For the viewer who is captured by wonderful objects, there should be a second layer of information that illuminates the objects without overpowering them. For those who want a deeper understanding, there should be access to more complex information that can be absorbed comfortably away from the viewing line.

Every museum should make the first two layers of information available in large print albums for viewers with glasses or who are visually impaired in any way whatever that can be carried around the exhibition.

It has become the fashion to have complex curatorial statements at the beginning of exhibitions. There is a human compulsion to read these and immediately you are committing the viewer to an act that is art/literary and antithetical to the belief that the difference between a museum and other places or ways of learning is the importance of the original objects. Most of the labels are too long and there is more than a good chance that most viewers will have exhausted their energy on the words and understanding them, at the expense of looking at real things.

Back to the drawing board?

I believe a curatorial/design rethink is necessary. There must be some information at the door or entrance, but let it be minimal and peripheral. Find different ways to get further verbal information or curatorial arguments to visitors, ways that they encounter and commit to by choice. Once again let's make objects supreme; words a complement. But if it is considered important enough to include words, they must be readable and pass the simplest comprehension test.

So I decided to score the places I visited for their labels on a scale of 1 = low and 5 = high for readability, comprehension, information complement and design cohesion.

Listed alphabetically, here's how I think they rated:

I am convinced that lots of museums have lost the plot and forgotten that objects, not words, are the primary reason for their being. The conjunction between objects should expose the curatorial position or story, not the catalogue or catalogue type information.

	readibility	comprehension	information complement	design cohesion
City Gallery, Wellington	4	3	3	3
Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt	3	3	3	2
Museum of Wellington City and Sea	4	4	4	4
Pataka, Porirua	3	3	3	2
Sarjeant Galley, Whanganui	2.5	2	2.5	2
Te Manawa, Palmerston North	4.5	4	4.5	5
Te Papa, Wellington	2.5	3	3	2

I am adding this abbreviated commentary:

City Gallery, Wellington
The introductory labels are too long, too many ideas. The floor-level tilted labels describing pots in John Parker's show's are wonderful: all the information you need; succinct and not in your line of sight. You can see objects without having any words in your eye.

Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt
Labels sometimes appear to be a design afterthought here. They are too black-and-white and often on vertical planes which are extremely difficult to read if you wear bifocals. Lots of labels are physically low and you have to kneel to read them.

Museum of Wellington City and Sea
It is a "book museum". Even though the labels are easy to read, it would take you a whole day if you wanted to read them all. It's a pretty wonderful museum, however.

Pataka, Porirua
The Koru and Kowhaiwhai show introductory label is too long. The give-away catalogue is a good idea for perusal afterwards. The show lost readability marks, though, for the John Hovell quotation overlaid across the photograph of Toa Rangatira at Takapuwahia which is very difficult to read. Michael Parekowhai's fluorescently lit works cause huge light differential problems. The eye can't accommodate the constant change of light levels.

Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui
The introductory label to the Dome installation is too complex. It takes several minutes to read, let alone comprehend, and you are then expected to see and comprehend a very busy exhibition.

Te Manawa, Palmerston North
The Tangata Whenua Gallery gives layers of information that are easy to use. This gallery, now nearly nine years old, still works well. Alongside it, a current temporary exhibition about Te Harakeke also works really well in terms of labels and information provision.

Te Papa, Wellington
Voyagers is very busy with words; there is a whole day's reading, if you have the inclination and the stamina. Labels also have to give some regard to people's intelligence. In Pacific Rim a work book is described as that and being made of paper and photographs. Does any body in the world not know that? Words for words' sake – how boring. The original work book is placed so far inside the case that a bifocaled person simply cannot read it.

Title adapted from Oliver Bennet's perceptive 5 May 2001 article in the Weekend Guardian

Galvan Macnamara has had professional and personal association with museums for approaching thirty five years.

State of the Art Awards

Tracy Puklowski shares some thoughts on the growth of this phenomena

Following the demise of the Visa Gold Art Awards in the late 1990s, it seemed as though major art awards in New Zealand were a threatened, if not extinct, species. However, the past three years have seen the artistic equivalent of an active breeding programme and the species is now in a healthier state than ever before.

The battle-weary Waikato clambered to the forefront of the Art Awards business with the establishment of two awards in the year 2000, both due to the determination of the Waikato Society of Arts (WSA): the Waikato National Art Award and the Contemporary Art Award (now known as the Trust Waikato Contemporary Art Award). Similar sounding names and similar looking entry forms led to some confusion regarding the events – was it one award, or two? The awards are now in their third year and have developed very different identities since their inception.

The Waikato National Art Award is restricted to painting and printmaking, and each year potential entrants are given a theme to base their work around. These themes are generally vague (such as Our Land) and attract entries from lesser-known as well as established artists. The prize of $10,000 makes the award one of the more financially appealing to have come from the regions.

The Trust Waikato Contemporary Art Awards also offers a prize of $10,000, and, like the National Art Award, is selected by a sole judge. This award has now firmly asserted itself as one of the few contemporary art awards in the country open to developing and established artists alike. It has also captured the imagination of the art community in a far more confident, even brash way than its sister. Certainly, it is clear where the Waikato art cognoscenti's affections lie; the Contemporary Art Award has been given substantial exhibition space at Waikato Museum of Art and History, whereas the Waikato National Art Award is held in a space at the Hamilton Gardens usually reserved for antique fairs and swap-meets.

Any remaining confusion between the two awards was decisively swept aside in the first year when judge Greg Burke selected Gavin Hipkins' now infamous photograph of a $2 soapdish as the winning entry. This taste for the controversial continued in 2001 with Daniel Malone's Perfect Pitch, leading naysayers to exclaim that the award was surely turning into a photographic award.

Perhaps mindful of this, the selection in 2002 was fairly evenly weighted between media, with a sculptural piece taking the gong – David Stewart's Hyperreal Tool Box for the Reinvention of a Transglobal Empire in a Parallel Universe. A mouthful in more ways than one, Stewart's work lined up customized beer crates (one with paua inlay á la Parekowhai) filled with home brew.

This episode marked a turning point for Hamilton – not only had the Contemporary Art Award attracted a sizeable number of entries from throughout the country, the winning work – chosen by Melbourne-based curator Zara Stanhope, formerly founder-director of the Adam Art Gallery in Wellington – used an aspect of Waikato's vernacular language and society to make its point. Without cringing Daniel Malone's winning entry of the previous year had hinted at this, but David Stewart's work grabbed the bull by the horns, as it were.

Controversial art award winners have become almost the norm recently, with the Turner Awards in Britain and New Zealand's new Walters Prize hitting the headlines. The Trust Waikato Contemporary Art Awards not only place Hamilton firmly within this new tradition, but in a way that celebrates rather than attempts to hide what Hamilton is all about. Followers of the endless local slogan debate see marketers continually attempting to evade the things that make the Waikato what it is – agriculture, green fields and yes, dammitall – cows.

For the sponsors, this show has been immensely successful. Trust Waikato CEO Ken Gordon comments: "For one week out of 52 this year,

New Zealanders talked about whether beer crates were art. That's great. We can't start to talk about new ideas unless they are put out for us to talk about. Contemporary Art Awards provide a unique opportunity for our thoughts and views to be challenged and stimulated".

He adds that, in his view, "the world has changed just that very small amount because of David Stewart's concept".

Sponsors such as Trust Waikato are quickly coming to terms with the value of the artistic dollar. Sponsoring art awards offers relatively affordable marketing, great column inches and, above all, profile. The fact that the National Business Review now has an annual Business Sponsorship of the Arts award speaks volumes about what appears to be an increasing trend.

Awards that acknowledge the highest profile artists in New Zealand have also come to the fore in recent years; some have brought with them enormous controversy, some have created barely a ripple. Deliberately understated (aside from its hefty prize pool), the Arts Foundation of New Zealand's laureate awards were established in 2000. According to their website, the 'laureates' were chosen in recognition of the fact that they are "flag-bearers for their respective disciplines". The laureates are chosen by a panel of their peers, and no applications are made. The inaugural laureate for 2000 in the visual arts (5 laureates were chosen in total) was Peter Peryer. The following year recognized the work of Philip Dadson and Michael Parekowhai. It will be interesting to see whether the Arts Foundation continues to celebrate New Zealand's artistic successes in this quiet, polite way in years to come.

Another quiet but substantial contributor to the state of art awards in this country is patron James Wallace, whose Wallace Art Awards have now been running longer than any other similar award in the country. The award is aimed at emerging contemporary artists, and is acquisitive, providing a record of New Zealand art as well as celebrating its achievements.

The last word should really go to the noisiest award in the country – the Walters Prize. 'The Walters' was

DAVID STEWART'S 'HYPERREAL TOOLBOX FOR THE REINVENTION OF A TRANSGLOBAL EMPIRE IN A PARALLEL UNIVERSE'. WINNER OF THE TRUST WAIKATO CONTEMPORARY ART AWARD 2002. TRUST WAIKATO COLLECTION.
COURTESY: WAIKATO MUSEUM OF ART AND HISTORY

specifically established, like the Turner Prize, to recognize individual achievements in the visual arts. It therefore came as a surprise to many that the inaugural winner was a relative unknown. However, controversy and discussion were clear goals of the prize from the outset, and to that end it has certainly achieved its objectives. Whilst lacking the banal theatricality and sheer 'up-yours' element of Martin Creed's The Lights Going On and Off, Yvonne Todd's photographs have outraged enough people to ensure that the Walters Prize has its place in the headlines firmly set for the foreseeable future.

Tracy Puklowski is the new Director of Aratoi Museum of Art and History. She was Director of Te Awamutu Museum for two years, and prior to that, Art Curator of Waikato Museum of Art and History. Her entry in the Trust Waikato Contemporary Art Awards was unsuccessful.

The website of the Arts Foundation of New Zealand is: www.artistnz.telecom.co.nz

Still absent after all these years

Pamela Gerrish Nunn finds a glaring omission at Auckland Art Gallery's Love and Death: Art in the Age of Queen Victoria

There is a conspicuous exhibition of Victorian painting currently going the rounds: originating at the Art Gallery of South Australia (Adelaide), it has visited other Australian cities and now comes to Auckland, its only New Zealand venue. It presents a sight, exposed by feminist art historians and cultural critics in the 1970s, which surely most people on either side of the debate have thought for years now was a thing of the past: an exhibition representing a particular artistic area, meant to attract attention to its field, intended to reflect credit on its originators, promoted as an important contribution to the fine art calendar, and yet almost totally devoid of women's work.

These 50 to 60 paintings (depending on which venue you see the show at) have been assembled under the title Love and Death – not a theme, one would have thought, that would exclude the female artist (perhaps the most frequent rationale given for women artists' omission from such endeavours).

Indeed, one which would make an especially large space for her work, given the Victorians' sentimental alignment of woman with love, romance and matters of the heart. Yet this show contains just one exhibit made by a female hand: the National Gallery of Victoria's striking battle painting Quatre Bras, making its author Elizabeth Thompson Butler the familiar token woman of the period of immediate reaction to feminism. Its appropriateness to the theme is of course surprising, and so it does make an important point about Victorian women's painting which may educate, enlighten and delight many visitors. But can this be the only suitable painting available to the curators one asks?

The answer is emphatically no, and can be shown to be so with very little effort (though 'it was too much trouble to identify/find/locate them' has often been the next excuse for the neglect of women's work in such projects). The collections from which this exhibition were drawn were the public galleries of New Zealand and Australia and some private collections in the latter country. In Auckland itself Margaret Dicksee's The First Commission and Sophie Anderson's After the Earthquake are indisputable contenders; the latter, indeed, is one of the gallery's most impressive Victorian paintings. In the other main centres of this country, other suitable exhibits come easily to notice: Wellington has Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes' Charity, Christchurch has Henrietta Rae's Doubts. Across the Tasman where the whole thing started, Adelaide itself has Laura Alma-Tadema's Pain of Parting; Perth has a fine dead animal by a representative of that important Victorian art institution, the painting family: in this case, it's a female member of the Stannards, Emily; and Sydney has the beautiful Mignon by Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, deemed worthy of almost permanent inclusion in the Art Gallery of New South Wales' Victorian gallery – in itself a rebuttal of the other habitual get-out clause of curators that 'women's work isn't good enough'. In addition, there are private collections in Brisbane and Sydney alone which could have furnished at least three other exhibits as fitting as anything actually in the show.

What is the scholarly value of such exhibitions as these, then, which purport to give a rounded and useful view of an artistic field but fail signally to do so on this score, which presented its challenge some thirty years ago now; which ignore the valuable expansion of the field over the last twenty years by historians of women's art; and which represent their source collections in such a partial and reactionary fashion? The New Zealand public – if not the Australian – knows better than to think that men made all the worthwhile art in the 19th century, and deserves better than this, even when post-modernism has urged us all to leave behind the politics of identity. The answer to these disappointing and less-than-the-sum-of-their-parts exhibitions (of which this is by no means the only one in recent years to lure the New Zealand public with promise of an extraordinary artistic experience in from abroad which turns out to be out of date in its premises and thus blatantly limited in what it has to offer) perhaps lies in their motivating factors.

Public art galleries are sorely tried these days to get the paying public in in sufficient numbers, and are on all sides resorting to a lowering of standards which is sad to see, even while it may be becoming a more and more familiar fact of public life (this writer thinks of the fields of health, of education...). Their ability to offer or access scholarship is either slipping down the list of priorities or falling victim to cost-cutting.

Their relationship with academe is becoming more and more of an effort, for both parties. Cosying up to private money, trusting in advertising and marketing, and mobilising lowbrow concepts which may widen their public are understandable resorts in these troubled times – but discouraging nonetheless. Whether or not the viewers of Love and Death notice the sexist nature of this exhibition isn't the point, either: all of us with an investment in the history of art and in public galleries' role in the maintenance and formation of a cultured and informed society are surely interested in them continuing to get a transparent offer of education, pleasure and stimulation from the gallery experience, which doesn't claim to be other than what it is – whatever that may be – but strives to be as good as it can be.

Dr Pamela Gerrish Nunn is Associate Professor in the History of Art Department at the University of Canterbury. Her research interests include women artists and gender issues, particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries, and she has worked in many public art galleries in New Zealand, Australia and Great Britain, including the landmark exhibitions The Women's Art Show (Nottingham 1992) and Pre-Raphaelite women Artists (Manchester 1997).

Love and Death: Art in the Age of Queen Victoria was shown at the Auckland Art Gallery from 24 August to 24 November 2002.

Virtual Collections: Museums Move Online

Australian software developer Erick Kendrick previews the latest in collection management and e-business software for Patrick Fitzgerald.

For museums grappling with issues of collection management, web access and revenue generation, newly developed 'digital media exchange' software offers a whole new set of options for moving forward.

Coined by Australian software developer Piction Digital Image Systems, the term 'digital media exchange' (DMX) refers to a powerful combination of digital collection management and e-business capabilities.

Across the Tasman, museums and galleries are now adopting DMX solutions tailored to match their own individual vision and requirements.

According to Piction CEO Erick Kendrick, Piction provides a powerful set of tools for a museum to address its mission more effectively and innovatively, through managing, marketing and distributing its digital-based knowledge.

"Working with collections-based organisations like the Australian War Memorial and Australian National Botanic Gardens, we've gained an understanding of the trends and drivers in the sector.

"We've learned that added to museums' traditional role of conservation of collections, has come increased expectations that museums will use the Internet to open up access to their collections. And not just what's on display, but what's in the basement as well."

The Australian War Memorial has had an active Collection Management System since the mid 1980s, according to AWM Project Manager Martin Woods, with a strong focus on creating a digital replication of the items in the collection as a means of preserving them.

With more than half a million records of artifacts, relics and photographs that chronicle Australia's involvement in wars from the 1880s to today, the Memorial has 220,000 photographs alone, in a digital database of more than 250,000 images. A key driver for the project to create an online digital database, has been resolving the conflicting needs to both preserve the legacy and provide access to it.

"One example is the Changi Quilts," Mr Wood says. "More than 400 female civilian internees in Changi Prison made three, and two of them are in the Memorial's collection. The quilts have an iconic status amongst Australian veterans, but they are very fragile. So digitising them for display online is a way to preserve them and share them at the same time."

Patently, digital technology and the Internet are making profound changes in the ways people search and gain knowledge for study, pleasure and business. "More museums are responding by moving towards digital media as a way to open up and increase access to their collections," Erick Kendrick says. "The digitization process is well advanced, and museums typically start with their key collections.

"The collection management systems most used by museums over the past decade or so, have been little more than computerised index cards, some with added digital asset management capabilities.

"That's solved only one part of the puzzle for museums. OK, you can manage the assets, but how do you then share them, and control input and access to them, and productise and market them, whether for commercial gain or for information provision, and how do you keep track of the resulting transactions?"

"DMX makes all that possible, by integrating collection management with e-business. Once you've captured an asset digitally, then we enable exchange of it."

For museums facing the need to generate more

funding for themselves, the ability to earn revenue through e-business may be very appealing.

In its collection management function, Piction is able to store all types of digital media: video, audio, images and documents. It's also highly sophisticated in enabling the museum to define separate internal and external views of information depending on the communities of interest the museum wishes to define.

Piction's cataloguing functions are based on Dublin Core metadata standards, the most flexible, and widely-accepted standards. "However, if a museum has already invested effort in developing its own metadata system, Piction can integrate with it to preserve and expand your own internal cataloguing system, while at the same time providing an architecture suitable for the Internet."

This enables the museum to continue using its own cataloguing system internally, while also allowing external users to search for and access permitted digital content using more familiar search tools and terminology.

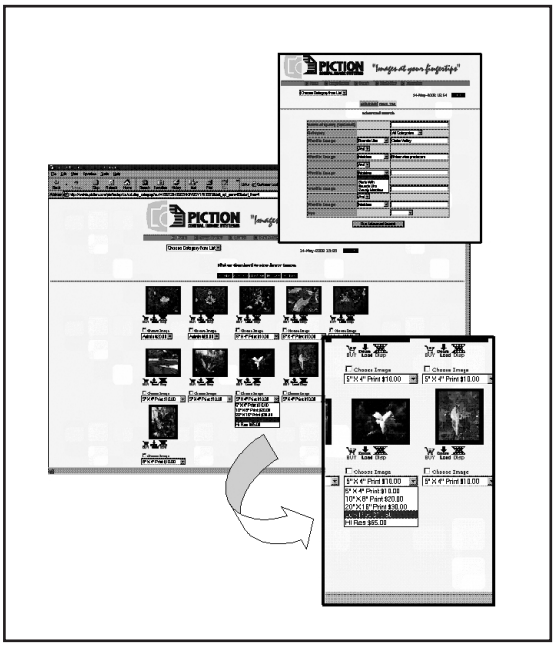
Museum managers are very quick to see the potential advantages of DMX, Erick Kendrick says. "The key questions typically revolve around control, cost and simplicity."

Piction enables museums to determine for themselves levels of control and security for self-defined user communities. "That includes all important considerations such as rights management."

For example, while the Australian War Memorial promotes access to, purchase and use of its reproductions, it also stringently protects its assertion of copyright over its images. Piction enables the purchase transaction to take place online, coordinating the sale of an image to a purchaser, and interfacing with online banking facilities.

"We believe all museum systems should be tightly integrated for control, simplicity and efficiency. That includes catalogue systems, business systems and web systems. For one thing, that reduces the effort and cost of making changes."

Piction is wholly compatible with, and provides an intelligent layer on top of, existing collection



PICTION ALLOWS WEB VISITORS TO SEARCH COLLECTIONS, ORDER DIGITAL COLLECTIONS IN A CHOICE OF FORMATS, AND COMPLETE THE REQUEST ONLINE.

management systems. Or, for a museum not yet using collection management software, it provides a powerful, highly customizable solution in itself.

For museums that wish to increase dialogue with their communities, Piction provides a two-way communication channel that enables interaction to build the museum's store of knowledge. "This allows a user community to add value back to the collection. For example, to identify a particular person in a historical group photo.

Suppliers to the museum can also be incorporated in the e-business chain. For example, Piction can link with a digital imaging bureau so that a user's request for a poster-size reproduction of a museum image can be routed to the bureau for fulfillment.

The only pre-requisite for using DMX is that the museum has digital images, video, audio or documents that it wishes to catalogue, manage and make accessible over the web. Available for purchase via a software licensing agreement or for 'rental' as an ASP, Piction is a scalable solution for doing DMX, "very usable for small museums, not just the major ones," Erick Kendrick says.

Patrick Fitzgerald is a freelance journalist who specializes in new technologies.

Pompallier @ Pompallier

Kate Martin gives an account of a moving occasion in Russell, where human remains, religion, tangata whenua, the Treaty and the New Zealand Historic Places Trust came together in April 2002.

PADDLERS' SALUTE: TE TU HONORE O NGA RAU AWA O NGA WAKA TAUA COURESTY: NEW ZEALAND HISTORIC PLACES TRUST

Only a few weeks after taking up the position as Manager of the Historic Places Trust property Pompallier at Russell, Bay of Islands, I found myself being quietly quizzed by two unassuming-looking men who had walked in by the staff entrance. It turned out that these were Catholic priests, one from the Hokianga, one from Paris. They finally spilled the beans: what did I think of the idea of digging up Bishop Pompallier's remains in France and bringing them to this place?

Years of museum debate about human remains had never once involved this kind of scenario. Remember those moko mokai still on display in the 1980s? Remember removing remains from storerooms for reburial amongst their own people? Remember those collections still in museums, confused and unidentified? More recently there's been news of Auckland War Memorial Museum's bid for the Unknown Soldier.

A man and his mission

One purpose of Te Hokinga Mai o Pihopa Pomaparie to New Zealand was the renewal of faith amongst Catholics, which is not part of the mission of the Historic Places Trust. However, the Church's other purpose of spreading knowledge about Pompallier, his work and his place in history, certainly is. Therefore, the Historic Places Trust welcomed this suggestion for one of the events associated with the return of the Bishop's remains to be a "lying in state" at the property Pompallier.

Bishop Jean Baptiste Francois Pompallier was the Frenchman who brought the formal Catholic Church to Western Oceania. At the Trust property, today also called Pompallier, a single building is all that remains of his mission headquarters in what was then Kororareka and a major port in the Pacific. Arriving in New Zealand in 1838, he walked straight into a scene that was fast moving towards Treaty, war and radical change throughout the country. Controversy continues today as to what were Pompallier's real intentions and influence in this country.

Now, the Bishop's remains were to follow his lifetime travels, staying at Catholic places throughout New Zealand. Sold by the Church in 1856, our venue in Russell was to be the one exception. Here was the opportunity to use a heritage place for something that was no historic reconstruction, yet somehow far more telling.

It became apparent that this was an unusual proposal for everyone. Catholics were asking if this was to be "just a Maori thing"; others wondered if it was "just a Catholic thing". In the end, the cultural traditions of both were used, and altered, to meet these exceptional circumstances, while the event became inclusive of the much wider Far North community.

The programme at Pompallier was developed in partnership with members of the parish, tangata whenua and the Historic Places Trust. Ceremonies focussed on the historic significance of Pompallier, man and place. On the other side of the Bay at Waitangi in 1840, this Frenchman had had the audacity to push for the 'Fourth' Treaty Article, asserting the right to religious tolerance. Our weekend's theme was celebration and reconciliation, focussing on that Fourth Treaty Article.

Pompallier @ Pompallier

The Bishop's entourage was first escorted by waka to the Russell peninsular. In Russell, the call of the putatara echoed those days when the village was warned that someone important was coming. Aware that in 1843 the brass band of the French

POWHIRI: KAUMATUA ERUERA GARLAND WELCOMES BISHOP POMPALLIER HOME
COURTESY: NEW ZEALAND HISTORIC PLACES TRUST

ship Le Rhin was one of the earliest to play in this country, for a Mass Pompallier said here, the Ratana band Piri Wiri Tua now led the pallbearers.

The procession moved forward through a guard of honour formed by the waka paddlers, across the site of the mission's own waka house. The kaihoe gave the missionary Bishop the traditional salute to the dead, the first they had ever performed.

As the small casket carved with Maori and Catholic symbols neared the mission gateway, the karanga went out. Bishop Pompallier's remains were escorted into a marquee erected on the site of his mission residence, where he once received visitors of differing nationalities and denominations. This weekend, the Bishop again played host to a multitude.

These included descendants, Maori and Pakeha, of people he had known in his lifetime. Pompallier would have also recognised those Maori and Church protocols, and those languages – Maori, English, Latin and his native French – that were spoken throughout the weekend. But who in the turbulent 1840s could have foreseen that a French Ambassador would stand here as part of the powhiri?

Or that Pompallier's remains could be so warmly welcomed by the inheritors of those Protestant missionaries (heresy to him) who had greeted his first arrival in New Zealand with the publication of Ko te Anatikaraiti, accusing him of being the Antichrist? Could anyone then have seen those competing denominations of his time (Anglican and Methodist), men and women, join Catholic priests, Ratana Apotoro and nuns, Mormon and others to participate together in an Ecumenical service?

Later, guests spoke, from both the Maori and French perspectives, of the Bay at the time of Treaty-making, the siege of Kororareka and of Pakeha settlers fleeing to Auckland. And of the 1845-46 northern war, when Pompallier and his Marist confreres stayed on this mission, under suspicion as treacherous Frenchmen and traitorous Catholics.

A Marist Brother talked of how Pompallier established the Church, despite the risks and loss of life. Here, on the Kororareka mission, where the Bishop's evangelising drive to spread the Church through Western Oceania with a handful of Marist priests and brothers, conflicted with their Order's desire to work as a community.

In the evening, Bay of Islands schoolchildren and the choir from Anglican Christ Church, Pompallier's nearest contemporary rival, led a multilingual candlelit Taize service, singing modernised versions of the chants that the Catholic Bishop introduced to New Zealand.

Relationships made

The weekend's programme involved much talk, tears, laughter and music, and the active organisation, fundraising and participation of many people. The Kororareka Marae Society hosted and fed around 700 people. Russell Museum put on a supporting exhibition. The District Council closed the nearby road. The Department of Conservation donated their car park.

The Historic Places Trust, always stretched for resources, contributed a lot to the organisational logistics. However, the Trust's biggest contribution came from staff, normally spread thinly around the country. Staff from the Northern Region, Auckland and Wellington offices volunteered their own time to act as guides and security over the entire weekend. Identifying ourselves by wearing red NZHPT tee shirts, we were soon nicknamed Kahu Whero and Chemises Rouges.

Inevitably, more history, archival and oral, surfaced. Pompallier and the Historic Places Trust in the North made real and hopefully lasting relationships with many groups and individuals, notably tangata whenua, the churches and schools.

As one of the kaikorero wrote in the visitors' book, Ka mau ki te ataahua o te wairua aroha o tenei hui

Kate Martin manages Pompallier for the Historic Places Trust. Prior to that she was Collections Manager at Whanganui Regional Museum, and registrar at the National Art Gallery and the Sargeant Gallery.

Museum Leadership: Good Management, Good Judgement

Kerry McCarthy listened closely to the public lecture given in Christchurch by Dawn Casey, Director, National Museum of Australia, in October 2002

Museums must collaborate, innovate and provoke, if they are to be successful today and in the future. This is the essential message of Dawn Casey's Christchurch lecture.

Casey is Director of the National Museum of Australia, which opened in 2001, and she has wide experience in heritage and indigenous cultural policy issues. She considers heritage a foundation stone of well-being, both individual and national, and believes that museums are central to understanding, appreciating and developing a meaningful sense of heritage. She is committed to caring for heritage and heritage collections, but also asks the fundamental question, "Why should this be done?"

Praising many of the achievements at Te Papa, Casey focuses on the direct experience of museum visitors, and the learning potential that this creates. At their best, museums can be centres of debate and wonder that provide unique insights into contemporary life and challenge visitors to question their prejudices and values.

Many organisations and industries provide heritage information and heritage experiences. The key point of difference for museums is that they provide an encounter with the 'real'. There is no substitute for being in the presence of an authentic, rare, valuable or ancient item. This experience inspires awe, and awe leads to questioning.

It is here that the skills of museum staff come into play in fostering curiosity through innovative presentation and interpretation. Casey observes that the museum staff with expertise in education and information delivery are not always the same people who have relevant collection or discipline expertise. Collaboration within museums is an essential part of creating successful learning experiences.

Learning in museums takes place on a number of

levels and in many different ways. School children use museums as learning centres with relative comfort. They are accustomed to formal visits, based around topics in education curricula. They know how museums operate and the kinds of information they might find there.

In contrast, adults see museum visiting primarily as a leisure activity and one that usually involves spending time with family or friends. However, adults do learn in museums and Casey argues that this type of learning is powerful precisely because it is unexpected. People who would never enrol in a formal education programme can be informed and involved in contemporary issues through interactions with museums and museum objects. Museums can provide relaxed, non-threatening environments for adults to explore issues and to learn.

Community involvement is also fundamental to the success of museums. Collaboration ensures relevance, improves communication, and broadens support for museums and their activities.

Outreach initiatives have been explored by many museums. Casey points to programmes, particularly in the US and the UK, built around the notion of "inreach" – bringing communities into museums, to work with staff in producing exhibitions, special events and other activities. This involvement gives museums direct value and meaning in the lives of their stakeholders, and ensures that museums are part of the big issues facing their communities.

The Talk Back Classroom programme at the National Museum of Australia brings together panels of experts, politicians, opinion leaders, and school students to debate topical issues. The debates are radio broadcast live to schools throughout Australia, and listeners are invited to phone in to take part in the discussion. At the same time, a live audience in the museum can listen and be involved in the debate. On another level, the broadcast suite has also been used to teach young people how a radio broadcast is made.

Museums can of course be involved in a variety of formal education activities for children and young people. They can provide after school programming, or can address gaps in the education curricula. For example, museums can teach art or art history in areas where schools no longer offer these subjects.

As well as formal learning experiences, museums should provide opportunities for visitors to reconnect with the wonder of learning. Adults can contribute to oral history or other memory projects, which benefit both the participants and the museum, and individuals or groups can curate their own exhibitions.

Casey stresses the importance of using outdoor areas around museums for community events and festivals. Theatre, outdoor movie screenings, family theme days, and corporate evenings are all ways for communities to interact with museums and the stories they tell. They also help museums to reach new audiences, and to forge new partnerships.

The importance of museum buildings should not be overlooked. They are often significant architectural icons in their own right, and communities should be able to take pride in them, not only during museum visits or museum opening hours. Creative lighting can make museum buildings into significant visual features by night, and outdoor courtyards and plazas can be used for a variety of formal and informal events.

Of course, a museum's influence can extend well beyond its physical location, and an interactive internet presence, touring exhibitions, and publications are important methods of providing information and inspiring interest.

These creative approaches to learning require museums to negotiate a range of management issues in new ways. Resourcing is a perennial challenge, and one that Casey suggests can be addressed through fostering partnerships with other learning organisations, heritage and community groups, business and government. While collaboration is essential, Casey also notes that boundaries of responsibility and authority may become blurred. However, she argues that today's world is a cross-sectoral one, and museums must resolve these questions if they are to prosper.

Accountability to multiple stakeholders requires that museums establish new ways to measure outcomes. While curriculum-based learning can be assessed through objective means such as results for assignments and examinations, affective learning and

changes in attitude are more difficult to measure. Learning by chance in a museum setting, although powerful, is often an emotional experience. All visitors, and especially adults, carry with them their own unique emotional histories. These colour what is learned, so that a learning outcome may be as varied as the individuals who participate.

The complexity of human experience and belief also means that museums will inevitably offend or disconcert some visitors. The benefit of the learning experience in these situations may not be so much the content of the message, as the opportunity to create an insight into the value of difference.

Casey believes that museums should provoke and challenge. They should provide a stimulating and lively experience in a setting that is entertaining and non-threatening, but they should not shy away from complex or controversial issues. Museums should cherish and promote their unique capacity to provide encounters with authentic expressions of thinking, culture and heritage, but they should also draw on cutting edge interpretation to provide an experience that is multifaceted, compelling, contemporary and meaningful.

Why, then, should heritage be preserved? In Casey's construction, heritage is closely linked to learning, and learning is aligned with community. Objects, places and ideas from the past should be preserved to inform the debates of today, and these in turn will shape the communities of the future. Museums have a central role to play in this process, and they must be valued and used by their communities in order to fulfil this role successfully.

Kerry McCarthy is Curator of Pictorial Collections at the Canterbury Museum. Dawn Casey's lecture in Christchurch was a Carter Group Heritage Week event. It was also presented in Auckland and Wellington, under the auspices of Te Papa National Services.

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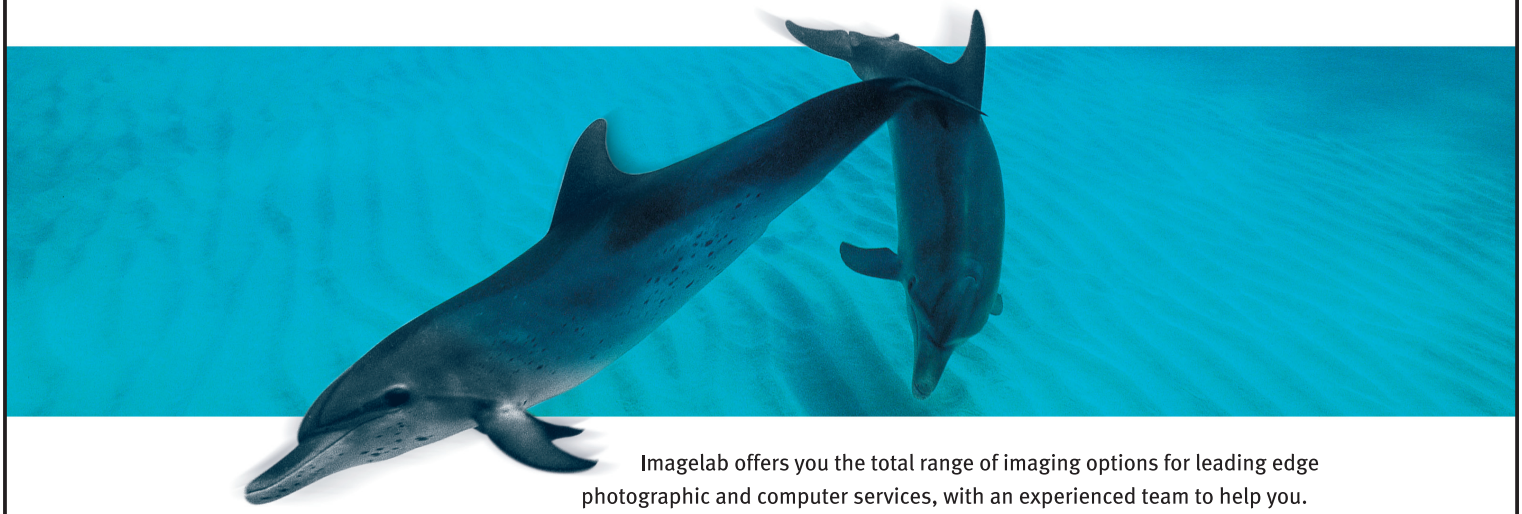

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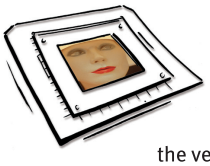

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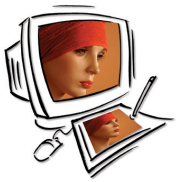

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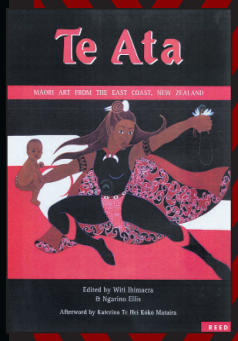
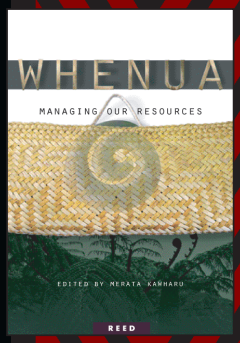


Edited by Witi Ihimaera and Ngarino Ellis
Afterword by Katerina Te Hei Koko Mataira
0 7900 0834 3, 156 pp, $34.95

Te Ata provides a unique regional perspective on traditional and contemporary Māori art. Six writers — Witi Ihimaera, Katerina Te Hei Koko Mataira, Ngarino Ellis, Ngapine Te Ao, Chris Bryant and Paerau Corneal — discuss the artistic expression of Te Tairāwhiti (the East Coast–Poverty Bay region) alongside colour reproductions of modern works by artists including Pakariki Harrison, Robyn Kahukiwa, Bob Jahnke and Michael Parekowhai.

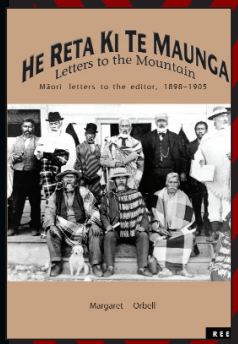
Whenua: Managing our resources



Edited by Merata Kawharu
0 7900 0858 0, 408 pp, $44.95

Whenua is the first publication dedicated to contemporary Māori resource management concerns. Merata Kawharu brings together 25 leading Māori and Pakeha commentators to offer perspectives on environmental resources, the management of fisheries and lands and inter-relationships with groups of people. An essential reference tool for anyone who deals with resource issues.

He Reta ki te Maunga: Māori Letters to the Editor 1898–1905



Margaret Orbell
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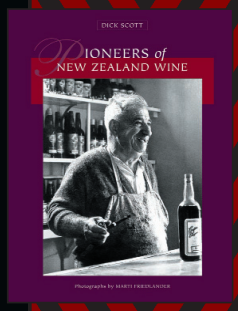

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