

ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

news

FROM THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA



CHINA TOUR



NAIDOC 2003



FIRST AUSTRALIANS GALLERY



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Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander news

General Editor: Margo Neale

Assistant Editors: Sharon Payne & Pen Roberts

Design: onlinedesign@netspeed.com.au

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Cover photos

Main: Bangarra Dance Theatre member Frances Rings performing Brolga. This image appeared in the *Stories from Australia* exhibition. Photo Greg Barrett

Left Top: Koori dancer Jarrah Bundle dances at the opening of *Stories From Australia* at the Guangzhou Museum of Art, December 2002. Photo Carol Cooper

Left Middle: Evonne Goolagong Cawley with Mandawuy Yunupingu, lead singer of Yothu Yindi, NAIDOC 2003. Photo George Serras

Left Bottom: View of entry to the Torres Strait Islander gallery in the lower level of the First Australians gallery. Photo George Serras

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PROGRAM



George Serras

I would like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal peoples, the traditional custodians of this area. My first job in welcoming you to this first newsletter is to acknowledge the enduring contribution Dawn Casey has made as the 'opening' Director of the NMA. As an Indigenous Australian she has shown us how we can succeed in the public service with courage, integrity and commitment and retain our Indigenous identity. Her clear and mature approach to the place of Indigenous people in institutions was based on mutual respect and inclusiveness, ensuring that we held our own and never received 'special treatment' – tough in the short term but empowering over the long haul.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the first issue of our newsletter which commemorates the Museum's third birthday. However, we see this as much more than a letter that only gives news. We see it as a tool for dialogue, another way of strengthening and expanding our connection with communities, the keystone of our program. On one hand we will keep you posted on what we are planning to do, and on the other we would be interested in knowing what is happening in your community and what matters to you. You may like to contribute to our future programs with stories, objects and referrals to appropriate people. Developing programs with partners in different ways is very much part of our practice and I feel sure this newsletter will further that aim in ways we have not even thought of yet.

This is a museum of the 21st century and as such we aim to do things differently. I know many of our people still have bad memories of how some museums treated them and their material culture in the past but you can be assured that we place the highest priority on respectfully observing appropriate protocols here.

In some ways we see ourselves as a 'museum without walls'. Although historically we were an institution that collected objects only, we now place great importance on intangible culture as well. The *Tracking Kultja* festival we held in our opening year, which involved some 50 communities, is an example of our commitment to acknowledging the value we place in the contemporary expression of our traditions through performance. The festival was also about maintaining active community involvement in the Museum and connecting with Country in different ways. Stay strong,

Margo Neale

program highlights in brief

» Opening of the First Australians gallery: with 22 exhibition modules; a Yirrkala exhibition in the Focus gallery; and 45 objects on loan from the University of Cambridge's 1898 Haddon collection in the Torres Strait Islander gallery, March 2001.

» Dancers from the Saibai, Yirrkala, Wik and Ngunnawal communities performed at the Museum's Opening.

» The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation donated their collection, November 2000.

» Commission of an outrigger canoe from Saibai Island completed on site, followed by a community blessing ceremony.

» Installation of *Yingapungapu* accompanied by a large sand sculpture, which was a collaboration with the Centre for Cross Cultural Research, ANU and the Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre at Yirrkala, north-east Arnhem Land.

» Significant publications: *Past Time: Torres Strait Islander Material from the Haddon Collection, 1888–1905; Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience; People of the Rivermouth: The Joborr Texts of Frank Gurrmanamana; and Ernabella Batiks.*

» Tour of *Bush Toys* exhibition (2000–2001) in association with ArtBack NT Arts Touring.

Welcome to the first issue of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander News from the National Museum of Australia*.

It has been an exciting and productive three years since we opened our doors on 11 March 2001. In this period we have seen the establishment of the highly acclaimed and popular First Australians gallery and an active program of Indigenous activities across the Museum.

We also take great pride in our high levels of Indigenous employment. We opened for operation with 16 Indigenous staff employed at all levels of the Museum. The numbers obviously fluctuate over time and Indigenous employment programs are in place to remain proactive in this area. We have a commitment to ensuring that our Indigenous staff are not marginalised into one compartment of the Museum but instead work alongside other Australians in all areas, from visitors

services to directorate. We currently have Indigenous staff working as hosts, curators, educators, and exhibition officers and in senior management.

The Museum does not see Indigenous programs as a separate but rather as an integral part of all Museum activities. This broad philosophy is reflected in this newsletter, which is an initiative of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program, the team who manage the First Australians gallery. Representative staff from sections across the Museum who develop and support Indigenous programs are introduced in this newsletter.

By the time you read this, my term as Director will have concluded. It was an amazing experience for me to lead a magnificent team to establish such a dynamic and successful cultural institution.

I wish everyone all the best,

Dawn Casey



George Serras

MESSAGE FROM THE FORMER DIRECTOR



George Serras

MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING DIRECTOR

I am pleased to be able to add my welcome to this first edition of the Newsletter.

I have always been a fan of the First Australians gallery – from the time we were trying to build it! And I am clearly not alone; almost two million people have visited it since we first opened and they have enjoyed the celebration of the continuity and diversity of Indigenous Australian culture that is to be found there.

The Museum's mission statement has a commitment to presenting exhibitions of outstanding content and imaginative delivery. The recent Review of the Museum found that this was being achieved particularly well in the First Australians gallery, where it concluded their 'strong curatorial vision and aesthetic flair and an informed selection of powerful

objects and images can produce exhibits that are both edifying and beautiful'.

This result could not have been achieved without the help and strong support of many Indigenous communities, and another part of our mission statement commits us to developing and maintaining innovative relationships with relevant individuals and groups. The 'Mates of the First Australians Gallery' program and this newsletter are such developments. I encourage you to become a mate; just join up on the form provided in this issue – it's free!

The next newsletter will come out in the last quarter of the year and we will include a community contribution page – so get those contributions going. With best wishes,

Craddock Morton

» Staging of *Tracking Kultja*, a week-long festival, 8500 visitors, 2001.

» *Frontier Conflict* forum, 2001.

» Artist-in-Residence program with Indigenous artist Elaine Russell with support from AIATSIS 2001/2002.

» Awarded 6 Research grants including Australia Research Council Linkage (ARC) and Discovery grants.

» *Paipa* exhibition in the Torres Strait Islander gallery 2002.

» Travelling exhibition, *Stories from Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* opened in China, December 2002 and in Adelaide, February 2004.

» The Museum's Repatriation Unit returned 405 human remains to communities in NT, SA, NSW and Victoria during 2002/2003.

» 'Living Collections' program documentation of artefact production by Roy Barker.

» Exhibition of children's art about the Macassans in northern Australia, August 2003.

» Cross-cultural training courses conducted for Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade each year.

» *Kamberry Dreaming*, an exhibition of works from local Indigenous artists shown in the Hall, 2003.

» *Thookay Ngaweeyan*, an exhibition of Indigenous children's work from the Museum of Victoria shown in First Australians, 2002 /2003.

» *Reconciliation: Melting Pots of Culture* exhibition, curated for the offices of Reconciliation Australia, Commonwealth Place, July 2003 to July 2004.

» *Native Title Business* exhibition and forum entitled *The Power of Cultural Evidence*, December 2003. ■

Note: For further details including lectures, tours and conferences see the Museum's Annual General Reports.

meet the staff

MEET THE STAFF WHO WORK WITH THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PROGRAM IN DEVELOPING INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS ACROSS THE MUSEUM.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program (ATSIP)

Margo Neale, Director is heading into her fifth year at the Museum. She led the ATSIP team to the opening of the First Australians gallery. Her extensive experience and interest in Indigenous culture is reflected in her co-editorship of the *Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*. 'It makes you so proud of your culture to work in a place that gives it so much space, value and voice. To work for a "deadly" black woman Director like Dawn Casey was a rare privilege.'

Tina Baum, Curator has worked in ATSIP since 1996. She is a Larrakia woman from Darwin who's areas of interest include the arts, culture, environment, new technologies, and the family experience. 'Being creative, forming partnerships and assisting Indigenous communities to have a voice in the Museum, experiencing their pride in their exhibit and becoming friends gives me the greatest satisfaction of working here'.

Leilani Bin-Juda, Curator came to ATSIP in 1999. Leilani describes herself as an 'allrounder' as she loves all aspects of museum work. She does single out youth issues as being particularly important to her. Leilani has recently taken a permanent position with the Torres Strait Regional Authority, working on the new cultural centre. We wish her well.

Jo Duke, Senior Curator and Program Manager has been at the Museum since 2000 and has worked in ATSIP. Her particular interest is 'researching, collecting and exhibiting cultural material from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. I am extremely lucky to be working in a job that allows me to talk with people who are passionate about history and have amazing stories to tell. I get to view objects from all areas of human existence'.

Andy Greenslade, Curator has been with the Museum three years, first with the *Tracking Kultja* festival before going to ATSIP. Andy takes 'special delight in getting to know some of the people who are featured in the Museum and seeing their cooperation and enthusiasm for the exhibits'.

David Kaus, Curator has been with the Indigenous collections since 1979 when they were still held at the old Australian Institute of Anatomy. He has been with the National Museum of Australia since 1984. David presently works between ATSIP and the Repatriation Program. His special areas of interest are the history of collecting and collection documentation, and material culture.

Nancy Michaelis, Curator has been working with the Indigenous collections for 15 years. Her area of interest is kid's creativity, especially their art. 'I love the creativity and diversity of my work. At the Museum there is the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life in this wonderful building.'

Sharon Payne, Curator worked in ATSIP in 2003 for eight months. A Batjula woman, she is interested in Aboriginal culture and society. While working here she enjoyed 'working with other areas of the Museum to develop exhibitions and activities featuring Aboriginal culture'.

Amanda Reynolds, Curator has worked at the Museum for almost five years. She has 'enjoyed every second!' Her areas of special interest are the creative arts and the expression of spiritual beliefs. What she enjoys about working at the Museum are 'the people you meet and the knowledge they share'.



Margo Neale



Tina Baum



Leilani Bin-Juda



Jo Duke



Andy Greenslade



David Kaus



Nancy Michaelis



Sharon Payne



Amanda Reynolds

Other people who have worked in ATSIP over the last three years **Staff:** Franchesca Cubillo, Lamickey Pitt, Royce Buchanan, Lee Burgess, Alisa Duff, Conan Fulton, Nathan Seden, Pip McNaught and Alison Cadzow. **Interns:** Amity Raymont, Pradiipa Khora and Brittany Neal. **Others involved in the development** of First Australians before opening include Mary Bani, Cynthia Coyne, Katie Gilbert, Carly Lane, Brad Manera, Djon Mundine and Luke Taylor.



Karen Peterson, Cameron Wood, Carol Cooper, George Serras

Exhibition Project Management – Carly Jia, Exhibitions Officer has been with the Museum since March 2003. She loves ‘the craziness of installing blockbuster exhibitions.’



Carly Jia

Registration – Carol Cooper, Manager of Registration has been with the Museum five years. ‘I love the huge amount of variety in my work, the energy of the staff... and working with the fantastic collection.’
Karen Peterson, Acting Assistant Registrar Documentation has been with the Museum for over two years. She loves working with such a fantastic Indigenous collection, especially the bark paintings.
Cameron Wood, Registration Officer has been with the Museum 12 months. ‘I love working on exhibitions and collecting material that preserves and promotes Aboriginal art and culture.’
George Serras, Senior Photographer has been with the Museum for over four years. ‘I love the diversity of my work, from photographing objects in the studio to photographing people in remote communities.’

Conservation – Eric Archer, Manager of Conservation has been with the Museum nearly five years. He is particularly interested in the Wet Specimen part of the collection. ‘It was an incredible experience getting up close and personal to a Thylacine.’
Nicki Smith, Senior Conservator has been with the Museum three years. Her special interest is bark paintings.
Mark Henderson, Conservator began working at the Museum as a student over 10 years ago. ‘I enjoy the variety of objects and people that I come in to contact with. This inspires and influences the sort of projects that I consider and plan.’

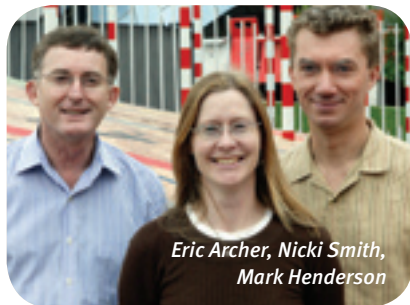
Visitor Services – Lee Burgess, Officer has been with the Museum three years. ‘Nothing pleases me more than taking Indigenous people through the Museum.’
Sue Emmerson, Officer has been with the Museum since early 2001.
George Taylor, Officer has been with the Museum since March 2001.

Public Programs and Events – Louise Douglas, Acting General Manager, Public Programs and Audience Development has been with the Museum since 1994. She loves working here ‘because its an energetic and creative place which tries to do things differently’.
Coordinator Denise Fowler, has been with the Museum since 1999.
Mikki Goode, Assistant Coordinator has been with the Museum since 2001. ‘I go to First Australians to chill out. I love the Frieze and I put the headphones on and after a while it grounds me’.
Mary Tallarida, Events Coordinator has been with the Museum for three years. She enjoys the ‘people aspect’ of her work and ‘loves going into the Hall and seeing it alive and happening’.
Jen Tierney, Venue and Bookings Officer has been with the Museum 12 months. Jen loves the architecture and the location of the Museum. ‘I love coming to work and seeing the view.’

Schools Program – Dave Arnold, Manager has been with the Museum for over three years. ‘It is a stimulating environment and getting children excited about Australia – its past, present and future – is very fulfilling.’
Trish Albert, Senior Schools Officer has been with the Museum over three years. She loves ‘the interaction with school students and teachers from across the country.’

Public Affairs – Martin Portus, Director has been with the Museum since 2000. ‘It’s tremendously exciting to work at this time helping forge a new cultural organisation dedicated to energetically exploring what it is to be Australian in ways that are not just limited to objects in glass boxes.’
Leanda Coleman, Publicist has been with the Museum 18 months. She loves working here ‘because we are bold and so many visitors come to see us – and so much media are constantly knocking on our door for stories.’

Research and Development – Mike Smith, Director has been with the Museum since September 1996. ‘At the Museum I enjoy the sense of being part of a lively well-coordinated responsive cultural organisation... and I enjoy being able to make things happen.’
James Warden, Curator has been with the Museum since December 2002. ‘Working for the Museum permits me to do history that is popular and scholarly.’ ■



Eric Archer, Nicki Smith, Mark Henderson



Lee Burgess, Sue Emmerson, George Taylor



Jennifer Tierney, Mary Tallarida



Denise Fowler, Louise Douglas, Mikki Goode



Leanda Coleman, Martin Portus



Dave Arnold



Trish Albert



Mike Smith



James Warden

Photos: George Serras; Dragi Markovic; Bill Raymond

The first three years

THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PROGRAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FIRST AUSTRALIANS GALLERY. SINCE OPENING WE HAVE REFRESHED EXISTING EXHIBITS IN THE PERMANENT GALLERIES, DEVELOPED NEW TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS, ASSISTED IN OFF-SITE PROJECTS AND MANAGED A NUMBER OF PUBLIC EVENTS.



ABOVE: The Haddon Collection on display in *First Australians*, March 2001. Courtesy of the University of Cambridge, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology
TOP RIGHT: Ceremonial Hat, 1960, maker unknown
BELOW: Spears from the Museum collection

Dean Golja



Dragi Markovic

Highlights include

the opening of a space dedicated to the heritage of the Torres Strait Islander peoples, with 45 classical objects from the 1898 **Haddon Collection** on loan from Cambridge University. We toured this exhibition to the Cairns Regional Gallery for the benefit of the large population of Islanders who reside in the region. In 2003 **Paipa**, which means ‘windward’, opened in the space.

It explores the migration of Islanders to the Torres Strait and mainland Australia, the impact of Christianity, the contribution to Australia’s defences, the pearling, cane and music industries as well as responses by young artists to the changing environment.

The Museum’s first international travelling exhibition **Stories from Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples** opened at the Guangzhou Museum of Art, China during December 2002. Drawing on works from the Museum’s collections, it featured nine communities, each with a special focus. Ngarrindjeri – people of the lakes and riverlands; Wik – ceremonies are sacred; Kimberley – a celebration of sites; the desert – centres of culture; Yarrabah – people of the rainforest; Tiwi – enriched by ritual; Saibai Island – keeping culture alive and a section entitled Artists across Australia, expressing cultural identity. Part of this exhibition toured to Tandanya for the Adelaide festival in March 2004.

The Museum’s **Tracking Kultja** festival, which featured performances, workshops and stalls, involved some 50 communities nationwide. An **Open Doors** program enabled many community people to view national collections of their material for the first time. This led to donations and acquisitions. In our Focus gallery we hosted a number of exhibitions including the Museum of Victoria’s exhibition of Koori Kids’ art **Thookay Ngaweeyan** in November 2002, followed



Gerald Preiss



George Serras



Benita Tunks

TOP: Rosie and Lee Cameron at the Reconciliation exhibition.
TOP RIGHT: An exhibition from the Museum's collection on display in the offices of Reconciliation Australia.
MIDDLE RIGHT: The dawn Smoking Ceremony performed by Ngunnawal elders led by Mathilda House, the day the Museum opened, March 2001.
BELOW RIGHT: Mariana Babia, Cedric Waia and Philemon Isua, artisans from Saibai Island, sit in the outrigger canoe they created for display in *First Australians*.

by the Gurang Land Council's **Native Title Business: Contemporary Indigenous Art** and **Refined White** from the Australian Sugar Industry Museum in Innisfail, Queensland.

One very special task during the year was the repatriation of Indigenous ancestral remains undertaken by the Museum's Repatriation Unit. Many remains were returned while some were retained by the Museum at the community's request. Remains were returned to the **Larrakia** people from Darwin in 2002, the **Ngarrindjeri** from South Australia and the **Barkindji** from south-western New South Wales in 2003, and the **Muthi-Muthi** from south-western New South Wales in 2004 amongst others.

At the local level, we hosted an exhibition in the Hall featuring the works of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. Entitled **Kambery Dreaming** after the traditional owners of this area, it included ceramics and textiles by women which were acquired to fill gaps in the collection.

Academic research activities included six research grants funded by the Australian Research Council in partnership with centres of excellence such as the new **Australian Centre for Indigenous History** at the Australian National University. ■



George Serras



George Serras

A short walk through First Australians: Gallery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

THIS GALLERY REFLECTS THE DISTINCTIVENESS, DIVERSITY AND DYNAMISM OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, AS WELL AS THEIR DEEP SPIRITUAL CONNECTION TO COUNTRY AND THEIR CULTURAL RESILIENCE THAT HAS ENSURED THEIR SURVIVAL IN THE FACE OF GREAT CHANGE.

The stories within the First Australians gallery speak of diversity and resilience in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice. Visitors are taken on a journey that tells of connectedness and alienation, of antiquity and continuity, and the central power of spirituality.

The gallery is the largest in the Museum, covering some 30 per cent of the exhibition spaces and housing some 3500 objects, including 2000 artefacts that require special conditions in the nearby 'Open Collections' area. The stories featured in the various exhibitions were developed through extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including the local Ngunnawal people who cleansed the Museum site with a smoking ceremony prior to construction.

One of the strengths of the gallery is the way it allows the old and the new to meet in a seamless line from the past to the present. This is immediately obvious on entering, where the pukamani poles are placed alongside a stunning contemporary glass wall sculpture on one side and a multi-media experience on the other.

The poles are grave posts from the Tiwi people of Bathurst and Melville islands north of Darwin. The glass wall represents some elements of country along with land and sky. The pressure sensitive floor of the Welcome Place allows the visitor to interact with the images of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dancers projected on the wall. It is a place of protocol for acknowledging the right of traditional owners of this area to welcome the public to another's country. The constellation above refers to the Seven Sisters legend and the significance of cosmology in the creation stories, the Indigenous world view and in navigation.

On this top level of the gallery we showcase a rotating and diverse range of specific communities – the Anbarra people from Arnhem land, the Wik people from Cape York Peninsula, people from Ernabella of the Pitjantjatjara community in Central Australia, urban Broome and the Palawa people of Tasmania. New exhibits on Victoria and Tasmania open late 2004. Separate exhibits of material culture reflect the intimate connection Indigenous people have with the land. Objects like bags, baskets, fish traps, boomerangs, spears and stone tools are evidence of a society that is able to adapt to

changing environments and technologies. The ethereal 'Kimberley Points' display featuring spearheads made from old glass bottles and ceramics from telegraph insulators, as well as stone, also show this.

The lower level of the gallery features the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since 1788. Here the visitor can see the original Batman Land Deed of 1835, a controversial document that shows that some pastoralists recognised Aboriginal ownership of the lands around Melbourne, but was rejected by the colonial authorities. The Focus gallery, which featured **Yingapungapu**, the life and culture of the Yolngu people of Yirrkala for nearly 3 years, has also displayed other temporary exhibitions such as **Native Title Business** and **Refined White**. Then there are the stories of conflict and resistance, of the official government policies that saw thousands of Aboriginal children removed

Junie, Tom and Conor Ryan explore the Paipa exhibition in the First Australians Gallery



Deen Galja



Visitors view the Wik exhibition. Overhead is the serpentine course of the ancestors spine.

from their families and placed in missions. The stories of the stolen generations are featured, along with the images and objects of their circumstances, such as the old mission gates from the Bombaderry orphanage and a bark hut with commentary about living on the mission. There are stories of celebration too – the success and influences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musicians, sports people and businesses, of cultural and political resurgence through land rights, Native Title and Reconciliation.

The exhibition, **Paipa**, in the gallery of Torres Strait Islander peoples, is also situated on the lower level. There are five island groups in the Torres Strait, each with a strong attachment to the sea and a deep commitment to community. Today, some 6000 people live in the Torres Strait with over 36,000 living on the Australian mainland. The **Paipa** exhibition reflects the diversity and richness of this sea-based culture and the sense of community that exists wherever Torres Strait Islanders live.

Above the entrance the oversized *dari* (headdress) from the Eastern Islands, designed by Torres Strait master artist Ken Thaiday senior, announces the space to visitors. The clearly identifiable

symbol of Island culture is the first of many important objects which includes a Saibai canoe. The contribution of Islanders to the pearling industry, the defence of Australia during the Second World War and many other examples of their unique place in Australia's history is showcased in this area.



The coming of Christianity to the Islands during the nineteenth century is depicted in a variety of ways including quirky exhibits such as the *Augemwali*, which is a variation of the 'Mother Hubbard' dress introduced by the missionaries who considered the grass skirts worn by the Island women improper. The hemlines and sleeve lengths gradually became shorter to suit the tropical climate while their bold floral prints and elaborate use of decorative beads and crochet work are expressions of the colourful personalities of the women who make and wear them.

A shark mask also by Ken Thaiday senior features a *beizam* or hammerhead shark that rests on top of the elaborate wooden structure. The lower jaw opens and closes to mimic the movements of the shark as the performer moves.

A further feature of the First Australians gallery is the **Open Collections** space where a selection of objects from the Museum's 115,000-strong collection is housed. This space allows a unique opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to have private access to their objects as well as providing a glimpse of artefacts in storage conditions. In this space, the visitor can view such implements as coolamons, baskets and other fibre containers, spears and spear throwers, digging sticks and hunting clubs, rainforest shields and some of the toys or miniatures that were produced for children's play. ■



LEFT: *Augemwali* on show in the Torres Strait Islander gallery. This style of dress is descended from the 'Mother Hubbard' dress introduced to the Pacific by missionaries in the early nineteenth century.



Evonne Goolagong Cawley with Mandawuy Yunupingu, lead singer of Yothu Yindi, at the Museum, NAIDOC 2003

George Serras



Performer from Gerib Sik Torres Strait Islander Dance Group during NAIDOC week

Dragi Markovic

NAIDOC 2003


THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA CELEBRATED NAIDOC WITH A SPECTACULAR ARRAY OF EVENTS, ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS.

Didjeridu player Graham King entertained visitors to the Museum daily with his live performances and informative cultural insights while a variety of storytellers, including Aunty June Barker who told 'dreamtime' stories, Ngunnawal elder Aunty Agnes Shea who talked about her young days and Larry Brandy who got the youngsters giggling with the 'Wombat Wiggle', kept the youngsters entertained in the Story Place.

Uncle Roy Barker who also took part in the *Rare Trades Country Fair Day* (6 July) demonstrated what was easily the most ancient craft still practised in the twenty-first century. As the incredible 'rock of ages' grinding stone in the First Australians gallery demonstrates, Aboriginal people have been using stone tools for a very long time. Roy's workshops on stone tool making were popular with the children and their dads who could not resist staying around for a look.

The very talented artist and author Elaine Russell delighted the young visitors who took part in her painting and toy making workshops. These were booked out every day and included a special book signing of her book *A is for Aunty*, which sold out in the Museum Shop in the first couple of days.

The dynamic Gerib Sik Torres Strait Islander Dancers were a big hit with young and old visitors in the Hall who also joined in learning a few dance steps themselves. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program staff were also called on to assist when one dance troupe did not arrive and curators led about 200 otherwise disappointed little people in the 'shake-a-leg', kangaroo and emu dances. ■



Roving didjeridu player Graham King with fan

Dragi Markovic



THE NATIONAL MUSEUM'S NAIDOC WEEK ACTIVITIES KICKED OFF ON MONDAY 7 JULY 2003 WITH AN 'UNVEILING'. SPECIAL GUESTS INCLUDED FORMER LABOR PM, THE HONOURABLE GOUGH WHITLAM AND TENNIS 'GREAT' EVONNE GOOLAGONG CAWLEY.

George Serras

UNVEILING OF THE MESSAGE STICK LAND ROVER

launches NAIDOC Week at the National Museum of Australia

Following the traditional Welcome to Country by Ngunnawal elder Aunty Agnes Shea who told the guests they 'could walk on her land now' (*ngunna yerrabi yanggu*), Mr Whitlam spoke of his commitment to Reconciliation and his pride in instigating the first land hand back to Aboriginal people at Wave Hill. Evonne Goolagong Cawley talked about how important NAIDOC was in keeping Indigenous cultures alive and reminding people of the Indigenous legacy of this country.

Visitors and guests also enjoyed an impromptu performance by Mandawuy Yunupingu of Yothu Yindi, accompanied by the owner of the Message Stick Land Rover, Michael Butler, playing didjeridu.

Following the speeches, Mr Whitlam and Mrs Goolagong made their way to where Aboriginal artist Walangari Karntawarra was waiting to record their hand prints on the Land Rover. They were joined by more than 200 invited guests and members of the press as well as hundreds of Museum visitors who watched the removal of the twin 'veils' (an Aboriginal flag and a Torres Strait Islander flag on loan from ATSIC for the occasion) to reveal the colourful artwork.

Mandawuy also left his 'mark' on the Land Rover along with National Museum of Australia Director Dawn Casey. They join such company as actors David Ngoombujarra and Hugo Weaving, Yidaki master Djalu in Yirrkala, and dozens of others who have left their artwork, totem or handprint on the Land Rover during its 5000 mile odyssey across the continent.

Everyone agreed that the launch was a great event – 'friendly and fun', 'a great vibe', were just two of the comments from staff and visitors echoing what many others said or wrote in the Mates of the GFA book. This set the tone for the rest of the week's activities with the busy program developed by the Public Programs area in conjunction with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs staff.

The Land Rover proved to be so popular with visitors to the Museum during NAIDOC week that it was decided to extend the exhibition for the duration of the school holiday period. It then continued its remarkable journey, appearing at the Queensland Museum and at Darling Harbour for the Rugby World Cup in Sydney. ■

LEFT: Evonne leaves her handprint **CENTRE:** Dawn Casey about to commit her hand to the Land Rover **RIGHT:** Walangari Karntawarra hands the red ochre to Gough Whitlam to leave his hand print on the Land Rover, a reversal of the symbolic action at Wave Hill when Gough poured red sand into the hands of Vincent Lingiari.



George Serras



Dragi Markovic



George Serras

IN DECEMBER 2003 ATSIP HOSTED THE EXHIBITION NATIVE TITLE BUSINESS: CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS ART ... THE TOPIC GAVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK ABOUT THE POWER OF CULTURAL EVIDENCE.



Native Title Business art exhibition launch & The Power of Cultural Evidence Forum

Our efforts were well supported by a stellar line-up of speakers and performers at the launch on 11 December. Museum Director Dawn Casey, Professor Mick Dodson, Jack Thompson and Margo Neale, Director ATSIP offered a range of personal perspectives and experiences on Native Title. An important part of the launch highlighted Dawn's achievements as Director of the Museum as this was her last official function. Professor Mick Dodson's strong support of Dawn's term of office and his emotional response (with very colourful imagery) rebounded around the nation's press. Professor Larissa Behrendt's tribute was capped with a finale by actor and performer, Leah Purcell who sang her own composition 'Run Daisy Run'. In keeping with the theme, Victorian Indigenous jazz singer Liz Cavanagh and keyboardist Luke Howard provided music for the event.

Following the well-attended launch, curator Joan Winter and Margo Neale took dignitaries and guests on a tour of the exhibition in the First Australians' Focus gallery.

A free public forum entitled *The Power of Cultural Evidence* followed. It was enthusiastically attended with a diverse range of speakers from community centres and from professions including artists, historians, museum professionals, anthropologists and lawyers, who explored Native Title from the perspective of their own fields of work. It was a snappy, informative, interactive forum. There was plenty of room for discussion time, of which the audience took full advantage. Dr Vivien Johnson noted that it felt like a 'black-fella' conference with audience and speakers all talking together.

As is fitting, the forum kicked off with community sessions. The first, on the Murray-Darling Basin, was convened by Yorta Yorta woman Monica Morgan, Murray-Darling Basin Commission, with elders and Dr Ruth Lane, of the Museum. The second, on Native Title issues, was convened by Dr Lisa Strelein, from the Native Title Research Unit (NTRU), AIATSIS. She included a number of young Indigenous lawyers and staff from the NTRU. The second day of the forum was divided into four sessions looking at the role



Top & Left George Serras

TOP: Dawn Casey speaks about her own personal experiences of Native Title. **ABOVE:** A tour of the Native Title Business exhibition. From left Leah Purcell, Margo Neale, Joan Winter and Prof Mick Dodson viewing the Wik Sticks.

of the following areas in Native Title: 'What is it anyway?' convened by Dr J Warden, of the Museum; the role of Indigenous Histories convened by Professor A McGrath, ACIH; the role of museums convened by Dr Gaye Sculthorpe, National Native Title Tribunal; and the role of art convened by Margo Neale, ATSIP, the organiser of the forum. This last session was a great high point with a line up of 'black chicks talking', climaxing with Leah Purcell. We were very proud to be able to host and commemorate this exhibition. ■

» *Native Title Business*, a national travelling exhibition, presented by the Gurang Land Council (Aboriginal Corporation), represented by Tony Johnson and Lynette Blucher at the launch and forum. It is toured by the Regional Galleries Association of Queensland (RGAQ) and curated by Joan Winter.

» The forum was supported by the Australian Centre for Indigenous History, (ACIH), the ANU Institute for Indigenous Australia (ANUIIA) and the Native Title Research Unit at the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).

LEFT TO RIGHT: Forum speakers included Prof Adam Shoemaker; Dr Gaye Sculthorpe, Dr Mike Pickering, Amanda Reynolds, Phil Gordon; Dr Vivien Johnson



George Serras



Dragi Markovic



Dragi Markovic

YESTERDAY
TOMORROW

RIGHT: Koori Dancer Jarrah Bundle dances at the opening of *Stories at the Guangzhou Museum of Art*
MIDDLE: NMA Director Dawn Casey and the Director of the Guangzhou Museum of Art, Mr Zhou Qi Li at the opening of the *Stories* exhibition
FAR RIGHT: Saibai Island dancer George Waia with new friend at the opening

Carol Cooper



Stories from Australia

The first international exhibition by the National Museum of Australia featured unique and culturally significant objects from nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around Australia. The exhibition was a major feature of the festival at the Guangzhou Museum of Art in the People's Republic of China celebrating the 30th anniversary of China-Australia diplomatic relations.

The exhibition was co-curated by Amanda Reynolds, from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program (ATSIP) and Carol Cooper, Manager of Registration. They, together with staff across the Museum, worked enthusiastically with staff from the Guangzhou Museum to make *Stories from Australia* a reality.

The Australian premiere of this show will open at the National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Tandanya during the Adelaide Bank 2004 Festival of Arts. ATSIP are delighted to collaborate with Tandanya and designer Peter Tonkin to show *Stories* in Adelaide. It will be on display from 27 February 2004 to 15 June 2004. ■

The Eddie Gilbert Collection

This collection consists of a cricket ball used by the Aboriginal cricketer Eddie Gilbert, a Kanju man who was born on Barambah (Cherbourg) Mission, to dismiss Sir Donald Bradman without scoring in a 1931 Sheffield Shield cricket match. Gilbert played some 19 Sheffield Shield matches for Queensland and is considered one of the fastest bowlers of all time, a skill attributed to his flexible wrists gained from throwing boomerangs.

The cricket ball tells a unique story of two sporting identities, Eddie Gilbert and Sir Donald Bradman. It also tells a story of overcoming great adversity including extreme poverty and racism to pursue his sport, while serving as a reminder that our heroes are only human after all.

The ball was donated to the Museum by Dr Kevin White who acquired it from Mr Jimmy Coburn, a member of the 1931 Queensland Sheffield Shield Cricket Team who kept the ball as a souvenir after the match.

It is currently on exhibition in the Eternity gallery in a section entitled 'Thrill'. ■

Graham Baring Courtesy of Sotheby's Australia

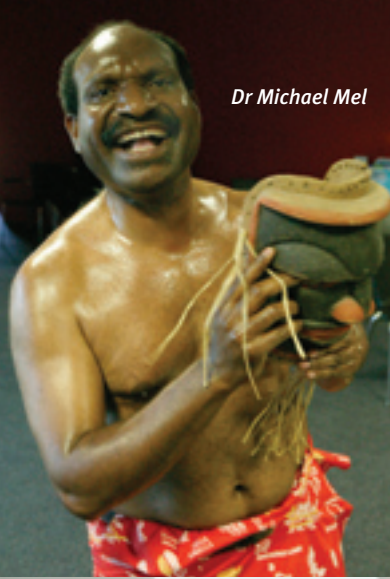


Boab Nuts A collection of 21 beautifully incised boab nuts by Jack Wherra were acquired at auction. Produced in 1948 at Broome Regional Prison in WA, they record graphic details of contact history in the region. ■

Jack Wherra's carved Boab Nuts record his stories of contact history, as a Ngarinyin man

Other important acquisitions include:

- » Saibai Island dance costumes
- » Sydney Olympics objects from the opening and closing ceremonies.
- » Collection of Tasmanian material comprising shell necklaces, prints, woven baskets, posters, possum-skin drums and kelp water carriers.
- » Collection of Victorian material including an installation of contemporary 'possum' skin cloaks and associated tools and designs.
- » A fourth collection of textiles, prints and other items donated by Winifred Hilliard about Ernabella Mission.
- » Thirteen early Hermannsburg watercolour paintings including one of the last watercolours painted by Albert Namatjira.
- » A collection of Torres Strait Islander clothing from Lucy Thaiday.
- » Wooden carvings and implements from Central Australia from Dick Kimber.
- » Three decorated Hermannsburg clay pots.
- » A collection of stone tools and other artefacts by Roy Barker of Lightning Ridge. ■



Dr Michael Mel

Art and Human Rights Conference and Exhibition **NMA and ANU with NGA**



Dr Michael Mel in performance in the Hall

DR MICHAEL MEL FROM THE HAGEN AREA OF THE HIGHLANDS IN PNG, IS AN ACADEMIC AND A PERFORMANCE ARTIST.

On the 10 August 2003 Dr Mel presented a paper, 'Art and Human Rights in an Indigenous Context in the New Millennium', and gave a performance for the exhibition *Witnessing to Silence*. Dealing with the theme of cultural survival, he retrieved 100-year-old objects from the Museum's Pacific collection in a process of reclamation. He commented on the role museums of the past have played in acquiring Indigenous collections. In a seemingly innocent act of dress-ups and face painting, Michael engaged the audience in a game of role reversal, the native and the coloniser swapping places. The participant-based experience was subversive, insightful, witty and global with the message striking a chord with Indigenous people around the world. As Michael says, 'the objects cannot speak for themselves... we must speak through them'.

It is part of ATSIP's philosophy to reconnect communities to objects in the collection, to restore their spirit and meaning. This concept of Indigenous performance and relationship to objects was also a strong motive behind the *Tracking Kultja* festival.

Other collaborations ATSIP is involved with at the Humanities Research Centre (ANU) include *The Other Within*, which examines the presentation of Indigenous material in the Asia-Pacific and a second project on *Art and Human Rights*. ■

BELOW: Dr Michael Mel with Margo Neale and Mbulelo Mzamane, South African educator and activist



Photos Dragi Markovic

1975

How we got to be

2.11 The Pigott Report

'We recommend that a Museum of Australia be established in Canberra. The new national museum should not attempt to imitate or duplicate those fields in which the older Australian museums are strong, but should concentrate on three main themes of galleries: Aboriginal man in Australia; European man in Australia; and the Australian environment and its interaction with the two named themes.'

Museums in Australia 1975 – Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections including the Report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra 1975)

1980

This report led to the *National Museum of Australia Act 1980*.

12.8 The Pigott Report

'The argument for a major display of Aboriginal history is overwhelming. The chronology of the human occupation on Australia is dominated by Aboriginals. If the human history of Australian were to be marked on a 12 hour clockface, the era of the white man would run for only the last three or four minutes.'

YESTERDAY
TOMORROW

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN'S ART



THERE ARE A NUMBER OF WAYS OF RELATING HISTORY. ONE OF THE MORE UNUSUAL WAYS IS THE DEPICTION OF HISTORICAL EVENTS AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF CHILDREN.

The National Museum of Australia has a magnificent collection of over 3000 children's drawings that came from the Aboriginal Arts Board in 1991. It is a unique holding in which all States (except Victoria) and the Northern Territory are represented. The strength of the collection lies in its cohesive cultural and historic content. A small but intriguing selection of these drawings is exhibited in the First Australians gallery. Curated by Nancy Michaelis, the drawings tell the story of the



Macassans who visited our northern shores from the 1600s to the early twentieth century. These works reveal a little known history of how the Macassans sailed from Indonesia each year, to harvest *trepang* (sea cucumbers) in the bountiful waters of coastal Arnhem Land. Around a thousand men would crew the *prau* fleet of some 60 vessels owned by Chinese merchants living in Macassar. Fishing rights were negotiated and traded with the Yolngu, and for a period of three to four months, they set up curing plants to process the *trepang* for export to China. At the end of the season, they returned home on the south-east trade winds. ■

ABOVE: 'Long Time before the real white people came to Arnhem Land, the Macassans who were probably looking for pearls stopped in the river not far from the bay and were suddenly surprised by the Aboriginals, who were standing on the beach with their families' 1975-1977 - Reproduction of a painting by Tony Gabalga, Maningrida, NT

ABOVE LEFT: 'Here comes the Macassans' 1975-1977 - Reproduction of a painting by Edwin Dingul, Ngukkur, NT

LEFT: 'This is my Grandfather watching the Macassans land 1975-1977' - Reproduction of a painting by Shane Namurki, Maningrida, NT

coming up this year

Stories from Australia

27 February to 15 June 2004

Tandanya, Adelaide

This exhibition celebrates the continuity and diversity of Indigenous cultures.

NAIDOC Week

July 2004

This annual event is celebrated each year with a range of activities including behind-the-scenes tours of the collection, storytelling in the boab tree, dance performances and hands-on workshops.

Refined White: Celebrating the Culture of Australian South Sea Islanders

18 March to 22 August 2004

A photographic exhibition which explores the controversial contribution of South Sea Islanders to Australia's sugar cane industry in far north Queensland. Developed by the Australian Sugar Industry Museum in Innisfail it also looks at the former White Australia Policy and the 20,000 Islanders living on the north coast today.

Urban Focus

September 2004

An exhibition which focuses on the development of material culture in the urbanised regions of Indigenous Australia. It explores the influences, adaptations, use of new technologies and cross-cultural collaborations.

Changeovers in Permanent Galleries

August 2004

These include expansion of exhibitions to feature more of the south-eastern areas of Victoria and Tasmania, and Broome in Western Australia. They are developed in consultation with local communities.

Wik Commission

To meet increasing demands on our current collection, a large project to commission new work from the Wik people of Aurukun is being planned.

*Entries and dates are subject to change.

*All exhibitions are free unless otherwise stated.

National Museum of Australia

GPO Box 1901, Canberra ACT 2601 Australia

Telephone: (02) 6208 5000 or 1800 026 132

Fax: (02) 6208 5398

Email: Mates@nma.gov.au or

Website: www.nma.gov.au

Opening hours: 9.00am to 5.00pm daily
except Christmas Day

Mates of the First Australians Gallery

has been established in response to widespread interest from Indigenous communities and supporters of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program.

Our aim is threefold. We seek to:

- strengthen our connections with communities and supporters
- gain support and advice on collections, exhibition development and other programs
- encourage endorsement of the Museum throughout the community.

(See enclosed nomination form to join today for FREE.)

Benefits

As a 'Mate of the First Australians Gallery' you are entitled to a special offer from the larger group, **Friends of the National Museum of Australia**. Join now and get three months FREE. Contact the **Friends** on (02) 6208 5048, or email friends@nma.gov.au. Make sure you mention 'Mates Rates'. Other benefits for the Mates of the First Australians Gallery are currently being negotiated.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander News from the National Museum of Australia* can be downloaded from our website www.nma.gov.au

Painting: Untitled (Six Wandjina figures) by Charlie Mumulmore, 1970, pigment on masonite

