

Sharing Our History, Sharing Our Future



Lannon and George in the studio

Sharing Our History, Sharing Our Future, part of the Museum's NAIDOC Week program, was an exhibition of images that visually document First Australians sharing their stories, cultures, and experiences as captured by Museum photographers George Serras and Lannon Harley and commercial photographer Wayne Quilliam.

The first part, subtitled 'Gathering at Festivals' comprised 20 images by Wayne Quilliam, an internationally renowned Koori photographer. The photographs are of First Australians participating at various cultural festivals and gatherings held in communities around Australia, such as the Garma Festival (Northern Territory) and the Tareer Festival (Victoria) during 2006–08. Quilliam's images offer a great insight into contemporary Indigenous experience as participants celebrate ongoing cultural practices within their communities and as individuals.



Wayne Quilliam in front of display

Photo: Lannon Harley

What's important is the preparation and discussions which take a long time to negotiate and everything done is a process that allows friend and family to be a part of the performance. Wayne Quilliam, 2009

These images illustrated beautifully how cultural practices are dynamic in nature, and how they progress and adapt with contemporary times and influences. The symbolism and knowledge that is invested in performances and the ephemeral nature of these expressions of culture at events and gatherings is one of the reasons they are recorded in photographs nowadays. Once the event has ended that moment will never occur again and the energy produced will dissipate.

The image needs to convey the value of the subject matter to the social history of our nation. George Serras, 2009

The second part of *Sharing Our History, Sharing Our Future* exhibition subtitled 'At the Museum' comprised 20 images sourced from the Museum's own photography department, also taken during the 2006–08 period. Photographers George Serras and Lannon Harley, through these images, document the variety of activities the Museum participates in, including:

- events, people and the internal processes of the Museum as it engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' material culture
- the diverse ways of recording and representing histories including the collecting of oral histories and objects
- the exhibitions and public forums which invite and inform audiences
- outreach programs where individuals and community engage with the Museum in collecting and representing their history, heritage and culture.

We need to capture modern history, visually document contemporary events and issues for our future. Lannon Harley, 2009

Sharing Our History, Sharing Our Future gave the audience greater social context to cultural festivals and gatherings, and events at the Museum. All three photographers visually document First Australians and the diversity of ways they celebrate their cultures and relate knowledge with each other and the wider non-Indigenous communities. It opened up a window into the contemporary lives of First Australians and how they continue cultural practice and pass knowledge along to the next generation — which is the shared aim of the Museum.

Barbara Paulson, Curator, ATSIP



Photo: George Serras



Photo: Wayne Quilliam



Photo: Wayne Quilliam



Photo: Lannon Harley



Photo: George Serras



Photo: Lannon Harley