Heritage Management, Interpretation, Identity
By Peter Howard. London, Continuum, 2003
ISBN: 08264-5898-X.

Heritage studies as an emerging academic field is the focus of Peter Howard’s Heritage Management, Interpretation, Identity. Howard perhaps is best known to Australian readers as editor of the International Journal of Heritage Studies, with an approach based upon his background in geography and landscape studies. He asserts that the book considers three main strands of heritage studies: identity, management and interpretation. Physical conservation, which is a fourth dimension of heritage, is not discussed in detail.

Howard considers that heritage studies is the only field that looks effectively at similarities between the tangible and intangible values that societies cherish and wish to preserve. In Howard’s paradigm, then, heritage is a discipline that sets out ‘to examine the heterogeneous collection of things that people want to save, and sets out a series of ideas by which they can be usefully studied, more effectively managed and interpreted.’ (pp.2-3) He adds that traditional academic disciplines ‘aid sensible thinking, but impede sensible management.’ (p.52) In this paradigm, cultural heritage managers respond to immediate social needs while academics cater to their interests.

The revelation that ‘heritage is perhaps the first post-modern subject’ (p.29) sets the context for far-ranging theoretical discussions on the concept of ‘legitimation’ as a nationalistic motivation for preserving places. Howard discusses the notion that heritage is the realm of the rich – no less than a mechanism for transferring places and things from the poorer, disempowered sector of society into the public domains that are the realm of the well-off or the ‘dominant’. ‘In such circumstances, to regard most heritage enterprise as a trick designed to persuade the entire population to pay for the few was entirely plausible,’ he says. (p.37)

Yet Howard also considers the practical application of attempts to create or nurture cultural resources (to generate ‘cultural capital’) in economically depressed locations for economic revitalisation. These discussions are set within contexts provided by earlier writers such as Hewson in The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline, and more recently, Ashworth in European Heritage Planning and Management. He provides numerous examples, many illustrated, of the practical aspects of making heritage a business.

Emerging forcefully are the differences between the Australian and the British approaches to heritage studies and place management. In this respect, Howard offers little by way of a discussion of silent or suppressed voices such as those of Aboriginal peoples. He does mention that it is necessary to extend the range of conserved things to those that are valued by subordinate social groups and the need to conserve more than objects: in fact, the traditions of people. Yet when discussing gypsy travelling vans as objects of heritage, Howard does not mention if or how the needs of such ‘minority’ groups are met through the various heritage processes.

Although there is a chapter devoted to ‘Heritage as a process’, I am not impressed that what is offered is at all as comprehensive as that found in the Burra Charter. For instance, I would have welcomed a discussion of the English system of identifying heritage through characterisation, and of the application of ‘cultural capital’ that brought notions of public amenity and cultural and natural heritage to the attention of heritage managers. It is notions like ‘cultural capital’, ‘quality of life capital’ and ‘characterisation’ that provide space to British heritage, while Australian heritage specialists seem to be mired in the past, their thoughts and actions constrained by the Burra Charter to the singular concept of ‘significance’.

Heritage Management, Interpretation, Identity is very much British in its approach, although European regional examples are cited. In this respect the book provides a wealth of comparative material to stimulate student discussions. Unfortunately many of the ‘exercises’ in each chapter, presumably for students, cannot be easily translated into an Australian context.

There are 20 to 30 up-to-date bibliographic references for each of the nine chapters: ‘What is Heritage?’; ‘Heritage as a Discipline’; ‘Heritage for People: History and Theory’; ‘Fields of Heritage’; ‘Selling Heritage’; ‘Heritage as Identity’; ‘Heritage as Process’; ‘Values and Issues’; ‘Interpretation in Practice’. Numerous photographs, often near half-page size, add to the attractiveness of the book. However, the publisher Continuum has made what must have been excellent photographs into uniformly dingy grey images with little contrast.

In my opinion the book is a valuable contribution as a general approach to heritage studies as well as a stimulant for student discussions in the classroom. It places the nature of heritage studies into perspective and provides far-ranging contemporary examples that should give Australian heritage managers considerable food for thought.

Brian Egloff

Personal Interpretation: Connecting your Audience to Heritage Resources

This is definitely a text book – but it is not one of those expensive tomes that you plough through because you have to, and ditch as soon as you can. It is the sort of slim, stream-lined booklet that condenses the essence of a discipline into a few pertinent chapters so that you want to take it with you.

It is presented with the authority of Lisa Brochu and Tim Merriman. These two are steeped in the world of the go-between and instrumental in establishing interpretation as a
discipline worthy of study. They have been introducing people and places to each other for decades.

Despite its unprepossessing appearance (100 pages with a simple cover adorned with a sepia photograph), it is what I would consider a source book. It provides a foundation for interpreters in the same way as Sander's *Classroom Questions* (1965), provided a source for classroom teachers in the 1970s and led to such things as Bloom's taxonomy.

Chapters range from history to theory to practical guidance, right through to sub-topics such as voice modulation and how to load a slide projector. They write: 'it's especially important to end with a black slide rather than a white screen so that the audience's pupils aren't suddenly forced to constrict'. See what I mean? These people are talking from experience.

Interspersed through the text are anecdotal examples of interpretation with colour photos. They are highly personal and sometimes provocative – unapologetic expressions of opinion, such as 'Low key also strikes a chord', 'Some approaches are better than others'. They would be useful stimulation for discussion in tutorials and workshops. Perhaps that is what they are designed for.

As Sarah Blodgett, the president of the (US) National Association for Interpretation, says in her foreword: 'this book will be invaluable for anyone new to the field, from docents and educators in museums, zoos, and aquaria, to front-line interpreters in parks, nature centres, and living-history sites. It is also a great refresher for those of us who are seasoned interpreters looking to renew our dedication to providing the best interpretive programs for the visitors to our sites.'

There are two other groups who would find this little text valuable. First, those of us (and I suspect, in Australia, there are many) who have stumbled into the field of interpretation by chance or through the avenues of teaching or public relations. We did not realise that 'interpretation' even had a name which defined it as a specialist discipline, let alone a tradition. I remember quite distinctly attending my first IAA conference in 1995 and thinking 'so that's what I am'!

Second, if you are responsible for the professional development of staff who use interpretation techniques, this book provides you with definitions, examples and even access to an on-line Interpretive Log Book to record and evaluate your interactions with visitors. If you are teaching interpretation, there is reference to the US National Park Service Module 102A of its Interpretive Development Program curriculum. (There are quite a few references to Module 102A and I suspect a lot of students buy this book!)

The list of the six most useful reference books, the National Park Service's Interpretive Development Program web site (www.nps.gov/idp/interp) and the index are most practical additions.

I found the chapter on the history of interpretation fascinating, focusing as it does on the efforts of individuals like John Muir and Freeman Tilden. *Personal Interpretation*, of course, acknowledges personalities. Useful summaries, such as of Cable and Beck's *Fifteen Principles of Interpretation* and Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* are often mentioned in museums, galleries and parks – here they are, neatly summarised and useable and still relevant more than fifty years on.

The authors point out that perhaps the role of the professional interpreter is more important than ever, with the opportunities for first-hand learning rapidly disappearing in a digital age: 'Are the interpreters of those resources the "elders" with the wisdom to teach the skills and tell the stories that transfer their culture? To some extent the answer is yes. Interpreters do have tremendous power they may not realise.' (p.3)

The subsequent discussion about the responsibility of the interpreter 'to represent their organisations faithfully and to handle the facts, artefacts and stories of culture ethically' deserves a bookmark. This year, the Interpretation Australia Association (IAA) national workshop in Canberra (10 -14 October), has the title *Telling the Difficult Stories*. Stories of loss, tragedy and protest. All participants would be well advised to read Chapter 1, pp.1-4, before they come.

There is no special mention of how to interpret indigenous sites, perhaps because interpreters need to be attuned to all sorts of cultural sensitivities. There is an amusing example of how to deal tactfully with someone in impossibly high heels who has turned up for a five-kilometre hike. The effect of this approach means there is a sort of refreshing equality in the human condition. The same light touch is applied to the swamp marsupial. (However, we share some of the same history, many of the same skills and all the same responsibilities. Perhaps one day someone may write a parallel story of personal interpretation in Australia using anecdotes and photos from Queensland, Tasmania, wherever. Perhaps we should gather our own statistics (in the US, in 1988 it was estimated that an estimated 15,000 interpreters were outnumbered 18 to one by volunteers) and make a case for some nationally funded training centres of excellence. To paraphrase the authors: in the effective management of our cultural and heritage resources, interpretation is not the icing on the cake, it is the cake.

All Garnett

**Living with the Past: Reconstruction, Recreation, Re-enactment and Education at Museums and Historical Sites**


In my experience in an outdoor history museum, there are not that many books which discuss and compare the issues of presenting and interpreting the past via collections of original and re-created buildings. *Living in the Past* analyses data collected by the authors in visits to historical sites and outdoor museums in America, England and Australia. They examine living history as a method of interpretation, ask tricky questions about authenticity, and study audiences and their range of expectations.

It is refreshing to read the many Australian examples among the northern hemisphere case studies. It occurred to me how different are the personas of each of the three countries. This may horrify the authors and others, but it was a great relief for me to think that Australians do not take themselves too seriously, as shown by way the book's Australian examples use...
humour, particularly in their reenactments. It would be interesting to study why nations and communities create the specific living history museums that we/they do. Judging by the cases in Living with the Past, US practitioners are very careful to present living in the past in terms of the conflict of living in the now. The book explores living history in three sections: how living history works as education in the museum context; issues of actually making living history happen; and reflections on doing it and what visitors learn through it.

I think the central issue of the first topic is language-acknowledging who tells the story. An important further question asks who is the principal history educator these days: museum or school? Audiences of all ages now see very different concepts in museums, compared with previous generations, and interpreters cannot rely on audiences knowing much school-derived history. The interpreters interviewed in the book refer constantly to the need for a fun environment to encourage people to participate and thus to learn history by bringing the past alive. Yet the underlying question is: whose history and what information?

In the second section of the book we move onto words like ‘authenticity’, ‘accuracy’ and ‘compromise’. These are ideas that an outdoor museum aiming to do living history faces every day. Hence Goodacre and Baldwin go into great detail about interpretation and visitor expectations, alluding to the power of the interpreter when it comes to reinforcing ideologies and stereotypes. I would have appreciated further analysis of cases that could be called ‘compromise’. Where are the borders of compromise in accurate history?

The third section of Living with the Past is about interpretive points of view and the role of history in relation to identity. I enjoyed this discussion, though when I thought about the people I know who work and volunteer in living history museums (I include myself), I felt the jargon might be off-putting. As the two authors are educators, pitching to an audience is their stock-in-trade. Perhaps they could have given more thought to who might read the book. I found myself thinking as I ploughed along, ‘couldn’t we have dot-pointed this?’

In all, Living with the Past reminds me how important the role of teachers has become in museums. At the Pioneer Settlement Museum we rely on 1.5 teachers to bring in 22% of our annual visitors. Evidence of visitor satisfaction with those 1.5 wonderful people, our research shows that many students return in later years, seeking the same type of hands-on learning about the past for their own children.

Goodacre and Baldwin provide the reader with some notable insights into the concerns of museums that aim to ‘people historical space’. (p. 50) Their analytical observations at times left me with more questions than solid ground; however, I felt there was much transferable information useful to many in the field.

It is now considered elementary that some form of interaction will encourage learning. Hence it is odd to see how the authors identify the subject museums’ and sites’ interactive arms only via their publications. The authors offer no opinions as to whether one mode of interpretation is superior to another. It is left up to the reader to assess how living history museums stack up on the evidence Goodacre and Baldwin provide. I found myself wanting to know much more about exit surveys on what ideas audiences actually took away.

The discussion in Living in the Past is thought-provoking and though at times it gets a bit dry, it’s well worth a read for an insight into living past museums.

This review is republished from Museums Australia Magazine, May 2005.

Robyn Till

The Reconstructed Past: Reconstructions in the Public Interpretation of Archaeology and History


If you wanted to put a single volume in front of a beginning public historian or archaeologist about the perils of a singular aspect of their chosen professions, this collection of articles would be a good start.

The question of whether to reconstruct or not is answered early and often. There is a core of unanimity that reconstruction is an effective way of achieving the larger purpose of communicating the significance of an archaeological site – and its context – to the visiting public and communities with a vested interest.

The most contentious issue is how reconstruction projects should be conducted and managed to protect the archaeological content and its integrity, and what interpretive values will permeate it. Dwight Pitcaithley of the US National Parks Service outlines the problems scholars often have with reconstructions: ‘all reconstructions look like they represent the past whether they are accurately produced or not. And therein lies the problem: while they claim to represent the past, reconstructions exist on a spectrum that ranges from strong documentary and archaeological evidence to pure fantasy.’ (p. ix)

The examples cited relate to reconstructions on or adjacent to in-situ remains or archaeological material. When reconstructions of historic sites became something of a movement in the early twentieth century, the task was almost exclusively the domain of archaeologists, relying heavily on physical evidence to determine the extent and content of the reconstruction. This sometimes narrow purpose often saw archaeologists in conflict with reconstruction proponents seeking more contextualised exhibits for broader public appeal, and more prepared to deal with conjecture to achieve that outcome.

Reconstructions have been driven by needs to preserve artefacts in-situ, to conserve deteriorating fabric, to contextualise artefacts, and to promote heritage tourism. They provide visitors with three-dimensional encounters with the heritage of a site, and can offer a more intimate experience of the cultural practices and material of the people who built the original (and, for that matter, the ‘reconstruct-ors’). Jameson notes that the strategy of interpreting the process of reconstruction itself at key points is emerging as a successful way to overcome potential confusion over the ‘real’ and the reconstructed on a site.

Each of the ten case studies profiles a different type of physical problem, interpretive context, and community and professional expectations to be managed. The time periods range from the Byzantine to the Industrial Revolution, and span such diverse
museums and sites as Colonial Williamsburg and Wolstoneholme Towne in Virginia; George Washington's blacksmith shop at Mt Vernon; the Saugus ironworks in Boston; Iroquois longhouse sites in Ontario; Homolovi Ruins in Arizona; and the Qasrin synagogue and Village on the Golan Heights. Forts provide rich material – the mid-eighteenth century Fort Loudoun in Tennessee, the Fortress of Louisbourg in the Canadian maritimes, and Bent's Fort in Colorado. Early medieval Britain is explored in Bede's World, and the heritage of the Industrial Revolution at Ironbridge Gorge.

These case studies show that reconstruction is, of necessity, a multidisciplinary project, engaging physical as well as documentary evidence in determining the built form and interpretation of a reconstruction. What follows as strongly is ensuring that the objectives, the decision-making process and the outcomes of a reconstruction project should be understood beforehand by those participating and by those with a vested interest in the project. Some case studies tell of unproductive conflict where expectations were murky.

The contributors indicate a shift from the methodological pursuit of physical evidence to the interpretive pursuit of exploring the significance of a site and connecting us today with those who created the original – to promote reflection on their lives, and our own. This approach has enabled indigenous people to engage in reconstruction projects in more satisfying ways – contributing knowledge from a variety of sources, and producing a more meaningful contemporary community outcome.

Australia has a rich inventory of reconstructions, especially in interpreting nineteenth-century colonial lifeways and work, and in the adaptive re-use of historic buildings. In interpreting the gold rushes that transformed Victoria, we at Sovereign Hill have adapted the Williamsburg model of contextualising in-situ artefacts, with re-creations of buildings based on evidence from many sources, in a defined interpretive period (1851-61), with costumed interpreters. Our very high use of reconstruction as an interpretive technique has been adapted over time to include technology which increases the power of telling significant stories associated with the locality. Port Arthur has a similar mix of interpretive strategies to take advantage of a remarkably rich in-situ building and archaeological resource, and has had occasional contretemps about reconstruction.

In common with the cases reviewed in The Reconstructed Past, the focus has shifted at Australian sites (at least those with viable professional resources) to stress the significance of the history they represent. Nonetheless, there have been moments of controversy which would sit well in this volume, such as the story of the Museum of Sydney and the First Government House foundations underneath and around it. Reconstruction is no easy path for history and archaeology.

Tim Sullivan

Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation History, Theory and Criticism
Vol.1, no.1, Spring 2004. ISSN: 1549-9715.

According to the Director's foreword in the inaugural issue of Columbia University's new journal, Future Anterior, like everything that the Columbia Historic Preservation Program does, tries to focus on how preservation helps us understand the human condition and what we should be doing about it. Put another way, the journal aims to provide an opportunity to think about historic preservation by looking at examples, reading commentary, coming upon new routes to the understanding of old things. It includes a useful set of papers dealing with a range of topics with thought-provoking commentary, but it would be too early to conclude whether the journal will make a valuable contribution to historic preservation debate; that will depend on a regular supply of good articles by contributors.

The name of the new journal is just a bit too clever, really. The editors clumsily claim that 'the title highlights preservation's foundational theoretical and historiographical problem of having to speak for two eras (the past and the present) in the name of the future'. Confused? The name was chosen no doubt to connote intellectual content but it could place the journal out of the reach of average readers, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds. The title would not be attractive to students trawling library shelves in search of information on the subject. Several more appealing names could be suggested for a journal that has such commendable aims.

The look of the journal too is unappealing. The text is relieved by only a small number of black and white illustrations. The cover is printed in bands of colour with plan Arial text. Why the directors of the Historic Preservation Program at Columbia would not have opted for an interesting illustration on the cover is a mystery. It could be assumed that the cover will remain constant through the series but will it be easy to relocate any particular issue in the future, without a memorable cue on the cover? Perhaps the individual colours on the polychrome banded cover will vary from issue to issue, which would be useful in future searches of back issues.

Future Anterior will be published semi-annually, presumably with a selection of topics. The articles in the inaugural issue are not themed. The first seven articles cover a range of topics from cast stone to amusement parks. There is also a lengthy interview with a Russian-born artist who took on the task of painting the previously unpainted façade of a large functionalist building in Mexico. Here, it would have been very useful to have better illustrations of the subject, preferably in colour. This might have been the opportunity to use the colour cover to include a key image of the five-storey building that is now painted red.

The text and writing style is determined by the individual contributors, understandably. The editors specify guidelines on format and spelling (following American convention) but the American convention is not always intelligible to a non-American reader. Take one example. A sentence that begins "This theoretical postulate has resulted in a unique institutional paradigm" is, quite frankly the sort of phraseology that makes it hard going and it really could be avoided if the journal is to successfully reach a broad readership.

The articles in the first issue are mostly of a high standard. The article on preserving the honky-tonk character of Coney Island is apposite to the journal's stated aims. It is also enjoyable to read. I can think of at least three places in Australia where the debate about amusement park heritage is topical; for example the re-building of the pier structure at St Kilda has evoked strong opinions. Likewise the article about preserving a significant urban expressway is timely, as many urban
managers face crucial decisions about aging infrastructure and the growing heritage value of some rather ugly though highly-appreciated places. Sydney’s Cahill Expressway is an example of a subject that was sufficiently potent for a former Prime Minister, Paul Keating, to buy into.

The rest of the articles are, in comparison, more even. It is an analysis of an essay written in 1903 by Alois Riegl on the theory of conservation (although referred to as preservation). It is enlightening to know that in 1903 Riegl was able to distinguish between intentional and unintentional monuments and propose different conservation approaches for the two different forms of what were commonly termed monuments. In summary, he recommended that consciously-designed monuments should be preserved in their pristine, authentic form, whereas unintentional monuments that are worthy of veneration due to their age alone, should remain old-looking without any falsification through restoration. Our thinking on this subject has matured a great deal since Riegl’s time but he was far more astute than most of his contemporaries on this.

On balance the journal provides a worthwhile contribution and, at $US 12 per issue, it is accessible. It will remain to be seen whether the contributors will maintain a high standard of content but the journal is worthy of support. It could prove to be a valued vehicle for discourse on the difficult questions from philosophical, theoretical and practical perspectives.

An invitation is extended to contribute to this journal, so if we wish to see it flourish we should perhaps start writing.

Donald Ellsmore

**Exploring the Modern City: Recent Approaches to Urban History and Archaeology**


This collection of ten short essays plus foreword and introduction discusses historical studies of Australian cities from viewpoints of archaeology, history, urban planning and cultural heritage management. Editor Tim Murray convened a one-day symposium in Sydney in May 2003 as part of his ARC-Linkage project, ‘Exploring the Archaeology of the Modern City’. He aimed to promote dialogue between historians and archaeologists in a context where some historians devalue the contribution of archaeology to studies of urban history and urbanism. Participants were invited to explore relationships between history, archaeology and related areas of practice. The book is a write-up of the symposium papers, plus three invited commentaries by archaeologists. As an archaeologist who attended part of the symposium, my responses come from a particular perspective.

The papers deal variably and in uneven depth and breadth with links between theories, methods and practices of Australian urban archaeology and history. Three papers don’t discuss archaeology. Paul Ashton outlines themes in the development and practice of public histories in the city of Sydney, with focus on monuments and memorialisation. Patrick Troy, from an urban planning perspective, explains notions of structure and form in the development of Australian cities, and how early decisions can determine and reinforce future developments via a process of path dependency. Both these essays are interesting, well-written and informative. Andrew Brown-May problematises the very notion of urban history via a discussion of issues raised in designing and implementing his *Encyclopedia of Melbourne* in print and interactive digital formats. There is nothing wrong with the paper, but it was dull in print compared with his excellent symposium presentation, which included a memorable interactive demonstration of ‘Designing a Water Fountain for Melbourne’. This shows it’s probably better to interact with than read descriptions of interactive media.

Papers by historians Graeme Davison and Alan Mayne addressed issues about history and archaeology. Davison develops a typology of postwar suburban neighbourhoods in Melbourne based on material and spatial attributes to provide insight into processes of urban development. This was interesting, but the title (‘The Archaeology of the Present: “Excavating” Melbourne’s Postwar Suburbs’) points to a distorted representation of archaeology. Whatever Davison’s research methodology, it is not archaeology as described in any basic text book.

In contrast, Alan Mayne is an historian whose paper directly engages with key aspects of contemporary archaeology. Through the author’s involvement in Melbourne’s Little Lon and other excavation projects. Mayne reflects on his personal learning curve about issues of relativism in archaeological interpretation and also the way popular public and media interest in and representations of the value of archaeology are often at odds with more scholarly and academic versions of the past. Such issues are already well-documented and discussed in an extensive and growing body of archaeological research literature, little of which appeared in the bibliography. It’s certainly useful for an historian to raise such questions in a live forum to promote inter-disciplinary debate and, hopefully, understanding, though I doubt the value of freezing part of what is essentially an incomplete dialogue into a published paper like this.

There’s a very good paper by Karskens and Lawrence, setting out a large-scale research agenda for historical archaeology studies of Australian cities in global context. This was a well-written, well-researched collaboration between scholars with backgrounds in both history and archaeology, who have integrated their perspectives.

Tim Murray, Penny Crook and Laila Ellmoos describe work in progress on the EMAC project with focus on appropriate scales of analysis for studying the archaeology of modern Western cities. Their printed description of the project’s People+ Place database suffers from the on-line *Encyclopaedia of Melbourne* problem noted above. Richard Mackay’s brief plea for the importance of ‘storytelling’ in public interpretations of archaeology, and Wayne Johnson’s historical overview of cultural heritage management in the Rocks and Sydney Harbour are contributions rather than comments. Only Tracy Ireland really pulls together threads and themes raised by other papers. She discusses connections between historical archaeological research into Australian cities and contemporary cultural concerns and ponders why so many people are interested in the ‘authentic material worlds’ which can be seemingly accessed through archaeology and related practices.
This attractively presented book showcases some interesting work in progress. Most of the papers are well-written and on the whole I enjoyed the read. The symposium itself was obviously successful at getting a group of key urban historians and archaeologists together and talking, which is no mean feat. However the published volume as a whole left me dissatisfied. While there is some good stuff in here, much is half-baked. The volume bears signs of having been rushed quickly into print to satisfy demands for 'tangible output' from research sponsors and university research auditors, as is increasingly common practice. This has resulted in a volume which touches on many important research issues, yet leaves too many of them annoyingly under-explored.

Sarah Colley

**Time Capsules: A Cultural History**


Sydney's Powerhouse Museum celebrates its 125th anniversary this year. To conclude the celebrations, a time capsule is to be produced. It will be suspended like a satellite in the Museum's main hall in April 2005, and filled with 'items of value or desire to represent the current time', contributed by NSW schools that share an anniversary with the Museum (founded in 1879). In 75 years' time the capsule will be opened, on the 200th anniversary of the Museum's foundation.

The Powerhouse Museum project shares its major characteristics with similar projects detailed in William Jarvis's exhaustive and scholarly study of the time capsule phenomenon. It is diachronic in intent: it will carry the present - soon to be the past - into the future. It will convey items perceived to be representative of today's culture to the society of that future. And, stored away in 2005 at the end of one significant anniversary, it will be opened on another.

Most people nowadays know what a time capsule is, so much so that the term has become a metaphor. I recently heard someone refer to a stalwart of a historical society as a 'time capsule' - by which she meant someone who personified the history and character of a particular place. So it was a revelation to read in *Time Capsules* that this useful term was coined only in the 1930s, by George Edward Pendray, initiator of one of the definitive time capsules of the 'golden age' of the form, the 'Time Capsule of Cupaloy'. Designed for the Westinghouse company as its contribution to the 1939 New York World's Fair, this millenium-spanning project (designed to carry 5001 years into the future), 'did much more than just promote a Fair event ... Today just about anything that makes the past come alive can be, and probably has been called, a time capsule, itself a significant historical legacy.' (p.173)

Jarvis's study of time capsules is, therefore, not limited to an examination of projects denominated by that term. His historical reach extends back to the earliest forms of written communication and memorialising. In Jarvis's schema, writing and its supports, archaeological remains, archives, libraries and museums are all time capsules. Deposits of coins, bones, and other artefacts - and of course foundation stones - are time capsules as well, and his examination of how these objects work in this way is illuminating.

While all these reminders of the past act as time capsules, the task of actively creating and depositing a time capsule is far more complex. The occasions for which time capsules are created are significant, as are the dates at which they are set to be retrieved. Some are amazingly ambitious, both in the range of contents chosen to represent a society at a point in time; and the amount of time they are expected to traverse - some time capsules are set to be retrieved after several millennia.

The contents of time capsules are much debated. Considerable thought goes into the most appropriate media for conveying information about a society, and the technological supports required. The section dealing with the preservation of materials for their long journey into an unknown future will fascinate those charged with preservation on a larger, institutional scale, who face essentially the same task - of ensuring that records are kept for present and future generations, and can continue to be accessed by them.

Probably the most fascinating section of the book is that dealing with the 'golden age' of time capsules which, not coincidentally, is that of the golden age of World's Fairs, from the 1930s to the 1980s. World's Fairs by their nature are paean to the progress attained by the present, and the notion that our culture will survive into a brighter future, in which the works of the past will be accessed and marvelled at. Similarly, the section of the book dealing with the proliferation of time capsules around the Millennium period of 2000 captures the expansive mood of that era.

By way of conclusion, Jarvis sums up humankind's motivation for creating time capsules: 'We have an archetypal urge to dedicate, commemorate and recall a variety of pasts for any number of possible futures. Time capsule deposits are a focused way we express that aspiration.' (p. 254)

Roslyn Russell

**The Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne: A Guide**


In 1996 Museum Victoria assumed responsibility for the Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne. It is fitting that the Museum, with its new building standing alongside the historic structure, should publish a guide to its largest and undoubtedly most precious acquisition. The guide is an attractive booklet of 56 pages, well illustrated, with an engaging text by curator Elizabeth Willis.

The Royal Exhibition Building is one of the world's few surviving exhibition halls from the nineteenth century, the great era of exhibitions, and for many years was Melbourne's largest building. Constructed for the city's first international exhibition of 1880-81 and used eight years later for an even grander event celebrating the centenary of European settlement of Australia, the building symbolised the coming-of-age of a city buoyed by gold discoveries. As the best example of its type extant, it has become not only a symbol of Melbourne but a structure of global significance. Its status was confirmed on 1 July 2004
(following publication of this guide) by World Heritage listing, the first non-Aboriginal cultural site in Australia to be so recognised.

More than a display palace, the building has witnessed other events of national importance, including the opening of the first Federal Parliament in 1901 and a hundred years later, a gala performance of Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand* to mark the Centenary of Federation. In 1922 it became the birthplace of the Australian War Memorial. During its long and varied history, the building has housed the Victorian State Parliament, a fever hospital, a migrant reception centre, military barracks, an aquarium (Australia's first), a cyclorama, a picture gallery, a museum and government offices. It has also served as a venue for concerts, balls, banquets, pageants, religious rallies, sporting events, university examinations (as I well remember), trade fairs, home and motor shows. More recently it has hosted Melbourne's annual Flower and Garden Shows, as well as other large public gatherings. As stated in the guide's foreword, the building epitomises the city's spirit and history and continues to enrich its life.

Integral to the Royal Exhibition Building are the surrounding Carlton Gardens, incorporating fountains, lakes and formal gardens, and the various annexes added over the years. While the historic gardens survive, the annexes have been demolished, though some were significant in their own right, such as the western annexe which accommodated the Victorian Parliament and the 1880-81 machinery annexe which eventually became the Royal Ballroom. Given the complexity of buildings and gardens, the guide would have benefited greatly, in my view, by a map showing the major additions and subtractions, also the surrounding streets. This would have been especially useful to non-Melburnians unfamiliar with the building and its sylvan setting on the northern fringe of the city centre.

In her text, Elizabeth Willis draws on an earlier publication commissioned by the Exhibition Trustees as a parting gift before they were disbanded: David Dunstan ed. *Victorian Icon: The Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne*, 1996. This, a comprehensive study with contributions from many specialists, treats the building not only as an architectural icon but also 'a biographical subject' of rich human experience. For Dunstan, its range and depth of human associations are as important as its design features. Dunstan's tome is a hard act to follow, particularly within the format of a brief and inexpensive guidebook.

From the wealth of documentation available, the guide offers an introductory chronology; a description of the building, the fountains and the present (1901) decorative scheme; a glimpse of the building's fascinating history; and details of the restoration work begun in 1985 under the supervision of Robyn Riddett, of conservation architects Allison Lovell Sanderson. The World Heritage nomination forms the booklet's concluding paragraph.

 Appropriately, the illustrations include many items from the Museum Victoria collection, reinforcing the historical links between exhibitions and museums. Of the booklet's offerings, I would have liked to learn more of the building's design and construction. The construction in less than twenty months by leading Melbourne contractor David Mitchell (Dame Nellie Melba's father) was a feat in itself. Yet the contractor does not even rate a mention, nor do such key players as the original decorators.

Nevertheless, this is a commendable publication, which gives Museum Victoria visitors a better understanding of an extraordinary edifice. It remains to be seen, however, whether the Museum can find a use worthy of the building and its original purpose.

Judith McKay

**Monumental Queensland: Signposts on a Cultural Landscape**

*By Lisanne Gibson and Joanna Besley. UQP, St Lucia Q, 2004. ISBN: 0-7022-3456-6.*

‘Public art’ usually refers to artworks situated in public spaces, sometimes with deliberate community input and/or manufacture. In being sited for public consumption rather than the delectation of connoisseurs, public art forgoes the exclusive ambience of high art. When it is made by, as well as for, the people, public art treads in the mud of vernacular expression and similarly loses caste in the conventional canons of art. In short, public art is a slightly iffy category, like the term ‘applied art’, carrying a certain odour of being not quite capital-A Art. At the same time, public art as known by that term – a 1970s construction – asserts a proudly non- or even anti-elitist unconventionality; with a mandate to bring art to the people. In it this asserts that the products of personal or community creativity are as valid as the products of Art.

The dichotomy between high art and public art lurks throughout *Monumental Queensland: Signposts on a cultural landscape*. Gibson and Besley write that outdoor art objects are conventionally judged by aesthetic criteria, which manifestly don’t apply to many of the Queensland works; they note that a second stream of judgement may be based on historic significance; and they observe that social significance is a rising concept of heritage value. This seems to be the point at which Gibson and Besley distinguish between art and heritage. Indeed, the book emerges from an ARC research project on the intersection of public art and heritage, grounded in the contention that the diversity of outdoor artworks is not recognised on heritage registers. This is true, but not because the idea of heritage is incapable of accommodating artworks. It is more because the practice of heritage management is geared towards places, while the management of artworks is usually seized by other agencies. There is certainly room to claim public artworks as heritage items (as some already are, specially as elements of landscapes), as well as practical benefits from the point of view of conservation.

Gibson and Besley employ a number of concepts to try to bridge the high art/public art gap: monumentality, commemoration, heritage, cultural landscape, popular culture and ‘cultural objects’. One can see why they end up using the latter phrase, clumsy as it is: the items range from Big Things to monumental portraiture to hyper-real modern statuary to abstract sculpture to commemorative carvings and plaques. This summary suggests that even the term public art is not the ideal framework in which to study such objects. Unless one takes the view that all human-made products are art (in the sense of artifice, a view I rather like), they can more rationally be understood as historically-determined expressions of commemoration and, by extension, of communal identity. Gibson and Besley attempt to override the art paradigm by analysing their corpus in themes and referring to current
historiographical interests such as contested history and heroic nationalism. But in continuing to see the objects as some kind of art, the authors lose track of the social purpose of the genre.

To my mind, the entire book is off-key because it fails to ask the important questions. It relies on the construction of straw-man arguments, presented to be demolished. For instance, the authors write: 'Some academics, heritage experts and others might consider that it is heretical to place together in the same chapter the likes of L.J. Harvey, the Shillamis, Tom Bass and the Big Pineapple.' (p.164) I would add: also some artists, art historians, citizens, councillors, MPs – in short, some people.

Australian heritage practice has the intellectual tools to recognise all these objects as cultural heritage (though the planning tools might be less complete). All it takes is a nomination, which would initiate a formal assessment, which would be evaluated by a Heritage Council and/or a Minister. There is no guarantee that every nomination would make it to a Register, but nor is every artwork accepted into a public gallery. Roll on the nomination for Rockhampton's Big Bulls!

Gibson and Besley claim that their study demonstrates the social importance of the multitude of cultural objects dotting the Queensland landscape, and that having demonstrated it, these objects should be acknowledged as heritage. In their perception, heritage rather than art is the elitist institution. A specially telling case traces the displacement after twenty years of a persistently unpopular abstract sculpture by a pseudo-old-style fibreglass farmer-and-dog (the abstract work moved elsewhere in town). Gibson and Besley call the figurative work 'heritage-inspired', where I would call it merely realist, but I think what they mean by 'heritage' is folksy nostalgia. Such use of 'heritage' is a popular shorthand for olden-days taste, but it's irrelevant in the framework of professional heritage management.

Monumental Queensland might be acceptable to an art-oriented readership, but to a history/heritage audience, it is likely to be unconvincing. To my mind, it would have worked better if had taken the form of a catalogue, an illustrated listing with some essays. As it is, the content amounts to paragraphs describing works, mostly accompanied by excellent photographs, making the text obvious and repetitive.

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Linda Young