Handbook of Cultural Economics

Heritage people – archaeologists, architects, historians, interpreters, planners and the rest – are so accustomed to groaning about inadequate money that we tend to assign anything dealing with economics to the dark side that limits and prevents us from realising our professional aims. I am as guilty as anyone of this view, but I learned a morsel or two from the Australian Heritage Commission’s seminar on heritage economics in 2000, and I’ve been aware ever since that this is an unstrategic view of economics. Whatever we suspect about its purposes, we ought to be more aware of economics as the dominant management perspective of our society.

The central problem is how to assign tangible value to the intangibly valuable products of our industry. It is not a new or unique problem. The sub-discipline of environmental economics has developed certain instruments to measure and theories to explain similar topics. Professor David Throsby (who spoke at the 2000 seminar) has written usefully on the subject, and contributes an entry in the book under review. But they have no certain answers.

I rather hoped that the Handbook of Cultural Economics might be a cheat sheet of the answers. Of course, it isn’t: it’s a reference book for professional economists. But it does permit the heritage outsider to survey how economists approach the problem of valuing culture.

How can one review an encyclopedia, a dictionary? Inevitably, one startsw. Inevitably, one starts with ‘heritage’. Author XYZ calls heritage (she means places and buildings) a social construction with blurred, unstable boundaries, and acknowledges right off that ‘heritage goods generate mixed feelings among [economist] researchers’ (255). She suggests that the enormous range of heritage places that may require attention costing money must be evaluated and prioritised by objective and subjective criteria. Her major observation arising is that if experts and regulators capture selection, they may create an over-supply of heritage. If only! I can’t decide whether we are way ahead of this author, or whether indeed economists live on a different planet. Not only has the heritage trade already considered and tested systems of evaluative criteria, it exists in such a tightly controlled segment of public management that it’s already difficult to get items onto heritage lists, let alone a surfeit of them (whatever a surfeit of heritage would be!).

However, editor Ruth Tawse’s own chapter on cultural industries is much more helpful. I think heritage management is sufficiently creative to join this club; our chief output is intellectual creativity. The cultural products we generate conform to her notion of a two-part process: content creation (by creatives) and delivery (by bizzoids), a combination that many heritage people aim to unify. The paradigm of ‘cultural industry’ may be a useful way of thinking about what we do and how we do it.

It is promising to read Tiziana Cuccia’s entry on contingent valuation (CV), a widely-tested instrument of environmental economics. The central concept of CV is to ask consumers to make judgements based on their willingness to pay for maintenance (WTP) versus their willingness to accept loss (WTA). This is a very acute summary of the reality of heritage conservation. Cuccia notes that the capacity for informed conclusions requires knowledge and education. My small experience of the ‘citizen jury’ technique for informing public representatives and then asking for judgements about value, suggests a way forward. Heritage people need to know more about these kinds of techniques.

Another enticing idea that may have applications in heritage conservation is the problem known as ‘Baumol’s cost disease.’ The nut of the problem is that in typical manufacturing industry, the labour to produce a unit usually declines over time, but this doesn’t apply to producing drama or music. The performer’s labour is the output, and there is no way to increase output per hour: a Beethoven quartet still takes four players; Hamlet needs a full cast – and similarly, conservation work needs traditional materials and techniques. Theoretically, the cost of arts productions should be rising unsustainably, but in practice, research in the 1990s shows that high inflation forced companies to adopt such effective cost-reducing policies that they are still viable. At the same time, the expanding economy leads to higher per capita income, which increases demand for the arts – and heritage, we may hope.

I expect my comments on the Handbook of Cultural Economics probably constitute grist to the mill of economists who find heritage people hopeless idealists. I don’t believe this is the truth about heritage managers, but given where power and influence lie, it is heritage people whose ideas will shift before economists’. We need to educate ourselves, and while the Handbook is probably not the place to start, it alerts us to ways of thinking that could be to our profession’s advantage.

Linda Young

Interpretive Planning: The 5-M Model for Successful Planning Projects

If you are keen to be a top-notch interpretive planner, thorough yet flexible in your approach, grab a copy of Lisa Brochu’s valuable new book. This is not another recipe-guide to interpretive planning, but a thoughtful analysis of the elements needed to create successful plans. This will help you to put them together in the best way possible to suit you, your planning team and the situation. Brochu is an experienced interpretive planner of 25 years, imparting a wealth of first-hand know-how in what works and what can bring you unstuck in the planning process. Her expertise and discussion-oriented approach reinforce her perspective that interpretive planning is
an informed yet creative process ‘that involves both sides of the brain. While there is some logical (left brain) analysis that must be conducted, it is also a creative (right-brain) process, usually limited only by budget and imagination. This dichotomy means that there is no one, single, correct way to approach interpretive planning’ (15).

Typical of Brochu’s practical, experienced approach, is the useful comparison of various plans, such as master plans, interpretive prospectuses, exhibit plans, business plans and so on, backed by a hierarchical schema that puts each plan type into perspective. She explains: ‘One of the challenges commonly faced by planners is the lack of consistent terminology within the profession of interpretation. One park’s comprehensive plan may be a nature centre’s interpretive prospectus, or vice versa. Planning consultants often develop their own lexicon’ (5). Throughout her book, she offers valuable practical exercises and handy tips that apply to all planning approaches. For instance, her thoughtful discussion on the skills needed to lead an interpretive planning team culminates in a helpful checklist of ‘dos and don’ts’ when engaging professional planning firms.

Brochu believes that ‘Effective interpretive planning, thoughtfully approached and addressing a wide array of variables, should always lead to success because it is a marriage of management, message, marketing, mechanics and media’ (3). This is the foundation of her ‘5-M Model’ for interpretive planning:

• **Management** is understanding management requirements, needs and capabilities, the ‘nuts and bolts’ associated with running the interpretive operation. It includes mission, goals, policies, issues and operational resources such as budget, staffing and maintenance.

• **Markets** refers to understanding current and prospective customers and market positions, users and supporters (current and future), and the implications of targeted market segments and market positions.

• **Message** means identifying a strong and appropriate story about the available resources. It is the ideas that will be communicated to the visiting public.

• **Mechanics** considers the physical opportunities and constraints of the location, such as the large and small-scale physical properties that have some effect or influence on what is being planned.

• **Media** brings in the appropriate mix of methodologies to deliver the message(s) to the market(s) within the constraints of management. Brochu means the most effective methods, given the mechanics of the situation, for communicating messages in support of management objectives to targeted market segments.

While the 5-M Model is a commonsense way to remember all the considerations that should affect decision-making, it does not provide a process or order to approach interpretive planning. Working in concert with the 5-M Model, Brochu recommends a simple four-stage process **Information > Analysis > Options > Action** as a logical order to proceed through a planning project. This process overlays the 5-M Model to ensure that none of the critical components will be ignored during any phase of the planning process. Each of the five Ms must be looked at during the four steps, but to varying degrees in each step, depending on the situation. Brochu provides guidance and handy checklists to approach each of the stages from a 5-M Model perspective.

The 5-M Model’s flexible approach is a major difference to many other planning programs, which tend to be more prescriptive, often template-oriented. Brochu emphasises the 5-M Model is not a recipe. ‘In fact, it’s just the opposite. It’s simply a list of ingredients. How you choose to combine them and the amounts of each that you include will determine the final outcome... The model offers flexibility in a framework. Use it to create the masterpiece that will most effectively communicate your message to audiences’ (64). For the inexperienced interpretive planner, the 5-M Model approach may not offer sufficient direction in a step-wise process. However, just keeping the 5-M model in mind will assist the developing planner toward more flexibility.

While Brochu’s base is in the USA, and her references to NAI practices, standards and accreditation systems remind us Aussies of the more formalised systems in interpretive planning, training and delivery in the States, the content and processes of her book are still valid in our context. In sum, Brochu offers a comprehensive and challenging approach for new and seasoned interpreters – a recommended addition to your interpretive reference toolkit.

Sue Olsson

**Marketing Heritage: Archaeology and the Consumption of the Past**


Most of us acknowledge that the past is political and that politicising heritage poses a risk to authentic presentations of the past. The theme of this volume is the ‘intersection of material remains and access to the past in a global context’, marketed for public consumption, where marketing means the ‘active construction of the past towards specific purposes’ (4-5). This is a fairly pointed definition of marketing, meaning more particularly the manipulation of heritage sites to meet nationalist and economic interests.

Using popular narratives of the past and iconic sites is a well-known government approach to heritage conservation – Prime Minister Howard recently welcomed new Australian heritage legislation by referring to Gallipoli. It is no surprise that places reinforcing a nation’s self-image are marketed to national and international visitors. This can be positive, generating a national pride within a diverse, even divided, society, as suggested for Afghanistan by rebuilding and celebrating the Bamiyan Buddhas (300). Not infrequently however, such nationalist icons are divisive and conflict-ridden. Golden argues that the deliberate destructive targeting of ‘shared shrines’ – Ayodhya in India, Joseph’s Tomb in Nablus, Palestine – is understandable in the light of ‘oversimplified identities ... a demonising of the Other’ (193), but notes that many strong heritage associations are based on myths that archaeology could probably dispel if given the opportunity (199).

Political constructions are not always so clear. At Zippori/Sephorit in Israel, Baumann demonstrates that site planners believe what they present is ‘what happened on the ground’ (215), although they do not interpret anything later than the third century CE. When questioned about the history of the Palestinian village of Saffouriyeh, demolished in 1948, they say
the village … doesn’t actually exist. There are only ruins’ (223). Such privileging of a particular past is tied up with national identity. Rhetoric surrounding Germany’s re-unification included a search for an earlier, common heritage. James shows that it was to be found in former East Germany in a less ‘modern’, more ‘authentic’, ‘unspoilt’ form (144), useful for reviving a sense of Germanness untainted by the past 70 disconcerting years of national socialism, war, and communism.

Tourism has long been seen as both opportunity and threat to heritage conservation. Addison shows that Jordan’s wish to cash in on Western [American?] tourists to Israel’s ‘Holy Land’ has resulted in a gradual change in road signage – in direction, language and text – pointing to Jordan’s Christian, or rather, Roman, ‘Holy Land’ sites, and thus ‘disappearing’ Islamic sites and indigenous eastern Christian sites of great historic and aesthetic quality. Have both tourism and heritage agencies agreed on this strategy? Considering all aspects of heritage significance, as required by Australia’s Burra Charter, would assist a more balanced presentation of Jordan’s history.

Appropriation of indigenous heritage to attract visitors is not rare, as shown in Mexico’s exclusion of the Maya in site management, whilst appropriating images of Mayan culture and exotic women in heritage-tourism advertisements (109). Australians may feel pride in our inclusive joint management arrangements at Uluru and Kakadu, yet marketing Aboriginal art and culture is similarly opportunistic. Exclusive archaeology can have other risks: a joint American-Cambodian excavation of a southern Khmer site aimed at tourism demonstrated that there is an effective cross-pollination between the historic and the artistic. Likewise the authors advise that in writing the opera ‘Aboriginal and text – pointing to Jordan’s Christian, or rather, Roman, ‘Holy Land’ sites, and thus ‘disappearing’ Islamic sites and indigenous eastern Christian sites of great historic and aesthetic quality. Have both tourism and heritage agencies agreed on this strategy? Considering all aspects of heritage significance, as required by Australia’s Burra Charter, would assist a more balanced presentation of Jordan’s history.

Several papers demonstrate that slick packaging of heritage draws visitors, as seen at Newgrange, Ireland, in contrast to nationally symbolic sites, such as the Hill of Tara. Costa argues that ‘the authentic experience is empty or over-controlled … The idea is to have been there, not necessarily to have been enlightened’ (87). In reality, toilets and shops can be as important as the site itself, and an examination of site shops shows they too construct a past for the visitor. Avebury’s National Trust shop bolsters an idealised view of England as a continuous, refined, pastoral landscape, with little connection to prehistoric ritual (98). By contrast, an authentic past is actively addressed at Colonial Williamsburg, with its fine reconstructions now ‘dirtied up’ to show past cruel realities, nonetheless strengthening visitors’ sense of progress and superiority (175).

The book’s collection of case studies of marketing the past are not accompanied by ethical site solutions for archaeologists. Magness-Gardiner refers to the World Heritage Convention moderating development at Machu Picchu (32), but otherwise there is no reference to international standards, such as ICOMOS’ International Charter for Archaeological Heritage Management. Nonetheless, moves away from explicit nationalism to more impartial approaches include the US National Park Service balance between ‘compelling stories’ and a historical thematic framework, encouraging greater inclusivity and complexity (280). Likewise the World Archaeological Congress aims for an ‘engaged archaeology’ to foster diverse voices for the past (292-3).

Marketing Heritage provides a window to other people’s heritage experience that can be compared and contrasted with practice in Australia. It is well-presented and well-referenced, although with too few illustrations. I recommend it to heritage practitioners with site planning roles, for the issues raised stimulate awareness of the risks and processes in marketing our heritage.

Marilyn Truscott

Ancient Muses: Archaeology and the Arts

The overall premise of this collection of essays is not only that art can derive natural inspiration from archaeology but that it is also an essential corollary for effective communication and interpretation of archaeologically-derived data. The differing views expressed in this book about the melding of art and archaeology, of the utilisation of the creative impulse in the cause of science, make for interesting and thought-provoking reading. My immediate response was that this is nothing new; there has always been cross-pollination between the historic and the artistic. An obvious example is the influence of Pompeii on European culture, which is well described by David G Orr. What drew me in was the point made by several contributors that archaeology is not so much an experimental science as an interpretation of data through the lens of human experience that leads to a narrative of the past. It is here that the various viewpoints diverge.

In general, the implied justification for presenting archaeological interpretations to the public in artistic formats is to maintain control of information. At the same time the interpreter should ensure the public receives an interpretation of the past that is an accurate representation of our current level of research. However, it is easy for artistic and creative minds to ignore the essential purpose of providing entertaining and informative communication to the public and move into more speculative preoccupations. In ‘Archaeology Goes to the Opera’ the authors advise that in writing the opera Zabette, about a coloured girl in Civil War Georgia, the intention was to intersect humanism with archaeology and ‘to rise above the empirical evidence’ and ‘attempt to “map out” the human spirit’. To my mind this is a prime of example of the interpreters using archaeology as inspiration rather than presenting an accurate interpretation of data.

The shortcomings of this approach are emphasised in ‘More than just “telling the story”: interpretive narrative archaeology’, by John McCarthy. His view is that artistic renderings of archaeology can be used to satisfy the public thirst for heritage tourism by making the past more alive through interpretative narratives. He emphasises that credible and reliable information can be packaged and presented to the public but that ‘our professional ethics should require that our narratives remain firmly grounded in historical and archaeological data’ and ‘the data upon which our narratives are based must be available for independent review’.

In ‘The Archaeologist as Playwright’, James Gibb also demonstrates that there is an effective learning experience for the public when archaeology is interwoven with an entertaining and character driven-narrative. The simple act of the archaeologist putting him or herself in the shoes of the protagonist is valuable and may even lead to the discovery of
future research topics. In ‘Experimental Ways of Communicating’ Nicola Laneri presents the case that the subjective narratives that archaeologists impose on ancient material culture should be marketed in competition with other fictional representations of the past. The alternative is to be swamped by Lara Croft and Gladiator. By ignoring bad history we may be condemning ourselves to seeing it repeated.

‘Art and archaeology: conflict and interpretation in a museum setting’, by Michael J. Williams and Margaret A. Heath concentrates on the fine line between presenting artefacts in a museum purely as art objects without context and the other extreme of overloading the visitor with information and interaction. A CD-Rom accompanies the book and this provides more complete examples of the art mentioned, as well as clips from the opera Zabette. Unfortunately the audio did not work on my system, but I think it is possible to gain a general idea of the role served by archaeology in the production of this art form.

Overall I think the message is that there will always be tension between science and art. Science needs to be communal for peer verification and art equally is reinforced by public appreciation. However science, even the archaeological form of it, should always attempt to err on the side of objectivity, while art will veer towards subjectivity. There will always be that fine line in transactions between the two but, hopefully, with care, some truth will emerge. After all, the past is all a matter of interpretation. How far we are prepared to go with ‘truth’ and ‘facts’ is really what characterises the interpreter.

Louise Zarrati

Whose Pharaohs? Archaeology, Museums and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I


Egypt’s legendary past is so much a part of our own culture that we tend to forget that we came to know it fully only in the nineteenth century. Whose Pharaohs? very thoroughly covers the period from the discovery of the Rosetta Stone to the beginning of the twentieth century. It was the classic period of scholarly and archaeological discovery and interpretation, which revealed ancient Egypt in all its complexity and beauty, immensely enriching our view of western civilization’s origins. As its title indicates, the book examines the evolution of Egyptian archaeology in the context of western imperialism and traces the growth of modern Egyptian national identity. This identity was partly formed by the gradual local appreciation of the significance of the ancient past, a heritage resource which, as the nation grew, modern Egypt sought to control and manage. Two quotations (1, 21) aptly set its tone and subject:

France, snapping an obelisk from the ever heightening mud of the Nile, or the savage ignorance of the Turks... earns a right to the thanks of the learned of Europe to whom belong all the monuments of antiquity, because they alone know how to appreciate them. Antiquity is a garden that belongs by natural right to those who cultivate and harvest its fruits.

Captain E de Vernianac Saint-Maur, Voyage de Luxor (1835)

Foreigners are destroying ancient edifices, extracting stones and other worked objects and exporting them to foreign countries. If this continues, it is clear that soon no more ancient monuments will remain in Egypt... it is also known that the Europeans have buildings dedicated to the care of antiquities... such objects are carefully conserved there and shown to the inhabitants of the country as well as to travellers who want to see them... Having considered these facts, the government has judged it appropriate to forbid the export abroad of antiquities found in the ancient edifices of Egypt... to forbid the destruction of ancient edifices, and to spend the greatest possible care on their safekeeping.

Decree of Muhammad Ali, 15 August 1835

Tracing these contrasting views gives many insights and pleasures, especially to those whose first interest in the past was aroused by that exotic Other which characterised (and characterises) many European interpretations of ancient Egypt. Closer to home, we can see interesting parallels between the colonial/post-colonial drama in both the Egyptian and the Australian experience. As in Egypt, Australian scholars have uncovered the rich history of an ancient civilisation – in our case of the oldest continuous culture in the world.

Like nineteenth-century Egyptians, Aboriginal people have become increasingly aware of this rich past. They have used it in their assertion of prior Aboriginal occupation of Australia and their effective arguments for land rights and native title, just as the Egyptian past became part of colonial Egyptians’ struggle for independence. Like the nascent Egyptian nationalists, Aboriginal people have become increasingly insistent on being involved in research into their own past and in claiming the objects and evidence associated with it. In particular, the significance of human remains and their treatment in Egypt and throughout the museums of the world by the colonial and ex-colonial powers has strong resonances with the Australian story.

Whose Pharaohs? draws on little-known Coptic and Arabic sources, as well as the better-known European ones, to tell the story. Particularly striking (once again with Australian parallels) is the slow recognition by international scholars of the link between modern Egyptian people and the land of the Pharaohs (282):

Copts, Gyps, Egyptians... they are indeed the true survivors of the people whom Pharaoh ruled and who built the pyramids of Giza... people of the race of the Pharaohs, speaking the very words of the Pharaohs, writing them with the letters of Cadmus... which twelve centuries of persecution have not been able to wrest from them or alter a jot...

Stanley Lane-Poole, Cairo: Sketches of Its History Monuments and Social Life (1898)

The link between archaeology and the rise of the modern tourism industry is also well drawn and illustrated. The modern guidebook has its birth in Egypt and the following scene (65) is familiar to us all:

You see the back of a native turban, long blue gown, red girdle, bare brown legs. ‘How truly oriental!’ you say. Then he turns around and you see ‘Cook’s Porter’ emblazoned across his breast ‘You travel Cook Sir,’ he grins; ‘all right.’ And it is all right...

John Pudney, The Thomas Cook Story (1953)

This is an interesting and stimulating book. It is not a superficial
This work focuses on several important areas of polar heritage. Among the most significant is the politics of responsibility for care and management of cultural heritage places; the intertwining of indigenous and non-indigenous cultural heritage; the development of management plans for polar heritage places; defining the boundaries between rubbish and artefact on polar sites; and sites of cultures from outside polar regions, referred to as ‘visitor heritage’.

Editors Chaplin and Barr both provide an additional introduction to the topics of responsibility for protecting them. This is the case, for instance, at Jackson Island, Franz Josef Land, where a Norwegian wintering site is administered by Russia.

Chaplin and Barr both write about the specific aspects of managing polar heritage sites: the large proportion of ‘visitor heritage’ as a result of heroic exploration, scientific expedition, military bases and resource exploitation. It is difficult to recognise the reasons for valuing the heritage of Scott’s and Shackleton’s expeditions; likewise, everyone understands and treasures Mawson’s hut and Wilkes station. But the relics of military, sealing and whaling sites are less known and increasingly vulnerable; considerably more work is required to preserve them.

Michael Pearson’s contribution highlights the dilemma of determining what objects at polar sites are heritage artefacts and what are simply rubbish. Many sites were only occupied for a limited amount of time and then abandoned, leaving much behind. These items provide information regarding how the sites were used, but after years of exposure to the harsh conditions, they might be regarded as trash. The presence of hazardous materials at some scientific and exploitation sites adds to the difficulty, especially in the light of environmental management obligations imposed by the Madrid Protocol. Pearson’s article is informed by his experiences at various Antarctic sites, including Wilkes station, where fuel oil, vehicle bodies and explosives were among the artefacts on site.

While the International Polar Heritage Committee (IPHC) is not specifically involved in indigenous cultural heritage, one of the most interesting articles in this volume is Doug Olynk’s trace of the cultural management of heritage sites within areas subject to First Nation land claims in Canada’s Yukon – excellent examples of ‘visitor heritage’ as a result of miners and traders coming to polar regions for short but very intense periods of time. Olynk’s article also covers cultural heritage management in a region of heritage shared between American and Canadian Whalers and Traders and Inulialuit peoples, as at Paulina Cove, Herschel Island in the Yukon.

Visitor heritage is further explored by Jean-François Le Mouël in his article about the convergence of American, Dutch, French, British, German and Norwegian heritage on the islands of Terra Australis; the Kerguelens, Crozet, St. Paul and Amsterdam. Their location within the milder climate of the Indian Ocean made them an ideal location for whaling, fishing, sealing, military and scientific sites for all these nations. Special problems associated with the sites include access, increased corrosion due to the subtropical climate and souveniring by subsequent occupation of sites. Le Mouël shows that immediate conservation programs and intense media exposure to highlight threats to polar heritage sites may be the direction forward.

Although threats to sites as a result of increasing tourism is mentioned in several contributions, and is identified as the largest contemporary threat to facing polar heritage, the specific topic of managing visitor impacts is notable by its absence. Many basic details are identified by contributors to the 1995 anthology, Polar tourism: tourism in the Arctic and Antarctic regions, edited by Hall and Johnston, and the 2001 book Tourism in the Antarctic: opportunities, constraints, and future prospects, by Thomas Bauer. It is regrettable that the IPHC did not to include some more specific case studies in the present book.

Nonetheless, this slim volume provides some great insights into a fascinating area of cultural heritage management. But as one of the editors points out, it could have been much larger. I am inclined to ask: why isn’t it? I expect the likeliest answer is money. So it’s a shame that despite being thoroughly stimulated by this offering, I am left feeling a little short-changed. This is definitely one of those instances where less is not more.

Lisa Randall

Clearings: Six Colonial Gardeners and Their Landscapes

ISBN: 0 522 85086

Clearings as explained by the author, Paul Fox, is about the destruction of one landscape to create another, depicted through the stories of six men from their letters, writings, writing about them and evidence of their work. It is six distinct stories of the achievements of: William Macarthur, Thomas Lang, Daniel Bunce, William Guillfoyle, Josiah Mitchell and William Ferguson; but it is also a story of the changing of the Australian colonial landscape through horticulture, acclimatisation, garden design, plant exploration, agriculture and forestry.

All six subjects lived when the western world’s educated society was consumed by a lust for plant-collecting, to identify new species and furnish gardens with exotica. Paul Fox does
not attempt to draw links or comparisons between the subjects, but opens doors to aspects of their lives and the aspirations of colonial society. The stories – particularly those of Macarthur, Lang and Guilfoyle – convey how the nurserymen-explorers sought the mesmerising beauty of new flowers and exotic foliage which could be exhibited as ‘gardenesque’ displays of living art. We gain insights into the personalities of the six men, their trials by public gossip and the competitiveness of the nursery industry.

The book commences with a chapter about Sir William Macarthur in the 1840s when he was an established nurseryman in New South Wales. It traces Macarthur’s lengthy relationship with the English nursery firm of Veitch and Son, describing the intrepid plant explorations and expeditions undertaken by members of the famous Veitch family. The chapter sets up the international context of plant exploration in the mid-nineteenth century, pursued under the name of science. Fox describes in detail John Gould Veitch’s expeditions to Japan, along with the lengthy business dealings he and his brother Harry had with the wily Macarthur.

Thomas Lang, an enthusiastic plantsman, sought to bring the best of international plant culture to the colonies. His introduction of a million plants to Victoria was astonishing. I was amazed at the number of fruit plant varieties he cultivated – 150 apples, 150 pears, 60 plums, 115 gooseberries and grapes. The stories of Lang and Macarthur show how Australia’s nursery trade was influenced by the imperial British control of nursery plants then being acquired from all parts of the world.

The account of the life and works of Daniel Bunce, particularly his early years of plant collecting and recording, most intrigued me. Although he initially lacked a scientific understanding of the profession, he had a compassion and love for Australia’s indigenous people and native flora. He sought opportunities to learn about native plant resources and Indigenous taxonomy from Aboriginal people. Fox calls him ‘the man on the edge’ as his explorations and enthusiasm for native Australia were far beyond the realm of appreciation by colonial society and its scientific elite.

Much has been written about William Guilfoyle and his life and works. But Fox’s account provides an insight into his expeditions in the Pacific Islands and his passion for the aesthetic drama of the forests of the Tweed River area in northern New South Wales. Fox connects Guilfoyle’s inspiration derived from sub-tropical nature with the drama of plant form and richness of foliage in his garden designs, particularly as displayed in his masterpiece, Melbourne’s Royal Botanic Gardens.

Josiah Mitchell was a champion of good farming at a time when the Victorian government encouraged small selections, with some disastrous results. Mitchell had an enlightened, logical and practical approach to land management, having appraised the inappropriateness of some traditional practices brought from England. From Fox’s account, he was a man with a mission to improve society with his model farms, through his writings and in his role in the Farmers Union.

Fox titles his chapter on William Ferguson “the man who couldn’t see” and of the six subjects, Ferguson is the least appealing. He upset his staff and engaged in an unpleasant controversy with his one-time boss, Von Mueller. Ferguson’s rigid promotion of exotic trees as ‘improved’ landscape shows an inability to let go his cultural baggage. On the other hand, he was strongly concerned about soil conservation, the wanton use of tall trees for mine props and the destruction of red gums in the Barmah Forest in central Victoria.

There are many perspectives on the story of ‘clearings’ to create a new landscape. The book does not claim to be comprehensive and it concerns only the south-eastern corner of the continent. However, through the snatches of these six men’s lives, with touches of wry humour, delightful period images and numerous endnotes, Fox offers a greater story: not just of clearings to impose different cultural traditions, but of the developing appreciation and understanding of the Australian landscape. This is an entertaining and must-read book.

Juliet Ramsay

The Art of Keeping House: A Practical and Inspirational Guide


This review is reprinted from Museums Australia Magazine, August 2005.

House museum curators are often asked for advice by visitors who are either enthusiastic home renovators or owners of personally significant objects that require care. This poses interesting philosophical and diplomatic challenges. It frequently needs a certain translation to explain decision-making in conserving historic interiors and collection objects at the museum level. Ideally, explaining the difference should inspire appreciation of this highly specialised professional skill.

The Art of Keeping House anticipates the need, and while it addresses the general audience and their homes rather than the house museum, it draws on the Historic Houses Trust’s extensive curatorial expertise. The book reviews the many readings of ‘keeping’ – what is it that we do when we ‘keep’ house? Do we pay ‘due regard’, and ‘retain possession of’, or is it more that we do ‘not lose or destroy’, but ‘maintain, preserve, and reserve’? These dictionary definitions present a nice semantic exercise, for they change according to context, making in conserving historic interiors and objects at the museum level. Ideally, explaining the difference should inspire appreciation of this highly specialised professional skill.

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On approaching The Art of Keeping House I hoped to discover how that most subjective of spaces, the home, and its care, could be informed by a text published within a museological framework. I was interested to observe how the specialist language and practice of conservation science could be transformed into a practical ‘how to’ guide. Not to disappoint, the text describes techniques such as cleaning methods in sensible, accessible language, intermingled with advice ‘curios’ from nineteenth-century manuals in popular use in Australia. The seven contributors provide overviews of Australian historical styles, decorative treatments for building elements and furniture, and cleaning techniques, including twentieth-century materials. The book’s design anticipates the need, and while it addresses the general audience and their homes rather than the house museum, it draws on the Historic Houses Trust’s extensive curatorial expertise. The book reviews the many readings of ‘keeping’ – what is it that we do when we ‘keep’ house? Do we pay ‘due regard’, and ‘retain possession of’, or is it more that we do ‘not lose or destroy’, but ‘maintain, preserve, and reserve’? These dictionary definitions present a nice semantic exercise, for they change according to context, making in conserving historic interiors and objects at the museum level. Ideally, explaining the difference should inspire appreciation of this highly specialised professional skill.

The Art of Keeping House joins a long tradition of household manuals, and the bibliography reveals the expected stalwarts of domestic advice, alongside texts on interior decoration. A
book that straddles both domestic and museum purposes, the English National Trust Book of Housekeeping (1984; I believe it is being re-published) has dominated the genre for twenty years. It describes preventative conservation embedded in traditional housekeeping practice, imparted in a very pragmatic voice, and concentrates on cleaning and care as the major work of housekeeping. By contrast, The Art of Keeping House splits the focus into cleaning and decoration. It seems to position housekeeping as a supplement to the glamour of decoration and ornament, to the point of omitting kitchen and bathroom service areas from its decorative ambit. At the same time, this in no way compromises the quality of the advice.

Museum houses are reclaimed private spaces, put to public use. The decisions made in conserving significant interiors in a museum space are based on policy frameworks; the decisions made in a private home are, of course, subjective. Museum approaches are therefore generally inappropriate for modern private housekeeping. On this topic, The Art of Keeping House is gentle in its advice, which is really the only position to take. The introduction, where some of these philosophical issues are deftly raised, might be overlooked by the non-professional reader, as the book is structured for quick reference. This is great for ease of use, but I would have liked to see the arguments about preservation/maintenance versus reconstruction/reproduction come across more clearly.

The Art of Keeping House covers caring for objects, though the personal reasons why people keep and collect are not explored. Something on collecting would have been welcome here, and there is plenty to be said – which is perhaps why it’s not included! It would also have been interesting to include some personal anecdotes from the curator-writers, stories from their own professional experience. (The authors would probably agree. If only publishers would too!)

The book is oriented toward an Australia-wide readership. The difficulty of this approach is noted, but the attempt to incorporate advice for differing Australian contexts – regional differences in manufacture, colonial styles – is perhaps too massive an undertaking. The result is understandably NSW-centric, though with some South Australian examples. Nonetheless, the book has broad potential outside the confines of the museum shop. To echo a familiar lament from earlier domestic advice books, a household manual is a project that fulfils a need. The Art of Keeping House may well succeed in its aim to inspire the ‘art’ of cleaning, even in an age when caring for your Ikea presents interesting conundrums and the notion of ‘furniture for life’ seems an archaic ideal.

According to Young we discuss only one instance of an outdoor cultural object disappearing due to lack of heritage protection. She therefore argues that we do not understand heritage management and concludes that the book will be of no interest to a readership versed in heritage. The example she cites is our discussion of the temporary disappearance of the Wally Lewis statue currently installed at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane. Our discussion of ‘the Wally Story’ is used as a humorous introduction to the book, which, as a whole, is a serious examination of the many and varied issues at stake with the management of outdoor cultural objects. It is simply wrong that ‘the Wally story’ is our only discussion of a cultural object that has been removed or lost.

Monumental Queensland was an outcome of an Australian Research Council project sparked by the removal in the late 1990s of a 1970s wall sculpture from a Brisbane building. It was removed while its nomination to the Queensland Heritage Register was under consideration. It was the Queensland Heritage Council’s own admission that they were unable to determine the significance of this work that initiated the ARC project. This example and many others like it, form the basis of discussion in Monumental Queensland. For instance, chapter seven focuses on issues related to the management and the protection of post World War Two outdoor cultural objects. It examines a number of significant public artworks that have disappeared due to their lack of protection under current heritage frameworks. Examples documented here include artworks by important Australian artists such as Leonard and Kathleen Shillam, Tom Bass, Nicholas Saffrin and Pavel Forman.

Young’s criticism that we do not understand heritage processes does not acknowledge or engage with discussion throughout the book of how criteria for cultural heritage significance derived from the Burra Charter have not, to date, been used effectively to assess outdoor cultural objects. There are a number of other factual errors in Young’s review that consequently misrepresent our arguments. Our concern is not with a disagreement in interpretation or theoretical understanding, rather with this misrepresentation. We thank Historic Environment for the opportunity to briefly address these inconsistencies.

Lianne Gibson and Joanna Besley

Monumental Queensland: a response

It was with increasing concern that we read Linda Young’s review of Monumental Queensland: Signposts on a Cultural Landscape published in Historic Environment 18.2: 52-53 (March 2005) The review is a negative one and Young is entitled to her opinion, but in the interests of both accuracy and public debate we feel compelled to respond. Young’s primary criticism of our book is that it fails to give adequate representation to arguments regarding heritage management and legislation.