
The Future of Museums

Recover and Reimagine (A Conversation)

*Craig Barker, Helena Robinson, James L. Flexner,
Anna Lawrenson, and Alex Burchmore*

The following conversation took place on 18 May 2021 during a panel discussion to coincide with marking the six months since the opening of the Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University of Sydney, along with the annual occurrence of International Museum Day.

Craig: The past two years have been a period of profound change and upheaval for the GLAM (gallery, library, archives, and museum) sector internationally, resulting from a combination of the pandemic, politics, and tightened purse strings. For the University of Sydney these changes have included positives, like the opening of the new Chau Chak Wing Museum (CCWM) in November 2020, and negatives, such as limitations on student experiences during lockdown and digital teaching.

International Museum Day on 18 May 2021 marked the six-month anniversary of the opening of the CCWM. The day has been organized by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) since 1977 to raise awareness of the role of museums in society. In 2021 the theme was “The Future of Museums: Recovery and Reimagine.”

As part of the CCWM’s public outreach program, I have asked four academics who work in and with the GLAM sector and are involved in the University of Sydney’s Museum and Heritage Studies program to join me in a live panel discussion on International Museums Day.¹ Meeting in Sydney’s newest cultural institution, it gives us an opportunity to reflect on our own experiences of museums and galleries in the age of COVID-19 and to comment on how museums can best recover and reimagine from an Australian perspective.

To open the discussion, as many people in our audience will have known, ICOM as an organization has been struggling over the past five years with the actual definition of a museum. Helena, could you give us a little background on that broader debate? I guess the question for all of us is, how can we celebrate International Museum Day when those of us in the sector can’t even agree on what a museum is?

Helena: I wonder whether most of you are now thinking, “How would I actually define a museum?” Some people would argue about why we even need to ask this question, because the answer seems self-evident in certain respects. But ICOM has really been struggling with their current definition—which has remained relatively unchanged since around the 1970s—and whether it needs to be revised (Robinson 2021). What this tells us is that museums are very much in a state of flux and that museums are being called upon to do more in an environment where



they do not have more resources at their disposal to accomplish a wider range of tasks. This now includes areas such as well-being and supporting extremely diverse demographics. They're being called upon to contribute to what cultural policy scholar Clive Gray (2002, 2007) has described as "policy attachment"—to deliver on economic policy, tourism, health, and other areas—but museums don't necessarily have the resources to do that. Those who work in and with museums are also asking ethical questions around the legacies of collecting (what has ended up in our collections seems to be a constant thorn in our side) and wondering how we position ourselves in relation to that.

ICOM started to debate the museum definition as it currently stands in 2017, when they decided it needed to be reconsidered. Now, the definition at that point (which still stands) reads:

A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study, and enjoyment. (ICOM 2022)

I think it's a fairly comprehensive definition. It's 45 words, while the proposed definition put forward at the 2019 ICOM General Conference was 99 words. The latter has caused a huge amount of debate and was voted down in the end, despite extensive consultation. The 99-word version is:

Museums are democratizing, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations, and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equity and planetary wellbeing. (ICOM 2019)

Craig: I think we all need much bigger budgets to achieve a fraction of those aims!

James: To me, what's very clear is that ICOM has put forward an aspirational definition, rather than a definition of anything that any museum comes close to achieving in the present. The notion that museums are somehow equally accessible to all and equally available to all people—we know that's not true. There are all kinds of barriers that keep people out of museums for a variety of reasons. Addressing questions about equitability is going to be one of the major challenges for cultural institutions as the century goes ahead.

Anna: I agree, it's an aspirational definition reflecting the ideology of the "new museology"—as coined in Peter Vergo's (1989) edited volume of the same name—and yet, more than 30 years later, museums are still aspiring to be democratic, inclusive, and polyphonic spaces for critical dialog. That is, it is still necessary to explicitly try to push constituents in this direction through the process of definition.

It's interesting to look at the gap between what museums aspire to be and what they do. Conflict often arises between the philosophical aspirations of museums to be democratic and open, which may run counter to the aspirations of funders and sponsors who might be keen to see an economic return on investment. Government stakeholders also have their own agendas, which might include social justice and well-being performance measures or objectives around destination marketing and tourism. So, museums are not defined in a vacuum, but rather they are bound by the political and funding context in which they operate. Policy objectives and

stakeholder interests sit alongside the aspirations of ICOM to determine what museums are and how they function.

The challenge for ICOM is that it's expected to provide this umbrella definition under which everything sits. However, if we're arguing for diversity and polyphony, it is difficult to homogenize institutions into a single definition.

Alex: What strikes me is the claim to “inclusivity” and “polyphony”—these words are not the most inclusive terms. This builds an image of the museum as an elitist institution and distances the museum even more from the ideal that the authors of this definition aspired to achieve. One thing I do find interesting, however, is the emphasis given to the idea of the “public trust,” which I think signals a positive change in direction.

Helena: It's interesting that you noted the addition of the idea of “trust.” When I was comparing the definitions, I noticed that two terms don't appear in the new version, even though it's much longer: “education” and “enjoyment.” It's interesting to look at what terms come in, but also what gets taken out, and why that might be. The other thing that all of you have identified is that it is very much an aspirational statement. But it's interesting to think about that in the context of the purpose of a definition. A definition needs to convey core elements, without which there would be no museum. The ICOM definition is picked up by governments, it's referred to in legislation that relates to museums around the world. Once governments start to adopt these definitions, we need to consider what such a long and all-encompassing definition excludes, for the very reasons that all of you have brought up. Because, for example, in nondemocratic countries, can museums be democratizing? Probably not. Does that mean they're not a museum? All these debates have to come up.

Craig: This discussion about definitions indicates that the sector is in something of a state of flux, certainly philosophically, but one thing that we've seen over the last 12 months is that we've also been in a state of flux, like every industry, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. At one end of the scale, you've got the Louvre going from its annual 9 million visitors down to a mere 2.7 million, but it's at the other end of the scale that the impact is most clearly felt. At one stage, there were estimates that up to one-third of volunteer-run museums in the US would close completely as a result of the pandemic. Can any of you reflect on how the museum and gallery sector has responded to COVID-19? To your minds, what have been some of the things we've done well, some of the things we've done badly, and how might that impact where we go over the next couple of years?

Alex: The issue that everyone talks about is the push toward digitization and digital programs. Last year, covering various responses to the pandemic for *Art Monthly Australasia*, I found that many people saw that shift as an isolated phenomenon, yet the events of 2020 really just enhanced and increased a process already in train before the outbreak of the virus (see Burchmore 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020e, 2020f). The urgency to digitize and increase digital access obviously grew when the doors of the physical institutions shut. I'd like to think there was a push toward attracting new audiences to museums, and perhaps building new forms of engagement with collections and new forms of thinking about collections, works of art, and museums in general, primarily because the latter could no longer rely on their usual way of doing things.

One thing I find especially interesting is the extent to which practical considerations, like crowd management, must play a part in future developments. For example, how will the blockbuster fare in a world where we can't have large numbers of people packing into small spaces?

I think we won't see that model as much as we had been, or perhaps we'll see a move toward timed entry and small groups, which will transform how people engage with museums in terms of moving through the space in a narrow duration. It may become a ticketed experience.

Craig: Ironically, undermining the concept of democratizing the experience to which the ICOM definition encourages us to aspire—if you have timed experiences, that will really impede access for a large proportion of our potential audience members.

Anna: The business model of museums and galleries has been predicated on having people come through the door, and that is the most common way that museums measure success. The pandemic revealed the precarity of that business model when physical visits were abruptly halted. On one hand, the pandemic provided an opportunity to target audiences outside the norm through digital means, but, on the other hand it also afforded an opportunity to change the way that institutions measure success. Blockbusters were not possible, and many institutions looked inward to their own collections and found novel ways of presenting them. As a result, some museums have begun to think about more meaningful, qualitative, measures of engagement.

Intimacy, and the search for connection, is one of the concepts that we have seen debated a lot in response to the isolation of lockdowns. In thinking about how visitors might be welcomed back into museums, the public will likely need a helping hand to feel comfortable again. They need a genuine connection and engagement with the institution, which is not about saying, “Here's your timed ticket, you've got fifteen minutes to get through the show.” I think there's a real opportunity to change that narrative by acknowledging the flaws in the system that have been highlighted by the pandemic and thinking about what we can do better. How can we enter into more meaningful relationships, which might be small-scale at first, rather than largely democratizing, but which are about a more equal exchange and relationship-building, in which the visitor is acknowledged and valued? That's something I'm really looking forward to seeing.

James: During 2020 and 2021, Pacific Islands museums have shifted away from being spaces largely for international tourist consumption. A country like Vanuatu, which really relied on international tourism for most of its economy, has suddenly had to think, what is our National Museum for, and who is all this stuff for? The Vanuatu Cultural Centre ran what they call *Kastom Skul* (kastom or traditional school) in the National Museum. Young people could come and learn traditional stories, different forms of artwork, like sand drawing or basket making, and had opportunities to engage with the collections in various ways. There's been a reframing of what these institutions do in a really interesting way. Hopefully once borders are open and tourism resumes, people will continue to think about how Indigenous-led museums can be resources for community building and intergenerational knowledge sharing.

Craig: Obviously, COVID-19 was a big news story of 2020. But so too was the Black Lives Matter movement. In many ways, the museum and gallery sector has been aware that this day of reckoning has been coming for a long time, but it's interesting how a lot of the debate around the roles of slavery and representation in cultural institutions has played out. We see at the moment a big debate in Britain, where these questions have become quite political in terms of the way their “culture war” has played out, and museums have been very much brought to the center of the discussion, especially in relation to issues of repatriation. I think, for example, of Dan Hicks's (2020) book *The Brutish Museums* and his argument for the repatriation of the Benin Bronzes, both from the Pitt Rivers Museum collection, where he's based, but also from other English cultural organizations—and a number have followed through, such as the Church of England in

recent weeks (Williams 2021). The broader question is—and before I ask this, we are very conscious of the fact that we are five white people having this discussion and acknowledge that many more voices need to be added to the discussion—how can we make the sector more diverse? How can we better represent the communities whose items are within the collections? Can museums decolonize at all? To break that down into smaller parts, the question of representation might be a good place to start.

James: I think we can find clear evidence of how far we have to go in a story that probably didn't make a lot of waves internationally, but which was really prominent in the US, particularly in archaeology and heritage circles. A for-profit, online physical anthropology course being offered by Princeton University used the remains of children whose homes were bombed by the City of Philadelphia Police Department in 1985 as material in the course. The remains had been curated in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology—this was considered acceptable museum practice—and moved with the anthropologists involved between these elitist Ivy League institutions as “research material.” There are many Black anthropologists and biological anthropologists in North America, and we shouldn't wonder why they continue to feel marginalized and traumatized by their own discipline (WGF 2022). To their credit the Penn Museum (2022) did respond in ways that they argue will help to mend some of the damage that was done and improve their practices in the future. Nonetheless museums are still a long way from anything achieving real inclusivity and accessibility for people from marginalized communities.

Anna: The ICOM definition hinges on the concept of public trust in museums. Yet, there is still a great deal of reticence within some institutions to become more inclusive, that is, to give over trust. Entering a trusting partnership with communities should be predicated on equity and reciprocity, but it is often about institutions as knowledge holders. James, your example perfectly demonstrates that in a university context, but there are innumerable examples within museums too. So, we need to think not just about how we define museums going forward, but how much they're willing to change. If institutions want to invite visitors into a partnership, how can they make that a more equitable one where knowledge is shared? Because it seems to me that the main role many museums see themselves playing is that of knowledge holder and transmitter. As Helena observed, it is interesting that “education” is no longer included in the proposed museum definition, but it is still strongly implied.

James: Museums are absolutely culpable in the example I gave. The remains were acquired by the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology, where curators include scholars who have published about how to make museums more inclusive spaces. But then you look at what their institutions are doing in practice, and it's a completely different story. There's clearly a disconnect between theoretical ideals in the scholarly literature about museum ethics, and how cultural institutions in practice address historical collections that contain a lot of past, as well as current, trauma.

Craig: Indeed, that revelation came hot on the heels of discussion and debate about the very considerable number of human remains of enslaved African American people held within the same institution. It wasn't a one-off case, and I suspect that many, many other museums across North America would have similar holdings.

Helena: I wondered whether I would weigh in on this question, because it is so complicated. Not in the sense of the examples that relate to human remains—I think the ethical considerations

there are pretty clear-cut. But one thing I worry about, in the bigger picture, is that museums are becoming very politicized. In some cases, such as the ones James raised, it's unavoidable. But in other cases, as a sector, I wonder whether we are doing a lot of navel-gazing at the expense of being genuinely responsive to the outside world and to our publics. The American Alliance of Museums is about to run a very big conference. I had a quick skim through the program, and almost two-thirds, maybe more, of the sessions are about museums as political spaces. I wonder whether these are actually the questions that people who come to museums on a regular basis, as well as those who don't, are asking, or whether that's what they want or expect.

I think it does come back to trust. I've seen data from the US (Edelman 2021) that shows a trend of declining trust in public institutions, while political polarization has grown. There's a perception that public institutions have become caught up in political arguments. I don't want to exclude the need for political debate in museums, I just wonder whether we're overdoing the politics to some degree, and whether there's a chance that we might alienate people as a result, losing their trust. From my perspective, once we prescribe that our institutions, in order to qualify as museums, must essentially become social justice warriors (for lack of a better term) do we already then narrow the range of interpretation that can happen in museums? Do we restrict the kinds of narratives that end up being told? And do we lose trust because we are not inclusive of a diverse enough range of perspectives that can be productive in helping us solve these important societal problems?

Anna: Museums already ostracize many people, so there's no reason to say, "let's not engage in political debate" because it might distance existing constituents. Existing constituents are often members of the demographic that keeps institutions elite: well-educated, affluent, economically stable. So, I actually don't see it as a risk to *not* engage in those political debates if it means that the representative nature of the museum might be expanded as a result.

Helena: Paradoxically, I think it's most likely that existing museum audiences are exactly the ones who are most interested in those debates. And I'm not sure that the others who we claim to be striving to bring into the fold are as engaged. I don't think we've asked them enough. I worry about the evidence base for some of this. In this crowd, we're already preaching to the converted, in a sense, but would museum politics pass the "pub test?"²

James: Museums might be propagating a version of authoritarian elitism, where, in fact, the people who aren't comfortable in these spaces don't want to feel like they're being preached to and told what to believe, or how to behave. I do wonder if there's an element of that, but I don't think that necessarily means museums should be shying away from having politically controversial discussions. I actually think the fact we still need to have these debates is, if anything, a motivator to talk explicitly about the politics of the spaces that we inhabit, the collections we hold, the meanings of those collections, and their relevance for different groups of people.

In many ways those of us who work with Indigenous communities already do this. In many settings, Indigenous people can be quite direct in telling you about what they consider appropriate or inappropriate. As the researcher you have to accept their preferences even if it requires you to change some of your plans because it's their prerogative to direct you. You're standing with all that historical weight of an institution behind you. It's fair enough for the people who don't see themselves represented in that institution to express reservations, particularly given the long history of harm caused in the name of "research" in museums and universities. The benefit of those sometimes very robust discussions is creating a place where you figure out how to work together and you find points of mutual understanding and respect. We should embrace

that potential for fractiousness and difficulty in the conversations we're having, because I don't think we'll get anywhere if we don't.

Alex: I believe that everything is political. It's inescapable. Politics is part of every single action and thing that we do, and especially that institutions do, and I feel it's disingenuous if an institution claims they *don't* want to be political, because it's a political act in itself to make that claim. I do agree that it's difficult not to speak *for* or *over* people, even with the best of intentions. And I acknowledge that I've enjoyed a lot of privilege: I have a tertiary education, and now a position in a prestigious university. I know I can't speak for certain people, but I do feel there's a responsibility to recognize that they have a point of view, and that their point of view should be considered and heard by trying to bring new voices into the institution and by creating more inclusive displays. I'm not sure of the precise mechanisms we can use to do that, but I think that what's happening at the moment is a reckoning, a watershed moment. The discussion may sometimes become histrionic or extreme, but it will settle into a pattern and will become more manageable. I don't know if there's necessarily a danger of museums becoming social justice warriors, but I see what you mean.

Helena: I don't want to create the impression that I'm against anything political in museums, rather what I'm saying is that not *everything* we do needs to be political. The new definition proposed by ICOM, on the other hand, almost stipulates that we need to be political about almost everything. As Anna mentioned earlier, the ethos of "new museology" took hold in the museum profession and related scholarship from around the late 1980s; it started much earlier than that, in the 1960s and 1970s, with the ecomuseum movement in Europe and South America, which was very much a grassroots movement to get communities more involved in museums, and for communities to make their own museums. The new museology did have at its core that democratizing principle. And it was responding to and against the traditional mode of the nineteenth-century museum as social reformer, as a place that would have a civilizing effect and where people could learn how to interact with one another in an acceptable way.

I wonder whether we are not using the same "reforming" mechanisms now, even if the message is different. In thinking about how to bring people around to a new way of thinking on issues of race or inclusivity, is there is a certain orthodoxy coming back into museums? Through the initial thrust of the new museology, we were approaching this amazing spectrum of different viewpoints and types of museums, this gorgeous idiosyncrasy, but perhaps that is now going through a convergence again and we are coming back towards a standardized perception of what museums are for, and that they will again be performing a social reforming function. That's what's made me think more critically about this question.

Craig: One thing, certainly from the perspective of Australia, that has generated much discussion over the past couple of years is that with a few notable exceptions, and one *very* notable exception, budgets for Australian national and state cultural institutions have been reduced. You can make arguments about lines of measuring financial support, but there's certainly been much less public money directed toward galleries or the GLAM sector more generally. Would anyone like to comment on how that may impact Australia's museums going forward?

Anna: Diminishing government funding is certainly pushing institutions toward revenue generation. The pursuit of self-generated revenue *could* be liberating if it extricates institutions from some of the ties that bind them to government, thus making them more arm's length. Conversely, the push toward self-generated revenue might fundamentally change the role of an institution

as it becomes more commercially motivated, perhaps casting doubt on whether it is still in the service of society; a key element of the current ICOM definition. In any discussion about funding, it's important to consider transparency: declaring funding sources and how they relate to specific activities. This is significant because museums are not neutral; their choices reflect their values and set standards of taste.

Perhaps that is a question that needs to be debated at a societal level; what does society want from museums? I think we are at a watershed moment. As a result of COVID-19 there is an opportunity to change the narrative about how society values museums and galleries. Seeking out more meaningful, individual, and authentic relationships with constituents provides opportunities to build advocates within society. Those advocates might vote with their feet and call for more funding for cultural institutions.

Other ways that museums are meeting the challenge of diminished funding include some really interesting exhibitions that are developed with touring in mind in order to ameliorate costs. Unlike conventional touring shows, some of the more innovative exhibitions make clever use of new technology to reduce freight and insurance costs and respond to the question of how museums might be more environmentally sustainable. These are exciting opportunities, but I acknowledge that it's also very difficult on a day-to-day basis.

James: I'm not so optimistic about the extent to which a step away from public funding represents an opportunity—you have to ask, what fills that vacuum? You're not getting as much money from the state, so who do you go to? Some massive corporation that makes its money through resource extraction or some other ethically questionable activity? I say this as we sit in this lovely building, built on the back of a private donation from a billionaire. It's almost like we're going back to the ancient patronage model, living in this twenty-first-century plutocracy where only a few people have the means to support these kinds of cultural institutions. How do you build democratic spaces in a society where only a very small number of people and institutions actually have the means to make these things possible and to make them sustainable?

Anna: I agree, and I think that's where transparency needs to be key. Yes, I was being very optimistic, and there is obviously a whole swathe of issues associated with how you generate funds, but I do think that there is great importance in that notion of transparency and in changing the way we demonstrate value to society. I think that's actually the crux of the problem.

Helena: We're thinking about this as a top-down issue, asking what we can do to better manage the money that is available, or to make ourselves seem more accessible, more worthwhile, and more worthy of investment. But I wonder whether there is an element of this that comes down to the actions of individuals—I think we need to value our cultural backgrounds, the cultural artifacts that we live with every day. Yes, there are millions of objects in museums, but there are so many more in private hands, in our own homes. If people could become more appreciative, more interested and engaged with their own heritage, then hopefully some of that could flow through to interest in museums as aggregators of that heritage higher up the food chain, so to speak. I think if an appetite for change doesn't exist at a grassroots level, I don't know what sustainability will look like in the long term. I don't think you can push it just from the top down.

Alex: Thinking more about that top-down/grassroots duality, one thing that I feel isn't mentioned often enough is the fact that the public funding cuts have primarily influenced small and medium arts organizations and museums. And those institutions just can't attract large funders

because many of the latter simply aren't inclined to support emerging initiatives. At *Arts Monthly Australasia*, for example, one of many publications completely stripped of funding, we struggled to find alternative sources of support. I think that's the greatest tragedy for organizations like that—there's nothing to fill the void, which means that many initiatives and projects inevitably can't continue to exist.

Craig: All four of you are involved in education and training the next generation of museum practitioners and GLAM sector workers. What do you think the challenges will be for that generation that weren't necessarily challenges for our generation, or for previous generations?

Alex: A lot of my students are of my generation! The main challenge is the search for employment, for something to do after university, which we tend to avoid discussing as it can be so difficult to think of a solution.

Anna: I agree, it's a challenging landscape to enter as a graduate trying to carve out a career, but I do think there are enormous opportunities to effect change because of their fresh perspective. For example, we mentioned the return of some Benin Bronzes this year, which is just astounding given the reluctance to even enter discussions around such returns ten years ago. But, for current students, this is the new norm. As such I am confident that the next generation will make substantial positive changes to cultural institutions. I see an optimistic future.

James: One major challenge going into the immediate future is a circumscribed possibility for critical thought and practice in a situation of austerity and extremely fierce competition for resources and positions. The ability to cause trouble or take a stand is greatly reduced in an environment where there are more people who want to work in the sector than positions that exist. This is especially true for junior professionals or students seeking to break into the field. Things like a grounded understanding of ethics and an understanding of your own politics and your own subject position have to be something that people formulate for themselves before going out to work for these institutions. The archaeological heritage equivalent is basically, when do you stand in front of the bulldozer and say, "I'm not letting you bulldoze this site." In the museum setting, who is going to be able to say, "I'm not letting you throw away this collection" or "I don't think we should accept money from a corporation doing damage to the environment?"

Craig: Final question: what do you think the museum experience will be like in one hundred years?

James: One of the things I've been thinking about as I've watched the repatriation debates chase their tail since the early 2000s is the idea of replacing the notion of cultural property with a more relational and reciprocal way of thinking about what museums have in their collections. Rather than a visit to the museum being about the things they own, it could be about gift-exchanging networks. I'm inspired by the research I've done on the gifting economies of Pacific Islanders. Rather than holding on to a particular assemblage of stuff that a museum "owns," collections could be traded in a cycle with other institutions to keep things new and to keep things moving through a network of which the institution, its people, and associated objects, might be a part.

Helena: I don't have a sense of what museums might be, or what I would like them to be, but I hope they still allow us opportunities for moments of wonder, of just being able to appreciate and become excited about human creativity.

Anna: I would say open and responsive. Hopefully museums will still have their doors literally open, but I also hope they will be open in the sense of being welcoming. I have no idea what society will look like in one hundred years, but I want museums to be whatever society needs them to be at that time.

Alex: I like the idea of being open and responsive, and I like James's comment about cyclical or reciprocal networks. The concept of networks was something that occurred to me as well—I think there'll be a lot more exchange between institutions and between communities and countries, more of a sense of community in a larger sense. That's what I'd like to see.

■ **CRAIG BARKER** is Head of Public Engagement at the Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University of Sydney and Director of the Paphos Theatre Archaeological Project in Cyprus. His research interests focus on Mediterranean archaeology, ancient Cyprus, Roman urbanism, archaeology in popular perception, museum education, and outreach.

■ **ALEX BURCHMORE** is Lecturer in Museum and Heritage Studies at the University of Sydney. He specializes in the study of Chinese and Southeast Asian art of the past and present, with a particular focus on ceramics, trade, and the interweaving of personal and material identities. His first book, *New Export China: Translations Across Time and Place in Contemporary Chinese Porcelain Art*, will be published in 2023.

■ **JAMES FLEXNER** is Senior Lecturer in Historical Archaeology and Heritage at the University of Sydney. His research focuses on collaborative and community-led archaeological fieldwork in Australia and the Pacific Islands. His interests include landscape archaeology, repatriation, archaeological and ethnographic collections, and decolonization.

■ **ANNA LAWRENSON** is Director of the Museum and Heritage Studies program at the University of Sydney. Her career has spanned critical museology and applied practice having worked in academia and the arts sector. This dual focus has informed her research which considers how the funding, history and administration of public museums and galleries influences their branding, exhibitions, and public and educational programming.

■ **HELENA ROBINSON** is Senior Lecturer focusing on interdisciplinary teaching and learning with the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor-Education, Enterprise and Engagement at the University of Sydney. She is a museum studies scholar and former curator whose research explores the construction of meaning around cultural collections. Her current projects investigate cultural democracy and stakeholder participation in contemporary museum practice.

■ NOTES

1. A podcast recording of this event is available as part of the Chau Chak Wing Museum's *Object Matters* podcast series (CCWM 2022).
2. "Pub test: A term used to describe the general opinion of 'everyday Australians' about current events, politicians or policies. For example, when something does not 'pass the pub test,' it is said to be something that people would not believe or agree with" (SBS Urdu 2019).

REFERENCES

- Burchmore, Alex. 2020. "The Art of Lockdown." *Art Monthly Australasia*, 15 September. <https://www.artmonthly.org.au/blog/art-of-lockdown>.
- Burchmore, Alex. 2020. "Artist Conversations 'Dig Deep within the Soul.'" *Art Monthly Australasia*, 13 May. <https://www.artmonthly.org.au/blog/artist-conversations>.
- Burchmore, Alex. 2020. "Artists in Isolation, the 'Lockdown Studio' and a COVIDSafe Arts Ecology." *Art Monthly Australasia*, 24 June. <https://www.artmonthly.org.au/blog/artists-in-isolation>.
- Burchmore, Alex. 2020. "Familiarity and Intimacy: 'Together in Art.'" *Art Monthly Australasia*, 27 May. <https://www.artmonthly.org.au/blog/together-in-art>.
- Burchmore, Alex. 2020. "Reopening Windows to Other Worlds through Art." *Art Monthly Australasia*, 20 May. <https://www.artmonthly.org.au/blog/reopening-windows>.
- Burchmore, Alex. 2020. "Turning Inwards, and Outwards: Galleries in the Time of Coronavirus." *Art Monthly Australasia*, 7 April. <https://www.artmonthly.org.au/blog/turning-inwards-and-outwards>.
- CCWM (Chau Chak Wing Museum). 2022. *Object Matters*. Podcast. University of Sydney, accessed 17 July. <https://www.sydney.edu.au/museum/news/podcasts.html>.
- Edelman. 2021. *Edelman Trust Barometer 2021*. Chicago: Edelman. <https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2021-03/2021%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer.pdf>.
- Gray, Clive. 2002. "Local Government and the Arts." *Local Government Studies* 28 (1): 77–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/714004133>.
- Gray, Clive. 2007. "Commodification and Instrumentality in Cultural Policy." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 13 (2): 203–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630701342899>.
- Hicks, Dan. 2020. *The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution*. London: Pluto Press.
- ICOM (International Council of Museums). 2019. "ICOM Announces the New Museum Definition That Will Be Subject to a Vote." 25 July. <https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-announces-the-alternative-museum-definition-that-will-be-subject-to-a-vote>.
- ICOM (International Council of Museums). 2022. "Museum Definition." Last modified 7 May. <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition>.
- Penn Museum. 2022. "Towards a Respectful Resolution." Last updated 8 April. <https://www.penn.museum/towards-respectful-resolution>.
- Robinson, Helena. 2021. "Debating the 'Museum': A Quantitative Content Analysis of International proposals for a new ICOM Museum Definition." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 27 (11): 1163–1178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2021.1960886>.
- SBS Urdu. 2019. "Eight of the Strangest Australian Political Terms." Last updated 6 December. <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/eight-of-the-strangest-australian-political-terms>.
- Vergo, Peter, ed. 1989. *The New Museology*. London: Reaktion Books.
- WGF (Wenner-Gren Foundation). 2021. "Concerning the Possession and Unethical Use of the Remains of the Children of MOVE and the Africa Family: A Collective Statement from the Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA), the Society of Black Archaeologists (SBA), and the Black in Bio-anthropology Collective (BiBA)." Wenner-Gren Blog, 29 April. <http://blog.wennergren.org/2021/04/move>.
- Williams, Hattie. 2021. "Lambeth Palace to Return Benin Bronzes to Nigeria." *Church Times*, 16 April. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/16-april/news/uk/lambeth-palace-to-return-benin-bronzes-to-nigeria>