

# Dimensions for a folding exhibition

## Exhibiting diversity in theory and practice in the *Migration Memories* exhibitions

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### Introduction

Every time you walk around Angledool station, you find things; reminders of people who came here for different reasons, reminders of people who were already here when the newcomers arrived.<sup>1</sup>

This paper discusses approaches to exhibiting diversity explored in an Australian Research Council Linkage project called *Migration Memories: Creating and analysing collaborative museum representations of Australian migration histories*. The project was based at The Australian National University in partnership with the National Museum of Australia (NMA) from 2005 to 2008. It explored alternatives to the 'celebration of diversity' paradigm typical of multicultural discourse and the individualisation of difference required by the 'consensus' model promoted in social cohesion policy. Drawing on the research, I suggest reframing diversity as an interaction between different social-historical positions and experiences. I argue that it can be achieved through interventions in the practice of exhibition-making, such as those tried in *Migration Memories*.<sup>2</sup>

*Migration Memories'* interventions rested on 'undoing' ethnicity as the established category of difference in migration exhibitions and asserting other aspects of distinction and potential engagement. The exhibitions created in the research process investigated the use of the historical, the local and the personal as distinct vantage points from which migration might be seen and felt in many different ways across time and place. As my discussion shows, they did this primarily by working with agency, collaboration and imagination as key elements of exhibition development and design.

My discussion, as with the *Migration Memories* research itself, is offered in the spirit of contributing to a museum exhibition practice that has grown from the aspirations of multiculturalism as an alternative to monoculturalism and assimilationist policies.<sup>3</sup> My investigation of alternative forms of exhibiting diversity, while critiquing aspects of this practice, has the same intentions to democratise interpretations of Australian history and culture. The first part of my paper provides a brief overview of the research project and situates it within the wider history of multiculturalist discourses and their impact on Australian

migration exhibitions. It also sets out the theoretical underpinnings of the research and shows how these have been taken up in practice. The second part concentrates on the critical aspects of practice I have identified as agency, collaboration and imagination, and discusses aspects of working with the personal in historical context, the personal meaning of objects and the local as a frame of reference. In conclusion, I draw together key threads of the research to highlight the practical dimensions of exhibiting diversity as an interaction between different social-historical positions and experiences.

My role in the *Migration Memories* project was that of project researcher and curator of the three exhibitions made as part of the research. I came to the project as a curator of social history, with a historian's interest in narrative and an oral historian's interest in what individuals made of their experience; the stories they told and the discourses they drew on. I also brought a writer's perspective to the shaping of story and the selection of strategies for engaging an audience's imagination. My interest was in establishing a collaborative approach to research in which the knowledge and experience of all participants produced what was discovered and made. In the exhibitions, the active role of the participants who developed their stories with me for display was made clear by using text that was distinctly authored by them and by me. In this way, their personal experience and point of view were voiced independently rather than as 'quotations'. In the same spirit, I use pieces from the participants' exhibition texts throughout this paper to give a sense of the material that informs it, but does not exist for it or within its frame.<sup>4</sup> My intention is to provide a glimpse of the voices and stories that made *Migration Memories*. In the context of this paper, it is a subtle dialogue—more poetic than literal—a reminder of conversation rather than a performance of it.

## **Overview of *Migration Memories* research**

My uncle said to me, 'Take only your handbag. Don't look back. Whatever you have in the cupboard—forget it.'<sup>5</sup>

*Migration Memories* produced two exploratory exhibitions, each in small regional localities with rich and distinct migration histories. The first was in Lightning Ridge, an opal-mining town in central northern New South Wales; the second in Robinvale, a horticultural town on the Murray River in north-western Victoria. The development of the exhibitions was supported by partnerships with local community organisations. These included historical societies and organisations concerned with migration issues. The exhibitions were shown separately in their localities (at the Lightning Ridge Historical Society in August 2006 and the Robinvale Leisure Centre in June 2007) and together at the NMA in Canberra in September 2007. With the support of the NMA, they were returned to their respective communities.

Within the local frame, each exhibition featured seven personal ‘stories’ of migration. These reflected critical local immigration events from the colonial period to the present and included the experience of migration from an Indigenous perspective. Each story was presented as a distinct, stand-alone configuration of artefacts, images and texts within the exhibition as a whole. Each was also shaped as a ‘dialogue’ between its meaning for a contemporary local resident for whom the migration was significant, and the history of the particular migration. The displays were developed in close collaboration with the individual participants—or ‘storytellers’. Among the storytellers, there were first, second and third-generation perspectives and those based on intimate connections with place and culture.

The local was foregrounded in the exhibition design—through images, graphics and fabrication—and in introductory text. A time line showing significant local events in the context of developments in Australian migration history provided a chronological reference for the individual histories. The sound installations for each exhibition used the sound of voices in conversation, along with other local sounds, to express local cultural diversity.

A central research theme—and the one that was most relevant to this paper—concerned creating alternative exhibition practices, which used the local, personal and historical as key terms of reference in presenting Australian migration history as a common but heterogeneous experience, rather than one belonging to a particular section of society. Other areas of research included how people ‘remember’ and understand migration histories of different times and types, and the processes and impacts of creating a story from life experience.

It is important to note that the exhibitions were not a research outcome that was tested against intentions. The research process *was* the preparation, development and display of the exhibitions. Each stage was regarded as part of the exploration and as productive of material for analysis and discussion. The exhibitions themselves were seen as documents for analysis. Equally important material was provided by documentation of the process of developing the exhibitions with community participants and by visitor responses to the exhibitions in local and national settings.

## **Context and issues: ‘Diversity’ and migration exhibitions from multiculturalism to social cohesion**

Then, in 1936, the government moved them to Brewarrina. Took the lot, children and grandparents and all. And it had a really sad ending to it because most of the old people died down there and were buried in a strange country.<sup>6</sup>

*Migration Memories* took place in a well-established landscape of Australian migration exhibitions and museums. Its response to theoretical issues in the field

was sharpened around issues of diversity in a political climate that had shifted from the celebration of cultural diversity to anxiety about it.<sup>7</sup> The following discussion draws on Ian McShane's and Andrea Witcomb's respective analyses of migration exhibitions and highlights issues that are particularly relevant to the approach to exhibiting diversity taken by *Migration Memories*.<sup>8</sup>

The first Australian migration museum opened its doors in Adelaide in 1986. By the end of the twentieth century, a number of museums and collections devoted to the culture and history of particular ethnic groups in Australia had emerged. The NSW Migration Heritage Centre was established in 1997, the Melbourne Immigration Museum was established in 1999 and migration became a regular topic of museum exhibitions. During this period, a typical style of 'migration' exhibition emerged, which Ian McShane argued was a servant of Australian multicultural policy rather than a frame for looking at migration history.<sup>9</sup> I refer to this as the 'multicultural' migration exhibition—a typical form, rather than a particular exhibition.

The seeds of a close relationship between museums and government policy were sown in the earliest days of multiculturalism when there was clear government interest in preserving cultural heritage as part and parcel of a range of programs supporting the settlement of recent immigrants.<sup>10</sup> Heritage professionals, librarians and museum curators saw it as an important opportunity to represent, record and preserve Australia's wide range of cultures and their diverse histories.<sup>11</sup> The multicultural migration exhibition evolved through this 'good fit' between government policy and museum interests concerned with their 'responsibility'<sup>12</sup> to reflect the history and culture of all members of the community rather than of an elite.<sup>13</sup> Its content and form were marked as much by the time in which it developed as by multicultural ideology.

The focus of the multicultural migration exhibition as it emerged was the huge number of newcomers who arrived as part of the Federal Government's revolutionary postwar immigration program.<sup>14</sup> With time, this has been refined and extended. The major migration museums have permanent displays highlighting key periods in immigration history, including the colonial period and the impact of colonisation on Indigenous people. They also include exhibits about recent refugee settlement and interactive installations that invite visitors to apply the immigration regulations of particular historical periods to prospective immigrant scenarios. Most migration exhibitions themselves, however, whatever their genesis, take the traditional form of a single cultural display: the Greeks in Australia, the Latvians, the Vietnamese, and so on. Their hallmark is the display of traditional artefacts brought to Australia. These exhibitions reflect the idea of multicultural society as 'a mosaic of ethnic diversity',<sup>15</sup> which expands with the addition of different groups of newcomers. Such exhibitions

have a limited capacity to explore migration history, changes in conceptions of cultural identity since migration or interaction between cultures.<sup>16</sup>

The typical multicultural migration exhibition is often presented in a way that renders 'experience' as undifferentiated within 'community' (ethnic) groups. There are no dissenting voices and there are no other aspects of the complex, experiencing self represented beyond that of migrant—and perhaps woman. This is supported by framing experience within stock narratives of migration and by looking at it through the lens of culture as represented by ethnic organisations. What we are left with is a thin, fixed and instrumental representation of experience and people. We are also left with very little sense of the wider historical context of migrations and what prompts and regulates them.

The stock narratives of the multicultural migration exhibition as McShane identifies them are the 'contribution' of migrants to Australian culture and economy and the 'rebirth' of migrants in Australia as free and successful.<sup>17</sup> What brings migrants to this new and useful life is 'the journey' from a shadowy old world to the sunlit shores of Australia—just as the immigration posters of the 1950s and 1960s suggest. Migrants themselves in these stories are victim-heroes—stick figures. They are not engulfed in loss and loneliness and none of them does as Dora in my writing class did when she reconstituted her Hungarian self and went home. Returning is just one of the complex experiences that fails to come to light through these narratives, whether in the form brought to attention in Hammerton and Thomson's *Ten Pound Poms*<sup>18</sup> or captured in the everyday Filipino term '*balikbayan*' (meaning the return of goods and money to people at home) or other, arguably increasingly transnational forms of migrancy.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the most critical problem in the typical migration exhibition is that it reflects and thus tacitly contributes to the way multiculturalism plays out in policy and popular consciousness. 'Multicultural' generally does not mean a society of many interacting cultures, but a particular section of society—the 'multicultural community'. As Ghassan Hage argues, this 'community' is constituted as essentially 'different' or 'other' from the dominant Anglo-Celtic culture of Australia. The dominant 'white' culture (unmarked by ethnicity) maintains its position by creating 'ethnic' others as 'diverse'—'enriching' and self-determining only within the confines of their definition.<sup>20</sup>

It is perhaps not surprising that a policy developed to support the settlement of non-British migrants should play out in this way—nor that 'multicultural', as well as meaning 'different', should signify 'migrant'. In this context, 'Poms', whether returners or not, are not migrants and are rarely present in the multicultural migration exhibition.<sup>21</sup> Recent approaches (as seen, for example,

at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne) generally depend on reframing them as having a specific 'other' culture such as Scottish or Irish.

For very different reasons, the position 'Indigenous' also stands outside 'multicultural'.<sup>22</sup> In the multicultural migration exhibition, 'Indigenous' is a specific category of difference. It denotes 'those who were here before' and 'those who continue to be here despite'. In inviting Indigenous people to participate in an exhibition about migration, *Migration Memories* ran the risk of being seen to conflate Indigenous difference with migrant difference. It also, however, opened up ways for the category Indigenous to be included 'inside' rather than 'outside' as a kind of prologue to the exhibition. This inclusion was based on how individual Indigenous participants wanted to locate themselves in relation to migration history.<sup>23</sup>

In the typical multicultural exhibition, migration is implicitly ahistorical and diversity is fixed rather than flexible, static rather than interactive. Despite its intentions to inform the wider society, to include and to celebrate its different components and to give those components a voice and respect their articulation, the multicultural migration exhibition is a spectacle of otherness that reinforces difference instead of changing positions. This is what Ien Ang and Brett St Louis call the 'predicament of difference'. 'Diversity' is caught up in this predicament as a sort of plural of essentialist difference. It 'is the managerial view of the field of differences to be harmonised, controlled and made to fit into a coherent...whole by the...state'.<sup>24</sup>

In the shift from multiculturalism to policies of social cohesion, the approach to managing diversity by displaying it has remained consistent. Papers by Lola Young and Raminder Kaur on diversity at the Museum of London provide an example of the 'managerial view' at work in the context of social cohesion policy in the United Kingdom. In their concern to include 'non-mainstream', 'minority' cultures and groups who have previously not been part of museum representations, they discuss diverse cultures as a collection of excluded identities.<sup>25</sup> In the language of social inclusion, which is central to British cohesion policy and increasingly used in Australia, 'diverse' becomes what passes for an inclusive way of collectively describing people who might face social discrimination—for example, the 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (CALD) community. It fixes them as 'others' in Hage's terms and suggests that they have no capacity to participate on their own behalf without the help of some inclusive policy.

In Australia, the current Rudd Labor Government has taken the 'inclusion' approach to social cohesion and has established a social inclusion policy based on full participation in society.<sup>26</sup> The previous, Howard Government, however, preferred cohesion based on a consensus on Australian values—exemplified in

the 2003 government review of the NMA.<sup>27</sup> In this model, diversity is managed by erasure.

When the NMA opened in 2001, its Horizons Gallery addressed migration to Australia as a long-term and continuing event in the frame of changing immigration concerns and policies. In this way, it historicised and politicised cultural diversity—and included generations of Anglo-Celtic settlers. The government review took exception to this. It saw colonial settlement as a heroic foundation event rather than part of immigration history. It indicated that reference to immigration of the more recent period would be more appropriately mentioned as part of individual biographies featured in a gallery whose first focus was individual experience. This was where it felt ‘diversity’ would be best managed.<sup>28</sup> The review’s recommendations erase the social historical experience and impact of migration to Australia as well as the policies and discourses that have framed it over time. Social and cultural diversity disappear under the assertion of history as a singular narrative and of experience as a personal event without wider social meaning.<sup>29</sup>

The *Migration Memories*’ focus on the personal, historical and local sought to take into account the problems of displaying diversity to the exclusion of complex experience and of erasing it from history by individualising it. This involved thinking about diversity in terms of encounter and interaction rather than as a static mosaic.

## Theoretical frameworks and practical approaches

Sometimes you get angry for the years you weren’t accepted. Until you find another identity, you’re lost, you’re in limbo.<sup>30</sup>

Paul Carter suggests that while local history in Australia is often presented as a ‘collage’ of histories of different peoples, it would be more appropriate to present it as a ‘fold’.<sup>31</sup> The contrast between displays of difference and displays that create contacts across difference might be similarly described. Folding is a movement that involves connection, influence and change. To move from the collage—or the mosaic of separate pieces—to the fold is to move from a passive picture of diversity displayed as single elements in a patchwork to enacting it; imprinting the pieces with traces of each other.

The ‘folding’ approach to exhibiting diversity explored in the *Migration Memories* project was driven by my long-term theoretical interest in the interface between the individual subject and discourses of social identity. My interest is informed by scholarship concerned with the discursive constitution of individual and collective identities and the practices—the actions and relationships—that are implicated in and contribute to those discourses. James Clifford, for instance, writes of ‘practices of displacement’ as *constituting* cultural meanings rather than effecting ‘their simple transfer or extension’.<sup>32</sup> Within the same frame of

understanding, activist writers such as bell hooks and Gloria Anzaldúa offer the practice of imaginative writing as an intervention in the discursive positioning of marginalised subjects by writing them into more powerful readings.<sup>33</sup> It is this creation of texts that particularly interests me in relation to museum interpretation of cultures and histories. What texts encourage interaction between elements of the exhibition and between the exhibition and audience members? This question is not so much about what museum texts do, but, as practitioners, how we create them.

The research took up this 'how' question in every aspect of the exhibition-making process: in content, the process of exhibition development, in the use of interpretative devices such as the shaping of text, the management of relationships between image, text and object in design and fabrication and the composition of audio material. At a broad content level, it drew on 'the peopling of Australia' approach used by the NMA's Horizons Gallery and the Migration Heritage Centre of New South Wales.<sup>34</sup> In including migrations from the colonial period to the present and the impact of colonising migrations on Indigenous peoples' movements within Australia, it established 'migration' more as a historical theme than an event or experience in itself. As Witcomb suggests, the thematic approach opens the way for looking at historical experience from a variety of positions, including those that might be regarded as 'mainstream', and for identifying difference with experience rather than essentialist identity.<sup>35</sup>

Another important element of content was the focus on the local. Like the theme, the local provides a specific frame of reference for exhibiting diversity. In the United Kingdom, as Message discusses,<sup>36</sup> it has been identified as a site for developing social cohesion across cultural diversity. Here, locality supersedes ethnicity as a focus for identification and community is created around geography rather than culture. In a rather different vein, Mat Trinca and Kirsten Wehner suggest locating Australian history in place 'as an active presence or "character" in the past [that] acknowledges the temporal and geographical specificity of encounters between peoples, places and ideas'.<sup>37</sup> The idea in *Migration Memories* was to work with the local as a site of encounter rather than as a replacement category of commonality. Importantly, the research saw the materiality of the local, rather than its ideal configuration as a 'site', as the key to bringing different experiences and perspectives into an active relationship with each other.

At a more detailed content level, the research countered the showcasing of difference by providing an intimate view of how people from very different walks of life saw migration histories that were significant to them. It took a critical view of the idea of 'representing' the experience of migration and the idea that you might array a fully inclusive list of such experiences—the stick-figure approach. It was interested in *how* something was experienced—what it felt like on the inside. It saw this as an important basis for seeing different

understandings and experiences of migration in relationship, and for inviting audiences into that relationship. It did not, however, want to suggest, like the NMA review, that difference was simply a matter of individual experience. Central to presenting the personal was locating it in the wider historical, geographical and political context of migration. For instance, it used maps, images of home countries at the time of emigration and official immigration documents to give presence to this wider context.

In collecting material concerning the personal experience of migration, the research worked with individuals rather than ethnic groups and paid attention to them as self-determining subjects within the exhibition rather than as its illustrations in the form of 'personal stories'. The model for achieving this was individual participation rather than consultation with community representatives. The collection and development process was sensitive to participant understandings of personal or collective identity but its focus was experience and what people made of their experiences. Terms such as 'perspectives' were used to assert differences of viewpoint over essentialist characteristics.

As well as taking an approach to content and the process of collecting material that was designed to 'unfold' migration from its set creases, a major area of experimentation concerned processes of exhibition development and the form of the exhibition itself.

The research's approach to this area of investigation was based on the understanding that the interpretative process was constitutive rather than one that offered a window on a topic. It is a making—or, rather, a series of makings—based initially on what the curator makes of certain material and finally on what those who view the 'outcome' of the generations of making that take place in the curatorial and design process 'make' of the makings. This is far from an instrumental relationship between intention and result. It suggests that interpretation is really something quite dense, and even opaque, that has multiple and curious effects rather than a set of outcomes that can be ticked 'achieved' or not. As Donald Preziosi says, 'We don't simply use, read, or consume museums and their contents...they are catalysts for thought and action.'<sup>38</sup> In the same way that any 'mode of artistry'<sup>39</sup> might, the research took the position that formal strategies of exhibition design and so on are as much charged with meaning as content is, and that while the process of development is related to content, it also has a vital impact on form. So all areas of exhibition making are implicated in what is made and how it can be read.

The exhibition form that fits best with the *Migration Memories'* research intentions is what can be called 'dialogic'. As Tony Bennett explains it, a dialogic exhibition is concerned with the 'multiaccentuality' of meaning. It does not operate through a 'controlling' curatorial position but across a number of sites. In this way, it encourages what Bennett calls the 'to and fro' that is implicit in

the dialogic process of meaning making.<sup>40</sup> This suggests a lateral rather than hierarchical relationship between material—something like a constellation of meaning making in which audience members are also participants.

‘Dialogic’ is also a term used to describe a process of developing exhibitions that is based on collaboration with community participants. In this case, as Ruth Phillips points out, ‘to-ing and fro-ing’ is also invoked. Her discussion of community collaboration in exhibitions also calls on the way ‘dialogue’ features in Paolo Freire’s democratic pedagogy as the basis for a mutual learning relationship between teachers and adult learners.<sup>41</sup> The *Migration Memories*’ process owed much to this understanding of collaboration and the dialogue that took place as part of it. I have a particular interest, however, in applying the idea of the ‘dialogic’ specifically to the exhibition form, as it is my contention that the dialogic intentions of collaborative development cannot be realised unless taken into the detailed workings of the exhibition. On this basis, *Migration Memories* falls into the type of collaborative exhibit that Ruth Phillips describes as ‘multivocal’: seeking to show multiple perspectives alongside each other and seeking to show historical interpretation in a reflexive light as one perspective on experience.<sup>42</sup>

## **Creating a dialogic exhibition: Agency, collaboration and imagination**

Mum always said, the past is gone, it’s where you are now that counts.<sup>43</sup>

The research took agency—the power to act or create effect—to be a vital characteristic of the components of a dialogic exhibition and also the basis for creating potential contact between different perspectives and worlds of experience. As indicated, the main components the research addressed in this way were the personal, the historical and the local. The historical was not taken as an anonymous general frame of the exhibition as a whole, but, like the other two, as a point of view, in this case embodied by the curator. Objects and sound were also distinct sites but they were positioned more in support of the main viewpoints; objects were particularly associated with the personal and sound with the local. Agency was also a key term of reference in the process of development, in the use of interpretative devices and in thinking about the audience.

The model for the process of developing exhibition material so that it acknowledged and supported the agency of individual participants and the curator, as already indicated, was collaboration. Howard Morphy’s essay in *Museum Frictions* about the *Yingapungapu* exhibition created by Yolngu for the opening of the NMA identifies the distinct complex of issues and intentions for Yolngu and the museum. It also shows Yolngu managing the ups and downs of the intersection of these on the basis of their long-held determination to use

their cultural material ‘to protect their rights in law and maintain their autonomy’.<sup>44</sup> In the same volume, Ciraj Rassool discusses the District Six Museum in Capetown as a ‘hybrid space’ combining the interests of a museum—research, collection, and so on—with community-based governance and activism on land claims and restitution.<sup>45</sup>

These examples describe the broad shape of collaboration as an engagement between differently positioned agents. Michael Frisch’s idea of ‘shared authority’<sup>46</sup> provides a framework for bringing curator and participants together in the exhibition itself. ‘Shared authority’ includes the idea of authorship, which is critical when the words and images of participants are used in public. It also concerns interpretative authority. Frisch seeks to honour ‘scholarly authority’ *and* the authority that is ‘grounded in culture and experience’ as a basis for sharing knowledge and creating the basis for a ‘meaningful engagement with history’.<sup>47</sup>

The interviews I conducted with participants at various stages of the research provided documentation of their collaboration with me in the exhibition-making process: how we negotiated our way through this authority-sharing activity. They show that it is often hard to find the words to explain the experience of an evolving working relationship. They also show how much effort we put in to engaging with and understanding each other. In many ways, we became friends, although in other circumstances we might never have even met. As well as providing the raw material for the exhibitions, these collaborations exemplified the practice of making connections across difference.

Collaboration was also the model for work across professional expertise—between curator, designers and photographers. One of the most important questions that we looked at together was the way interpretative devices could support or deny agency. For instance, in the case of making the audio, the sound designer, Lea Collins, and I looked for alternatives to the predictable sound of the interview and the way it situated the interviewee as an obedient respondent. The sound of engaged conversation locates voice very differently.

The research also saw visitors as self-determining makers of meaning. It assumed that audience members were ‘knowers’ rather than empty deposit boxes, to use Paolo Friere’s characterisation, and that people would themselves bring diverse experiences and perspectives to the material and make their own sense of it.<sup>48</sup> A question for experimentation, which remains open for me, is how to collect what people ‘make’ of the exhibition, rather than what they think about in an evaluative way. The Lightning Ridge exhibition designer, Iona Walsh, and I looked for ways of adding audience responses into the exhibition. We were not interested in the noticeboard or post-it note form where the audience role is response (a technique that has been widely used at the Migration Museum in Adelaide, for example), but some kind of making that would really become part

of the exhibition and extend the diversity of experience and understanding of migration. Nor were we interested in the 'tell your story' approach, which can be patronising. We were searching for something that could be distinct and expressive and surprising and was least likely to be caught up in the most obvious discourses—something that could show a variety of engagements and show the exhibition itself as a living thing. It was a challenge we had to let go in favour of others. Perhaps the best answer so far is provided by a phone call I had from a teacher in Robinvale who is working on a history of his family's migration for his children. He was inspired by the use of the personal in historical context in the exhibition and was planning to use a similar approach.

Agency is critical to the intentions of the dialogic exhibition and particularly in creating the potential for contact, but something more is required to make the connection, to strike the spark. How do you get inside experience, how do you set the fold in motion? My way into this territory connects with Witcomb's interest in 'feeling' and involves the use of meaning-making strategies directed to engaging the imagination—the faculty that enables empathy.<sup>49</sup>

Empathy is often described as being able to stand in another person's shoes. The strategies and devices employed in creative writing, storytelling and dramatic performance, with which I am most familiar, support agency and move us into other people's shoes in a variety of ways. They do it through characterisation and embodiment, which support agency, and through establishing point of view—that is, the distinct places that characters speak from. They use precise description rather than abstract generalisations. They use plot and manage narrative and other structural devices to frame the worlds they create. They work through the senses and by association. They put unlikely combinations of elements together in image and metaphor—combinations that undo cliché and make fresh connections. They don't fill up all the spaces with illustration but leave space for an audience to wonder, to draw on their own knowledge and experience, to engage on their own behalf. Part of the 'feeling' they produce is a sense of intimacy, of 'being there with'. We are 'taken', we are 'moved', possibly into positions beyond our realm of experience but also into places that we recognise. A key ingredient of the intimate experience that these devices create is pleasure. Pleasure is an 'empowering' sensation. It engages a sense of confidence and ability. It moves outward and towards rather than as horror might, backwards in recoil, or as despair might, inward. The experience of pleasure is not to do with the subject matter itself, but the way it is treated. For instance, Witcomb's discussion of a miniature model of the Treblinka concentration camp shows that it is the intimate engagement with the maker's memory and desire to memorialise, made palpable in the specificity and embodiment of his experience in the form of the model, that has the power to transform.<sup>50</sup>

Figure 6.1 Panel from Maamaloa-Fine family, *Migration Memories: Robinvale*



Photograph courtesy of Jo Sheldrick, 2007.

The *Migration Memories* exhibitions explored materialising and evoking personal meaning through objects, images and texts and a combination of these. For instance, the sense of culture expressed by second-generation Tongan Mele Kirirua led to the development of a panel design combining photographic images and text. Photographic details of *kiekie*, *ta'avala* and *tapa* were used not as descriptions of cultural artefacts, but to give an intimate sense of 'my Tongan culture'.

Artefacts created by the participants for the exhibition had a particularly evocative quality and brought the individual into the exhibition in a powerful way. One example was Aunty Rose's feather flowers, which she made not so much as her mother had taught her as from her memory of her mother making them. Another is Frans's model of the 'view from the caravan'—an expression of his sea change migration to Lightning Ridge.

A consistent element in the invitation to engage through imagination is the creation of space for an audience to use their imagination. The explanation of objects was kept to a minimum in favour of text and images that suggested their personal meaning. For example, with the opal cutter that had been used by three generations of a family, the most important text was 'Dad'd say, Now Jen, I want half the thickness of a cigarette paper off the top of that stone'. Some issues of curiosity for both storyteller and curator were left open, not by directly asking 'What do you think?', but by presenting the situation. For instance, a squatter's account of a first encounter between a Scottish couple and a group of Aboriginal people was accompanied by responses to his account by the storyteller, Kay, by an Aboriginal elder, Aunty Rose, and by me. We all saw the situation from different perspectives.

Responses to the exhibitions that I found indicative of connection included laughter, humming along with songs in the sound installation, reading panel text out to a companion, staying for longer than anticipated, losing track of time or a companion's whereabouts and striking up conversations with other visitors about subjects prompted by the material.

The idea that held together the intentions and methods of the research's exhibition making, including the concern with agency and collaboration, was 'conversation'. Conversation expresses the 'to and fro' and 'give and take' implicit in the dialogic. It takes place between subjects who speak on their own behalf. As a form of communication, it has an open and yet intimate texture; it invites listening and response. A 'good conversation' involves listening to ourselves as part of attending to the exchange, and contains the potential for engagement and movement.

As real dialogue, conversation, and the exchange it involved, was the method through which the display-making work with participants developed. Interpretative devices in the exhibitions such as the conversational style of the

text and conversation fragments in the sound installations literally reflected the discussions that had produced the displays and implicitly invited audiences to keep the conversation going.

### **In practice: the personal in historical context**

I loved it—being taught how to dance in Tongan, being taught how to sing in Tongan, being taught the Tongan ways.<sup>51</sup>

As Ann Curthoys has remarked, ‘the personal is historical’.<sup>52</sup> Showing the connection between individual experience and historical circumstances was central to *Migration Memories*’ interest in locating migration experiences in history without resorting to an overarching single historical narrative, subsuming them under ‘culture’ or individualising them. ‘The personal is historical’ also suggests an opportunity to explore ways in which individuals might be present in an exhibition, not as illustrations of history, but as actors in it. In this section of the paper, I discuss how the research worked with the personal and historical in the process of developing the material, as well as through the ‘narrative mode’ of the exhibition.<sup>53</sup>

In developing each ‘story in context’, the focus was on how the teller understood and expressed it. The major threads of meaning for the teller became the storylines that organised the material—and directed archival research for relevant images and documents that provided context for it. The story as an understanding of migration experience also directed the display of material culture. In some cases, the choice of a meaningful personal item could be made only as we both became clearer about what the teller felt was most important to say—for example, was the emphasis here on continuity or origins? In this way, the process started from the ‘inside’. Historical context and material culture extended from the personal perspective rather than the other way round.

In the exhibitions, the context was shown through images and text with the text presented in the words of the curator, an identity named as ‘Mary’. The personal included an object or objects selected by the individual as well as images and text in their own words to show the story from their point of view. These two views were woven together in the distinct, stand-alone display of each story and headlined in a title panel that identified the story as the personal teller ‘in conversation with’. In this way, the narrative mode used in the exhibitions indicated that the stories were creations of both the teller and the curator—a ‘shared authority’ based on individual agency and collaboration.

Figure 6.2 authored text, *Migration Memories: Robinvale*



Photograph courtesy of Lannon Harley, 2007. With permission from the National Museum of Australia.

There was an important graphic dimension to constructing each point of view as active and identifiable. Devices included the use of graphics that distinguished the personal and historical but did not turn either position into an illustration or an aside through frames such as quotation marks or boxes. In working with the text itself, syntax was important in distinguishing and embodying voice. The teller's words were used in the form of telling—as they might speak. This was not as an oral history transcript might produce it but as a listener might hear and recognise 'I can just hear him saying that!' The words were of course discussed and refined with the participant.

I experimented with my own text in first and third person. On the one hand, providing context was a 'cooler' position and I found that the personal voice of the teller could often more successfully carry reference to me and our collaboration: 'When Mary asked me about my old handbag I didn't know if I still had it. When I found it, there were a few things still inside.' On the other hand, first person is more lively and places the business of providing context more clearly in the picture: 'My research on migration to Australia from the Philippines highlighted the huge extent to which Filipinos leave their country of birth to earn a living.'<sup>54</sup>

There are some issues about using personal stories with care for personal agency that are worth discussing. In the contemporary context, the personal story, particularly that of less-visible and less-powerful individuals, sits on the brink between self-determination and commodification. The camera, as Laura Bear points out in her discussion of the 'politics of display' in the exhibition *Warte Mal!*, plays a particular role in the age of fascination with 'real-life' stories.<sup>55</sup>

*Warte Mal!*'s use of film counters the entertaining and voyeuristic value of the 'real life' of sex workers in the Czech Republic by creating a complex, mediated, open and layered viewing experience. *Migration Memories* was interested in avoiding devices, such as the glib use of the visual to make visible, which support the easy and thoughtless consumption of the personal story and the 'objectification', as Bear says, of its subjects.

During the making of the exhibitions, and since, there has been much discussion about providing a contemporary photographic portrait of each storyteller with their story. As I see it, this use of image undoes the agency I was seeking to assert because it works as an illustration, not an embodiment. It does not support point of view or agency of the person in the photograph because it is not for them. It is for the audience. It does not speak for the position of the subject but rather subjects them to the gaze of the viewer. In this way, it returns us to the spectacle of diversity, rather than engaging us in it. In the particular context of the *Migration Memories*' stories-in-context, it also overrides the delicate hyphenated relationship between curator and teller and erases other characters in the story. Photographs of the storytellers were certainly present as part of their stories and were captioned to identify them in time and place. Contemporary photos of them were used in introductory material. These showed them participating in the process of making the exhibition, often with me in the frame, and generally engaged in activities rather than presenting themselves to the camera.

### **In practice: Artefacts**

For most of my life I was too busy rejecting my Italian heritage to find out much about it. Going back to Ferla was a very emotional experience for me.<sup>56</sup>

Because *Migration Memories* did not want to identify cultural difference in the clichéd form of celebratory cultural diversity, it sought objects for their personal meaning rather than as exemplars of material 'ethnic' culture. Their role in the exhibition was not to be objects *of* interpretation but *agents* in the meaning making and interpretation of each individual story. For instance, the denim jacket and cotton trousers Sothea Thea kept to remember his journey by leaking fishing boat from Cambodia to Australia carried several interrelated meanings. They hold the immediate meaning Sothea gives them: a story to remember what he and others went through to survive. They are visibly marked by this. They also stand, in Sothea's view, for a wider refugee story of sacrifice for the next generation. From a wider angle, they are full of the lived experience of one individual during a particular period in which Cambodian and Australian history came together in both productive and uncomfortable ways. They speak for the personal experience and that history.

**Figure 6.3 Panels Sothea Thea, *Migration Memories: Robinvale***



Photograph courtesy of Lannon Harley, 2007. With permission from the National Museum of Australia.

The general intention was that the individual's main object, like Sothea's clothes, would be used as a focus for each story to materialise the narrative's meaning. The challenge in exhibition terms was how things in all their lumpy solidity could be placed to act in this way—in effect, to 'move'. In the Lightning Ridge exhibition, the objects were presented in museum cases, which the designer, Iona Walsh, worked into the fabrication of each story display as far as possible. In Robinvale, Paula McKindlay worked photographs of the objects by Jo Sheldrick into the panel designs. The photographic images were of course more mobile than the objects in their material form, but the loss of materiality was significant. Where either one or the other form worked best it was because of its capacity to be most mobile or most material.

The image of Sothea's jacket and trousers was one that held its materiality in presentation, perhaps particularly because the items themselves were so intimate, so embodied. Sothea is present, not just in the text that is part of the image, but as the wearer of the clothes. Another ingredient in the success of this image was the detailed collaboration between Sothea, myself as curator and the photographer and designer.

These my only clothes I had to wear on the boat. I keep them to remember my journey.

Seventy-nine people on the boat including men, women and children. From memory the boat was about 20 metres long and 4 metres wide. I am alone so I stay in front where no one else goes. At night the water comes over but I find a small space I can lie down in. I pull the sleeves of my jacket down over my hands to keep warm and turn my back on the water.<sup>57</sup>

The agency of objects in their material form depended on placement in relation to the exhibition panels. The arrangement of panels and a small case around a central plinth worked well for the biscuit tin that held the few letters and documents that connected Gabor Nagy to his homeland. Reading around the plinth, the case was always included. Its size and the angle of looking down into the tin and onto text that went with it created a powerful intimacy, which propelled connection with other aspects of the story. Other objects created much greater challenges within the context of the exhibition space, time and the research budget. One device we explored was the use of storytellers' words in large vinyl lettering on the exhibition case. In some contexts, this might be regarded as unorthodox but breaking orthodoxies can be critical in providing fresh ways of seeing. A fuller exploration of such possibilities would involve strategies such as combinations of media, variation in scale and radical approaches to the real fabric of the exhibition.

Another aspect of the use of objects as agents of interpretation is the possibility of treating them in the same collaborative way as the 'personal in historical context' to show their personal meaning and their meaning as items of material culture. For instance, how might the historical meaning of Sothea's clothes be made more explicit—or indeed the complex story of his jacket, which connects directly to the Vietnam-backed Cambodian government and the material culture of denim? Jennifer's opal cutter is another instance in that it materialises aspects of the nineteenth-century opal trade, which could have been explored more explicitly and fully. What I'm suggesting is that the research's exploration of evoking the personal meaning of objects opens further questions about how objects in all their singularity might operate dynamically to create dialogue across different ways of seeing and using the one item.<sup>58</sup>

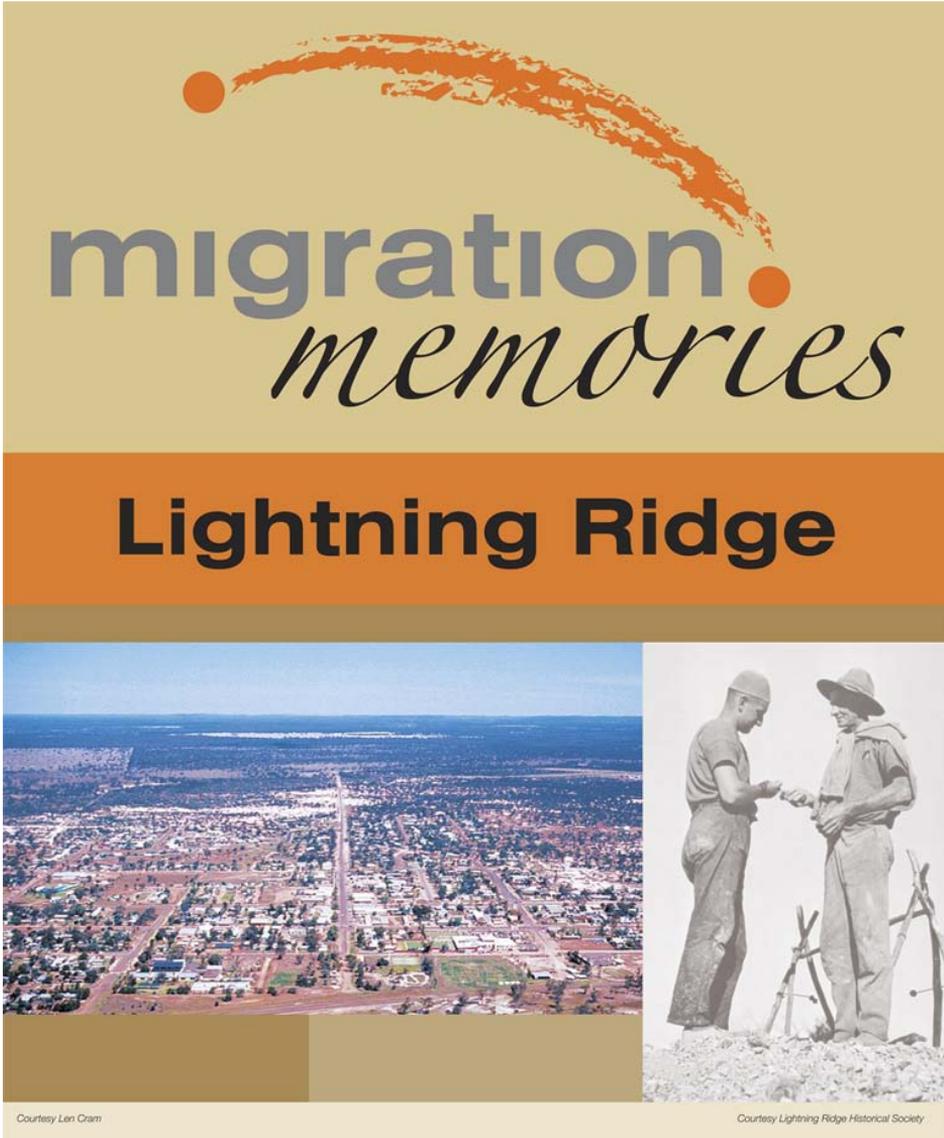
### **In practice: the local**

Thai border full of land mines. On a boat you might drown. Double or nothing. You choose your way to survive.<sup>59</sup>

As with the objects, working with the local perspective threw up more questions than answers when it came to characterising it and putting it to work in exhibition form.

The concrete representation of place in image and design, and the detail in the individual stories, was a vehicle for interaction between different experiences when the exhibitions were displayed in their local settings. For instance, the Tongan family's photo of the hut where they first lived in Robinvale brought generations of first experiences of working in Robinvale together—including those of soldier settlers. In the local context, visitors easily read the stories in relation to each other and their responses suggested that the result was often an expanded sense of people in place based on new connections and understandings: 'I didn't realise' or 'you know people but you don't know them'. In the national context, however, the active role of place was greatly diminished and really didn't do the work it might have done to show specific instances of Australian migration history: the encounters it produced and the way they lie on a particular landscape. At the NMA, the personal stories were anchored in time but the exhibitions' representation of the local wasn't strong enough to stop them from floating around in a general idea of Australia.

Figure 6.4 *Migration Memories: Lightning Ridge*, Lightning Ridge Historical Society Gallery. Designer: Iona Walsh, 2006.



Perhaps a way through this is offered by making explicit how cultural diversity, as encounter and connection, is specifically figured in a local context. For instance, in Lightning Ridge, diversity seems to be enacted horizontally, on the surface, in a way that mirrors connections between Lightning Ridge and other places, and the tracks between opal-mining claims. In Robinvale, by contrast, cultural difference has deeper roots, a vertical hold that shapes understandings of local cultural diversity and invites metaphors associated with the region's long-term horticultural history.<sup>60</sup> These kinds of understandings might suggest a stronger basis for exhibition representations of place as a locus of diversity, in a national context. The lesson could simply be, however, that establishing the local as a dialogic character, capable of holding its own and framing perspectives, requires quite different strategies in local and national contexts.

## Conclusion

You come in here you don't speak the language. You don't know what's what. You wonder if you're ever going to understand. Then day after day, month after month, year after year—that's it mate. This is my country now. Just like it was where I was born, where I was a kid... This is the road you have to pass.<sup>61</sup>

*Migration Memories* set out to exhibit migration history in a way in which audiences would see themselves as well as others. Above all, it was interested in engagement across difference as a basis for informing understandings about 'us' in whatever configuration. To this end, the research exhibitions worked with the idea that embodying and grounding diversity in personal and local perspectives, and in the context of migration history, could create distinct and tangible contact points.

In discussing the *Migration Memories* research, I have argued for an approach to exhibiting migration that is not wedded to the passive spectacle of diversity or, as a reaction to the potential divisiveness of this, a catalogue of personal experience. The practical strategies adopted by the *Migration Memories* exhibitions suggest the possibility of dissolving the bond between migration and cultural diversity in favour of treating migration as a historical event and experience, within which cultural position is a factor. They also suggest the possibility of viewing difference through the lens of social-historical experience, position and discourse, rather than through the essentialist markers of difference attached to 'culture'. This more fluid approach opens the way to undoing the use of diversity as a collective noun. As a noun, diversity, like community, has come to operate as a perfect managerial term in that it objectifies and makes passive. In *Migration Memories*, diversity was in many ways recast as a verb. The project approached exhibiting diversity as the action of making contact and interacting across difference. In this sense, the intention was to extend 'sitting

well with each other' (the phrase Ruth Phillips draws on to describe collaborative exhibits)<sup>62</sup> into exchange between subjects.<sup>63</sup>

The metaphor I have used for diversity in action is 'folding'—a connection between surfaces that produces complex and layered configurations.<sup>64</sup> *Migration Memories* was interested in creating a 'folding' exhibition in practice. The idea of the dialogic exhibition suggested a form for encouraging conversation between the different experiences within the exhibition and between these and the experience that audiences would bring to their viewing of it. An important part of the research concerned how this form might be realised through the practical dimensions of graphics and fabric, of scale and composition, through the use of image, text, colour, material, shape and sound. My discussion of the theory and practice of *Migration Memories* speaks for the value of attention to this level of practice in relation to wider issues about the role of interpretative cultural institutions as collectors and creators of culture.<sup>65</sup> It is founded on an interest in what we 'make' of each other and in how interventions in dominant understandings of 'you' and 'I' and 'us' can be made through cultural—and in this case, exhibition-making—practice. I have argued that an understanding of the practical dimensions of 'folding' and 'conversation' is required for their realisation.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Joan Treweek, *Migration Memories: Lightning Ridge*, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Andrea Witcomb's paper in this volume provides an overview and analysis of the political and museological issues that frame the *Migration Memories* approach. My discussion offers a response to some of her questions and suggestions in this paper and in her earlier paper, 'How style came to matter' (in Chris Healy and Andrea Witcomb [eds] 2006, *South Pacific Museums: Experiments in culture*, Monash University E-Press, pp. 21.1–13). My discussion is also informed by Kylie Message's work on social cohesion, museum practices and citizenship—for example, Message, Kylie 2009, 'New directions for civil renewal in Britain: social capital and culture for all?', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4 (June) [in press, accepted 11 April 2008]; and Message, Kylie 2006, *New Museums and the Making of Culture*, Berg, Oxford and New York.

<sup>3</sup> In response to the Howard Coalition Government's desire to replace 'cultural diversity' with 'Australian values', Andrew Jakubowicz argues that the values of multiculturalism provide a basis for an egalitarian, modern, cosmopolitan society. Jakubowicz, Andrew 2006, 'Reflections on a multicultural nation', *On Line Opinion*, 15 November 2006, <<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=5153&page=0>>

<sup>4</sup> This approach takes its cue from work by Margaret Somerville. See Somerville, Margaret with Dundas, Marie, Mead, May, Robinson, Janet and Sulter, Maureen 1994, *The Sun Dancin': People and place in Coonabarabran*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, pp. i–v.

<sup>5</sup> Lovelyn Miglietta, *Migration Memories: Lightning Ridge*, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Aunty June Barker, *Migration Memories: Lightning Ridge*, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> For examples of scholarly discussion, see Jupp, James 1998, *Immigration*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 132–50; Galligan, Brian and Roberts, Winsome 2003, Australian multiculturalism: its rise and demise, Australian Political Studies Conference, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 29 September–1 October 2003, pp. 3–4, <[www.utas.edu.au/government/APSA/GalliganRoberts/pdf](http://www.utas.edu.au/government/APSA/GalliganRoberts/pdf)>

<sup>8</sup> McShane, Ian 2001, 'Challenging or conventional? Migration history in Australian museums', in Darryl McIntyre and Kirsten Wehner (eds), *National Museums Negotiating Histories Conference Proceedings*, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2001, pp. 122–33; Andrea Witcomb, this volume.

<sup>9</sup> McShane, 'Challenging or conventional?'

<sup>10</sup> Jordens, Ann-Mari 1997, *Alien to Citizen: Settling migrants in Australia 1945–75*, Allen & Unwin in association with the Australian Archives, Sydney, pp. 233–8.

<sup>11</sup> Birtley, Margaret and McQueen, Patricia (eds) 1989, *New Responsibilities: Documenting multicultural Australia. A record of the conference for Museums, Libraries, Archives and Historical Collections towards a National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia 11–13 November 1988 Melbourne*, Museums Association of Australia Inc., Victorian Branch, and Library Council of Victoria.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Australian museum interest in multiculturalism also reflected the influence of the ‘new museology’, which called into question whose culture was represented in museums. For example, Vergo, Peter (ed.) 1989, *The New Museology*, Reaktion Books, London.

<sup>14</sup> McShane, ‘Challenging or Conventional?’, pp. 125–7.

<sup>15</sup> The image of the cultural mosaic has been commonly used alongside the idea of multiculturalism since it was introduced as an immigration settlement policy by the Whitlam Labor Government in 1973. Jordens, *Alien to Citizen*; Lack, John 2001, ‘Multiculturalism’, in Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne and New York, p. 445.

<sup>16</sup> Witcomb (this volume) discusses exhibitions that explore cross-cultural connections as exceptions to the rule. It is my perception that exceptions to the rule are increasing. An important recent example is the South Australian Museum’s touring exhibition *Australia’s Muslim Cameleers: Pioneers of the inland, 1860s–1930s*, ca 2006.

<sup>17</sup> McShane, ‘Challenging or conventional?’, pp. 128–9.

<sup>18</sup> Hammerton, James A. and Thomson, Alistair 2005, *Ten Pound Poms: Australia’s invisible migrants*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York.

<sup>19</sup> McKay, Deidre 2004, ‘Performing identities, creating cultures of circulation: Filipina migrants between home and abroad’, in Robert Cribb (ed.), *Asia Examined: Proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> biennial conference of the ASAA, 2004, Canberra, Australia*, Asian Studies Association of Australia and Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Canberra,

<[Coombs.anu.edu.au/SpecialProj/ASAA/biennial-conference/2004/proceedings.html](http://Coombs.anu.edu.au/SpecialProj/ASAA/biennial-conference/2004/proceedings.html)>

<sup>20</sup> Hage, Ghassan 1998, *White Nation: Fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society*, Pluto Press, Sydney, p. 117.

<sup>21</sup> Sara Wills discusses the need to make British migrants ‘visible as migrants’ in the context of Australia’s British-based national identity. Wills, Sara 2003, *Flora’s box: empty spaces, memory and migration*, History and the Meaning of Things seminar series on History and Material Culture, Melbourne Museum, 10 September.

<sup>22</sup> Hage discusses the complexities of ‘difference’ in Australia through the lens of nationalism and ‘whiteness’. Hage, Ghassan 2003, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for hope in a shrinking society*, Pluto Press, Annandale.

<sup>23</sup> The slippage between terms that refer to categories of exclusion was brought home to me in a poignant and ironic way in my work with Auntie Rose Kirby in Robinvale. When I asked her what migration meant to her as an Indigenous person, she said that she saw it as a process of becoming accepted. Like other Aboriginal people from the region, she and her husband came into Robinvale for work at the same time that postwar migrants were arriving. Her experience was that of being similarly excluded, but, over a similar period, becoming a recognised member of the community.

<sup>24</sup> Ang, Ien and St Louis, Brett 2005, ‘The predicament of difference’, *Ethnicities*, vol. 5, p. 296.

<sup>25</sup> Kaur, Raminder 2005, *Unearthing our past: engaging with diversity at the Museum of London*, June, Consultancy for Reassessing What We Collect, Phase 11, Museum of London; Young, Lola 2005, *Our Lives, Our Histories, Our Collections*, Museum of London,

<<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/Collections/OnlineResources/Essays>>

<sup>26</sup> For example, see Stephens, Ursula 2008, *Rudd Government’s social inclusion agenda*, Speech by the Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector and Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Prime Minister for Social Inclusion to Australian Council for International Development Forum, Public Theatre, Parliament House, Canberra, 13 March 2008,

<<http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/mediacentre/allreleases/2008/march/ruddgovernmentsocialinclusionagenda.htm>>

<sup>27</sup> Commonwealth of Australia 2003, *Review of the National Museum of Australia, Its Exhibitions and Public Programs*, A report to the Council of the National Museum of Australia, Canberra.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 22–5 and 32–4.

<sup>29</sup> In 2003, I curated an exhibition for the National Archives of Australia to accompany a touring exhibition about Australia's largest postwar migration reception and accommodation centre, Bonegilla. My brief was to highlight records of immigration policies and practices. In recent years, the archives has concentrated increasingly on the value of its immigration records for individuals interested in family history.

<sup>30</sup> John Katis, *Migration Memories: Robinvale*, 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Carter, Paul 1994, 'From collage to fold: a poetics of place', *Periphery*, no. 20, August, pp. 3–7.

<sup>32</sup> Clifford, James 1997, *Routes: Travel and translation in the late twentieth century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge and London, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> hooks, bell 1991, 'Narratives of struggle', in Philomena Mariani (ed.), *Critical Fictions: The politics of imaginative writing*, Bay Press, Seattle, pp. 53–61; Anzaldúa, Gloria 1987, *Borderlands La Frontera: The new mestiza*, Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco.

<sup>34</sup> Migration Heritage Centre New South Wales, the Institute for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney and the Archaeological Computing Laboratory, University of Sydney 2001, *Peopling New South Wales: A state-wide migration heritage partnership*, September, A scoping report to the Premier of New South Wales, Migration Heritage Centre New South Wales.

<sup>35</sup> Witcomb, 'How style came to matter', pp. 21.12–13.

<sup>36</sup> Message, 'New directions for civil renewal in Britain'.

<sup>37</sup> Trinca, Mathew and Wehner, Kirsten 2006, 'Pluralism and exhibition practice at the National Museum of Australia', in Chris Healy and Andrea Witcomb (eds), *South Pacific Museums Experiments in Culture*, Monash University E-Press, p. 06.11.

<sup>38</sup> Preziosi, Donald 2008, Presentation to Public Cultures seminar series, Research School of Humanities, The Australian National University, Canberra, 5 November 2008, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Bennett, T., 2006, 'Exhibition, difference and the logic of culture', in Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaaja and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto (eds), *Museum Frictions: Public cultures/global transformations*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> Phillips, Ruth 2003, 'Community collaboration in exhibitions: toward a dialogic paradigm', in Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown (eds), *Museums and Source Communities*, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 155–70.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163–7.

<sup>43</sup> Sheila Nagy, *Migration Memories: Lightning Ridge*, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Morphy, H., 'Sites of persuasion: *Yingapungapu* at the National Museum of Australia', in Karp et al., *Museum Frictions*, p. 473.

<sup>45</sup> Rassool, Ciraj, 'Community museums, memory politics and social transformation in South Africa: histories, possibilities and limits', in Karp et al., *Museum Frictions*, pp. 295–6.

<sup>46</sup> Frisch, M. 1990, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the craft and meaning of oral and public history*, State University of New York, Albany, pp. xxi–xxii.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xxi–xxii.

<sup>48</sup> Freire, P. 1972, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, London, 1972. Other discussions of audiences in this vein include: Sandell, R. 2007, *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxford; Trinca and Wehner, 'Pluralism and exhibition practice at the National Museum of Australia', p. 06.9.

<sup>49</sup> Witcomb, this volume.

<sup>50</sup> Witcomb, Andrea (in press), 'Remembering the dead by affecting the living: the case of a miniature model of Treblinka', in Sandra Dudley (ed.), *Museum Materialities: Objects, engagements, interpretations*, Routledge, London/New York.

<sup>51</sup> Mele Kirura, *Migration Memories: Robinvale*, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Curthoys, Ann 2000, 'The personal is historical: writing about the Freedom Ride of 1965', in Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath (eds), *Writing Histories: Imagination and narration*, Monash Publications in History, Department of History, The Australian National University, Canberra, pp. 75–81.

<sup>53</sup> Laurence Gourievdis is currently working on a typology of modes of narration and email correspondence with her has been most valuable in focusing aspects of this discussion.

<sup>54</sup> Lovelyn Miglietta, Mary Hutchison, *Migration Memories: Lightning Ridge*.

<sup>55</sup> Bear, Laura 2007, 'What the anthropologist said in "The politics of display: Ann-Sofi Sidens' *Warte Mal!"*, art history and social documentary', in Sharon Macdonald and Paul Basu (eds), *Exhibition Experiments*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, Mass., pp. 158–9.

<sup>56</sup> Tory Pisasale, *Migration Memories: Robinvale*, 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Sothea Thea, *Migration Memories: Robinvale*, 2007.

<sup>58</sup> I am indebted to Ian Coates at the National Museum of Australia for this insight and his early work with me on *Migration Memories* as part of the linkage funding partnership.

<sup>59</sup> Sothea Thea, *Migration Memories: Robinvale*, 2007.

<sup>60</sup> Hutchison, M. 2008, Personal histories/collective biographies: reflections on two local exhibitions of personal migration histories, Collective Biography Conference, Research School of Humanities, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences, Canberra, 8–10 September 2008.

<sup>61</sup> Dusan Malinovic, *Migration Memories: Lightning Ridge*, 2006.

<sup>62</sup> Phillips 'Community collaboration in exhibitions', p. 167.

<sup>63</sup> Ghassan Hage (*Against Paranoid Nationalism*, pp. 144–52) uses the motif of the pedestrian crossing to show the importance of an ethical structural relationship between society and individuals in enabling horizontal, ethical inter-subjective exchange.

<sup>64</sup> I am aware of the association here with the surface contacts that Elspeth Probyn describes in *Outside Belongings*, taking the position of a 'sociologist of the skin'. Probyn, Elspeth 1996, *Outside Belongings*, Routledge, New York, p. 5.

<sup>65</sup> Message, 'New directions for civil renewal in Britain'.