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***City* revealed: The process and politics of
exhibition development**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

This thesis examines the ways in which the process of exhibition development and the politics this involves affects the practice of history in the museum. It does this by establishing the broad parameters of history practice in the museum and places this in relation to academic practice, focusing on the New Zealand context and specifically upon Auckland War Memorial Museum. From this basis the thesis examines the development of *City* exhibition at Auckland Museum as a large-scale museum history exposition. The development process for this exhibition was created with the aim of changing the traditional Museum approach so as to create a more engaging and scholarly history exhibition than is traditional. At the same time however, there was also an aim of retaining the appearance of the traditional Museum within this programme of change. These aims were to be met by the innovation of the collaboration between an academic historian and the Museum's practitioners in the development process.

The research is based upon a detailed investigation of the roles played by the exhibition team members and the decisions, negotiations and compromises that they made through the development process. Beginning with their original intentions and concepts for the exhibition its metamorphosis into the exhibition as it was installed in the Museum gallery is traced. Emphasis is placed on the resonance that the various decisions and changes carried into the finished exhibition. The findings indicate that the Museum's traditions of developing and displaying knowledge exerted a strong conservative effect over the exhibition development in conflict with the programme of change. This conservatism vied with the authorial intentions of the exhibition development team. As a result of this influence the exhibition developed lean towards the conventional. The unexpectedly orthodox outcome resulted from the absence of critical museological practice. The thesis argues that although Auckland Museum had undergone extensive restructuring, including the introduction of new exhibition development processes and a new outlook as an organisation, the conception of history in the Museum had not changed. Ultimately this precluded that the practice of history in the institution would advance through the revised exhibition development process. However, the development of *City* did help achieve the updating of social history in the Museum and remains a platform upon which a more critical approach to the past can be built.

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Abbreviations

DS
JB
MB
RW
RY

Daniel Smith
James Belich
Margaret Belich
Rodney Wilson
Rose Young

Prologue: *City*



Plate 2 Auckland War Memorial Museum, main entrance. Collection of Auckland University Art History Department.



Plate 3 Auckland Museum ground floor plan. *City* is located in the back left hand corner from the front entrance (the room with the bridge icon). Image from Auckland Museum website, URL: <http://www.akmuseum.org.nz/web/floorplans/ground.html>



Plate 4 (top left) Hobson's Choice. Plate 5 (top right) Women's Work. Plate 6 (bottom left) Bloke's Shed interior. Plate 7 (bottom right) The People's Wall, looking towards Auckland's Britons.

Introduction

...the exhibit is in many ways a more complex mode of communication than the book or article, it is more difficult to control meaning. A single powerful artefact or image, for example, can overwhelm the carefully crafted message spelled out on dozens of labels.... matters of exhibit design and strategy must be part of any serious evaluation of the work of history museums.¹

Exhibitions tend to be presented to the public rather as do scientific facts: as unequivocal statements rather than as the outcome of particular processes and contexts. The assumptions, rationales, compromises and accidents that lead to a finished exhibition are generally hidden from public view: they are tidied away along with the cleaning equipment, the early drafts of the text and the artefacts for which no place could be found.²

The creation of a major long-term exhibition such as *City* involves a considerable commitment of staff, time, and financial resources by the museum institution. As a long-term exhibition *City* has a twelve-year life span.³ It stands as a representation of the institution's interpretation of its operational aims, its responsibilities to its public, and its interpretation of its collections during the period of exhibition development. Investigating the development of *City* throws into relief the influence of the museum context, its processes, and the politics involved in exhibition development, as well as the 'assumptions, rationales, compromises and accidents' that creating a museum history exhibition involves.

¹ Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig, "Introduction", in Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *History Museums in the United States: A critical assessment* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p.xviii.

² Sharon Macdonald, "Exhibitions of power and powers of exhibition: An introduction to the politics of display", in Sharon Macdonald, ed., *The Politics of Display: Museums, science, culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p2.

³ Rodney Wilson interviewed by Daniel Smith, 7 July 2002, Auckland. Tape recording. Rodney Wilson is the director of Auckland Museum. Rose Young, the history curator at the Museum adds that individual modules within the exhibition may be refreshed during that time, Rose Young interviewed by Daniel Smith, 16 September 2002, Auckland. Tape recording.

In order to create at once both a more publicly accessible and more scholarly history exhibition, Auckland Museum has taken the innovative approach of developing its history exhibition with a team centred on an academic historian working in collaboration with the museum practitioners. This thesis inquires into the processes, politics and roles of the core exhibition development team with particular focus upon the nexus between the Creative Producer and History Curator as the team's two principal history practitioners. The thesis argues that despite the extensive restructuring, the introduction of new processes and a new outlook at Auckland Museum, the institution's conception of history has not changed and therefore its practice could not.

Background

Auckland Museum is a scientific museum and shares in a history of museums that reaches back into their European origins. The discussion here is confined to an overview of the immediate origins of the colonial museum, and its implications. It will also background history practice in museums and its (non-) relationship to academic practice.

By the nineteenth century museums were becoming increasingly open to the public as well as the community of scholars so that anybody might 'survey the evidence of science.'⁴ Indeed Tony Bennett suggests that by 1885, the concept of the museum and its social and educational roles was already part of the cultural baggage of Europeans settling in the New World.⁵ During that century, as newly emerged nation states sought to define their citizens, museums as a technology of vision and mass education had become communicators of national identity and progress. Meanwhile, colonial expansion provided material to display, and territory for newly emerged nation states to govern.⁶ Museum collections helped bring these new territories and their indigenous peoples into knowledge, and knowledge helped bring dominion over these territories and peoples. In Europe the museums became more specialised around specific disciplines. Contemporary with this development was the establishment of general scientific museums, such as the Auckland Museum, in the New World. These colonial metropolitan museums developed general or mixed collecting practices

⁴ Macdonald, op. cit., p.8.

⁵ Tony Bennett, "Speaking to the eyes: Museums, legibility and the social order", in Macdonald (ed), op. cit., p.27.

⁶ Macdonald, op. cit., p.9; also Bennett, "The exhibitionary complex", in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, eds., *Thinking about exhibitions* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

covering a broad range of natural and human history.⁷ Cast in the likeness of the museums of Europe, but sharing more in common with their New World cousins, the colonial museums went about the task of collecting and displaying the colonial dominion, with the express concern of extending public knowledge.⁸

These New World museums were thus involved in the spreading of colonial power. Their exhibitions were sites through which that power could operate. With science on their side, museums could cast the new nations and their cultural, racial and class differences, as facts.⁹ ‘In this’ writes Macdonald, ‘museums and exhibitions were perhaps particularly effective in that they not only provided a “picture” but also objects and other tangible “evidences”.’¹⁰ In New Zealand this took the form of a Eurocentric discourse. As a consequence, a considerable amount has been written regarding the impact of museum practice in New Zealand in relation to Māori, and Māori material culture, in the creation of a national discourse.¹¹ Scant attention, however, has been paid to the collection and display of Pākehā history.

As a discipline in New Zealand universities, history was slow to evolve and slower still in acknowledging the history of the population that lived here. In contrast, the collecting of Pākehā material culture is as old as museums in this country,¹² though it has largely been an unfocused activity characterised by passive accrual. Objects have had a research role in the natural sciences and in the human history disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, ethnology and art history, and this common ground meant a relationship between museum and academy in these disciplines. History scholarship,

⁷ Susan Sheets-Pyenson, *Cathedrals of science: The development of colonial natural history museums during the late nineteenth century* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press), 1988. Fiona Cameron, “Shaping Maori identities and histories: Collecting and exhibiting Maori culture at the Auckland and Canterbury Museums from the 1850s to the 1920s” (unpublished PhD thesis (social anthropology), Massey University, 2000). Chris Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism: History as social memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.77-105.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Macdonald, op. cit., p.11.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ A lot of material was generated in response to the *Te Maori* exhibition in the 1980s. For more recent examples see Ben Dibley, ‘Museum, native, nation: Museological narrative and postcolonial national identity formation’ (unpublished MA thesis (sociology), Auckland University, 1996); also Cameron, *ibid.*

¹² Auckland Museum opened in 1852, a mere twelve years after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. The original statement of its collecting aims was: ‘The object of this Museum is to collect Specimens illustrative of the Natural History of New Zealand; the Geology of New Zealand; Weapons, Clothing, Implements ...of New Zealand and the Islands of the Pacific. Any memento of Captain Cook or his Voyages will be thankfully accepted. Also coins and medals (Ancient and Modern). In combination an Industrial Museum to Exhibit: Specimens of Building and Ornamental Stone; Timber for various purposes; Clays, Sands & Dyes. Tanning substances, ...&Gums. Resins & Hemp - Hair As it is desirable that samples of New Zealand wool should be exhibited’, J. Smith, in *New Zealander*, Auckland, 27 October, 1852. Quoted in, S. Park, “John Alexander Smith and the early history of Auckland Museum, 1852-1867,” *Records of the Auckland Institute and Museum*, vol.35 (1998), p.27.

however, has tended to concentrate on documents for its evidence. New Zealand academic historians modelled themselves upon the British style of scholarship which meant ‘emphasis upon accurate empirical scholarship based on documentary sources.’¹³ In the twentieth century the history of Europe remained a strong focus for historians here,¹⁴ and the profession tended to keep to itself, eschewing direct communication with the lay public.¹⁵ Even after diversification in the academic repertoire following the arrival of the new social history in the 1960s¹⁶ and the later cultural turn,¹⁷ the sources that historians consulted have not included the material culture that museums have collected. Consequently there has been little academic involvement in the history practised in museums.¹⁸

Phillips notes that history is now articulated to the lay public in a range of new media that professional historians are not trained in. Their failure to engage in the process of popularisation prevents the trickling down of academic historical scholarship to the wider lay audience.¹⁹ In the particular case of museums, the involvement of academic historians in the creation of history exhibitions has been as recent as the development of the opening exhibitions at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

New Zealand museums form no exception to the New World trend, whereby history, as distinct from ethnology or applied arts, has been of minor importance. This claim can be supported by the recognition that it was not until 1969 that the first curator

¹³ Jock Phillips, “Of verandahs and fish and chips and footie on Saturday afternoon: Reflections on 100 years of New Zealand historiography,” *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol.24, no.2 (October 1990), p.126.

¹⁴ Phillips has observed that in the 1890s and 1920s the history taught at university level was British, and even in the 1950s the papers offered in New Zealand history only became available to students in their honours year. Phillips, “Of verandahs,” p.125 and *passim*.

¹⁵ Phillips writes of John Beaglehole’s 1954 paper “The New Zealand scholar”: ‘Beaglehole’s model of the historian’s role was that he (the gender is Beaglehole’s) would communicate to a small elite – and in turn his findings would be translated into popular books and poems by a secondary level of contributors to the culture. This is the literary ‘trickle down’ theory, and like other ‘trickle down’ theories it frequently does not work. For the popularizers either do not bother to read the front-line scholarship, or if they do, they fail to understand it.’ From, “Our history, our selves: The historian and national identity,” *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol.30, no.2 (October 1996), p.112.

¹⁶ Phillips “Of verandahs”, p.129.

¹⁷ Phillips *ibid.*, p.132; Bronwyn Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum, “Introduction,” in Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum, eds., *Fragments: New Zealand social and cultural history* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000), p.7.

¹⁸ Healy makes a similar observation regarding history and museums in Australia in the twentieth, *op. cit.*, p.76.

¹⁹ One exception being James Belich’s television documentary based on his book, *The New Zealand Wars*. Phillips, “Our history, our selves,” p.113.

of history was appointed in any museum in the country.²⁰ At least up until this point, the type of history that was collected reflected the comfortable myths and the grand narratives of Pākehā dominance.²¹ Thus, in general, the main metropolitan museums' approach to history has been poor. The types of long-term history exhibitions in these museums have tended to be limited to imitation colonial period streets, transport galleries, and overviews of regions. In the execution of these exhibitions little in the way of a critical point of view is offered.²² However, latterly at Te Papa, the Historical Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs contributed to the opening suite of exhibitions, and history PhDs have been employed as curators. At Auckland Museum a new methodology has been applied to exhibition development which has seen the contracting of professional historians to work as part of the development teams. This approach has seen Chris Pugsley work on the war exhibition *Scars on the Heart* and James Belich on *City*.

At Auckland Museum, history has meant Pākehā history, and, as a curated collection, has only existed since 1992 following the appointment of Rose Young. The area of human history at Auckland Museum is separated into the collection areas or departments of Archaeology and Ethnology, Decorative Arts, Military, and History collections. Ethnology was the original human history collecting area at the Museum. This area, particularly Māori material culture, was the human history collecting priority under the first long serving director, Thomas Cheeseman.²³ This legacy has effectively divided the museum conception of New Zealand as a population, largely ignoring the settler population in deference to collecting the indigenous.

History has rarely been an area of active collecting in the Museum, and even less so of scholarship. Thus while 441 papers were published in the Museum's *Records* between 1930 and 1996, none were on the subject of Pākehā history.²⁴ In spite of the effective non-category of Pākehā history at the Museum for 140 years, its recognition in

²⁰ Young to Smith, op. cit. The appointment was made at the National Museum.

²¹ A view formed in discussion with David Butts about the history of New Zealand museums and from the accounts of the history of New Zealand museums, such as: Keith Thomson, *Art Galleries and Museums of New Zealand* (Wellington: A.W. Reed Ltd., 1981); Roxanne Fea and Elizabeth Pishief, *Culture of Collecting: 60 years of the Hawke's Bay Museum* (Napier: Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust Inc., 1996); Richard Dell, "The first hundred years of the Dominion Museum", (unpublished, c.1960); Dibley op. cit.

²² Ibid; Young, op. cit.

²³ Cameron, op. cit.

²⁴ L. Furey and B. Gill, "Indexes to the Records of the Auckland Institute and Museum volumes 1-33, 1930-1996", in, Auckland Institute and Museum, *Records of the Auckland Institute and Museum*, vol.34, (1997) p.6. Applied arts accounted for 3 papers, Archaeology 82, and ethnology 43 of the total. Since 1997 two papers have been published under the heading of "history" and both concerned the Museum.

1992, the adoption of a new collection policy, the creation of a major long-term exhibition, and the contracting of a major New Zealand academic historian to do it, may be taken as signals of a new intent.

Objectives

This thesis analyses the development of *City* as an event in which an academic historian adapted his practice to the context of the museum exhibition and the museum practitioners facilitated and accommodated the academic historian. By exploring the issues that emerged from the analysis of this process, this thesis attempts to make a more general set of observations about constructing and exhibiting history in the Museum. The questions addressed are divided between the primary question governing the research, and the subsidiary questions that help locate the discussion within the corpus of relevant literature, namely that relating to social history in museums, material culture methodology, exhibition development, the museum as a context and influence on museum praxis, urban history, city history exhibitions, and museum scholarship.

Primary question:

How did the processes and politics of exhibition development influence the practice of the academic historian and the museum practitioners and thus shape the outcome of *City*?

For the purposes of this thesis the term “process” is defined as the method of production, including the designation of roles, as prescribed by Auckland Museum. The term “politics” refers to the web of relationships, especially those involving authority and power, between the actors within this context. Essentially this question seeks to locate where the power of authorship lies, and the agency of the actors within the process. The development process is situated within a complex of constraints. These were: the possibilities and limitations of the collections; the influence of the Museum context (its history and traditions); the limitations of resources (staff, finances, and time);²⁵ the requirements of Museum policy and mission; the ability of the core individuals to function as a team; and the inexperience of James Belich with museum history (exhibitions and material culture). By limiting action, these constraints vied with the agency of the main actors in shaping the outcome of the process. How these

²⁵ Part of the time factor was the competing projects. Although not part of the discussions, created by the same team as *City* was the exhibition *Wild Child* a history of New Zealand childhood which was never entirely completed, and was developed roughly contemporary to *City*. In addition, staff not only needed to divide their time on these exhibitions but other ongoing projects also.

constraints were influential upon the outcome will become apparent through the analysis.

Pursuing an answer to the primary question requires the answering of a number of subsidiary questions.

- What is the relationship between the context of the museum, and the possibilities and limitations of history in the museum?

Effectively this question seeks the broad scope of possibilities for ‘doing’ history in the museum: the role of material culture as evidence in history, museum collections and collecting, curatorship, and the crossover with academic history.

- What were the roles of the curator and hired academic, and how do they relate to each other in the context of *City*?

This question essentially seeks to find where the roles intersect, and how curatorial and academic approaches support or compete with each other.

- What was the role of scholarship in the creation of *City*, and in museum history in general?

In other words, given that James Belich is a recognised scholar, and that scientific museums such as Auckland have a scholarly objective, can *City* be described as scholarly?

- What is history in the context of Auckland Museum?

This question approaches the meaning of the practice and display of history at Auckland Museum with reference to *City*.

Methodology

As a product of my training, the basic approach to the research has been a historical one. The development of *City* was documented and analysed as a historical event, set within the immediate context of Auckland Museum but also within its longer history that includes the traditions and characteristics of the colonial scientific museum. The essential approach was to take the original concept for the exhibition and explore how and why changes occurred through its development into the exhibition in the gallery. By analysing the causes and outcomes of change, a conclusion about how authorship is affected during exhibition development can be drawn. By locating this within the wider context of Auckland Museum and museum history generally, the practice of constructing history in the Museum can be characterised. The thesis is that despite the

extensive restructuring, the introduction of new processes and a new outlook at Auckland Museum, the organisation's conception of history has not changed and therefore its practice cannot. Only by adopting a more critical approach to practice will a more critical and scholarly outcome to exhibition projects be achieved.

Exhibition data

The central body of primary evidence researched was on the development of *City*. The available evidence consisted of the exhibition in the gallery (see Appendix One), the documents generated during exhibition development collected in the history curator's files,²⁶ and interview data from the main participants in the process.

The exhibition itself is an important source of evidence as the outcome of the development process, and the Museum's implicit public statement on what constitutes history in that institution in practice. No catalogue or other printed material accompanied the exhibition to supplement or expand on this statement.

The documents generated during exhibition development fall into three types. The first type comprises the 'Creative Direction', which outlined the development process, and prose material such as the various proposals and responses to them, and the exhibition brief (see Appendix Two). The second type comprises the collected minutes from the various meetings. These contain brief accounts of topics discussed and decisions made. The third type comprises the designs. These constitute the preliminary sketches and the various floor plan layouts (footprints). Crucially, nearly all of these documents are dated, which allowed the recovery of the order of events. The limitation is that this file may not contain the totality of documents generated. However, given Young's central involvement they will necessarily represent the majority. Furthermore these were the only exhibition development documents accessible for this research.

The third category of evidence was the interview data. The documentation and the exhibition supply the basic narrative outline of the development process and referred to some of the politics involved, which provided the vital background to prepare the interview questions. The insights that the interview subjects provided "thickened" the other evidence, applying flesh to the skeleton story, and in particular provided the political dimension of *City*'s development. A limitation to the interview data was that one of the core members of the exhibition development team, the designer Kai

²⁶ Collectively cited as the Rose Young *City* Project Files.

Hawkins, could not be contacted. Thus the key area of design is under-represented. This influenced the field of inquiry to apply only a minor focus to design.

The *City* exhibition development team comprised professionals from inside and outside of the Museum. The backgrounds and roles performed by the key players in the development process are summarised below.

Dr. Rodney Wilson: Director of the Museum since 1994 has a doctorate in art history, and has been the director of the Auckland Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia, and was the founding director of the National Maritime Museum in Auckland. He was the instigator and overseer of exhibition development, he established the ‘Grand Design,’ and was also a minor participant in the process. A high level of agreement was displayed between Wilson and James Belich in the interviews.

Margaret Belich: Has a professional background and a masters degree in arts administration. James Belich undertook the contract on the proviso that Margaret took the Producer role. Margaret was involved as translator and go-between. She moved between James Belich and Rose Young, and James Belich and the Museum generally, charged with translating ideas into three-dimensions. She worked closely with James Belich and also with Young.

Professor James Belich: Creator of the overall exhibition thesis, he articulated the narrative through conceiving the displays and developing the exhibition texts.²⁷ He was supported in his role as creative leader by the exhibition team generally, and specifically by the two other creative roles of designer and curator. He was challenged to transfer and adapt his academic history and research to the Museum context. He worked closely with Margaret Belich and the designer Kai Hawkins. He shared the role described by Margaret Hall in chapter one as “editor” with Young.

Kai Hawkins: Was contracted to create the overall design. He worked very closely with James Belich translating ideas into visuals, together creating the vision of

²⁷ Belich has a thesis that periodises New Zealand history into three-phases. The first phase he terms “progressive colonisation”. This ‘created the Pākehā people and marginalized the Maori people in less than half a century. There was nothing steady about this kind of progress, which was characterised by frenetic demographic and economic growth rates.... This system of explosive settlement and extraction began its collapse in the 1880s, and completed it by the 1900s. Meanwhile, an equally remarkable replacement system struggled to its feet. [Belich’s] label for this is “recolonisation”. This.... Made modern New Zealand an ideological and economic (though not necessarily a cultural and social) semi-colony of Britain and... it remained so to the 1960s.’ The demise of recolonisation ‘dates to the 1970s and constitutes the second great transition of our modern history. Decolonisation, 1970s-90s, brought economic diversification, greater independence in foreign policy and collective identity, and a great socio-demographic “coming out” of difference. It also brought slow economic growth, insecurity, trauma and challenge....’ See his *Paradise reformed: A history of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the year 2000* (Auckland: Allen Lane and Penguin Press, 2001), pp.11-12.

the displays. The closeness with which spatial design and exhibition concept must work together and complement each other means that they are effectively almost synonymous. Thus one of the key relationships in *City*'s development was that between James Belich and Kai Hawkins. Admiration expressed of Hawkins by James Belich and other team members suggests that this was a very fruitful relationship.

Rose Young: History curator, prior to coming to Auckland Museum in 1992 had been the history curator at the Waikato Museum and a concept developer at Te Papa. As curator, Young was responsible for objects deployed in exhibition, and also shared "editor" role with James Belich. Described by Margaret Belich as the "other historian" of the project, she developed the object-related story lines. Curatorial tasks also involved obtaining objects and processing them, as well as responding to James Belich's concept proposals and relating collection objects to these.

A set procedure was maintained for each interview.²⁸ Once an interview date had been set, the questions that were to be covered in the interview were sent to the informant with an introductory cover letter outlining the project and its aims, and an explanation of the informant's rights (including to choose to not answer questions). The questions were designed to chart the progress of the exhibition development, to draw from each informant his or her understanding of the role performed, and to explore the challenges encountered during the process. As much as possible the informants were encouraged to indulge in self-directed monologues. The interview subjects recollected and reasoned through aspects of the development process from their point of view. Usefully, they also offered their impression of what other team-members' viewpoints had been, and how this had led to disagreement or alternatively made the process work smoothly. As interviewer, my role was to maintain focus by steering respondents back to answering the questions or into making fuller explanations. The timing of the interviews (three years out from the end of the development process) meant that responses were likely to be clouded by faulty memory.²⁹ In part, sending out a list of

²⁸ Interviews were conducted in accordance with the Massey University Human Ethics Committee guidelines and requirements, see <<http://www.massey.ac.nz/~muhec/index.html>> and other linked pages. Each interviewee signed an informed consent form and was offered the opportunity to control how the data they supplied was used and to edit their responses during the interview and in transcript form. Interview method was informed by: Martin Tolich and Carl Davidson, *Starting fieldwork: An introduction to qualitative research in New Zealand* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1999); Martin Tolich and Carl Davidson, eds., *Social science research in New Zealand: Many paths to understanding* (Auckland: Longman, 1999).

²⁹ Memory is infamous for its unreliability and contamination from other sources. Research on autobiography shows that recollection involves an unconscious gap filling between fragmentary memories, 'with inferences supplied by our expectations, biases, present needs, and desires.' See W.

questions prior to the interview allowed the informants to prepare, by beginning the remembering process before the interview. In the event however, two of the respondents (Wilson and James Belich) admitted to not having read the questions prior to the interview. In the case of Belich there were instances where he claimed to be unable to remember how certain events unfolded, although this may also have been an evasive ploy. Wilson on the other hand appeared to have no such lapses. The questions put to him, however, were less concerned with specific events or details, and more aimed at his approach and opinion. Margaret Belich and Rose Young by contrast were well prepared for their interviews, although still had some difficulties in recalling some details, such as names.

The issue of self-interest can bias interview data. The interview data was analysed to determine this bias in three ways. Firstly, by reading a respondent's data "against the grain" of its likely intentional bias, an attempt was made to establish the plausibility of the recollections and viewpoints.³⁰ A second strategy was to compare the viewpoints of informants with documentation such as meeting minutes or the responses of the other informants. This effectively set opposite biases against each other. Where accounts agreed the information could be considered valid.³¹ A third strategy was to assume there was a situational logic to behaviour. That is, given the context, the behaviour was what a notional rational agent would also have done in the same situation.³² This strategy was also utilised in the opposite direction to fill gaps in the evidence. By looking at behaviour and outcome, it was sometimes possible to infer what the context provoking an action was likely to have been.

Contextual data

In addition to contextual data gathered through the interviews, the literature relating to Auckland Museum comes from a variety of published and unpublished sources. Auckland Museum *Annual Reports* and other organisational documents along with anniversary essays, although uncritical of the institution, could be read "against the

Siebenschuh, "Cognitive processes and autobiographical acts", *Biography*, vol.12, no.2 (1989), p.143. Also Daniel Smith, "Autobiography and the historian: how a self-biography is created and its use as an historical source" (unpublished honours research essay, Canterbury University, 1999).

³⁰ Miles Fairburn, *Social history: Problems, strategies and methods* (Houndmills and London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), pp.177-89.

³¹ Termed 'triangulation' by Tollich and Davidson, op. cit., p.34.

³² Fairburn, op. cit., pp.81-3.

grain”³³ for information about organisational life. For the 1990s, the decade in focus, these were compared to articles and comments in the local and national newspapers.

A wider corpus of relevant national and international literature was also surveyed. This related to: social history in museums, material culture methodology, exhibition development, the museum as a context and influence on museum praxis, urban history, city history exhibitions, and museum scholarship. Because little has been written about history in New Zealand museums the international literature is particularly valuable. The limited scope of a master’s project meant that a greater deal of primary research could not be undertaken to develop local comparative cases. As summarised in chapter one, this literature provides a comparative baseline for the developments and outcomes at Auckland Museum.

Limitations

There are four main limitations. One limitation to this thesis is that it is based on the primary evidence of a single case, which can hardly be defended as a reasonable sample upon which to base any reliable generalisations. The case study, for example, could be an exceptional case, rather than the norm. I have attempted to mitigate this limitation by employing comparisons drawn from secondary literature. A second limitation is that the analysis focuses on how collection objects are deployed in the exhibition even though the exhibition narrative is text driven. The reasoning behind this is that the exhibition was intended to be collections rich, and thus concentration on how objects were deployed in the exhibition reveals attitudes, both implicit and explicit, towards the collection and museum history practice. The collecting and interpreting of material culture and not other media is after all what distinguishes history in the museum from other forms of history practice.³⁴ A third limitation is that no surveys have been conducted by Auckland Museum that have a focus upon visitors’ reactions to *City*. Certainly conducting such research was beyond the scope of this thesis. This sort of visitor research practice is consistent with critical museology, and that it has not been undertaken as part of the Museum’s internal review processes is suggestive of a traditional form curatorial practice consistent with this thesis’ argument. Finally, it should also be noted that although agencies such as the Historic Places Trust and a

³³ Fairburn, op. cit., pp.81-3.

³⁴ Gaynor Kavanagh, “Collecting from the era of memory, myth and delusion”, in, Simon Knell, ed., *Museums and the future of collecting* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1999), p.79.

number of practitioners outside of the museum interpret the built environment as a material culture source of Pākehā history, this is not a focus in this thesis and therefore has not been considered in the discussion.

Outline

Scientific museums and their ancestors have collected and displayed objects of the natural world and of human creation as a way of comprehending the world, and a source of knowledge, since the Renaissance. Following Foucault, Macdonald notes that in the pursuit of science through collecting, ‘*vision* became prioritised over the other senses.’³⁵ Although approaches to gathering knowledge change from one episteme to the next, vision has remained the dominant sense in the museum.³⁶ As already noted however, academic history has tended to interpret documents, rather than objects. It pursues an abstracted interpretation of the past.

Chapter one outlines how history in the museum is visual and solid, a counterpoint to text based history. It reviews the potential of objects as historical evidence, a category of traces of the past that academic historians in New Zealand are largely unacquainted with. This review outlines what might be considered as contemporary critical museological practice with regard to museum history.

Objects, or material culture, are socially meaningful and as the basis of museum history affect its practice. The building of museum history collections is a form of social memory making. What is collected, affects what can be shown, and how. Museums add their own meaning to the material culture they collect. Through exhibitions, museums attempt to communicate particular object meanings over other possible meanings by capturing and directing visitors’ attention. In creating exhibitions, museums are creating a very public form of history that visitors are likely to take as unchallengeable truth (“seeing is believing”). Museums thus remain implicated in politics, and through selection and display can support or confront accepted knowledge. The processes of translating ideas into exhibitions complicate the communication of a clear message. Critical museological practice is therefore required.

Chapter one overviews approaches to display, and reviews the basic processes of exhibition development. Traditionally, the curator who developed the collections and

³⁵ Macdonald, op. cit., p.7. Tony Bennett also makes this point in his essay, “The exhibitionary complex”, op. cit.

³⁶ Macdonald, ibid. See also, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the shaping of knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

interpreted them for the public has played the role of museum historian. However, as museum history practice has become more aware of the need for context, it has moved closer to the history practised in academia. Consequently some academically trained historians have become active in museums as advisors and as curators. Museum organisations may welcome this advent as a way to improve the scholarly standing of their output. This is not a straightforward transition however, because the visual nature of museums and the demands of team activity in creating exhibitions are alien to academic practice. Nevertheless, there is great potential for forging more rigorous history for a lay audience through the partnership of academia and museums. The chapter ends with a look at one subject area of crossover between the academy and museum, city history.

While the first chapter provides the scope of museum history, the second analyses the shaping effect of the Auckland Museum context and the process of exhibition development there. It begins with the history of the History Collection, passively collected, with a colonial focus, and by default a Pākehā conception. It proceeds with the Museum's context of change physically, as an organisation, and in outlook under the new directorship in the 1990s. However, in spite of the emphasis on change, it was elements of the "old" Museum that were allowed to dictate the overall redesign of the galleries, thus tradition persisted in the revitalised Museum. The aim for the history gallery was to create an object-rich exhibition with scholarly clout. A document-trained academic historian was hired as Creative Director for developing the concept in this object-orientated context. The rendering of his concepts into an exhibition was therefore to be reliant upon the development process. Through a process of review and negotiation a concept was chosen for development. This had the hallmarks of rigorous academic history, however there was also perhaps an undertone of the conventional Pākehā orientation to the Museum's view of history. Nevertheless, the team processed the concept into an exhibition successfully connecting objects with ideas. The threat of running over-budget was met by rationalising the necessary from the dispensable, and the exhibition was completed on time.

The third chapter analyses the shaping effect that the politics of the process of development have on the exhibition, and *City* as a museum history communication. Translating an exhibition from a concept on paper into three dimensions involved negotiating constraints, and accepting compromises and changes, both positive and negative. The central challenge in developing *City* was spatial, in estimating how much

would fit into the gallery, in learning to communicate historical concepts in three-dimensions as opposed to the two of text, and in articulating the displays and organising them in the displays in gallery space. The chapter then proceeds to analyse the development's outcome. The exhibition narrative is analysed and the weaknesses of celebration and homogenisation are identified. The latter is then analysed to locate how this failing came about. This is followed by an examination that argues objects were deployed statically in the exhibition narrative and as illustrations to the text. The use and abuse of nostalgia in the exhibition is then argued as reinforcing the homogenising tendencies of the overall narrative, before noting the liberties taken with mixing truth and fiction. Finally, *City* is compared to the demands of the Auckland Museum Act, suggesting that although "knowledge" can claim to have been served, the question of whether the exhibition serves the people of Auckland remains.

In the conclusion the exhibition is reviewed as scholarship. It is found to meet the criteria but not necessarily to exceed them. I then summarise why this was. The argument is that the process, derived from the Museum context, together with the politics of the process, asserted a strong influence over the outcome of the exhibition. Their influence is a conservative force, subtracting from the authorial power of the Creative Producer and the exhibition team's agency. *City* tends towards the orthodox, and while updating, it does not advance the conception of history at Auckland Museum. The major fault of the project was that it did not critically engage in the collection or the concept of history in the Museum.

CHAPTER ONE

Seeing is believing: History and museums

...material culture is capable of touching a raw nerve of passionate interest; as humans we are able to feel strongly and bitterly about the objects around us and the symbolic meanings which they are capable of carrying.³⁷

Introduction

In the phrase “seeing is believing”, to see is not only to use sight, it is to apprehend an object’s presence in its three-dimensionality with all of one’s senses, through touch, taste, sound and smell as well as sight. It is this sense of “seeing” that a museum offers. Where museum visitors are prevented from actually utilising all five senses, they are none the less assured that what they see is there, and is real. In this everyday sense museum objects have credibility, a sense of truth in their concreteness, their tangibility. Museum objects can be witnessed, experienced as a “body” in a space, by another body. The same sense of reality is not quite so easily attributed to words, written or uttered, from one unobservable mind to another, remaining as they do an abstraction.

To discuss history in the museum it is necessary to discuss the museum objects as evidence, collected, interpreted and displayed. This chapter reviews the potential of material culture as a source in social history. It is also an overview of contemporary critical practice with its emphasis on reflexive museology. The concentration on objects in museum history affects its practice at a number of levels. At the practical level, for example, the commitment to show collections, and communicate history with them through their exhibition, means engaging in a very complex exercise of translating ideas into three dimensions. At the implicit level, the history of objects and the collections they are in, the acts of selection and interpretation, involve museums in the politics of representation. The theme of who is empowered or disempowered by these actions is

³⁷ Susan Pearce, “Foreword: words and things”, in, Susan Pearce ed., *Experiencing material culture in the Western World* (London and Washington: Leicester University Press, 1997), p.2.

recurrent in the discussion. Beginning with the object, the discussion considers material culture as evidence; it then proceeds to examine how objects enter museum collections and become museum objects. In the third section of this chapter, exhibitions are considered as communications between museum and visitor. In creating exhibitions museums privilege some meanings over other possible meanings; how these are gathered and presented reveals a museum's attitudes to the material culture, "knowledge", and its role in its dissemination. Finally, the roles of academic historians in museums and curatorship are examined, ending with types of City History, from the academic, to printed public history, to museum exhibition.

Material culture as evidence: Definition, qualities, problems and methodologies

Working Definition

Susan Pearce describes the material world as 'the world outside each individual, [it] may be defined as including the whole of humankind's physical environment, embracing the landscape, the air which is manipulated by flesh into song and speech, the animals and plants off which humans live and the prepared meals which come from them, our own bodies and those of other human beings.'³⁸ Material culture is the result, either explicitly or implicitly of human agency acting upon the material world. Schlereth suggests the following working definition of material culture: 'material culture is that segment of humankind's biosocial environment that has been purposely shaped by people according to culturally dictated plans.'³⁹ This definition is sufficiently wide to include the sphere of intentional human activity, so that acting upon the landscape such as ploughing a field, the scientific breeding of livestock, a cut of meat, and the range of moveable and immovable objects all fit within its boundaries.⁴⁰ Although this broad definition should not be lost from sight, for the purpose of considering material culture in museum collections a narrower definition will be sufficient. Following Pearce, I define material culture as 'the material world we usually

³⁸ Susan Pearce, *On collecting: An investigation into collecting in the European tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p.13.

³⁹ Thomas Schlereth, "Material culture and cultural research", in, Thomas Schlereth ed., *Material culture: A research guide* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), p.5

⁴⁰ Ibid. Schlereth cites, James Deetz, *In small things forgotten: The archaeology of North American life* (New York: Anchor Press, 1977), pp.24-5.

refer to when we talk of accumulating; that is the area of discrete materials, for which ‘object’ or ‘thing’ or ‘piece’ is our usual word, meaning an item which can, perhaps with some difficulty, be lifted up from its immediate surroundings and moved somewhere else.’⁴¹

Although material culture is one of the most bountiful of traces surviving from the past, little attention has been paid to it as a category of evidence in New Zealand historiography. Jock Phillips has acknowledged that ‘the gaps in the history of material culture are large. We know so little about our ways of life’.⁴² It is therefore worthwhile to review why and how material culture evidence has been approached by practitioners elsewhere.

Qualities and problems

The American scholar Thomas Schlereth has been a proponent of material culture studies as an approach to social history. He has summarised five qualities that recommend it as a category of evidence and that are not present in documentary evidence. These characteristics are: evidential precedence; temporal tenacity; three-dimensionality; wider representativeness; affective understanding. I will examine these in turn.

Evidential precedence refers to material culture as ‘humankind’s oldest legacy of cultural expression.’⁴³ The creation of material culture predates writing (by some fifty thousand years) and therefore extends the knowledge of humanity well beyond that which written accounts allow. The types of objects that humans have been able to produce have been used to describe broad stages of human history from the Palaeolithic Period to the Information Age. From this point of view progress is described by the human ability to fashion things, and the range of materials and processes that human expertise includes.

Temporal tenacity refers to the tangibility of material culture as a ‘form of a past time persisting in the present’ and also to the durability (not indestructibility) of much material culture. This, Schlereth suggests, allows the practitioner to research a ‘much wider pattern of cultural change than if only written records are consulted.’⁴⁴ While this

⁴¹ Pearce, *op. cit.*, p.14.

⁴² Jock Phillips, “Of verandahs” *op. cit.*, p.132

⁴³ Schlereth, “Material culture and cultural research,” *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.9.

is applicable to the types of objects that museums collect, temporal tenacity can be overstated. How a culture presents its cuisine, for example is a class of material culture that is not inherently durable. The loss of the non-durable is an effective bias inherent in the material culture record.

For Schlereth, in objects, ‘past experience is made solid’. Objects as material culture evidence have ‘the power to stabilise experience of the past. To the historical researcher, they are in his time; and yet they are also still there in another time – that is, in their time.’⁴⁵ Schlereth here seems to suggest that an object exists as evidence through a division in time. It is in the present, but represents the past as a piece of it, an anachronistic quality. It is also possible however, to conceive time’s continuity in an object, a holistic approach, whereby an object’s meaning relates to the length of its existence, inclusive of the present.

Schlereth argues that the surviving material culture provides a record of a broader cross section of society, and might mitigate the bias towards elites that is often present in the written data.⁴⁶ Because only a small percentage of the world’s population has ever been literate, and a smaller percentage still has left written records of their existence behind, material culture is seen to afford wider representativeness in comparison to written or statistical data. David Lowenthal notes that the ‘artefactual route to the past’ has the power to ‘make historical knowledge more populist, pluralistic, and public.’⁴⁷ Historical objects have attributes that help fulfil the promise of social history. As Lowenthal writes:

Tangible vestiges are ... more characteristic of everyday life...[and] intentional preservation accounts for only a small fraction of what survives. In resurrecting the way of life of the millions who have left no archival trace, artefacts partly redress the bias of written sources⁴⁸

Thus historical objects are a class of evidence for history from below. Notwithstanding, museum collections are often unrepresentative of the broad range of society.⁴⁹ The material culture of poorer classes is less likely to survive intact, for example, from exhaustion through extensive use out of economic necessity. As institutions aligned to

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.10.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp.11-12.

⁴⁷ David Lowenthal, *The past is a foreign country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.244.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Schlereth, “Material culture and cultural research”, p.14.

social elites, museum collections can also show the same biases as written historical data.

The three-dimensionality of material culture affords a non-verbal mode of knowing through experience of an object via the senses.⁵⁰ An object is physically approachable, unlike the abstract past of events recorded in text; mass and scale are directly observable. An object can be witnessed. This three-dimensional quality of material culture relates closely to Schlereth's final quality, affective understanding. Material culture evidence, it has been suggested, enables contact with the past intellectually and physically. There is a 'tendency for verbal evidence [oral and textual] to take on an "averaging-out" quality that reduces human experience (past and present) to overly abstract formulas and symbols. One result of the generality of verbal symbols such as words is that two people can be in verbal agreement without meaning the same thing.'⁵¹ Words can convey precise meaning, but this is a consequence of performance, and not an inherent property of words. Material culture, it is argued, embodies as well as conveys meaning. For Lowenthal this is the virtue of the 'artefactual route to the past'. He sees a 'relative lack of intentional bias' inherent in the material record that means 'a tangible relic seems *ipso facto* real.'⁵² Unlike textual evidence that has already been filtered through one mind, object evidence exists un-decanted and directly available to our senses. However, the meaning of an object is not necessarily static. In different contexts the same object may take on different meanings.

Thus material culture is altogether a different kind of evidence to textual sources; it is a record of the past that can be seen, touched and weighed. Schlereth, however, also lists five standard problems with using material culture as evidence in cultural explanation. These are: fecklessness of data survival; difficulty of access and verification; exaggeration of human efficacy; penchant toward progressive determinism; and proclivity for synchronic interpretation. I will now examine each of these in turn.

The fecklessness of data survival, refers to the bias in the material culture record brought about by that which does not survive. As Schlereth writes: 'For all the great cache of objects in our museum storehouses, we have little quantitative sense of what has been lost.'⁵³ If the extent of material culture present in any given historical context is not known, the fraction that is extant cannot be reliably estimated to be a

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.11.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.13.

⁵² Lowenthal, op. cit., p.244.

⁵³ Schlereth, "Material culture and cultural research", p.14.

representative sample. In addition there may also be gender, class or ethnic biases represented in surviving artefacts. In these cases documentary records such as probate inventories, auction ledgers, wills and other inventories may come to the rescue.⁵⁴ Schlereth cautions that we must ‘continually recognise that historical explanations are based only on surviving data, certainly not all that once was.’⁵⁵ Selection by time or through human action (collecting) limits the survival of material culture.

The standard problem of difficulty of access and verification refers to the three-dimensionality of objects. Unlike textual records that can be transcribed, copied, and summarised, object data cannot easily be made ‘widely available to other scholars for further interpretation and verification.’ Collecting disperses objects into institutional and private hands, and Schlereth writes, ‘even within museums they are often inadequately catalogued, stored off site, and hard to locate for systematic study.’⁵⁶ The increasing use of computer databases uniting object information and images, and their publishing on the World Wide Web, may eventually help to mitigate this. However if, as Schlereth seems to suggest, the importance of material culture evidence is that it can be witnessed, then researchers will in preference visit the objects of their study.

The standard problem of exaggeration of human efficacy arises from the sort of object experience described through the quality of affective understanding. There is a danger that the object may seduce the researcher into overstating the agency of its creator(s). ‘The existence of things still tangibly present centuries after their actual making can often oblige the researcher to overemphasise the self-defining or self-assertive activities of their original makers.’⁵⁷ Schlereth suggests this is often a problem in museums where the display of objects promotes a view of history as a story of achievement by neglecting the downsides of human life.⁵⁸ This is enhanced by the fecklessness of data survival biasing elites. Recourse to the documentary and statistical data (for example diaries and mortality statistics) can provide a balance, but there is also the need for ‘analyses of material culture pathology so that we might know more about what things, in various historical periods, did not work, that consistently broke down or were quickly junked in favour of other products.’⁵⁹ In the absence of this, Schlereth

⁵⁴ Schlereth, “Social history scholarship and material culture research”, in Schlereth, ed., *Material culture: A research guide*, op. cit., p.164.

⁵⁵ Schlereth, “Material culture and cultural research”, p.14.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.15.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

notes that American material cultural history has tended to tell the story of history's winners. This concentration upon material success leads to the standard problem of a penchant toward progressive determinism in material culture studies and museum exhibitions. This occurs, for example, in exhibitions of technology, where technological change is depicted as improvement but no exploration of the social impact is made. For both standard problems, a 'greater appreciation of history's losers (people and products) might provide a valuable corrective.'⁶⁰

The final standard problem is the proclivity for synchronic interpretation. By synchronic, Schlereth means a 'descriptive study of objects without reference to time duration or cultural change.' Synchronic analysis, for example, in attempting to solve problems regarding form or design (in an art history or decorative arts based approach), can freeze objects into a past moment of the creator's choices. By this definition, the antonym would be a diachronic analysis, a 'comparative study of objects as historical data'.⁶¹ This acknowledges object data as both effects and causes in history.

As noted above, an object can be related to time as representing both a rupture between the present and a past context, and a continuity. Didier Maleuvre argues that museums have the effect of exaggerating historical distance because in the museum an object cannot be experienced in the habitual terms of its functionality. The object, he argues, becomes an image of itself. As Maleuvre explains:

In a collection of clocks, for instance, the actual clock is taken over by its image, its "clockness" as an ideal appearance. It is no longer meant to tell the time but simply to look like itself. The image-being of the collected object marks off the emergence of history: the object embodies a piece of immobilized time that hangs over the present and never matches it entirely.

[....]

That the collected clock or, say, the snow shovel in the gallery looks like itself seems to mean that it loses regard for me, that is, for the uses that I might make of it. It seems the object can exist as such only at my expense, that is, if I give up my prerogative as a subject (to grab it and shovel snow with it, for instance). It becomes a disused object or an object out of work.... To be an image is to resign from the present, phenomenologically but also socially.... To look like oneself, to

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.17.

be an image, is to withdraw into history. And history is where the subject cannot enter...⁶²

In Maleuvre's first example, the time on the dial of a stopped clock is not correct twice a day, but instead refers to the moment that its spring finished unwinding. Its momentary alignment with present time is coincidental rather than correct. Rather than being an instrument for telling time, the object exists simply as how the clock looks. The same can be said for the snow shovel. It embodies the potential of being used for shovelling snow, and this is part of its past, but this function is no longer allowed to be activated. Its relationship to the subject (that is a cultural agent) is thus frustrated. In the museum, Maleuvre argues, an object's functionality must become inactive, a referent rather than an actuality. By being transformed by the museum context into a signifier of a past functionality, that past is severed from the present rather than being connected by the continuum of time.

However, Maleuvre's observation does not account for cultures where an object's functionality may be revived or related to functionally continually through time even though it is in a museum. Recent examples of object repatriation reveal ongoing relationships with objects that are similar to person-to-person relationships. For example, Paul Tapsell's discussions regarding the Māori taonga (treasures), the cloak Kahumamae o Pareraututu⁶³ and the carving Pukaki,⁶⁴ reveal that objects can have "personal" histories and relationships, and retain a cultural functionality such as to ameliorate mourning. To do this, the object leaves the museum to take part in the rites, and returns to the museum on their cessation. In this way some taonga are both museum object and active cultural object.⁶⁵

Maleuvre's observation about the museum effect upon an object is as much about the limits of interpretation as the effect of the museum context. If the culture that made and used an object, and the object's existence as an instrument actively used in a

⁶² Didier Maleuvre, *Museum memories: History, technology, art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p.70.

⁶³ Paul Tapsell, "The flight of Pareraututu: An investigation of taonga from a tribal perspective", *Journal of Polynesian Society*, vol.106, no.4 (1997), pp.323-37

⁶⁴ Paul Tapsell, 'Taonga: A tribal response to museums' (unpublished PhD thesis (museum ethnography), Oxford University, 1998).

⁶⁵ Tapsell writes: 'The concept of taonga is one of Maori society's central threads of identity. Since entering museums in the nineteenth century, taonga have also become woven into Western world consciousness. Pukaki's comet-like return home released to his descendants a whole new genealogically-ordered understanding of the past. Is this not what museums should also be all about? Bringing to life history in a manner which reflects reality? The primary goal of taonga is also to represent the past. But ironically taonga, the time capsules of Maori society have, until recently, been captured by museums and frozen mid-trajectory, preventing proper release of the customary values they represent.' *Ibid.*, p.268.

culture are not part of the object's analysis, interpretation and display, then the culture becomes a passive reflection.⁶⁶ Without a sense of the object's movement through time (a diachronic analysis) the originating cultural context is reflected statically, frozen in the past. The aim of studying material culture evidence, as Schlereth reminds us, is to *reveal* the culture. Material culture after all, is not only a reflection of, but is, human behaviour. The study of objects therefore should not be an end unto itself; otherwise the researcher sinks into the practice of connoisseurship or antiquarianism, without any approach to historical explanation. However, Schlereth writes, 'it would be hubris indeed to assume that we can acquire access to a culture's behavioural and belief systems simply because ample objects have survived.... our understanding of material culture will always be mere approximation, a conjecture based at best on fragmentary evidence.'⁶⁷ In this respect utilising material culture in historical research conforms to all other forms of historical explanation. However, where possible, by involving members of the originating culture in the object's interpretation, researchers will be able to approach an understanding of the object's active contextual meanings.

Methodological paradigms

Material culture evidence can be interrogated as a source of new knowledge; it can be utilised in a supporting or supplementary role with documentary evidence, or it can be used to critique established interpretations.⁶⁸ The principal task in studying material culture is to attempt to find what can be known about recent or distant past cultures through the things they have created. It is an epistemological study. However, there is no orthodox methodology with which to approach this task.⁶⁹ Rather, methodology (as with the study of documentary data) depends on a range of variables such as the type of questions asked, the type of contextual information available, the disciplinary background of the researcher, and the particular theoretical approach she supports. Following Schlereth and Pearce, I summarise the various methodological paradigms as the functionalist approach, the cultural reconstructionist approach, the national character approach, the object biography approach, the structuralist approach, the behaviouralistic

⁶⁶ James Gibb and Karen Davis, "History exhibits and theories of material culture", *Journal of American culture*, vol. 12, no. 2 (Summer 1989), pp. 27-33.

⁶⁷ Schlereth, "Material culture and cultural research", p.23.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.20-22.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.7.

paradigm and its corollary performance theory. By analysing these categories I will tease out the various ways practitioners have found material culture meaningful as evidence about social practice. The discussion focuses first on those approaches that are most interested in the object's tangible or concrete qualities, and proceeds towards approaches that are most interested in the object's abstract meanings.

Firstly, as pieces of the natural physical world transformed through social processes, objects can be studied from a functional perspective 'to show how material culture operates synchronically in society.'⁷⁰ In this respect, writes Schlereth, the functionalist paradigm conceives material culture as:

primarily a means of adapting to environment, with technology as the primary adaptive mechanism. The utility of artefacts within the context of a technological system... provides the key to understanding transmission and adaptation in this approach to material culture research. With only a secondary concern for the origins of artefacts, the functionalists are primarily interested in the ramifications of material culture; they are intrigued with process, change, adaptation, and the cultural impact of objects.⁷¹

That is, functionalist practitioners attempt to know how an object came to be produced and how it functioned in a socio-cultural context; how it is 'a reflection of the rationality and practicality of the participants in the culture.'⁷² Schlereth observes that history in scientific museums often has a strong functionalist orientation. However, in the deployment of this paradigm, museums tend to focus on demonstrating the working object, and pay less attention to how it functioned in social, cultural or political contexts.⁷³

Working within the functionalist paradigm, Robert Friedel argues that the substance of an object, that by which its physical presence can be experienced, is both the most basic and the most overlooked aspect of its meaning.⁷⁴ Reasoning based on an object's material realities can identify various threads of pre-production decision-making influenced by environmental as well as broadly social and cultural

⁷⁰ Susan Pearce, *On collecting*, p.15.

⁷¹ Schlereth, "Social history scholarship and material culture research", op. cit., p.170.

⁷² Ibid., p.171.

⁷³ Thomas Schlereth, "History museums and material culture", in, Schlereth, Thomas *Cultural history and material culture: Everyday life, landscapes, museums* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1992), p.397. [Originally published in Leon and Rosenzweig (eds), *History museums in the United States: A Critical appraisal* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), pp.294-320.]

⁷⁴ Robert Friedel, "Some matters of substance", in, Steven Luber and W. David Kingery, eds., *History from things: Essays on material culture* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), p.42.

phenomena.⁷⁵ These are the determinants of manufacture. Jules Prown argues that objects can reveal the mind(s) that were associated with them. He writes that the ‘deep structural meanings of artefacts can be sprung loose by.... analysing them as fictions, specifically as artistic fictions.... Analytically it is useful to treat artefacts as works of art.’⁷⁶ As a practitioner, Prown concentrates on design and decoration to reveal cultural meaning. Such an approach reflects upon the mind of the object’s creator as a cultural agent.

This interest in cognitive processes is closely related to the aims of experimental archaeologists.⁷⁷ When information about motives or processes is not available through oral history or documentation, researchers have attempted to find answers through experimentation. By recreating a set of historical conditions, not unlike a scientist in a laboratory, they attempt to test hypotheses about past processes, particularly technical or agrarian production, to reveal aspects of past cultural life. By concentrating too narrowly upon creators, the functionalist approach is prone to the standard problem of exaggerating human efficacy. Schlereth observes that functionalist orientated exhibitions often promote history as a story of success and achievement, thus suffering from the standard problem of progressive determinism.

Cultural reconstructionists, using ‘patient empirical research’ attempt to resurrect the physical past as closely as possible. ‘Their imperative is no less than to document, study, and communicate as holistic a view of the past as is possible. In this attempt at reconstructing a total sense of the past, artefacts are seen as vital building blocks.’⁷⁸ In America most of this work has been focused upon ‘preindustrial craft villages, rural agrarian communities, and military garrisons’ the large proportion of which have been utopian ventures. ‘Although cultural reconstructionists may seem more intent on historic preservation than historical analysis, their approach is strongly research-orientated.... They examine extensive documentary, statistical, and especially archaeological evidence before articulating an interpretive framework.’⁷⁹ However these

⁷⁵ Ibid. For instance, an object’s function will mean some materials are more appropriate than others, and what raw material is used will depend on what is naturally available within the environment or through trade, and the relative costs involved (including time) in procuring the raw material will also factor. The style of the object will include its function, ergonomics (or their absence), and the (cultural) expectations of how a type of thing should look.

⁷⁶ Jules Prown, “The truth of material culture: History of fiction?” in, Lubar and Kingery, eds., op. cit. p.6.

⁷⁷ Schlereth, “Social history scholarship and material culture research”, p.171.

⁷⁸ Schlereth, “History museums and material culture”, p.400.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.401.

ventures are highly static (for example the Plimoth Plantation is set in the year 1627) and reinforce the idea that technological improvement equates to improved standards of living, thereby also suffering from the problem of progressive determinism.

Also prone to the fallacy of progressive determinism is the national character approach. In this approach material culture is used to explain the collective ethos, usually of a nation or city, which is cast as the protagonist in a romantic historical narrative, overcoming adversity to a celebrated outcome. Through this the aim is to demonstrate a distinctive collective identity. However, Schlereth notes that a 'national character emphasis in a history museum exhibition need not be uncritical or insensitive to changes that were unsuccessful or to points of view that did not prevail.'⁸⁰ He explains further:

Even a minor revision of a traditional national character exhibition can promote more sophisticated understanding of nationhood and a more perceptive understanding of the national past. When an exhibition is different in tone, subject matter, or point of view from what they expect, visitors will be surprised and take notice.⁸¹

The national character approach can be a useful approach to interpreting the past through exhibitions. The approach becomes most effective when the narrative is given more texture by including the unexpected, when the positive is balanced with negative experiences, and revisions and alternatives of the official versions of civic or national success stories are presented. The national character approach is a diachronic approach to the collective past, offering a broad context for the material culture and the peoples associated with it.

At a more detailed level, object biographies show a diachronic interest in the cultural functions of individual objects. Pearce writes that 'objects may be studied... as things to which both individuals and societies attach differing moral and economic values as a result of their historical experience, both personal and communal.'⁸² Appadurai writes that 'from a methodological point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human social context.'⁸³ This approach has been used in the study of material culture as commodities. Commodities are objects that are in a certain

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.396.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Pearce, p.16.

⁸³ Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the politics of value", in Arjun Appadurai (ed.) *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.5.

situation (context) rather than a type of thing. “Commodity-hood” is a phase of an object’s social life rather than a state of being.⁸⁴ From a biographical approach, an object may be seen as having a career with different socially constructed meanings for the different phases of its “life”, where the commodity phase is but one of many possibilities.⁸⁵ An object becomes associated with an economic value for the purposes of exchange. Appadurai’s concept of value in exchange is explained in his term *regimes of value*, ‘which does not imply that every act of commodity exchange presupposes a complete cultural sharing of assumptions, but rather that the degree of value coherence may be highly variable from situation to situation,’ and that this applies intra- and inter-culturally. ‘A regime of value... is consistent with both very high and very low sharing of standards by the parties to a particular commodity exchange.’⁸⁶ Either way however, the attribution of value to the object is a social action because two or more cultural agents perform it, and as a social action it has the potential to reveal power relationships to the analyst.

Groups may resort to controlling the consumption of commodities (or other objects) as a strategy for protecting their status. Thus sumptuary laws in pre-modern societies or the laws of fashion in modern societies privilege certain groups’ access to certain objects that are perceived as displaying status. At the same time agents may successfully divert or subvert the conventions thus raising their status and contesting another’s.⁸⁷ While the practices and laws of a society reveal its mechanics, the meanings of these structures are in the realm of discourse.

A structuralist approach to material culture considers the rhetorical nature of objects. In a structuralist approach objects are construed as symbols that signify meaningful messages for cultural agents. Analysts treat ‘object sets as texts, to be interpreted by applying to material culture concepts developed by semiologists and structuralists for the analysis of language.’⁸⁸ Appadurai views consumption as a focus

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.13.

⁸⁵ The biographical approach is developed in Igor Kopytoff’s essay, “The cultural biography of things: commoditisation as process”, in, Appadurai, ed., op. cit., pp.64-91.

⁸⁶ Appadurai, op. cit., p.15.

⁸⁷ This refers to Appadurai’s discussion of *tournaments of value*. There are situations where social status is directly tied to the setting of value as played out in tournaments of value. Participation in these tournaments is likely to be a privilege (for example an art auction) but they may have actual social outcomes. These are events that are ‘removed in some culturally well-defined way from the routines of economic life.’ They are status-defining contests, where ‘strategic skill is culturally measured by the success with which actors attempt diversions or subversions of culturally conventionalised paths for the flow of things.’ Op. cit. pp.16-29 (quote p.21).

⁸⁸ Pearce, p.15. Also Schlereth, “Social history scholarship and material culture research”, pp.161-62.

for sending and receiving social messages. This is particularly apparent with the consumption of luxury goods ‘whose principal use is *rhetorical* and *social*, goods that are simply incarnated signs.’ Appadurai lists five attributes, some or all of which are displayed by luxuries:

(1) restriction, either by price or law to the elites; (2) complexity of acquisition, which may or may not be a function of real “scarcity”; (3) semiotic virtuosity, that is, the capacity to signal fairly complex social messages (as do pepper in cuisine, silk in dress, jewels in adornment, and relics in worship); (4) specialized knowledge as a prerequisite for their “appropriate” consumption, that is, regulation by fashion; and (5) a high degree of linkage of their consumption to body, person, and personality.’⁸⁹

The major limitation of these observations is that the object itself is treated as a semiotic void. The object behaves as a carrier of meaning, not meaning of itself, thus ignoring the possibility of meaning generated through interaction with the object. The object’s ability to convey meaning through its own inherent qualities – the “concrete sign” – often plays a passive role in analysis. Meaning ‘tends to be projected from the knowing subject.’⁹⁰ The contention here is that meaning also flows between the human subject and object. The practice of the structuralist approach has also been criticised as being limited to relatively static cultural settings or synchronic analysis.⁹¹

The behaviouralistic paradigm, sharing a kinship with a traditional art history perspective of the artist, tends to focus on individual creators of objects. The individual maker of an object is seen to personify a novel complex of skills stressing human creativity but defying precise categorization into environmental, regional, or historical divisions.⁹² A corollary approach is called performance theory. ‘Advocates of this approach... are intrigued by the many unexplored interconnections between material and mind, and they apply “performance” or “phenomenological” mode of analysis to artefactual matter.’⁹³ Oral testimonies are a feature of researching in the behaviouralistic paradigm and in performance theory.

The performance theory approach is observable in the description by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton of the “economics” of attention (or psychic

⁸⁹ Appadurai, op. cit., p.38.

⁹⁰ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The meaning of things: Domestic symbols and the self*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.43.

⁹¹ Schlereth, “Social history scholarship and material culture research”, p.162.

⁹² Ibid., pp.173-74.

⁹³ Ibid., p.175.

energy).⁹⁴ They argue that through the allocation of attention, that is, by focusing on an activity, ‘ordered patterns of information and action are created.’⁹⁵ Attention is a finite resource. The human brain can only be focused on a few bits of information at any one time. ‘Consequently, there are a limited number of things we can *do*... ways we can *be*.’⁹⁶ Because (lived) experience is diachronic, making one choice precludes the option of experiencing others. Thus spending time creating an object means the fabricator is unable to allocate attention to other thoughts or actions. Attention is “spent”. If attention expended is plotted on one axis and time on the other, then the curve described on the plane between is an individual’s life experience. Thus through any act of attention, part of the agent’s lifespan is invested in the focal object (including thought or action). This invested energy ‘can turn into a gain if as a result of the investment the agent achieves a goal... accomplishing a goal achieves positive feedback ... allowing the self to grow.’⁹⁷ This positive alignment produces psychic harmony. The object of attention gains meaning from the agent’s action, but the agent too, takes meaning from the focal object in the outcome of that action.

The antithesis of this is also possible, such as the Marxian model of worker alienation:

Because workers concentrate their attention on the job at hand, a product takes shape; however, workers do not “own” the product, having little choice in deciding what it will be, how it will be done, and to whom it will be sold and for how much. Moreover, the return workers get is always less than the value of the activity they have invested in the task, the difference being surplus value – the profit that the employer makes by appropriating part of the worker’s life energy.’⁹⁸

If an agent’s intentions are in conflict with her or his experience then over a lifetime they lose control over a substantial portion of their life energy, which can lead to inner conflict or psychic entropy. Objects as focal points of attention represent a part of the producer’s life span – effectively how much he or she aged in its production. This is one source of object value.

In the term “means of production” Marx highlights a second way in which interaction with objects shapes individual lives. The term describes the objects in every

⁹⁴ Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, pp.1-54, *passim*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p.5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*. pp.5-6 (original emphasis).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.8-9.

society that are necessary in procuring subsistence. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton read Marx's concept as follows:

to Marx, the free use of such things is an essential condition to a truly human life for two reasons: (1) because without it one cannot control one's material survival and (2) because it is through productive labour that people create their own being. [...] If the means of production are owned by someone else, the worker is related to the product of his or her labour as to an *alien* object. But because the product of labour is the objectified self – the outcome of... [attention] invested over time – the worker relates to his or her own self as an alien object.⁹⁹

Thus for Marx, meaning in life is derived from work, and if the processes and modes of work are beyond the subject's control, then alienation occurs. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton critique Marx's position as exaggerating the role of work in creating self-meaning. They suggest that strong and complex self-meanings may also be derived from leisure activities; it is not the action of production that counts, but immersion in the activity that discloses 'the self of the agent'.¹⁰⁰ In turn Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton are writing in reference to late twentieth-century United States where leisure time is available for creating self-meaning even to working classes, an opportunity not necessarily available in all milieus. Their point expands on Marx in that it is the feedback that the agent receives from all experience that is important to the state of consciousness.

Pearce writes that: 'Objects play their own part in perpetuating ideological structures and creating individual natures, even though the European tradition – with its perceived fundamental duality between active, understanding human subject and passive, inert object (meaning the entire material world) – has made us reluctant to admit this.'¹⁰¹ There is thus reciprocity in the meaning that occurs between human cultural agents and objects. Csikszentmihalyi suggests that objects are crucial to individuals. Consciousness, the *I* of the subject, is not a stable entity; it requires regulation and external order to keep randomness from invading the mind. He writes:

Without external props even our personal identity fades and goes out of focus; the self is a fragile construction of the mind. [...] Artefacts help objectify the self in at least three major ways. They do so first by demonstrating the owner's power, vital, erotic energy, and place in the social hierarchy. Second, objects reveal the

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.47.

¹⁰⁰ Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, op. cit., p.48.

¹⁰¹ Pearce, op. cit., p.18.

continuity of the self through time, by providing foci of involvement in the present, mementos and souvenirs of the past, and signposts of future goals. Third, objects give concrete evidence of one's place in a social network as symbols... of valued relationships. In these three ways things stabilise our sense of who we are; they give a permanent shape to our views of ourselves that otherwise would quickly dissolve in the flux of consciousness.¹⁰²

Objects offer stability to selfhood as projected and congealed identity, as a record of experience, and evidence of inter-subjectivity – the self-other relationships of self-definition. 'We need objects to magnify our power, enhance our beauty, and extend our memory into the future.'¹⁰³

There is a complex interaction between individual identity and cultural identity, each established and maintained by differentiation from the other but also mutually sustained through integration. Thus we can establish demarcations of self and other (not-self), and culture (us) and other (not-us). At the same time there is the integration of self and others of cultural membership. In each of these zones, objects symbolically help to secure these meanings.¹⁰⁴ This *differentiation*¹⁰⁵ / *integration*¹⁰⁶ dialectic is the principal dialectic of the discourse where individuals seek to find a balance to the tension of existing both as an individual, and as part of a social group,¹⁰⁷ and where social groups define themselves as a group apart. The reality for most individuals of course is that they are part of a number of social groupings that intersect in different ways.

Pearce writes that objects are not inert or passive. Objects have an important social role, 'they help us to give shape to our identities and purpose to our lives. We engage with them in a complex interactive behavioural dance in the course of which the weight of significance which they carry affects what we think and feel and how we

¹⁰² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Why we need things", in, Lubar and Kingery eds., op. cit., pp.22-3.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.28.

¹⁰⁴ Hilde Hein observes: 'Self-creation... entails the radical demarcation of self from other, and so their mutual alienation and objectification. ...all cultures define themselves relative to others, whose strangeness they enforce through every institution under their command. Thus language, science, religious ritual, family, and economic practice conspire to perpetuate the socially othering system that preserves a guarded selfhood and sustains the unstable ground that supports it.' Part of this process is the appropriation and dominion of objects, so that objectivity dwells in the ground between self and not-self. Hilde Hein, *The museum in transition: A philosophical perspective* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), p.53.

¹⁰⁵ That is, separate or apart from the group.

¹⁰⁶ A member or part of a group.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

act.¹⁰⁸ Recognition by museum practitioners of the range of meanings that objects have means that the study of material culture as evidence opens a wide range of possibilities for learning about social relations and ways of being. By remaining mindful of the objectives of research, and vigilant of the standard problems it involves, material culture is a category of evidence that historians may find valuable for increasing understanding about the fabric of the lives of those associated with it. Having reviewed the types of approaches utilised in material culture research, this discussion turns to overview how the “archives” of evidence have been created through the development of museum collections.

Museums and the collecting of material culture

Collections and collecting

Scientific museums in British colonies were a mechanism of colonisation. The work undertaken, whether in the collection and documentation of natural or human history, was fundamentally descriptive. For Peter Gibbons, the ‘colonial scientists saw their function as adding to the general scientific knowledge of the world by collecting species or specimens, and detailing their properties – science was organised at the centre which was Europe, and in the outpost of the empire the workers in the field supplied materials for the taxonomic and theoretical engines.’¹⁰⁹ Indigenous flora and fauna, geology and topography, and Māori material culture were collected, (re)named, identified and described in European terms. Museum collections were involved in the process by which Pākehā developed a cultural identity that Gibbons describes as the ‘primitive accumulation of cultural capital’.¹¹⁰ It was an overlaying of the European upon the indigenous. The *differences* of New Zealand to home (Britain) provided support to the nascent Pākehā identity, through opposition and cooption or *integration*.

The term material culture has been in use since at least the late nineteenth century.¹¹¹ Buchli describes material culture as a ‘super-category’ that materializes

¹⁰⁸ Pearce, op. cit., p.18.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Gibbons, “Non-fiction” in, Terry Sturm, ed., *The Oxford history of New Zealand literature in English*, 2d ed., (Auckland: Oxford University Press New Zealand, 1998), p. 53.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.62.

¹¹¹ Thomas Schlereth, “Material culture and cultural research”, op. cit. He cites: A. Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers, “On the evolution of culture”, in, J.L. Myers, ed., *The evolution of culture and other essays* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1906), p.23. Victor Buchli, “Introduction”, in Victor Buchli, ed., *The material culture reader*, (Oxford: Berg, 2002), p.2.

social being. Historically it is a term linked to the perceived degree of progress a people, separated by time or space from Victorian Europe, had achieved. It is also associated with European colonial expansion.¹¹² Collecting and display implicitly privileged the culture doing the collecting. European superiority was emphasised and set at the forefront of the process of historical development.¹¹³ The display of systematic collections of material culture also had a ‘reformist social agenda’. Buchli observes that exhibitions, such as the Great Exposition of 1851, ‘not only brought in “primitive” peoples within the universalising schema of European thought, but also brought in and edified the less enlightened in their own societies, serving as a vehicle of reform. Both “savage” and “proletariat” were meant to be enlightened, edified and stimulated towards social progress and social reform through these displays.’¹¹⁴

The political implications of the nineteenth century collection and deployment of indigenous material culture in museums have come under scrutiny. The power relationship that this practice defined placed the museum in an authoritarian and colonial role in relationship to producers of the material culture, and the visiting proletarians. In recent decades, the exhibition and display of ‘other’ cultures, regardless of the best intentions of curators has become the subject of controversy. Michael Rowlands writes that critiques of the ‘Enlightenment ideal of dispassionate knowledge coupled with rising cultural relativism have led to the undermining of Western or Eurocentric grand narratives about the cultural heritage of others.’¹¹⁵ In the New Zealand context, Chanel Clarke argues that the ‘overall intention of... museum activity was situate Māori culture in an idealised and romanticised past, which would in turn place Pākehā in a progressive future.’¹¹⁶ The meaning of the indigenous material culture to the indigenous people was less important than the meaning applied or implied by its collection and display.¹¹⁷ Fiona Cameron has examined the origins of the ethnography collection at Auckland Museum under the curator Thomas Cheeseman, and observes the particular identity of Māori that Cheeseman invented through his collecting practice.

¹¹² Buchli, *op. cit.*

¹¹³ Tony Bennett, “The exhibitionary complex”, *op. cit.*, p.97.

¹¹⁴ Buchli, *op. cit.*, p.6.

¹¹⁵ Michael Rowlands, “Heritage and cultural property”, in Buchli (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 112.

¹¹⁶ Chanel Clarke, “Mai i te po ki to ao marama, Māori and museums: Past, present and future aspirations” (unpublished MA thesis (history), University of Waikato, 1998), p.4.

¹¹⁷ The implications of this point are discussed in the Australian context by Steve Hemming, “The South Australian Museum’s Aboriginal Cultures Gallery: A political, historical and spatial reading?”, paper presented at the Museums Australia National Conference, Adelaide, 2002, <<http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/conf02/Papers/hemmings.html>> (17 April 2003).

She suggests that although this is no longer the knowledge that informs the Museum it is nevertheless its intellectual and political inheritance.¹¹⁸ The implication is therefore that the term material culture, its collection and display, is aligned to a particularly imperialistic form of Western or European ethnocentrism that potentially affects contemporary museum practice.

Collections, especially those that have come to us from earlier periods, are thus attracting attention as historical documents in their own rights.¹¹⁹ Understanding the collecting process and the meanings of collections has become an important aspect of critical museology. Pearce writes that collecting is an active process with ‘the deliberate intention to create a group of material perceived by its possessor to be lifted out of the common purposes of daily life and to be appropriate to carry a significant investment of thought and feeling, and so also of time, trouble and resource.’¹²⁰ She sees collections as ‘sets of objects, and, like all other sets of objects, they are an act of imagination, part corporate and part individual, a metaphor intended to create meanings which help to make individual identity and each individual’s view of the world.’¹²¹ By this, Pearce means that collections carry meanings that relate to the values and perceptions (implicit and explicit) of the collector. They are documents with a biographical significance. As with individual objects, collections are involved in reciprocal meaning with the collector as a cultural agent. Objects are taken from their social existence and placed in a collection where new meanings are applied, even if the old ones are also appealed to.

Museum collections are usually developed by combing large and small private collections gained either through gift or purchase. Initial selection is thus often not made by curators, even though curators such as Thomas Cheeseman or his contemporary at Canterbury Museum Julius von Haast performed the role of collector by defining collection parameters.¹²² Sustained proactive collecting has not occurred in any significant scale in most museums. It has been the values and perceptions of the contributing collectors that have developed the museum collections. However, in recent decades, through the implementation of collection policies, museums have become more discerning in what they accept and reject. Curators and the institutions have in this

¹¹⁸ Cameron, “Shaping Māori identities and histories”, op. cit.

¹¹⁹ Pearce, *On collecting*, p.142.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.23.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.27.

¹²² Cameron, “Shaping Māori identities and histories”, op. cit.; Sheets-Pyenson, op. cit.

way asserted their values upon the collection acquisitions. Nevertheless museum collections have tended to continue to represent dominant social attitudes.

While collecting the material culture of non-European indigenous peoples as the other, has been called Ethnography, the collecting of the self, the material culture of European and European originating settler societies has tended in museums to be called History. Gaynor Kavanagh has described the act of collecting as the ‘distinguishing act of making history in the museum’.¹²³ Collecting supplies museum history with the evidence that it works with, and caring for that evidence to ensure its long-term survival also becomes the role of the museum. ‘The collection serves as a resource from which all other museum functions stem: exhibitions, educational work, identification and research, education and outreach.... Curators literally make history by deciding what to collect and what to ignore, and by so doing dictating what should be remembered and what forgotten.’¹²⁴ Kavanagh suggests here that in the process of collecting, curators are developing the raw material of a form of society’s memory. The selecting of objects is a matter of judgment for the curator and it is a responsibility that can prove difficult, particularly with respect to overcoming narrow definitions such as what constitutes history, to create an inclusive and representative collection. This has been partly mitigated by the development of collection policies. Knell writes that there has been a ‘shift towards intellectualising thinking about that practice. Activity is now built out from a firm philosophical and intellectual (rather than just theoretical) base’.¹²⁵ Acquisition must meet a variety of policy criteria including relevance (historical and museum mission), affordability in terms of space and cost, and the requirements of research and conservation. However, because many policies focus ‘on object acquisition rather than the methodologies available to achieve the same intellectual end, [o]bjects, rather than knowledge dominate.’¹²⁶ Thus although collection policies provide a framework, the curator ultimately still must exercise her judgement, and collections will therefore reflect this. Kavanagh views the process of history collecting in museums as having followed two basic trends, the object-centred approach and context-orientated approach. Each shall be examined in turn.

¹²³ Gaynor Kavanagh, “Collecting from the era of memory, myth and delusion”, op. cit., p.79.

¹²⁴ Gaynor Kavanagh, *Dream spaces: Memory and the museum*, (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 2000), p.98.

¹²⁵ Knell, op. cit., p.6.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

An object-centred or antiquarian approach values objects for their intrinsic value, and often for their immediate availability. This traditional approach is often the result of passive collecting,¹²⁷ and remains quite strong in museums today.¹²⁸ This approach ‘centres around the drive to collect for its own sake, to complete sets, to assemble the curious and bizarre and create an assemblage of that which tide and time have rendered redundant.’¹²⁹ The people that have used and been associated with the objects, as well as the objects’ meanings in their cultural contexts are a low priority or are forgotten.

A context-orientated approach on the other hand attempts to create an integrated archive of linked ‘objects, memories, images and sounds so as to promote the effective exploration of the past.’¹³⁰ In this approach collecting occurs as a facet of fieldwork, the documenting of a context through oral testimony and photographic records. The importance of oral testimony means the approach is limited to living subjects, and extant contexts to photograph, and so the approach has tended to focus on twentieth century and contemporary history. Indeed Kavanagh notes that the approach has ‘swung ever closer to recording the life of the object as evidence of it, rather than the object within the context of a life.’¹³¹ This decentres the object as the absolute focus of museum history. Although this approach creates a rich documentation base of the meanings of the object, it remains a process of selection. The context to be documented and collected is chosen, as are the memories reported by the informant. Therefore the approach must be practiced critically if silences are to be avoided in the assembled archive.

Kavanagh reports on the Croyden Museums Service, London, that has put this context orientated approach into practice:

all the objects have firm provenance, and 74.5 per cent of the objects on display are on loan and will therefore be returned to their owners as the exhibits change. The aim of the museum is to build a small collection of objects, but a very strong and detailed record through oral history, photographs and other means. In other words, something eminently manageable within the museum’s medium- and long-term

¹²⁷ Kavanagh, “Collecting from the era of memory”, op. cit., p.81.

¹²⁸ Kavanagh, *Dream spaces*, op. cit., p.98.

¹²⁹ Kavanagh, “Collecting from the era of memory”, op. cit., p.81.

¹³⁰ Kavanagh, *Dream spaces*, op. cit., p.98.

¹³¹ Kavanagh, “Collecting from the era of memory”, op. cit., p.81.

budget, yet consistent with its commitment to produce a detailed and inclusive archive¹³²

The development of a detailed archive of contextual information has been prioritised over the acquisition of objects at Croyden. This works to the museum's advantage as it gathers a small but well provenanced collection, which means the cost of maintaining the collection is not invested on a body of poorly provenanced objects that have little value as historical evidence.

Simon Knell¹³³ notes that through collecting, museums are in the business of history, but as inheritors of collections they are also its product. Many museums with a long history of collecting inevitably inherit collections built on an object-centred approach. Kavanagh writes:

In museums where the antiquarian approach has dominated.... the museum's 'document' [is] stripped of all associations and neutered of the meanings attached to it while in private hands. This is typical of the dilemmas that passive collecting precipitates. What should or could the museum do with it? More time can be spent in puzzling out the worth and meaning of an undocumented object than ever would be involved in effective fieldwork and recording at the point of collection.¹³⁴

Lack of documentation and unsystematic or idiosyncratic approaches to creating museum collections often means that collections inherited from earlier eras lack context and meaning for contemporary museums. However these collections are also historically significant. Barbara Lawson notes that the 'lack of disciplinary methodology in gathering... objects has resulted in a natural layering of material goods, corresponding in kind and quantity with successive cultural encounters.'¹³⁵ In the institutional setting the inheritance of a collection from generation to generation of curators, imbues the collection with each generation's values. Through research, collections can be recontextualised to reveal the host of 'sea captains, sailors, traders, naturalists, missionaries, military personnel, administrators and travellers'¹³⁶ that brought the material culture of others (or the self) into the museums, and the curators that accepted them into the collections. By researching the contexts of collecting, the

¹³² Kavanagh, "Collecting from the era of memory", op. cit, p.84. For a discussion that problematises this type of approach see Andrea Witcomb's Australian case studies in her *Re-imagining the museum: Beyond the mausoleum*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp.79-101.

¹³³ Simon Knell, "What future collecting?", in Knell, Simon (ed), *Museums and the future of collecting*, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 1999, p.3.

¹³⁴ Kavanagh, "Collecting from the era of memory", op. cit, p.82.

¹³⁵ Barbara Lawson, "From curio to cultural document", in, Knell ed., op. cit., p.64.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

inherited collections can be revitalised and their meanings as cultural or inter-cultural documents can be revealed. Thus the museum collection as an entity is an historical artefact in itself.

Kavanagh summarises:

The study of objects on their own can lead to cold forms of antiquarianism, revering the inanimate, remote from people and the lived past.... Yet to study just the meanings, and not the object, leads to that which is script-, narrative- or text-based.... This risks the object becoming a mere touchstone or illustration. It is in the *integration* of these, of the meaning *and* the object, that history in museums becomes effective.¹³⁷

Curators operating with this integrated approach that Kavanagh champions must be prepared to recognise objects with the meanings that they had in people's lives. These will include the person's sense of self, emotions, and politics. They may even derive from a knowledge system in stark opposition to that which is dominant in the museum. As the items of evidence studied and displayed in museum history, museums may need to confront the controversial nature of the things that they hold. The values and perceptions of the past are part of the historical meanings of all collections. These also, Pearce writes,

have histories which can be traced, and are susceptible to analysis, which, viewed from the appropriate perspective, will reveal the very important part they play in the construction of power prestige and the manifestation of superiority. They, too, are active carriers of meaning, and have a very large share in the creation of individual personality and the way lives are shaped.... like all objects, [they] hold meaning only in so far as they relate to other meaningful objects, for significance rests in the web of relationships which is physically inherent in each thing.¹³⁸

If collections represent the values of their collectors, and as a result have meaning as an artefact in their own right, then the objects in a collection have the meaning(s) of the collection added to them on collection. Thus when an object enters the museum collection it takes on the additional meaning of "museum object". This is the subject of the next section.

¹³⁷ Kavanagh, *Dream spaces*, op. cit., p.100 (original emphasis).

¹³⁸ Susan Pearce, *On collecting*, p.20.

Material culture and museum meaning

The museum phase of an object's biography sees the transformation of the object into (in Ivo Maroevic's term) an object document.

A museum object is.... a document of those realities in which it lived earlier, but in a way which is not obvious or intelligible at first sight.... its multilayered identities ranging from the conceptual, through the factual, the functional and the structural, to the actual identity.¹³⁹

It is only when an object has been collected and entered a museum phase that the object's documentary (evidential) value becomes activated. The documentation processes of cataloguing involve recording the readable values of the objects such as their structure, history, original environment, or their historicity. This is transferred to other media (increasingly to a digital database) so the museum object's historicity is captured and recorded.

Central to the validity of any evidence is its authenticity. Ruffins writes that 'museum professionals know that their visitors, no matter how young or how sceptical, believe what they see in a museum is "true" [authentic].... This is especially present in a history museum, which takes as its subject the cultural truth of our collective past.'¹⁴⁰ The responsibility of representing the cultural past has a strong ethical dimension for museum professionals. Museum professionals feel they must be able to answer clearly "yes" or "no" to the question "Is this the real thing?"¹⁴¹ Trust in the authenticity of the object, the "real thing," is an implied relationship between visitor and the museum. The physical presence of objects, their three-dimensionality and its affective experience, along with the implied authority of the museum context, provoke naive belief, and to not test that belief is the implicit pact between the visitor and the museum. To break this pact is to damage the reputation of the institution and also to dupe the visitor.

The object's historicity or evidential value, its *reality*, is partly transformed into an abstraction through the documentation process. The object document is extended. The object's information can be actualised in its absence. 'The documents cannot be substitutes for the museum object, but they can give us a definite notion about it.'¹⁴² Information, by its non-materiality, is able to establish a mediating relationship between

¹³⁹ Ivo Maroevic, "The museums message: between the document and information", in Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, ed., *Museum, media, message*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p.25.

¹⁴⁰ Fath Davis Ruffins, "The exhibition as form: An elegant metaphor", *Museum News: The magazine of the American Association of Museums*, vol.64, no.1 (October 1985), pp. 58-9.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.59.

¹⁴² Maroevic, *op. cit.*, p.27.

the object document and the society in which it is actualised. Information about object documents makes its way into society as the result of specific social relations. These relations occur through museum public activities, and the most public of these is the exhibition.

Museum Exhibitions

Communication

Exhibitions unite objects and their information in completely new sets of relations. The exhibition is a creative act involving the museum gallery space, the objects and knowledge about them joined in a unique system with the intention to communicate a defined message.¹⁴³ The object's role is 'that of cumulative and individual information carrier. The object is a carrier and transmitter both of a common message [of the exhibition] and also of individual messages which will be disclosed only to those qualified or trained [or habituated/socialised] to receive them.'¹⁴⁴ At the same time, it is the authentic object that maintains stability in this context, because the object always means itself.

The intended message is communicated through the selection and arrangement of the objects, graphics, texts and labels, and audio-visual media and their placement in the museum space. It is a form of communication subject to change. The exhibition, unlike a printed text, is ultimately limited in time. The exhibition

has united several factors whose parameters are changeable in relation to time and society. At different times and in different social relations the same museum material can therefore emit different museum messages and create different communication patterns of understanding by individual subjective creative acts.¹⁴⁵

The message intended by the exhibitors is not subject to passive reception. The visitor must construct the message(s) of an exhibition, an active process. These acts of construction are likely to be individualistic and contingent upon the visitors' background knowledge and experience of the subject, socialisation in the understanding of museum exhibitions, and dependent upon the amount of energy the visitor expends in engaging in extracting meaning.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.30.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.34.

Stephen Asma views the experience of a museum exhibition as part of the cognitive processes of *recognising* patterns and *perceiving* differences.

The human psyche functions effectively in the world of survival because it has impressive powers of pattern recognition. Our mind groups our perceptions into quickly recognisable patterns that allow for easier manipulation and faster reaction to our environment. Those ancestors better able to organise their experiences – better able to recognise patterns indicating danger, for example – were better able to leave like-minded offspring. Cognitive and perceptual familiarity with the environment frees humans to interact with that environment in ways that are increasingly complex and beneficial. Obviously, this is still true today.¹⁴⁶

Asma suggests that evolution has equipped humans with psyche designed to notice difference as it appears in the environment. Perception of difference in a pattern as a survival strategy means that a human in the “wild” focusing upon an activity is warned of potential danger arriving into the environment, or of the location of the camouflaged quarry in a hunt. The disruption can be quickly familiarised into to the ‘normal’ pattern of reality once attended to. That which is odd momentarily disrupts the orderly and familiar world. It seizes attention, ‘and in a context that is not life threatening, most humans find that experience to be pleasant.’¹⁴⁷ As museums and their antecedents found long ago, the curious and the unusual engage the attention of the visitor. In the museum, the normal¹⁴⁸ pattern of reality must be suspended to engage in the experience. Asma observes that

[s]tanding at the glass window of a life-sized exhibit of a mounted deer, for example, brings on the strange oscillation that’s required in museums. You must oscillate between knowing that it’s a man-made construction and suspending your disbelief to enter into a play-along relationship with the display. Only by playing along a little and taking the representation for reality can you be transported to the quiet woods with foraging deer.... Your incredulous self has to give your credulous self a wide berth in order for the imaginative magic to occur.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Stephen Asma, *Stuffed animals and pickled heads: The culture and evolution of natural history museums*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.35.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.36. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton also draw on the two distinctions *perception* and *recognition* made by John Dewey in *Art as Experience* (1934). “Recognition is when we experience a thing and interpret it only as something we already know. ... it does not produce a new organisation of feeling, attention, or intentions. Many people relate to objects through recognition simply because of habituation.... Perception, on the other hand, occurs when we experience a thing and realise its own inherent character.... the object imposes certain qualities on the viewer that create *new insight*”. *Op. cit.*, pp.44-45.

¹⁴⁸ Each individual defines what is ‘normal’ according to his or her pattern-making experiences.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.38.

Recognition of the display as unreal or constructed relates it to the normal patterns of life. By pretending that display is a different pattern of life to normal the visitor partakes in an alternative to their present or usual reality.

However, there has been a tendency to conceive exhibitions that treat the visitors as passive receivers of the museum message, rather than as active cultural agents constructing meaning. This latter approach is termed by Rounds as the “meaning-making paradigm” of museum exhibits which he sees as working in opposition to the former approach of the traditional “cultural-transmission paradigm”.¹⁵⁰ The term cultural-transmission denotes a form of exhibition where knowledge is being transferred to the visitor via the exhibition, and where that knowledge is a stable and fixed entity. The meaning-making paradigm by contrast recognises the limitations of a successful transference of knowledge in the traditional paradigm and attempts to take advantage of the agency displayed by visitors to present more engaging exhibitions. The aim is not so much as to guide the visitor through a certain story (although inevitably it will do this) but to guide the visitor into engaging in the exhibition by making meaning, by constructing knowledge for themselves. Museum display strategies, as ways of engaging visitors and convincing them to “play-along” have developed over time. In the next section I will briefly overview the various types that have been used.

Display history

The museum’s early precursors, the “cabinets of curiosities” and *Wunderkammer*, exhibited with a ‘capricious freedom’. They displayed an apparent lack of a rational classification, with a ‘bizarre sense of accumulation and juxtaposition’.¹⁵¹ The rationalism of the Enlightenment overtook the eclecticism of the cabinet and imposed chronology. Bennett writes ‘it was in France that historicized principles of museum display were first developed’ by the suggestion of the ‘essential and organic connection between artefacts’ and epochs, by their display in ‘rooms classified by period’.¹⁵² Bennett explains the placement of objects and peoples occurred within a developmental sequence from simple (and for Europe, chronologically early) beginnings, to a

¹⁵⁰ Jay Rounds, “Meaning making: a new paradigm for museum exhibits?” *Exhibitionist*, vol.18, no. 2 (Fall 1999). <http://www.umsl.edu/museums/exhibitionist/99vol18_2/meaningmaking.html> (12 June 2002). See also Asma, op. cit., pp. 260-67, and Lois Silverman, ‘Visitor meaning-making in museums for a new age’, *Curator*, vol.38, no.3 (1995), pp.161-170.

¹⁵¹ James Putnam, *Art and artefact: The museum as medium* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), p.8.

¹⁵² Bennett, “Exhibitionary complex,” op. cit., p.98.

sophisticated (again European) present. This sequential display was true for the array of recently emerged disciplines: ‘history, art history, archaeology, geology, biology, and anthropology’ in their museum deployment.¹⁵³ Typological displays with the implied narrative of Progress were the central characteristic of the Victorian museums. Meanwhile, in the art museums, the singularised and isolated artwork hung for contemplation (usually free of interpretative labels) became the norm.

In the nineteenth century, with a concern to provide more didactic displays, museums began experimenting with various types of recontextualisation. For natural history specimens, taxidermied animals in a habitat setting was one strategy, and this was extended to the display of mannequins representing “primitive” peoples with their actual objects. The effect was the creation of a “frozen moment”. The beasts and mannequins are eerily still and wooden like bad actors in their imitation surroundings charged with the constant anticipation of movement that can never occur. For European cultures the period room (almost always “unpopulated”) became the standard. As the name suggests, objects of a like period were displayed together, thus offering a sense of historic harmony. However, these displays were not necessarily based on documentation of an actual room from the past, and so mixed objects together that had never shared a space together outside of the museum. They also tended to be ‘overstuffed’ by colonial standards.¹⁵⁴

For Gary Kulik, the decisive development in the exhibition of history in American museums was the development of the interpretive exhibition, a concept led approach to displaying the past. The *Farmers’ Year* opened in 1958 in Cooperstown, home of the New York State History Association, and was one of the first examples of this approach to exhibitions. It explained the importance of the seasons to the work of pre-industrial farmers in twelve sections corresponding to months of the year, and this was the principle for organising objects. The exhibition achieved an extraordinary fit between content and design. Kulik writes ‘[t]he arrangement of objects and images, the placement of labels the use of main headings - all communicated a sense of self-conscious design.’¹⁵⁵ There were no cases and the use of objects was spare in comparison to previous exhibition styles. Simple clear design with a sharp delineation

¹⁵³ Ibid., p.97.

¹⁵⁴ Gary Kulik, “Designing the past: History-museum exhibitions from Peal to the present”, in Leon and Rosenzweig, eds., op. cit., p.15. By ‘overstuffed’ Kulik means that the period room tended to contain far more objects than would have been found in such a room in the period.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p.23.

between ideas and images was the aesthetic of the time, and was utilised in advertising, industrial trade shows and shop windows.¹⁵⁶

Design has become increasingly central to exhibition development. Beyond the interpretive display has been the “block buster”. These (usually) travelling exhibitions are often created by companies rather than museums and are designed to draw crowds by emphasising the spectacular. Their crowd pulling potential has not gone unnoticed by museums. In cash-poor environments, museums attempting to create a yearly cash cow through a revenue creating exhibition, or seeking to support funding applications by improving visitor numbers, have taken to hiring block-buster shows or creating their own exhibitions that mimic this style of delivery. Hein writes: ‘Design and spectacle – the semiotics of display – appear increasingly as central elements of museum exhibition, sometimes pre-empting narrative order, as museums shift their emphasis from preservation and study to dramatic delivery.’¹⁵⁷

The history of museum display has seen a shift over time regarding who has the central responsibility for development. In the days of the cabinets, the owner-collector was likely to have been the key figure in arrangement. With the development of the modern museum, curators took that role. However as the aesthetic appeal of exhibits became more important other specialists became involved. With the interpretive exhibit the curator remained central to the concept, but increasingly designers have taken more and more active roles. Today, in museums such as Auckland Museum, where public programmes are mission driven, exhibition development is the role of multi-disciplined teams where the curator is but one member.

This brief overview shows that there are two basic poles to exhibition. One is the singularised, reified object, the other the recontextualised display dominated by the trope of mimesis. Designers work within the continuum between these poles. However, this generalisation should not be taken to imply that display has a strongly limited repertoire. A number of artists have proven that the history of display is a rich ground for exploring meaning in material culture and the museum. Putman reminds us that since Andy Warhol’s *Raid the Icebox* show at the Rhode Island School of Design’s Art Museum in 1969, the impact of artists (especially those working in non-art museums) has reinvigorated thinking about the possibilities of the juxtapositions of the *Kunst und*

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p.24.

¹⁵⁷ Hein, op.cit., p.5.

Wunderkammer, such as with Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum*,¹⁵⁸ and the narratives implied through design. The lessons that these artists give have not so much been the revival of past approaches to display, but the reinvigoration of concept-based exhibitions, by harnessing the communicative power of objects. As much as text, display is a medium for expressing ideas and knowledge. The artists work, as do historians or museum scholars, at semiotic meta-levels to discover narrative veins within the collections, and configure objects to represent intended stories. As discussed above, Asma's modalities of *perception* and *recognition* underscore the museum experience of an object. What the artists have recognised in the museum is a context where, through display, recognition can be re-routed into perception. This underscores the communicative power of exhibition, the power to surprise and capture attention.

Politics

Exhibitions however, are not uncomplicated. Their representations and their omissions speak of dominance and subordination. It has already been shown that the collection and display of the material culture of the "other" in museums has aligned them with elites, eurocentric worldviews, and colonial discourses. Sharon Macdonald writes that exhibitions 'are never, and never have been, just representations of uncontested facts. They always involve the culturally, socially, and politically saturated business of negotiation and value-judgement; and they always have cultural, social and political implications.'¹⁵⁹ The point of view of the exhibition, stated or not, will imply assumptions about power relations or other interpretations that are contestable as normal or true. When the exhibition concerns human history whole peoples can be excluded or re-colonised. Exhibition development therefore requires a high degree of critical awareness and reflexivity to avoid, or at least minimise, the repetition of the old museum's "othering" tendencies.

Exhibitions result from many negotiations over boundaries, internal and external to the museum, conducted according to processes both stated and implicit. Ruffins states that in an 'exhibition, as with any fictive product, the intellectual concept or idea that informs the original intent must be translated into the expressive, symbolic and representational language of the medium itself. Translation, then, becomes the key

¹⁵⁸ Ivan Karp and Fred Wilson, "Constructing the spectacle of culture in museums", in, Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne, eds., op. cit., pp. 251-67.

¹⁵⁹ Macdonald, op. cit., p.1.

interpretive challenge of a history exhibition.’¹⁶⁰ Simply attending to the standard problems identified earlier in the chapter will not automatically mean the creation of a rigorous exhibition. Translation of an idea into a gallery display can occur a number of times during exhibition development and be made by various specialists. Most of these will not be historians or critical museologists. At these points of translation the clarity of the concept is tested and the intended meaning can suffer as a result.

Exhibition development

Exhibitions require a variety of skilled personnel; architects, designers, museum craftsmen and various people give ideas tangible form in three-dimensional space.¹⁶¹ It is necessary for a team to take responsibility for the exhibition concept and content and its rendering into displays on the gallery floor. Margaret Hall notes that within the exhibition team, the various roles and the boundaries between them must be clearly defined.¹⁶² The basics of exhibition development are true for all teams no matter what their size or the scale of the project. The ‘various stages and roles in the planning and production are likely to be similar, but in smaller projects a member of the team is likely to play several roles in turn.’¹⁶³ Thus although the subject of exhibitions differ, the process through which they are developed will generally be the same. In particular Hall singles out the roles (and requirements) of design and editing. This section reviews the process of exhibition development and the six basic exhibition designs summarised by Hall. The discussion begins by reviewing the role of design.

Hall describes design as ‘an umbrella’ term. ‘It can cover every level of decision-making about the final form of an exhibition.’¹⁶⁴ In this sense the whole exhibition team may be responsible for the outcome of the exhibition. Specifically, designers have ‘the task of finding a harmonious arrangement of things, facts, ideas, site and purpose; and then getting the audience into and around the exhibition.’¹⁶⁵ The designer’s role is both aesthetic and practical; they impact heavily on the way the

¹⁶⁰ Ruffins, op. cit., p.59.

¹⁶¹ Flora Kaplan, “Exhibitions as communicative media”, in, Hooper-Greenhill op. cit., p.39.

¹⁶² Margaret Hall, *On display: A design grammar for museum exhibitions* (London: Lund Humphries, 1987), p.21. As well as Hall, although not referred to directly, this section is based on Michael Belcher, *Exhibitions in museums* (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1991), and David Dean, *Museum exhibition: Theory and practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p.10.

museum message is communicated by giving the exhibition its shape. So while the curator or concept leader makes academic ‘sense’ out of a collection, the designer has to translate this into visual ‘sense’.¹⁶⁶ The crucial relationship in the exhibition team is that between the designer and curator or concept leader. Hall notes that this is an intimate relationship and can sometimes be fraught. ‘The academic specialist is going to speak through the designer and this demands mutual trust and understanding of both objectives and style.’¹⁶⁷

Referring to the umbrella meaning of design, Hall describes the first stage of exhibition development as the ‘grand design’. These are the key decisions made in the institution before any notion of a subject or topic is proposed. ‘A key part of the “grand design” will be the decision by the museum administration as to which section of the public will have the story addressed to them, and what resources will be made available for the purpose.’¹⁶⁸ The gallery to house the exhibition, the collections it is to involve, as well as the desired completion date and other preparatory decisions are made. These criteria are formulated into a statement and these become the criteria that the exhibition must fulfil. The grand design therefore refers to the overall schema of the museum that the exhibition must fit into.

At their outset, all projects begin ‘with a notion,’¹⁶⁹ which is developed into a concept statement that Hall refers to as the brief. The brief is the outcome of the first stage of the design process, a dialogue between the curator or concept leader and the designer, and other members involved in the exhibition team. The brief is a written document, and once approved becomes the foundation document of the exhibition. ‘The brief should summarise the aim, state the theme and describe purpose and nature of the exhibition. It should make clear how the project in hand relates to other exhibitions and the overall strategy of presentation (if it exists) of the institution.’¹⁷⁰ It thus echoes the requirements of the grand design. It should state the exhibition’s objectives in terms of the visitors’ experience. The brief can be referred back to throughout the project as a guide, and subsequent developments should be checked against it to ensure there is no deviation from the original plan, or if there is, that it is agreed as an improvement by all involved. Hall refers to the brief as the designer’s bible. Throughout the duration of the

¹⁶⁶ Hall, *op cit.*, p.11.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.24.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.22.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.21

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.42.

project it is the design guide. Although revisions can sometimes not be avoided, the usual emphasis is to stick to the original brief.¹⁷¹ The work that goes into developing the brief therefore must clearly define the exhibition concept.

Following the approval of the brief the development process proceeds. The designer needs to know the proposed contents, preliminary storyline, and precise details on objects early on. Practical issues of design require information such as object dimensions, weight, conservation requirements (for instance the light sensitivity of objects) and security issues (for valuable objects and in terms of potential danger to visitors). The opening date and duration of exhibition is also an important factor as this affects the choice of materials, which in turn affect the budget. 'Space is a problem in most exhibitions, and at the start of a project there is often an unrealistic view of how much material will fit in. It is therefore helpful to group objects under three headings: essential objects, desirable objects but not essential, and 'gap fillers'.¹⁷² As the development process moves forward, and final exhibition form takes shape, rationalisation of the contents becomes necessary, and this inevitably means some objects or display ideas will be ultimately left out. The total effect of the unification of the exhibition elements is the presentation of a thesis, a statement of some sort, rather than a mere collection of objects. Although the objects may have many meanings, in the exhibition they are being used to make a series of points, relevant to a certain concept, for a particular time and place.¹⁷³ The process of exhibition development involves unifying disparate elements into coherence.

The purpose of editing is to achieve this coherence. The role of the editor involves three phases of decision-making. First, in the production of the brief, the editor is involved in encapsulating the initial idea into an exhibition concept that provides the framework within which the whole team is going to work.¹⁷⁴ Secondly, the editing role involves choosing the identified objects that will convey the story, deciding the order they will take in the exhibition, and what additional information will have to be added to make sense to the intended audience. Creating this sequence is extremely important. The objects and the items of information function as units that link to each other to create the story. Even though the 'arrangement might be flexible and open... the

¹⁷¹ Hall, *op. cit.*, p.44.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p.43.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.45.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

strategy is... one to move visitors forward.¹⁷⁵ The third stage involves the text components of the exhibition. A certain amount of text is nearly always necessary in exhibitions to assist in the communication.

Exhibitions often use a tiered approach to information, to account for different levels of need from visitors, and to convey different levels of story. The main rule is that text must be minimal. The label writer must hold the label reader's attention. In the gallery space, distractions of the other displays and visitors can divert or win the reader away. The visitor must be given information to fit the object into the story. If a catalogue is to be used then this decision must be made at an early stage because it will dictate the role of the printed word on the gallery floor, in the amount of textual intervention necessary. Labels and exhibition texts require visitors to use their memories to piece the exhibition into a story. 'The planning of the relationship between an object and the text to which it is related is critically important. It depends on the amount that the expected visitors can be expected to digest in a short time.' Between 80 and 100 words of text for general information but less for object explanations are recommended. Hall writes that 'it is clear that text lengths in excess of this figure are not fully read by the majority of visitors.'¹⁷⁶ Editing involves identifying and removing the excess that exhibitions gather during their development to ensure a concise museum message. The role is closely linked to design.

For the visitor, reading an exhibition display involves connecting objects to their relevant label information, and the placement of these components will involve searching the display space. 'Even if the two are fairly close together they will seldom be taken in at a single glance.'¹⁷⁷ Thus connecting the two is a matching process. If it is successfully accomplished the language and object will be united into a single experience, a unit of meaning. This may be taken forward as the visitor proceeds to the next exhibit in the sequence to be 'understood'. 'The verified piece of memory has to be held... while the process is repeated again and again' creating the whole exhibition experience.¹⁷⁸ Repeated difficulties in this process are likely to lead to abandonment. Another factor is that the time it takes for the visitor to complete this process will affect the rate of visitor flow through the gallery.¹⁷⁹ Hall states that many 'exhibitions have

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Hall, op cit.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p.43.

failed by ignoring, at the planning stage, the viewing and reading time that they will require.’¹⁸⁰ In the preparation of the text components of the exhibition it is worth considering how long it would take a visitor to read every word in the exhibition. In exhibition development the editing and design roles affect each other. If the text and underlying strategy change so will the appearance, ‘designer and editor have to learn to think as one. The editor is there to help the designer handle the vital fourth dimension: time.’¹⁸¹

Exhibitions are created from a repertoire of generic components and approaches in various combinations to produce the museum message. The reliability of these components in the museum context allows the visitors (socialised into visiting museums) to navigate the museum and its exhibitions and retrieve meaning from them. The basic components as Kaplan writes are the

objects either made and used by human beings or drawn from the natural world; they require texts, most often in the form of labels, wall panels, headlines and banners; and they incorporate other graphic elements, such as photographs, maps, charts and drawings.¹⁸²

In addition to these the museum visitor is likely to encounter the following:

lighting, museum ‘furniture’ – cases, platforms, walls – and architectural elements that must protect the objects shown, enhance viewing and enclose exhibition space. Qualities of colour and texture attach to all of these elements. Sound, seating and the media of film, video, slide projection, computers and simulation may also be added. Live elements often range from plantings to performance – dancers, actors and scholars, as well as lecturers and docents. In the galleries, museum guards function as unofficial guides. Budget permitting, print materials are prepared for the public in the form of free handouts, information sheets and brochures; guidebooks, and exhibition catalogues may be offered for sale.¹⁸³

All of these elements have been made to fit into the gallery space by the designer and exhibition team. Furthermore the designer will have had to work these into the permanent architecture of the gallery, and museum generally, which may have no contextual relevance to the exhibition subject.

The approaches to arranging these components into exhibitions has been summarised by Hall into three general types and three general styles. The first type is

¹⁸⁰ Hall, op. cit., p.49.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Kaplan, op. cit., pp.39-40.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p.40.

the taxonomic exhibition where exhibition ‘material is displayed by classification alone’ following linear arrangements. This strategy ‘assumes an informed public.’¹⁸⁴ A second type is the thematic exhibition that imparts a story. In this type of exhibition, ‘the visitor is guided to make connections and follow the development of the thesis as it evolves in the exhibition.’¹⁸⁵ The exhibition can follow a simple linear approach (for example chronological), or can branch out to develop sub-themes within the linear organisation. An alternative approach is the ‘mosaic’ type of presentation.¹⁸⁶ Within the broad theme there are many separate “island” displays. The visitor pursues her or his own route around the exhibition developing an individual selection of information within the main theme. The third type, the interactive exhibition approach, requires a degree of involvement by the visitor in the manipulation of displays to reveal the exhibition’s information. In the evocative exhibition style, ‘scene setting aids understanding by evocation and association and not necessarily by the display of informative texts.’¹⁸⁷ For example, it may attempt to conjure the atmosphere of an era. In the aesthetic exhibition style, ‘each object speaks for itself.’¹⁸⁸ The supporting texts and display mechanisms complement but are subordinate to the visual and aesthetic experience. In a predominantly didactic exhibition style, the ‘intent and appearance are primarily to impart information’¹⁸⁹ however, if interactive displays are incorporated, this will not necessarily take the form of text. Most exhibitions will be created from the pairing of a type of approach with a style.

Curators, academics and history

Introduction

Museums have become more inclined towards hiring academic historians as consultants, to help develop exhibitions, or to work as curators. However, the literature suggests that the text-based training that historians receive in the universities does not adequately prepare them for museum practice. Traditionally, the practice of history in the museum has been the role of the curator. However, that curatorial practice of history has tended to lack a critical and reflexive approach. Latterly, as shown above, museum

¹⁸⁴ Hall, op. cit., p.25.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p.27.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p.29.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

practitioners have attempted to adopt a more rigorous approach. It is suggested that traditional academic history training as well as training in critical museology through museum studies or public history courses, are needed to prepare a practitioner for museum history and curatorship.¹⁹⁰

Academic historians and museums

Kulik notes that from the 1950s an increasing number of academically trained historians were becoming directors of museums and historical societies in the United States. In the 1970s, there was a great influx of historians into curatorial and interpretive positions. This had resulted from increased government funding such as from The National Endowment for the Humanities, combined with increased graduate programmes in the universities, a relatively static academic job market, and the rise of the new social history, which saw a closer alignment between academic and museum history, all making the jump from academia to museum easier.¹⁹¹ New Zealand museums have not experienced a similar influx. Dalley and Phillips recently estimated that about twenty New Zealand historians make their living in the heritage area, which includes museums, Department of Conservation, and Historic Places Trust.¹⁹² This leaves a lot of history in the heritage area to be done by only a few historians employed on a full-time basis; a problem that, as in the case study of *City*, can be solved by contracting work out to academics or freelance professionals. Indeed it can be argued that the barrier between museum and academia has become increasingly permeable in recent years across most academic fields, and that museums have in general been making use of outside professionals to a greater degree than they have perhaps in the past.

For historians partaking in the ebb and flow between academic and public scholarly practice, producing history in a lay arena involves overcoming a raft of professional challenges. As Phillips has observed, history is now presented to the public in a variety of media that are outside of the traditional training of academic historians.¹⁹³ Academic history has gained many of its characteristics from print culture.¹⁹⁴ ‘Book

¹⁹⁰ Graeme Davison, “Paradigms of public history”, in John Rickard and Peter Spearitt, eds., *Packaging the past? Public histories* (Brunswick: Melbourne University Press, 1991), pp.4-15. Gaynor Kavanagh, *History curatorship* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1990), passim.

¹⁹¹ Kulik, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

¹⁹² Jock Phillips and Bronwyn Dalley, “Introduction”, in Bronwyn Dalley and Jock Phillips, eds., *Going Public: The changing face of New Zealand history* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2001), p. 10.

¹⁹³ Phillips, “Our history, our selves”, op. cit., pp.112-3.

¹⁹⁴ Jock Phillips, “History and the new media”, in Dalley and Phillips, eds., op. cit., pp.141-57.

history is predominantly sequential and linear.... To understand the work fully, it must be read as it is presented.’¹⁹⁵ History essays or chapters read like an extended monologue. The historian’s interpretation is dominant and excerpts of evidence appear only in support of this voice. Although cartoons, photographs, and the occasional artwork may be reproduced in the text, they appear more for their illustrative value than as evidence. Once the text is printed, it cannot be changed, and in this way print culture makes the exposition time bound, freezing the interpretation in the moment of its creation. Web pages and museum exhibitions however can be updated and “refreshed”.¹⁹⁶ Indeed web pages can include a built-in space for response and criticism. Although the form of the book is well established, the structure of web pages and exhibitions is open to the interpretation of the designer. How visitors encounter these is difficult to control, unlike books that ‘begin on page one and end on page 300.’¹⁹⁷ This unpredictability must be factored into their development with the provision of layered narratives and different sequences. Phillips concludes that ‘historians must learn to... see themselves as the organisers of primary source material facilitating discovery by others.... [This] may be the most difficult adjustment of all since the style of historians has tended towards a controlling patriarchal mode where one individual expounds with unchallenged authority.... throw[ing] into question the culture of the historical discipline.’¹⁹⁸

In museum exhibition development the historian or curator is a team member. The historian might supply the concept but the finished exhibition will have been reviewed and interpreted by a number of specialists along the way. The historical interpretation will have been rendered into a visual statement by the designer, graphics, marketing, educators, writers, and various technicians, all leaving their indelible mark. Guided by the curator, objects will enter the picture. All of these cooks in the one kitchen can result in the concept losing its definition in production. Unlike the printed page however, an exhibition, if the resources allow, is not time bound, and indeed conservation concerns may require objects to be displayed for only short amounts of time. Exhibitions can be updated, they can respond to criticism or new evidence.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 142.

¹⁹⁶ In the case of museum exhibitions however this possibility is seldom exercised.

¹⁹⁷ James Belich interviewed by Daniel Smith, 8 August 2002, Auckland. Tape recording.

¹⁹⁸ Phillips, “History and the new media”, op. cit., p.157. The subject of the quotation is actually history produced in digital medium, but is equally applicable to museum exhibitions.

Whereas academic historians may utilise any documented evidence to prove a hypothesis, in the museum, the evidence is primarily material culture. Furthermore, museum exhibitions are about the objects as evidence, as much as the supplied interpretation. A minimal amount of text is favoured over the ‘book on a wall’ approach. Resoundingly, the exhibition is encountered in three dimensions, and must be created with this in mind. Bronwyn Labrum discovered that for historians this ‘means thinking in a 3-D fashion. Doing history in this context means that you are always needing to put yourself in the museum visitor’s shoes and think about the effect of what you are developing.’¹⁹⁹ An exhibition communicates more than by rhetoric alone. Lighting, arrangement, and the objects themselves can evoke emotion, recognition, and perception. It will be shown later that James Belich discovered that objects were ‘also documents in themselves, so they impacted back on my historical interpretations. I saw them primarily in the first instance as the kind of symbols with which I would construct my discourse. I soon also realised they were sources that would affect the nature of my discourse.’²⁰⁰ There are dialogues occurring between objects and texts, objects and objects, as well as the exhibition and visitor.

For the historian who crosses over to the role of curator, there is the additional new territory of collection development. Bronwyn Labrum reports on her experience as a history curator at Te Papa:

I didn’t have any specific training or experience with using material culture and in particular three-dimensional artefacts in an exhibition context, nor with the building of collections and their care and documentation. My first two years were an enormous learning curve! As far as collections go, learning what to acquire, how to find out information about it and then how to catalogue it fully can be learned fairly easily, although it takes years of accumulated wisdom to develop fully in any particular type of collection or field of material culture.²⁰¹

For historian trained only in academic history, the three dimensions of the evidence and exposition present a new way of doing history. Most museums do not have the resources to support a curator who needs to spend two years on the job training. Simply employing an academic historian will not necessarily ensure the development of a collection or an exhibition that has scholarly integrity. It is up to the museum to ensure

¹⁹⁹ Bronwyn Labrum, Bronwyn Dalley, and Jock Phillips, “Thinking visually: Doing history in museums. An interview with Bronwyn Labrum”, in, Dalley, and Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

²⁰⁰ James Belich to Smith, *op. cit.*

²⁰¹ Labrum, Dalley and Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

that its commitment to scholarship is upheld. This involves committing to researching the collections in broad terms and critically approaching them as evidence in social history.

In 1992 the Strong Museum in Rochester, New York, ‘adopted a “Framework for Interpretation” that formally elevated issues of critical historical interpretation to a position of paramount importance in the museum’s interpretive programme.’²⁰² From a list of around two-dozen topics ‘that linked specific themes used in cataloguing’ to the wider historiography, three streams of interpretation were chosen to be pursued. These were pertinent to the museum’s ‘collections (everyday domestic and mass-produced artefacts) and time period (1820 to the present)’ and the museum’s mission was revised so as to ‘identify the three streams as the museum’s principal interpretive directions.’ The museum thus ‘embraced an interpretive mission based on contemporary historical scholarship’.²⁰³

Whether or not museum partnerships with universities or individual scholars are to replace original in-house research, an inquiry led approach must develop the collections concomitant to the research. If not, the primary evidence will not be central to the exhibition developed as a result of the research. This is one of the major pitfalls identified by Gibb and Davis that result in static exhibitions where objects are used to illustrate ‘points raised in exhibit text, rather than providing the interpretive focus on exhibits.’²⁰⁴ They advocate emphasising the active nature of material culture, where the objects are presented ‘as powerful physical and symbolic instruments placed within a defined context of social action.’²⁰⁵ As in the Strong Museum example above, museum organisations can support the production of more rigorous exhibitions by requiring critical historical practice in the mission and programmed aims. This should apply to both the curator and any contracted help.

Curatorship

It has already been shown that curators deal with objects and collections that are the products of social forces, and carry a variety of meanings, some inherent, some

²⁰² Christopher Clark-Hazlett, “Communicating critical scholarship through museum exhibition: A museum historian’s view”, in, Peter Rider, ed., *Studies in history and museums* (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilisation, 1994), p. 59.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Gibb and Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

associational, some imposed, and most both political and historical. The work that museums do is communicated to the public through exhibitions, and the development of exhibitions is another role that curators perform, as leaders or more latterly members of exhibition teams. Although researching material culture evidence has been developed in a number of directions, the problem of poor documentation with many existing collections means that the variety of interpretations that can be made of the object data in museums is limited. Like other historians, curators consult a variety of sources in the construction of their histories. As a result of this research, generic contexts for existing collections can be formulated from the wider historiography. However, the problem with these is that the display of the collections becomes illustrative rather than central to the core narrative.

It has also been shown that unlike other historians, curators are not just users of evidence but are responsible for developing collections. In this role curators are creating a record of society. Many curators are also intent on collecting the memories that accompany objects. Indeed Kavanagh argues that ‘museums *need* memories’, recorded as oral histories, ‘as a primary source.’²⁰⁶ The concern shown by many by curators to record memory and present the wider social context, has led to the question: ‘Are museums about objects or people?’²⁰⁷ Kavanagh answers her question writing: ‘[w]ithout a feeling for people’s lives and histories, museums become remote and irrelevant.’²⁰⁸ A broad swing in curatorship from object centred to context-orientated practice has occurred with the aim of making museums relevant. Kavanagh writes:

Traditionally, museums were places which housed and exhibited selected objects; curators tended the inanimate. But once the emphasis shifted in the post war years from antiquities to *social, cultural* and *industrial* histories, understanding the recent past through objects alone became impossible to sustain or indeed justify. As soon as museums moved from antiquities to histories, they were committed to embracing a wide range of source materials.²⁰⁹

Many curators have been attempting to practice a broader social history in the museum rather than the narrow grand narratives of the past. To achieve these ends curators have had to diversify their sources from predominantly object-based to the fuller spectrum

²⁰⁶ Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces*, op. cit., p.4 (emphasis added).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.7.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.8.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.7.

that professional historians refer to.²¹⁰ Kavanagh is quick to agree with critics that this has not been true across the board. She writes that some ‘museum projects... have engaged in the worst excesses of shabby history-making’. However, an ‘able reflective society needs available, challenging, thoughtful and accurate histories.’²¹¹ Museums can and do offer this service.

The issue of people, communities, and their relationship to museums and museum authority became a major focus in New Zealand museology with the *Te Māori* exhibition in the 1980s. Fiona Cameron suggests that this has spurred the drive to broaden inclusive practices in other areas of social history. Cameron notes that there is very little information in the literature regarding the practice of social history in New Zealand museums, although anecdotally a number of programmes championing community access have been run at a number of museums. These include: the Petone Settlers Museum, the Otago Museum, the Otago Early Settlers Museum, and The Science Centre and Manawatu Museum.²¹² The practice of social history in museums, unlike that in academia where methodology is emphasised, tends to be ‘unstructured and lacking in an all embracing or collective definition.’²¹³ This is perhaps symptomatic of the fact that history curators in New Zealand museums have tended to come from disciplinary backgrounds other than history, and that the interaction between academic history and museums in New Zealand has, until recently, been a rare occurrence.²¹⁴ However, the swing towards a more social history approach in museums as described by Kavanagh, an emphasis on context, and a widening of the types of sources consulted in research has meant the museum practice has moved closer to that of academia.

An interest in furthering the rigour of history practice in museums has perhaps motivated a number of museums into hiring academic historians. This is unlikely to leave an incumbent history curator unaffected. Traditionally the curator has been the museum’s sole history authority. The contracting of an academic historian can be seen as implicitly devaluing that authority. The political dimensions will always be case specific, but the potential professional threat to a curator is always likely to be present at

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid., p.5.

²¹² Fiona Cameron, “Pathways to access: The relationship between communities and social history programmes in museums”, *New Zealand Museums Journal*, vol.24, no.2 (1994), pp.14-16. The Science Centre and Manawatu Museum now goes by the title of Te Manawa.

²¹³ Ibid., p.14.

²¹⁴ David Butts, conversation with Daniel Smith, 3 April, 2003. Kavanagh from her British perspective notes that ‘[i]ntellectually there is very little to suggest a direct correlation in trends between history in the museum and that created outside of it’. “Collecting from the era of memory”, op. cit., p.81.

the outset of new partnerships with academic historians. Positive outcomes might be that the collection expertise and historical knowledge of the curator becomes more apparent, and better appreciated. However, there is also the potential for the curator's historical opinion to be unappreciated, and for the curator's role to become supplier of objects to the academic. This is especially true if the objects are only to play an illustrative role in exhibition. At the same time, simply substituting the historical authority of one practitioner for another will not necessarily secure a more rigorous outcome to a museum's programmes.

Critical museum practitioners are the result of training. For some curators this has been the outcome of a university degree followed by years of experience. For others it has been the result of more formal training through museum studies and public history courses. Museums have begun to move towards a more context-orientated approach to social history. In order to develop this approach, museums need to ensure that the history practitioners in their employment are able to practice critical history in the museum environment. In the museum, historians need to bring the same critical scholarship they bring to texts, to objects and exhibitions. Although a gulf has separated academic and museum history in the past, critical museological training can supply a bridge between the two.

Urban history

The potential for bridging the academic-museum divide is great. In this final section of this chapter I will look at the historical genre most pertinent to the present study, urban history.²¹⁵ This section presents an overview of approaches made in print and museum exhibition that attempt to convey the history of specific cities.

In academic historiography urban history has been particularly concerned with the regional/rural to urban relationship, and through the influence of quantitative approaches to history (cliometrics) social mobility/stability has also been important. A New Zealand example of the former would be Miles Fairburn's article 'The rural myth and the new urban frontier'. New Zealand's rural myth was forged in opposition to the 'threat of the city,' which was perceived as the breeding ground of disease, immorality, crime and corruption, a threat to social control, a breeding ground of anti-social

²¹⁵ The discussion here is confined to the study of the histories of neo-European cities.

behaviour.²¹⁶ Fairburn attempts to account for how the Arcadian ideal of nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealand was reconciled within a predominantly urban society. To any student of New Zealand history, Erik Olssen and Tom Brooking's project on the working class Dunedin suburb Caversham will be the obvious example of the latter approach in this country.²¹⁷ As with similar longitudinal studies of occupational and social mobility in the United States, the Caversham Project has been subject to the generic criticisms of a heavy reliance on quantitative methods resulting in huge sets of (unwieldy) data. Accusations have been levelled that the experience of living in the city, which should be central, was often left out of urban history. Consequently, much urban history has been characterised by a search for balance between qualitative approaches (for example oral histories) and quantitative methods (based around series of data such as census returns).²¹⁸

A more cross-disciplinary approach has been to study a city through the lens of a particular subject or complex of subjects. Thus architectural histories of cities and their landscapes comprise of one such approach, which can be a point of departure in developing into a wider social history. Graeme Davison has taken a more cultural approach through his studies of civic ritual.²¹⁹ The studies of urban subjects such as transport systems, sanitation, urban spaces and urban planning have been routes to creating city histories, and have helped develop the view of city as artefact.²²⁰ Urban archaeology, with its particular focus upon the material-past has added to the conception of city spaces as layered with continuous habitation.²²¹ Consonant with these academic approaches has been the heritage movement seeking to preserve historic buildings and districts. Restoration and reconstruction however has often submerged the authentic

²¹⁶ Miles Fairburn, "The rural myth and the new urban frontier: an approach to New Zealand social history, 1870-1940", *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol.9, no.1 (1975), pp.5, 8.

²¹⁷ A basic introduction and bibliography to the (now) extensive research and analysis that has been conducted on Caversham can be read on the web page <<http://www.otago.ac.nz/nzpg/caversham/aims.html>>, and other linked pages.

²¹⁸ Michael Frisch, "American urban history as an example of recent historiography", *History and theory: Studies in the philosophy of history*, vol.18, no.3 (1979), pp.350-77.

²¹⁹ For example see Graeme Davison "Cities and ceremonies: Nationalism and civic ritual in three new lands" *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol.24, no.2 (October 1990), pp.97-117; and his "Welcoming the world: The 1956 Olympic Games and the representation of Melbourne", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol.28, issue 109 (October 1997), pp.64-77.

²²⁰ Schlereth, "Social history scholarship and material culture research", op. cit., pp.177-81.

²²¹ See Schlereth's literature review essay, "The city as artefact", in his *Cultural history and material culture*, op. cit., pp.183-93; also Peter Ackroyd's approach to the city in his encyclopaedic *London: The biography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000).

character of the urban past that has been saved.²²² A more publicly accessible cross-disciplinary approach to cities can be seen in recent work on city encyclopaedias such as the *Encyclopaedia of New York City* edited by Ken Jackson.²²³ Graeme Davison is presently involved in the compilation of *The Encyclopaedia of Melbourne* which is also expected to appear in electronic as well as print form.²²⁴

David Hamer writes that numerous commemorative histories of New Zealand towns have been written. However these have tended to be little more than compilations of ‘miscellaneous items gleaned from local newspapers,’ and fail to develop overall patterns of meaning.²²⁵ As works often commissioned by councils they also tend to magnify the role of these patrons. More recently university historians have begun to undertake these projects and have been able to inject more rigour into them, attempting to popularise without compromising scholarly historical explanation. These works, best described as “public scholarship,” strive for a wider readership than the strictly academic urban studies already noted. Included with these should also be histories written on subjects such as city institutions, commerce, civic and community bodies, and histories based on collections of historic photographs.²²⁶

Turning to the museum, Michael Frisch finds that the urban biography is the conventional standard of city history exhibition. These tend to be a linear narrative where the city as protagonist plays the role of hero. As the term biography suggests, these trace the life story of the city in anthropomorphic terms, a city ‘whose birth, growth troubles, dreams and triumphs can be set in the context of a national history’.²²⁷ This conforms to Schlereth’s national character approach and its propensity towards the fallacy of progressive determinism. However, neither Frisch nor Schlereth are dismissive of this approach. The urban biography ‘inevitably involves some mix of

²²² David Hamer, “New Zealand urban history” *Urban history yearbook* (1984), p.61; also “Historic preservation in urban New Zealand: An historian’s perspective”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol.31, no.2 (October 1997), pp.251-69. Jim Russell, “Debating heritage: From artefacts to critical perception”, *Australian Geographer*, vol.24, no.1 (May 1993), p.13.

²²³ Reviewed by Jonathan Franzen, “First City”, *New Yorker*, 19 February 1996, p. 90, cited in, Graeme Davison, “History and Hypertext”, *The Electronic Journal of Australian and New Zealand History*, August 1997. < <http://www.jcu.edu.au/aff/history/articles/davison.htm>> (23 January 2003).

²²⁴ Davison, *ibid.*

²²⁵ Hamer, “New Zealand urban history”, *op. cit.*

²²⁶ *ibid.*, *passim*. Some examples regarding Auckland that Hamer writes are worth noting include: G. Bush, *Decently and in order: The government of the city of Auckland 1840-1971, the centennial history of the Auckland City Council* (Auckland: 1971); and recommends R. Stone, *The makers of fortune: A colonial business community and its fall* (Auckland: 1973). Photographic histories of Auckland include: W. Main, *Auckland through a Victorian lens* (Wellington: 1972); and Barrett’s *A picture book of old Auckland*, (Auckland: 1981).

²²⁷ Michael Frisch, “The presentation of urban history in big-city museums”, in Leon and Rosenzweig, eds., *op. cit.*, p.50.

broad economic and political forces; of regional, national, and even international relationships; and of a complex of social groups and relations across the racial-ethnic and class spectrum'.²²⁸ The urban biography offers a narrative form in which the synthesis of academic urban historiography can be approached, and thus communicated to the public. In practice, urban biographies range from the banal to serious scholarly attempts at analysis.

Another type of city history exhibition is one that, like its cousin in print, develops an urban history through the lens of a subject or subjects, teasing them out to show the wider social context and their interconnections. Frisch cites the example of a municipal institutional history – gas and water, fire and police – where the use of objects is particularly interesting because of their link to people and places. He notes the 'way services link people, environment, and institutions makes even a brief treatment a base for interesting reflection on the workings of an actual city.'²²⁹ Thus the focus in a subject based urban history allows the opportunity for analysis of the complexity of a society. In another example, *Made in Philadelphia 1830-1939* which opened in 1987, focused on the evolution of industrial Philadelphia. Although quite traditional in many ways, the text offered a sophisticated discussion of 'the process of industrial development, providing an anchor for discussion and documentation of wider patterns of economic change, of the relation of production to complex commercial and consumption patterns, and the links between industrial work and workers – their backgrounds, skills, families, and neighbourhoods.'²³⁰ The exhibition thus linked economic development with daily life, presenting a socially grounded economic and technological urban history. Notably too, the exhibition was developed in cooperation with two scholars of the subject area.

Developing on the subject-based exhibition type is Frisch's discussion of Baltimore's rowhouse installation. This reinvention of the house museum, 'offers a strikingly inclusive social, economic, and institutional profile of Baltimore's overall history... grounded in the most prosaic details of ordinary life and in the very buildings that still house a large proportion of Baltimore's residents (and of the museum's visitors).'²³¹ This site-based exhibition 'permits intensive examination of architectural history, broad urban economic development patterns, complex legal financial

²²⁸ Ibid., p.41.

²²⁹ Ibid., p.48.

²³⁰ Ibid., p.53.

²³¹ Ibid., p.54.

mechanisms, the links between real estate developers and their clients, and the relation of all of these to neighbourhood, work, family life, ethnicity, and class.²³² Frisch remarks on the resonance between the exhibition's themes and the material culture. This had indeed been a deliberate intention by curators who engaged in exhibition-driven collecting. Another site-based approach to exhibition is through recreation of an environment. Frisch gives the example of an abandoned factory where the work environment was recreated and demonstrations of processes given by skilled workers as well as insights into their lives. Frisch's explanation leaves the aims of the site unclear, although it appears to sit somewhere in between a cultural reconstruction (prone to uniformity, homogeneity and static representations) and experimental archaeology (which often fails to convey social, cultural or political context and is prone to exaggerate human efficacy).

In New Zealand museums recreations of colonial streets have offered the common presentations of urban history. Auckland, Canterbury and Wanganui museums all have colonial streets.²³³ The discussion here, however, will be confined to that at Auckland Museum. The exhibit, an approximation of Auckland in 1866, is conceived in the cultural reconstructionist paradigm. Although it does not recreate an actual street, the shop fronts that line the corridors are based on actual shop fronts, albeit scaled down. Maps in the shop windows pin point where the actual business once stood, and a photograph of the original is also supplied with a brief history. The shops however are mainly devices to supply a context for displaying a vast quantity of the collections that in reality may have never been associated with the shop. The 'street front' is a series of period room displays in a highly static portrayal. No sense of class or ethnic difference can be made, nor are any of the other of the usual social historical analyses attempted.

Summary

This chapter has discussed how objects are meaningful as historical evidence, and how the nature of their tangibility and three-dimensionality affect museum history practice. The first section of the chapter discusses how material culture is useful as evidence in history, and by inference, how it can be meaningful in social relations. The scope of possibilities was found to be wide.

²³² Ibid., pp.54-55.

²³³ Keith Thomson, op. cit, pp.62, 67, and 77.

However, in the second section, the discussion of the development of collections showed that the study of material culture as evidence in museum history has not been a central motivation to collecting in the past. Museum history collecting instead has been object-centred, an approach that has decontextualised the collection objects. As artefacts imbued with meaning about their collectors, even highly object-centred collections can still be utilised as social history evidence. Thus museum history collections that are problematic because they lack the documentation of their original contextual meanings remain ‘salvageable’. Recently, a more critical approach to collecting in museums has emphasised the documentation of each object’s social context and contextual meanings. The context-orientated approach places greater value on the evidential qualities of the object. Thus rather than focusing on the museum object, it focuses on the object’s “life” before entering the museum.

The third section addressed the technicalities of how museum exhibitions communicate through their tangibility and three-dimensionality. It briefly summarised the history of museum display, observing how both the affective and evidential qualities of objects have been emphasised in various display strategies, and it also reviewed how exhibitions are developed. The role of the exhibition designer was described as controlling the technical as well as artistic production. The designer must work closely with the editor, which in the case of *City* was a role that was divided between the academic historian James Belich, and history curator Rose Young. The designer and editor work together organising ideas, object and other components and reducing the overall content to form a coherent visual statement. Because history exhibitions are statements delivered in three-dimensions, their creation is reliant on teams. Their “authorship” becomes shared across the team, unlike the experience of history writing.

In the fourth section, the issue of adapting to working in exhibition teams and with material culture was discussed in relation to academic historians working in museums. Historians can inject academic rigour into exhibitions but they must adjust their print-orientated practice to the museum context. History curators can help academics make their adjustments by partnering their knowledge of the collections and their familiarity with the museum context with the other’s expertise. However, whether their assistance is a help or hindrance may hinge on the extent of the curator’s own critical practice, and on the extent to which the museum organisation supports a critical approach with its programmed aims and mission. The university training of historians in New Zealand universities does not directly prepare them for work in the museum, but

there is great potential for partnership between museum and university history. One such area of potential is in the genre of urban history. This has been practiced in the academic history, cross-disciplinary, public history and museum history arenas. In New Zealand museums the standard approach to urban history is overdue for rigorous reworking.

CHAPTER TWO

Auckland Museum: Collections, context, process

RY: “My interpretation is if it was pretty - and applied arts got a bit fed up with me saying this - but if it was pretty they kept it, and if it was junky they would put it in the colonial register, [...] it was the history junky area, you know.”²³⁴

JB: “I’m a text-based historian, and therefore I can talk about things that would be interesting to illustrate and what their resonances might be”²³⁵

Introduction

Having broadly examined the nature of history in the museum in chapter one, chapters two and three address the issues of process and politics as raised in the primary research question. It is argued that the process, including the foundation of the exhibition team, evolved out of the context of the Museum with its simultaneous and conflicting aims of instituting change, while retaining the Museums traditional character and stability.

Following from chapter one and the argument made for the central position of objects in museum history, this chapter begins with a historical overview of the history collections and locates its relationship to changes in academic history practice. An examination of the nature of the collection provides an indication of some of the limitations that the exhibition developers would face. The second section documents the decline that the Museum had fallen into and the sorts of changes that were initiated in the first half of the 1990s to revive the ailing Museum. This period of recovery preceded the major redevelopment of the exhibition galleries. The third section, the grand design, argues that despite the climate of change, elements of the traditional Museum were allowed to persist into the present. The pre-history of the exhibition documents the

²³⁴ Young to Smith, op. cit.

²³⁵ James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

expectations and parameters placed upon the creative producers.²³⁶ It then proceeds to document why and how the director developed the exhibition team. The fourth section follows the development of the first concepts into the exhibition brief, and notes the early function of the development process influencing this. It also notes the Beliches' intentions for the exhibition. The brief, as an original conception of the exhibition is then documented for later comparison to the completed exhibition. The exhibition development process "in action" is then described, with a particular focus on the roles performed by James and Margaret Belich and Young.

History collecting at Auckland Museum

The development of the Museum's history collections has suffered from a singular lack of definition. At least until the institution of the Auckland Museum collection policy in 1990 (since expanded and revised), the collection of objects relating to Pākehā history was a grey area.²³⁷ The history collections began accumulating in 1852 when the Museum was founded. The early museum had two registers, an ethnology register and a natural history one, thus the history objects originally came under the umbrella of ethnology.²³⁸ The first observation to make is that the early collection of human history at Auckland Museum was divided between indigenous people generally, with the particular preference for Māori material culture as already noted, and Pākehā or European material culture. The former category represented the collecting priority. This division remains, as Rose Young acknowledges: "I basically came to the conclusion that generally in New Zealand if it's white it's history and if it's not white it's ethnology."

For the first curators of human history in scientific museums, the precedent of natural history provided a foundation on how to collect.²³⁹ The aim of scientific collecting was to systematically gather examples of every "type" of artefact, and of these the most highly prized were "type specimens". Curators collecting human history interpreted this approach by gathering the "best" examples of the pool of human creations. This led to the object-centred or antiquarian collecting described in chapter

²³⁶ This was James and Margaret Belich's title.

²³⁷ Stuart Park notes in his introduction to the 1990 policy that the only previous statement of collecting intent had been published in 1852 on the Museum's foundation. Auckland Institute and Museum, "Auckland Institute and Museum Collection Policy" (1990), p.3.

²³⁸ Young to Smith, op. cit.

²³⁹ Cameron argues that a Linnean approach derived from his botanical collecting dominated Cheeseman's system of collecting and arranging at Auckland Museum. Cameron, op cit.

one. Following Baudrillard Cameron argues that Cheeseman's social distance from Māori 'enabled him to conceptually remove himself from their lived reality so that he could then view them in the abstract'.²⁴⁰ In this way Māori material culture was able to *be* Māori culture. Such a leap could not be made with Pākehā/settler culture however. There is an incongruence between being part of a culture and making "outsider" identifications of significance. When the first general museums were established in New Zealand (Auckland, 1852; Napier, New Plymouth, and Wellington, 1865; Dunedin, 1868; Christchurch, 1870; Invercargill, 1871 and Whanganui, 1892)²⁴¹ the Pākehā past was recent. That is to say it was within living and inherited memory. Cheeseman could not achieve the social distance necessary to objectify Pākehā material culture into Pākehā culture, and so collecting Pākehā culture sat uncomfortably within the framework of objective scientific collecting.

During the Cheeseman era the acquisition of social history objects did occur, but when an alternative collecting enterprise, the Old Colonists Museum, was established in 1915, the Museum transferred 127 items to assist its set up. These items appear to have comprised mainly of photographs, pictures, drawings and documents.²⁴² The impression is that in the long term a slow and passive acquisition of social history objects continued.²⁴³ In 1920 the war register was started to catalogue the military collections (actually begun during the First World War), thus creating a new addition to the registers of human history. The 1938-1939 *Annual Report* notes a discussion over whether or not the Museum should initiate a decorative and applied arts collection as a sub-category of ethnology.²⁴⁴ Records of acquisitions would suggest that it was an acceptable development.²⁴⁵

In 1957 the Old Colonists Museum closed down, and the collections were divided between the Auckland Art Gallery and the Auckland Public Library. Although the

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p.72. Cameron cites Jean Baudrillard, "The system of collecting", in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal eds., *The cultures of collecting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1994), p.21.

²⁴¹ David Butts, "Museums in Aotearoa New Zealand" (unpublished draft), pp.3-4.

²⁴² *Annual Report* 1915-1916, p.8.

²⁴³ For example, the *Annual Report* 1949-1950 includes records of the acquisition of a 'seraphine (precursor to the harmonium) used in the early Northland mission', a penny-farthing bicycle, a motor buggy, and the 'dress sword of Captain Demoulin first surveyor of Auckland...' p.13.

²⁴⁴ The dilemma, apparently facing all the institutions in 'the Dominion', was whether or not this task was best left to the art galleries. Advice was sought from overseas. *Annual Report* 1938-1939, p.6.

²⁴⁵ *Annual Report* 1949-1950 p.13. Also, *Annual Report* 1951-1952, p.17 reports on new displays and arrangements of porcelain and furniture. *Annual Report* 1952-1953, p.12 describes new displays of 'Oriental ceramics and bronze and of English silver and Sheffield plate.' In the *Annual Report* 1955-1956 the development of the collection of applied arts (ethnology) was boosted with the allocation of £500 to purchase furniture from England, p.8.

Museum had been offered the objects (only) from the defunct museum, it declined, wanting the whole of the collection or none of it.²⁴⁶ However, in 1965 when approached by the department store Milne and Choyce to co-produce an exhibition celebrating the business' one-hundredth anniversary (1966), the Museum went back on its earlier decision and accepted the Old Colonists collection. Milne and Choyces' offer to cover all expenses including the registration of the collection no doubt motivated the reversal of the earlier decision. Young observes:

The interesting thing then about the collection register is it was always called the Colonial Register. So it wasn't the history register, and that was very much the idea then which I guess was repeated, to some extent, in little museums throughout the country. History *was* colonial, so you had this big tendency [for] collections... to be 19th century.²⁴⁷

Thus the colonial register and colonial section were initiated, although they remained under the auspices of the ethnology department.²⁴⁸ The year 1965 also saw the creation of the applied arts department, separate to ethnology. A certain amount of collection rationalisation occurred at that time resulting in the transfer of objects from the ethnology department, and with them went the overseeing of the military collections. In 1973 the colonial section moved from ethnology into applied arts, and appears to have become less active.²⁴⁹ Applied arts also began a "miscellaneous" register, which competed with the concept of a (Pākehā) social history collection. In 1990 the Museum's first Collections Policy was drafted. Under the Human History heading five main collections are listed, these are: Applied Arts, Archaeology, Ethnology, Maritime history, and Military History. Colonial history is listed as one of the twelve collection areas under the wing of Applied Arts. Its acquisition objectives are recorded as 'generally passive and minimal' but with occasional active collecting 'when opportunities arise.'²⁵⁰ In 1992 history was established as a curated collection and department in its own right, and the title 'colonial' was dropped.

Thus it can be asserted that the collection of social history objects at the outset was not ethnological collecting, where ethnology is defined as the material culture of a (colonised) indigenous people, particularly those of Māori. Following the First World War it was also not the collection of military objects, and later it was not the collection

²⁴⁶ Yong to Smith, op. cit., *Annual Report 1957-1958*, p.8.

²⁴⁷ Young to Smith, op. cit.

²⁴⁸ *Annual Report 1966-67*, p.14.

²⁴⁹ *Annual Report 1973-1974*, p.22.

²⁵⁰ Auckland Institute and Museum, "Auckland Institute and Museum Collection Policy", p.21.

of applied arts, where applied arts is defined after Pearce as the museum deployment of art history.²⁵¹ The first positive category that can be applied to the collection of these objects is colonial. This was enforced by the 1915 transfer of collection objects to the Old Colonists Museum, and then the accessioning of that museum's objects into the Auckland Museum collections in 1965.

The terms used to describe Pākehā history objects - English by-gones, Old Colonists, Colonial History - highlight a focus on nineteenth century origins. The creation of the Old Colonists Museum is analogous to other developments in the recording of the Pākehā past. Hilliard notes that early twentieth century ethnologists and amateur historians were motivated to document Māori and Pākehā knowledge which they observed to be disappearing. He writes:

“Early settlers”... were dying out, and interviewing them about their experiences and preserving their manuscripts were supported by historical societies and by the state. Perhaps beyond these practical reasons, there was a sense that the changes wrought by colonisation had put time out of joint, a sentiment that several Pākehā writers voiced. The sense of change and the threat of loss elevated the seriousness of collection: it became an act of rescue.²⁵²

The creation of these texts was seen as an act of salvage. Buchli locates this motivation with a ‘melancholic turn in the face of rapid social change’, which he sees as applying equally to traditional European rural life facing industrialisation, and in European observers of non-European societies, such as Cheeseman.²⁵³ Phillips observes that the work of amateur (Pākehā) historians from the late nineteenth century fits into four main categories: military history (in New Zealand and abroad), pioneer memoirs, ethnology (focussing on what was thought to be traditional Māori life), and the history and development of New Zealand politically. Phillips follows the continuance of these categories into the twentieth-century²⁵⁴ noting that by the 1920s, ‘the pioneer memoirs continued to come out, becoming ever more nostalgic and anecdotal as the automobile began to undermine old rural culture.’²⁵⁵

Erik Olssen writes that the first wave of New Zealand history scholars ‘devoted much of their scholarly energy to New Zealand’s English-ness and the on-going

²⁵¹ Pearce, *On collecting*, op. cit., p.6

²⁵² Chris Hilliard, “Textual museums: Collection and writing in history and ethnology 1900-1950”, in, Bronwyn Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum, eds., *Fragments: New Zealand social and cultural history* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000), p.119.

²⁵³ Buchli, op. cit., p.8.

²⁵⁴ Phillips, “Of verandahs”, op. cit., p.121.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.123.

significance of the Empire.²⁵⁶ The development of the Museum's interest in applied arts with a focus on objects of British and European origin ("culture"), even though occurring at a time when New Zealand history was becoming a scholarly endeavour, appears nevertheless to share a similar mind-set. James Belich has described this continuing influence of a mindset that located Pākehā conceptually as British in the twentieth century as the recolonial phase of New Zealand history.²⁵⁷ Wilson summarises:

I think for a long time in this institution's history but throughout New Zealand and Australia, the prevailing social attitude was we didn't have a history. History was something that existed in Britain; it didn't exist here. And so if you haven't got a history why would you ever collect objects that might be part of a history? I think that it would be true to say that our history collections had been formed late, in New Zealand museums, by accident, and without much strategic thought as to what it was we wanted to report.²⁵⁸

However, within scholarship, as within society, this began to change in the 1960s. The attitude of the Museum to Pākehā history was however slow to follow.

The (new) social history arrived in the New Zealand universities in the 1960s in a response to international developments in the discipline.²⁵⁹ Initially defined in opposition to the (old) political-orientated history the 'new social history and its multiplying sub-genres such as women's history, urban and cultural history, business history and econometrics, aspired to understand the experience not of elites but of 'ordinary people' in their everyday lives, many of them previously neglected, while making explanation more rigorous.²⁶⁰ Under the influence of these new historical practices in New Zealand universities academic history diversified, and the range of sources interrogated and the questions asked of the past increased. More useful now as an umbrella term, social history and its developments has altered earlier ideas of what constituted the discipline.²⁶¹ Given the scholarly aims of the Auckland Museum under the 1996 Auckland War Memorial Museum Act, it would be expected that the new recognition of the category of history in the museum would acknowledge these

²⁵⁶ Erik Olssen, "Where to from here? Reflections on the twentieth-century historiography of nineteenth-century New Zealand", *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol.26, no.1 (April 1992), p.54.

²⁵⁷ James Belich, *Paradise reforged*.

²⁵⁸ Wilson to Smith, op. cit.

²⁵⁹ Dalley and Labrum, "Introduction", in, Dalley and Labrum, eds., op. cit., p.1.

²⁶⁰ Olssen, op. cit., p.68.

²⁶¹ Dalley and Labrum, op. cit., p.2.

academic developments.²⁶² The contracting of an eminent academic social historian such as James Belich to be the Creative Director of the social history exhibition is certainly consistent with a conceptual change. Young notes that:

we've defined a collections policy that has certain broad, thematic areas. So local history, Auckland history, Auckland and Aucklanders, migration and settlement, history of local businesses and organisations, how we lived²⁶³

The test of these developments will be the definition of what constitutes an "Aucklander", "local", "history", and the "we" in "how we lived". The analysis of *City* will reveal this.

To summarise, since their inception, the history collections at Auckland Museum have developed with an apparent lack of definition. At the outset a division between Māori and Pākehā was enforced, and priority was given to collecting Māori material culture. As a scientific museum Auckland was capable of collecting the indigenous "other" in systematic detail, however the collecting of the "self" presented difficulty. By the early twentieth century this difficulty was solved by bifurcating between the cultural present and the "early settler" or "colonial" past. The latter category became distanced from the present, generalised and often romanticised with nostalgia. A focus on British-ness through the development of an applied arts collection enforced the elitist and narrow terms in which Pākehā presence in New Zealand was construed in the Museum and society at large. In the mid-1960s a collaborative exhibition development saw the creation of the colonial register, however after the flurry of activity surrounding this exhibition, the collection slowly became inactive. While academic history was changing the Museum was slow to respond, however by the early 1990s the first curator of history was given charge of the collection, and by the late 1990s the first new long-term history exhibition *City* was developed. If a collection's organising principles resonate in the present as an intellectual inheritance as suggested in chapter one, then the construal of the history collections is based upon a culturally narrow Pākehā focus.

²⁶² For example, Roger Neich, Auckland Museum's curator of ethnology, has asked: 'where [in museums] is the 19th century Maori social history, the evidence of the struggle for Maori cultural and even physical survival in the later 19th century?' One would expect that such questions could be addressed in the broad focus that the term social history suggests. Roger Neich, "Interpretation and presentation of Maori culture", *AGMANZ Journal*, vol. 16, no.4 (1985), p.7, cited in, Victoire Clarke, op. cit., p.67.

²⁶³ Young to Smith, op. cit.

The 1990s, a context of change

Auckland Museum is situated on a hilltop in the picturesque Auckland Domain with a commanding view over the harbour and out to the Hauraki Gulf. Even in today's built-up skyline, the building, opened in 1927, maintains a presence as one of the city's landmarks. The Museum has a dual function by also performing the role of war memorial. Built with a Greek-inspired neo-classical architecture, it is inscribed with the names of foreign battlegrounds; a bas-relief frieze of military images skirts the entire perimeter wall. This sombre note is carried inside on the top storey where two sanctuaries with marble lined walls remember the names of Auckland Region's war dead. For these reasons the Museum has a high public profile.

In 1990, it was recognised that the Museum needed to change. A project team was established and reported a raft of issues and problems that needed to be faced.²⁶⁴ The building itself needed maintenance and upgrading to meet earthquake safety standards and revised fire regulations. Both collections and visitors were at risk in the event of fire or major geological activity, and security and environmental controls were inadequate on both counts. Furthermore the historic listing of the building meant that major modification was restricted. There was a lack of storage space for the collections that was affecting their management, and research activity by staff. None of the collections were fully documented. The quality of the displays were also recognised to be lagging behind the rest of the museum world. The collections, recognised as having both national and international significance, were displayed in an unresponsive and inanimate way. Whereas there had been an increased emphasis worldwide on public programmes, this was not true of Auckland Museum.²⁶⁵ The Museum was also facing major financial problems. It was recognised that there was a need to generate more income not only through the traditional sources of central and local government, but also through sponsorship, and by being more entrepreneurial. Like many similar organisations, the Museum recognised it needed to go into a phase of restructuring.

Playing to the Museum's strengths, the intention for the future was to improve but maintain the character of the old Museum's displays and exploit the building's architectural features. With the arrival of the present director, Rodney Wilson, in 1994,

²⁶⁴ The following paragraph is based on: Auckland Institute and Museum, "A strategy to revitalise the Auckland Museum" [unpublished] (1991?).

²⁶⁵ It was noted at the time that the 'inherent justification that scientific and cultural programmes are in themselves "necessary and good" for a self aware society, is now being joined by a belief that these activities must become more accessible and able to be enjoyed by the public that "owns them".' Ibid., p.6.

the plan was reworked and enlarged to include a major organisational restructuring. In 1994 the \$43 million refurbishment project to ensure the safety and preservation of the building began, spearheading the refurbishment of the Museum's collections exhibition galleries. As well as the physical changes, several internal changes also occurred. The most drastic of these was a reduction of staff numbers, with 27 redundancies. Under the 1996 Auckland War Memorial Museum Act, the Museum's governance was restructured to include a Māori committee, the Taumata-a-Iwi, in reference to the Treaty of Waitangi, an unprecedented development in New Zealand museums. In 1995, at the end of his first twelve months as director, Wilson made the following statement, capturing the tone and intention of the revitalisation project:

The task for Council, the Trust Board and staff during the next five years is to invigorate the Museum, whilst retaining the best of its traditions; to equip it to answer better the demands of a modern public and the call on its educational and information services; to make it more competitive in the recreational and tourism markets; and to provide a sound platform for future growth and change. Nothing is static. The world is changing rapidly, and with it the expectations of new generations of museum users.²⁶⁶

The museum faced the future with a new outlook. Following this period of physical and organisational change, the development of the new suite of exhibitions gathered momentum.

The Grand Design

Introduction

In the context of Auckland Museum, *City* was created as part of the overall restructuring project, which included changes to organisational culture and building structure, as well as a whole suite of new exhibitions in the galleries. The key figure in the grand design was Rodney Wilson, who took the mandate of steering the Museum restructuring when he accepted the directorship in 1994. Wilson stated his position clearly: 'although changes are taking place the essential values, ethics and principles of the Museum will remain and its noble traditions will be upheld. But the Museum *will* change.'²⁶⁷ Wilson

²⁶⁶ *Annual Report 1994-1995*, p. 7.

²⁶⁷ Rodney Wilson, *Annual Report 1996-1997*, p.6 (emphasis added).

supplied the leadership and vision for the gallery changes, and the grand design reflects his outlook. In this section I will review the pre-history of the exhibition.

Creative directions

Wilson was in agreement that a complete overhaul of the exhibition spaces was necessary: ‘some of the processes of display modernisation, communication, interpretation and visitor service which have changed the complexion of museums abroad, had not occurred in Auckland.’²⁶⁸ He believed that reworking the Museum’s public interface was basic to the Museum’s commitment to its communities of interest, and also symbolically refocused the organisation’s culture that he criticised for being insular and inward looking.²⁶⁹ Wilson recalls the basis on which these changes were developed:

So we had three main themes [arising from the breadth of the collections and the War memorial function]... and they were the stories of the place of New Zealand, the story of the people of New Zealand and the Pacific, and then this other element which was the specialised aspect of the telling of the story of the people, and that is the emergence of a national identity through times of crisis and conflict. Very conveniently we had a building that had three floors. So three stories to tell, three storeys of building, and then we had some logics within the building that were pretty undeniable. The strongest of all of those was the Māori Court with the house Hotunui in the middle of it, the big waka [Te Toki a Tapiri] that had been built into the building... You can’t even turn it around and take it out through the front doors, there’s not enough room to do that... Plus we had two war memorial sanctuaries on the top floor... They started to give some sort of - pegs in the ground - that you’d have a lot of difficulty moving around. So conceptually, what we came up with was that we would tell the stories of New Zealand identity on the top floor level sanctuaries and rooms, because that was the logical places to tell them... Then, we’d tell the human history stories on the ground floor because we had the pegs of the Māori Court in there, before and after the Māori Court, geographically in the building. Which left the middle level for the natural history story. And hence the three layers of the wedding cake...²⁷⁰

The Museum building and its original layout was thus allowed to dictate to the first stages of the re-design of the galleries. As a result of this logic, the post-contact history

²⁶⁸ Rodney Wilson, *Annual Report 1994-1995*, p.5.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.7; also Wilson to Smith, op. cit.

²⁷⁰ Wilson to Smith, op. cit.

galleries were designated as those on the east and south-east ground floor, reached (from the front door) via the Pacific and Māori galleries. This decision impacted on the ‘Creative Direction’ given to the Creative Producers, requiring that ‘conceptual planning and development of the New Zealand History narrative(s)... be undertaken in cognisance of the development of those other galleries.... to ensure a complementarity of displays’.²⁷¹ The grand design for the ground floor was that it would tell ‘a Pacific/New Zealand story from earliest Pacific migration and navigation until today.’²⁷²

The historical nature of Auckland Museum was also to feature in the overall look for the Museum. Market surveys had revealed that visitors simultaneously wanted the Museum ‘to modernise, become more lively, more interactive’ while asserting ‘their affection for its tradition and permanence’. It was therefore recognised that the challenge for the Museum was ‘to achieve improvement’ and at the same time ‘reinforce the Museum’s timelessness and tradition.’²⁷³ This is reflected in the directive in the document ‘Creative Direction’ given to the Creative Producers that the ‘galleries will be “collections-rich”, in that they will focus on the telling of the story through objects and the priority will be on use of Auckland Museum’s various collections to service that end. Audio-visual, multimedia and other specialised display will also be used in a support role, but not in a lead role.’²⁷⁴ Wilson explains this expectation:

We want to tell stories. We don’t just wish to present objects. But we wish that the objects are contextualised, relate to each other, that provide stories that people come into and go out of. So, the narrative, the story telling became very important. But we also cautioned ourselves in having made that decision because we said... [the] objects must come first. We are going to be an object-rich museum. We are not going to use our collections to illustrate narratives. But we are going to weave our narratives around the objects in a way in which there is a kind of dialogue between object and narrative.²⁷⁵

A dialogical approach to display where the objects “come first” would be a new departure for history in the Museum. Following from the discussions in chapter one, this

²⁷¹ “Auckland Museum Refurbishment Project 2000. Creative direction: New Zealand history outline brief and programme for display development” [6pp], 25 September 1997, p.1. Rose Young *City Project Files*. (Henceforth cited as “Creative Direction”.)

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ Rodney Wilson, *Annual Report 1994-1995*, p.5.

²⁷⁴ “Creative Direction”, *op. cit.*, p.1.

²⁷⁵ Wilson to Smith *op. cit.*

might allow the display of objects as active in constructing meaning in social relations, privileging their possibilities as social history evidence.

The ‘Creative Direction’ given to the Creative Producers had a very minor focus on the target audience other than the statement that the ‘stories developed’ must ‘meet the widest range of Museum and community needs’.²⁷⁶ Vague as this may seem, the expectations were clearer than they appear. The Board had some months earlier announced the ‘four categories of customers’ that it ‘recognised’ as:

- Students - primary, intermediate and secondary school students, as well as tertiary students from university and technical colleges
- Auckland residents - reflecting the multicultural diversity of the people in the Auckland region
- New Zealand tourists - New Zealanders visiting Auckland – the world’s largest Polynesian city
- Overseas tourists - overseas visitors seeking introduction to New Zealand and its cultural heritages²⁷⁷

The expectation therefore was that the exhibitions were for the “consumption” of all-comers, with an emphasis on multiculturalism.

The ‘Creative Direction’ also stated the Museum’s expectation of the process of exhibition development:

The following Summary Stages of conceptual planning and display design development... have been identified...’

- A. Concept development
- B. Storyboard Development
- C. Story Completion
- D. Collection Selection
- E. Design Development
- F. Interpretation

To give direction and control of the display development process, the progression through these key phases is best approached lineally; accepting there are crossovers and some parallel development of the elements is healthy and inevitable.²⁷⁸

The expectation placed upon the Creative Producer by the Museum was very much ideas first. Although the concept and story obviously had to be cognisant of the collections, the process of development described places the ideas as quite separate to,

²⁷⁶ “Creative direction”, op. cit., p.1.

²⁷⁷ Peter Menzies, *Annual Report 1996-1997*, p.63

²⁷⁸ “Creative direction”, pp.1-2.

and before, the objects. The ‘Creative Direction’ did not suggest that the exhibition would, for example, be developed from object-based primary research. The time factor also would have been a consideration in this, as opening was intended for the end of 1999. The focus on story telling abilities of the Creative Producer was foremost, as Belich remarks ‘because I didn’t have much in the way of museum exhibition experience, I didn’t really have an exhibition-like image.... I did have a strong idea of the sort of storyline I wanted to take.’²⁷⁹

Other foundation work involves providing a budget for the project. The finances of restructuring and running of the Museum overall had been a preoccupation of the Board in the early 1990s. Wilson:

the new Board when it first came into being... was very closely focused on admissions and financial issues and that sort of thing... it perceived, I think rightly, that there were some basic management issues... I don’t want you to misunderstand this, because we’re a not-for-profit organisation and our goals are not profitability as they are in the commercial world, but to hone up our commercial skills.... That was the emphasis of the Board at first.²⁸⁰

There was indeed a palpable sense of relief in the president’s reporting that funders of the restructuring (Local and Central Government) had agreed to adjust their contributions according to inflation to protect the original purchasing power.²⁸¹ The exhibition budget was calculated at ‘two and half thousand dollars per square metre in 1994 dollar values’ which, although ‘not a king’s ransom’, was calculated to provide reasonable latitude for display development. Furthermore, a contingency management plan was also established which, as Wilson explains means ‘nobody touches [the budget] unless they get their authority from me. And the authority doesn’t come because the price comes in above or somebody’s goofed, there has to be something much more serious than that to allow us to start to draw on the contingency.’²⁸² In this way the director could retain control over spending.

Developing the Creative Team

The most important aspect of the grand design is choosing the personnel that form the Creative Team. Exhibitions require a range of skills and expertise in the various stages

²⁷⁹ James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

²⁸⁰ Wilson to Smith, op. cit.

²⁸¹ H.V. Coop, *Annual Report*, 1994-1995, p.4.

²⁸² Wilson to Smith, op. cit.

of their execution, and the teams that create them must work well together and have the right balance of abilities to successfully execute the brief. However, within the Museum's context of change, the team and exhibition process represented more than just choosing personnel. Part of the Wilson-lead restructuring had aimed to change the staff culture in the museum. This included altering the role of the curators, who traditionally are responsible for, or deeply involved in, creating exhibitions:

RW: not all curators are good storytellers. In fact, there's almost something about curation of collections, collection management, and storytelling that are in conflict. The person that's very assiduous in collecting and describing and cataloguing and so on, might not necessarily be the person that has the big picture....

Wilson saw the role of curator as separate to the historical synthesis required to contextualise the collections for the public. A storyteller from outside of the museum was seen as necessary:

DS: You always had the idea of getting James Belich to do this gallery?

RW: Pretty much, yeah. Having carved up our programme of time, having carved up the building, we knew what we were going to do. We knew that those two galleries were going to be history galleries, but we didn't know what we were going to do in there. Or, right at the beginning, who we were going to use. But we were always working to a reasonable lead-time to identify those people and the stories. I don't know when we actually recruited Jamie and Margaret, but it was probably about... late '97.

DS: Was his profile influential, *New Zealand Wars*, *Making Peoples*, the TV documentary?

RW: ...I would say Jamie's books were definitely influential on his choice, the television series wasn't a factor. I don't think we actually seriously considered any others. We could have...

[...]

When we were looking to who this should be, I described this person we needed as being like a shaman. We needed someone who could dance around the fire and hold people spellbound with telling the stories of the tribe.... So we wanted shaman-like people to be able to tell this story and we didn't have many shaman-like people in this institution. [...] Jamie was the person to tell that story, I mean yes, there could have been others, but here was one of the more argumentative historians, somebody with a point of view. Points of view are great, because we wanted to be a museum with a point of view, because points of views can be contested and they can be challenged. Sometimes it presents the opportunity for the

museum to put the countering points of view as well; this is what we believe but others say this.... knowledge is contestable, its always contestable, I think that those are fantastic things that museums can involve themselves with. So, who better to have than a historian who ruffles feathers from time to time, but in ruffling feathers captures peoples' imaginations as well, gets them on board, [and] makes them feel a sense of belonging.²⁸³

In Wilson's mind, the creation of a major long-term history exhibition needed the (magical) qualities of a performer who could capture and hold an audience. The Museum's scholarly aims also meant an alliance to the active creation of knowledge was to its advantage. At that stage Belich had published *Making Peoples*, the first of his two-volume history of New Zealand, and was in the process of writing the second. He had also published *The New Zealand Wars*, which had been made into a television documentary. One of the hallmarks of his interpretations had been to emphasise the agency of Māori in contact history in direct contrast to the popular tendency to portray or assume Māori as passive.²⁸⁴

Thus James Belich and Margaret Belich were hired as the Creative Producers for the two New Zealand history galleries that were to become *Wild Child* and the case study *City*. As Margaret Belich explains:

Originally he [James Belich] was asked to do it and he said I can't do this without Mags because I'm not going to have the time to... [do] the translation work... to work with people to ensure that it's delivered - with all the mix of skills you need to make up a museum exhibition. So that's where I came in, and the division of labour was always that Jamie was the creative bit of it and I was the producer bit of it. Our job title was the *glorious* Creative Producer. [Laughs]²⁸⁵

Margaret Belich's role was to assist James Belich in adapting to the Museum context of making a history exhibition.

Wilson describes the team approach that workshops ideas as 'a process that I fundamentally believe in.... Everything that we did was dealt with in that way. Even those quite simply stated building blocks were the product of that kind of debate.'²⁸⁶ The core of the Creative Team was James and Margaret Belich, Kai Hawkins, 'a well

²⁸³ Wilson to Smith, op. cit.

²⁸⁴ One newspaper review of *City* described Belich as a 'myth-busting historian'. B. Rudman, "Those were our young years," *New Zealand Herald*, 18 December 1999.

²⁸⁵ Margaret Belich interview by Daniel Smith, 26 July 2002, Auckland. Tape recording.

²⁸⁶ Wilson to Smith, Interview, 7 July 2002.

known film, retail and museum display designer',²⁸⁷ and Rose Young, the history curator. James Belich describes his perspective of the team dynamic:

Margaret and Kai and I, [and] eventually Rose who distrusted the process a little initially, but really got into it, really worked well together. So we'd sit around working through it sparking off each other. It was genuine teamwork.... But... had we not had someone as good as Kai it might have been very difficult. So... basically there was a team process that actually worked at the conceptual level, primarily consisting of the four I mentioned, and Rodney had some very good ideas when he came in too, but he wasn't able to participate as much as he could. But he had the same kind of mind operating in context quite well. I mean I found that quite interesting because, you know, the way in which a group can work so that the whole is greater than the sum of it's parts is something that I've known in theory but not in practice. So it was nice to find out that it could actually happen.²⁸⁸

The director, by supplying leadership to the vision and development of the exhibition, and by choosing the members of the team that created the exhibition had an early and pivotal role, even before the concept had been proposed.

The evolution of the concept

Narratives and collections

Predating the brief by over a year was the work of the curators in creating narrative overviews of the collections. Young created extensive lists of objects and possible themes that would be relevant to an exhibition on the subject 'of New Zealand History post-European arrival and settlement.'²⁸⁹ Dated early 1996, Young's "History Collection Groupings" suggests objects and historical themes that includes: bottles linked to 'breweries and aerated water manufacturers', the wine industry collection, the chimney pot collection, 'Farmers Trading Company... Importance of Farmers (and predecessor Laidlaw Leeds) as a major department store, but [the] collection is small and lacks significant items, needs development', the extractive industries theme 'gold, kauri gum, and timber, immigration, and growth of Auckland'. Objects included

²⁸⁷ Rodney Wilson, *Annual Report 1994-1995*, p.7.

²⁸⁸ James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

²⁸⁹ "Creative Direction", op. cit., p.1.

cameras and photographic equipment, domestic and household collections.²⁹⁰ In one form or another, all of these suggestions became part of the *City* exhibition.

The social history collections were to be central in the new exhibition. From the outset this was likely to be limiting, as Young notes, ‘one of the issues is the collection isn’t a huge collection’²⁹¹ and ‘our collections for twentieth century were not very rich.’ Furthermore organisational restructuring with the loss of staff affected the ongoing cataloguing process.

The redundancies were well over at that stage... I had lost the history technician and that really got me because in fact all of that extra collection work was being done with people on short-term contracts. So the thing of there being someone else, working on that who was already up to date with the collections and the systems and all that....

Young had an expanded role of supervision in addition to her normal tasks ‘juggling the public enquiries... that come in day to day, the management demands’. The shortfalls of the existing collections also required collecting for the exhibition, which in turn required documentation before entering the collections, compounding the cataloguing pressure.

Concept development

The early role of the Creative Producers was to produce the concept(s) for the two galleries as identified in the ‘Creative Direction’ document. The workshop approach meant that the initial concepts for the galleries, as with all the ideas, were produced through a process of presentation and response. At the end of January 1998 the Beliches and curatorial staff had their inaugural meeting to discuss possibilities: ‘Discussion ranged over concepts and access and analysis of collections. A schedule was drafted for the exhibition through to 15 October 1999’²⁹², the date of completion. At the beginning of March 1998 the Creative Producers presented three preliminary proposals. They also presented their intentions for the exhibitions:

²⁹⁰ Rose Young *City* Project Files: “History Collection Groupings” [12pp], *passim*.

²⁹¹ Young estimates that ‘if we took what was in the Colonial Register that Colonial Register has about 4000 objects. That was just the Colonial Register, then there’s the War Register, Numismatics, things like that. But the things that had found their way into that initial register, it was not a large collection by any means compared to many museums.’ Rose Young to Daniel Smith, Interview, 16 September 2002.

²⁹² Rose Young *City* Project Files: ‘Minutes from meeting for the history galleries project, Friday 30 Jan 1998. Present: “Michael Evans, Jamie and Margaret Belich, Rose Young, Louis Le Vallant, Katrina Stamp, Nigel Prickett, and Gillian Chaplin”, p.1.

1. Stretch conventions without breaking them: utilise the special strengths of museum exhibition as an historical medium, but also challenge assumptions, such as solemn and reverential notions of museum as secular church.

2. Both medium and message: the exhibitions must be accessible and engaging to a wide and varied audience, often on multiple levels, but must also have worthwhile messages.

3. “Breaking the glass”: challenge assumptions about history in general and Pākehā history in particular. Break barriers to empathy with, and general excitement about, Pākehā past.

4. Keep cheap; use existing collections, or other existing resources (library, capacity for creating botanical exhibits etc.), or objects or images that can be borrowed, sponsored, or cheaply bought or made.

5. Cutting edge: incorporate responsible cutting edge views of NZ history – design for 2008 rather than 1998.

6. Coherence and flexibility: exhibitions need to have cohesion, but also breadth and flexibility. They are a context, a set of options, from which the audience weaves own story. The “storyline” is not imposed, mechanistic, or one-dimensional, but still underlies.

7. Pākehā but bicultural: aim to energise Pākehā history; link, but avoid clashing, with Māori exhibitions; include but do not co-opt, Māori dimension.

8. Auckland but national: respect special relationship with Auckland region, but also recognise extent to which Auckland historical issues are New Zealand issues.²⁹³

Overall, these reveal that the intention was to create an exhibition that, while recognising the strengths of the museum medium, was prepared to be unorthodox, to not necessarily be bound by traditional approaches and interpretations. Points three and seven emphasise the Pākehā focus of the intended exhibition, even though biculturalism was also an aim. This conforms to the traditional approach to history in the Museum, however the intention to ‘challenge assumptions’ and be ‘cutting edge’ suggests commitment to the opposite. Given the past approaches to history at Auckland Museum and in New Zealand museums generally, as already noted, the intention appears to have been to be forward thinking, to create a new standard. Certainly point eight seems to imply that James Belich saw the exhibition as an opportunity to produce a national history through an Auckland case study. In addition, point six suggests the exhibition was intended to invite visitors to create their own interpretations, and point four seems

²⁹³ Rose Young *City Project Files*: “Preliminary Proposals for New Zealand history exhibitions at Auckland Museum” [17pp], prepared by James and Margaret Belich, (presented) 4 March 1998, p.2.

to suggest that the Beliches were prepared to use reproductions to develop the exhibition.

The ‘historical vision’ behind the proposals drew directly from James Belich’s academic work. They were summarised as:

Proposal One [‘Te Pākehā’] draws on a thesis about Māori-Pākehā interaction which emphasises the two-sidedness of the contact process, and the extent to which the twin peoples “made” each other. The case for this is made in *Making Peoples*, ch.5-11. Proposals Two [‘Wild Child’] and Three [‘Demon Drink and the Dry Century’] draw on the thesis that modern NZ history is characterised, not by a steady progress towards autonomy, sophistication and diversity, but by three dovetailing phases: progressive colonisation, 1830s-1900s (ruthless but robust, diverse); recolonisation, 1880s-1970s (narrow, conformist, homogenous, but also affluent and secure); and decolonisation, 1960s-future (a return to diversity, but the jury still out). The case for this is made in the sequel to *Making Peoples*, as yet unpublished.²⁹⁴

Out of these proposed concepts ‘Wild Child’ was picked up for one of the two gallery spaces to be filled. Neither of the remaining proposals however was deemed as acceptable for the second gallery.

James and Margaret Belich felt that an air of conservatism, perhaps deriving from the Museum’s memorial function, helped override their favoured ‘Demon Drink’ option.

JB: maybe the museum did have a little bit of primness. There’s a certain ...vestigial sense of museum as church in some of the people in that institution. So one of the proposed exhibitions was Demon Drink and the Dry Century, and I think there was a feeling - I don’t think it was from Rodney... - that this wasn’t quite the thing we want Auckland’s great museum to have.²⁹⁵

MB: Demon Drink and the Dry Century... was the really cool one, but we weren’t allowed to do that one. [Laughs]... Even though we had based that on the known collection strengths of the Museum... I think that in the end... with... all the politics around drink, it was probably too much²⁹⁶

Young’s stated response however, was more concerned with collections and the value of the interpretations for an exhibition, rather than an issue of appropriateness:

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p.3. *Making peoples: A history of the New Zealanders from Polynesian settlement to the end of the nineteenth century* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1997). The sequel was *Paradise Reforged* op. cit.

²⁹⁵ James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

²⁹⁶ Margaret Belich to Smith, op. cit.

RY: we've got the pub upstairs in Centennial Street and we had the Victoria Hotel excavation, we had the little wine industry collection... I'm not sure how apparent collection ideas were contained within the concept.... I liked the Te Pākehā thing, although... Jamie had stated it as a particular concept, that it was Pākehā history through Māori eyes. I don't think he actually did that. I think it ended up being contact history and some of it ended up being more Māori history²⁹⁷

One possible implication of this disagreement was a miscalculation by the Beliches about the amount of objects needed to carry an object centred exhibition. A lack of experience in working in the museum context meant they had little practice in relating quantities of objects to exhibition concepts and gallery floor space.

Through the processes of discussion the Beliches also became aware of a general feeling in the museum that the exhibition should be a more 'geographically based story',²⁹⁸ that is, with greater relevance to Auckland. This led the Beliches to return to the Museum in April with another exhibition proposal: 'City'. The proposal was accepted in principal and, over the next three or so months, was redrafted in reply to another round of Museum responses and meetings by Margaret Belich with the curators concerned.²⁹⁹ In August 1998 the second draft of 'City' was presented to the Museum, and this document became the exhibition brief.³⁰⁰

*The brief*³⁰¹

'City' retained elements from the earlier proposals such as a 'Pub'; a sense of an early Māori Auckland, and James Belich's three-phase approach to New Zealand history. The new concept advanced closer towards the Museum's intentions than earlier proposals by making Auckland's history the central focus of New Zealand history: 'Auckland is simply too big for its history to be wholly separated from that of New Zealand.'³⁰² Belich's intention to avoid a progressive interpretation was also made clear: 'the story must not be told solely in triumphalist or singularist terms. We need to cover busts as well as booms; hidden and varied histories as well as the homogenous official one; bad

²⁹⁷ Young to Smith, op. cit.

²⁹⁸ Margaret Belich to Smith, op. cit.

²⁹⁹ Rose Young *City* Project Files: Meeting minutes, 15 May 1998, attached to a memo 21 May 1998.

³⁰⁰ Belich Project Files: "City: Second draft. History gallery proposal for the Auckland Museum by James and Margaret Belich, August 1998".

³⁰¹ The complete text of this document is recorded in Appendix Two.

³⁰² Ibid. p.2.

news as well as good.’³⁰³ Linking the particular history of Auckland with the general history of New Zealand were a number of ‘connecting’ themes:

the shift from the Big Four to the Big One, New Zealand’s love-hate relationship with Auckland, Auckland’s love-hate relationship with its own growth, its tendency to busts as well as booms, the downs as well as the ups of a rollercoaster history.³⁰⁴

Thus the brief proposed a history of Auckland with a broad focus, one that would connect with the general history of the nation.

As noted in chapter one the brief is the ‘bible’ of exhibition development. It is the beginning of the design process. From it, (and with James Belich) Kai Hawkins developed the layout of the displays on the gallery floor, called “footprints”. As the first fully developed statement of the intended outcome, the brief provides a point from which to measure the changes that occurred during the development process. We shall now take a “walk” through this first version of the exhibition.

Entry to the exhibition was envisaged through an animated arch of an appropriately rescaled Auckland isthmus rotated so that ‘north-south is left-right’ rather than ‘the conventional up-down’, the arch being formed by the Manukau harbour.³⁰⁵ Lights, beginning with a single light and working through a cycle that ends with forming the word “City”, were to indicate the growth of Auckland and its population and the subject of the exhibition. Part of the entry display was also to include an audio-visual of a rollercoaster ride intercut with ‘the galleries displays’ and also ‘historic images and footage of Auckland.’ Through the entry was to be a space fitted to mimic a generic ‘Auckland City public bar, circa 1965.’ This space was intended to ‘function like an airlock, shifting visitors’ mood’. A skit performed by comedienne Linda Topp as a (male) bartender was to appear as an audio visual that ended asking: “What is history, mate? *You’re* history, mate.” The purpose behind this was to orientate visitors into thinking of themselves as participants in the historical process. For Aucklanders, this was their history.

Beyond the Pub was the long corridor of the “Rush Phase” of Auckland history. Beginning over a century earlier than the setting of the Pub, this covered the ‘foundations and the reckless but dynamic “rush phase” of Auckland history’. To the left was ‘Māori Foundations’ followed by ‘Māori Trade’, symbolised by a Māori canoe.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Quotations in this section *ibid.*

To the right was ‘Pākehā Foundations’ leading up to a dray (opposite the canoe) containing ‘Pākehā trade goods or... building equipment’, an open display and part of the ‘Makings of Auckland’. Between the Māori left and the Pākehā right stood William Hobson’s Bed, and a display on ‘The Price of Auckland’. Half way down the corridor, beyond the canoe and dray, was the ‘saw pit and pit saw’ of the ‘Timber Rush’, which supplied kauri timber for building. Nearby, to the right was a collection of ‘bricks, tiles, pipes, [and] chimney pots’ also relating to City Building. This area contained ‘Auckland Gaol’, ‘Fire’, ‘Woman’s Work’ (emphasising the weight of domestic objects) and ‘Wife Rush’. The corridor turns to the right working towards the ‘Crash of ‘86’, and the end of rush phase Auckland, through ‘Fathers of Auckland’ the impact of the gold rush and the ‘Webs of Credit’ surrounding Thomas Russell.

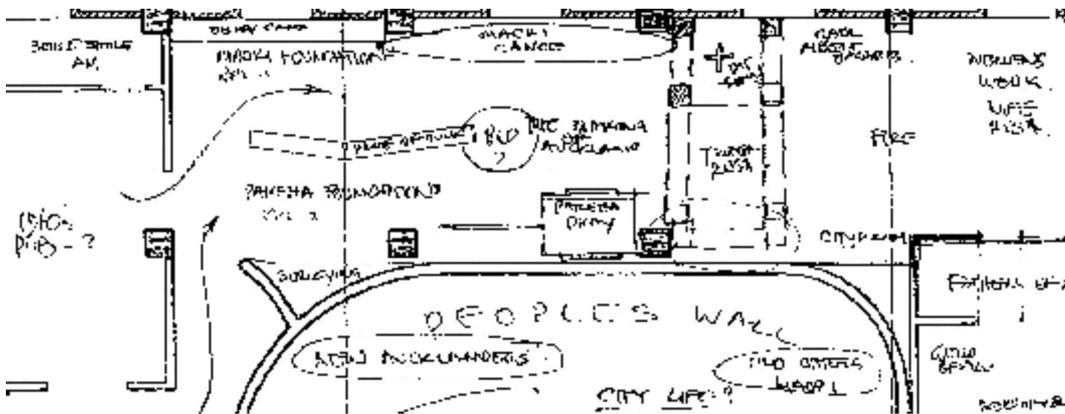


Plate 9 First gallery floor plan, section showing Rush Phase.

The iconic object of the second phase, titled ‘Shifting Gear’, is the tram, symbolising Auckland’s middle age ‘suburban spread’. The period covers the ‘1880s-1920s, focusing on the rise of the Protein Industry, the new “Recolonial” relationship with Britain, the “Second Industrial Revolution” and Auckland’s role as the key interface of all three.’ The aim is partly to account for Auckland’s growth into the main city of New Zealand. ‘This continuing trajectory – from the Big Four Cities to the Big One – is a central theme of Auckland’s – and New Zealand’s – modern history.’ The displays in this area included ‘The Farmers’, ‘1900s Studio Photography’, and ‘Air Auckland’. ‘Shifting Gear’ is the ‘hinge or fulcrum’ in the “U-shaped” path, the visitor is turned towards the second arm of the exhibition.

‘Queen City, 20th Century Auckland’ consisted of a mosaic of six displays, some clearly described (the Kiwi House and the People’s Wall), others sketchy (City Life,

Processing the brief

For James Belich, the role of Creative Producer was a challenging one because of his inexperience with the exhibition medium. As he admitted, ‘I was mystified about how we were going to go about this in the first place, but I think it was Rodney who said “look you decide what you want to do then we will see if we can do it”.’ On another level, he also felt that a history exhibition was ‘theoretically... my game’, seeing himself as ‘an historian first... the nature of the medium... [as] secondary’. Having already branched out to television, his attitude towards the exhibition concept became:

just another dimension of the process of communicating scholarly history to a wide audience by making it user friendly and as immediate and relevant to people as possible, and exciting³⁰⁶

The approach to the brief was characteristic of the storytelling qualities that Wilson identified in Belich. Belich explains his basic thesis:

people think the history in their own back yard is boring, I try to site it in one of the most remarkable developments in the history of human demography, and that is the explosion of these settler cities in the nineteenth century, Chicago, Melbourne, Auckland. Instant cities.

[...]

basically the conception was simply that we need to see this city as... an example of a remarkable global phenomenon, which is the emergence of the neo-European mega-city in the blink of history’s eyelid... I mean Chicago’s the classic case, you know, it grew from 30 people to 1.1 million in 60 years. Auckland wasn’t that far behind. It was that notion of fast history that I wanted to convey.³⁰⁷

Thus Belich began adapting to the new medium by focusing those elements that were most familiar. Capturing the notion of fast exciting history in three-dimensions however involved the new experience of working in a team and with material culture.

James Belich:

Because I didn’t have much in the way of museum exhibition experience, I didn’t really have an exhibition-like image... pre-conceived... I did have a strong idea of the sort of storyline I wanted to take. But the creative process was working with Margaret and especially with Kai Hawkins as well, and a lot of other people, including Rose Young, to actually put a shape on it. I mean one of the interesting challenges here was that as far as Pākehā social history is concerned, the Auckland

³⁰⁶ James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

Museum is not object rich, so it was going to be a kind of *constructed* exhibition rather than a display of treasure.³⁰⁸

The exhibition was not primarily built upon the collections so much as Belich's thesis on New Zealand history adapted into the concept for *City*. His approach conforms to Hall's thematic exhibition type, and the evocative style. He had no qualms about creating generic displays and reconstructions to tell this story. Underlying this is an attitude towards the objects, not as primary evidence, but as illustration. However, in retrospect, Belich admitted that the objects were more than simply illustrative:

JB: It's also true that neither they or the text were simply a means of communication, you know simply a kind of coloured alphabet with which you set up your message, it's not that simple. They're also documents in themselves, so they impacted back on my historical interpretations. I saw them primarily in the first instance as the kind of symbols with which I would construct my discourse. I soon also realised they were sources that would affect the nature of my discourse.

DS: With respect to that, did you feel there was a problem with controlling the meaning you were trying to convey?

JB: I didn't see that as a problem.... it was non-linear which was kind of outside the square, but I like that....I still had a strong, relatively strong conception of the *City* exhibition, which I wanted the exhibition to be true to but not necessarily for me to totally dominate that.³⁰⁹

The impact of the objects as documents is perceivable in the completed exhibition. Working 'case by case' in a more or less linear fashion, the approach to the display of the objects is notably different in the later displays, for example compare (early) *The Price of Auckland* with the much later *Hobson's Choice*. While the former is quite literal, the latter is metaphorical. This will be discussed further in the next chapter. The point here is that the communicative power of the objects was not central to the developing exhibition. This was not part of Belich's game.

Closely following the presentation of the Second Draft, Kai Hawkins began drafting and redrafting the gallery footprint putting a shape on the exhibition. James Belich puts particular emphasis on the relationship with Hawkins in creating the *vision* of the exhibition:

JB: Remember that those footprints aren't necessarily what was in my mind. Kai did those and was trying to put a shape on it... gradually they sort of converged

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

together. So the notion that the first footprint is plan A is not necessarily correct. That's the first attempt of Kai to put a spatial shape on it, and we got better at communicating, at bringing our conceptions together ³¹⁰

As noted in chapter one, the relationship between the roles of designer and editor are necessarily a close one, and the process of developing the concept into an exhibition involved a lot of close teamwork.

JB: a lot of the work was done there [Kai's studio] a lot of it was done at my desk, you know writing some of the narratives at home... thinking of some of the images or displays that might tell the story.

[...]

the historical conceptions were basically mine. I think that's fair to say. Then there was kind of a collegial process of working it through. Which involved several people - and I provided a lot of ideas because that's what I do, but a lot of them were pretty stupid. Some were good and some weren't and it was the team which decided which were viable.... So I mean I take responsibility for the fundamental historical concept.³¹¹

The relationship between the designer and Creative Producer centred around shaping the exhibition. The Creative producer was primarily concerned with supplying the historical concepts, but the team had say over the broad design, being able to accept and reject James Belich's ideas on the basis of how they might work as displays. Nevertheless, by developing his display concepts in his and Hawkin's offices, away from the collections, Belich did unnecessarily impose upon himself the effects of Schlereth's standard problem of difficulty of access and verification. This certainly would have helped reinforce the conception of the objects as illustrations to his narrative.

Young offers a collections based (over ideas based) perspective of the team process, recalling the cross currents of meeting the various needs of the Creative Team and the Museum:

RY: my role somewhere in there was working with the Beliches with their concept, bouncing ideas backwards and forwards in terms of, ok, how can we realise that idea with objects.... what have we got to use to realise those ideas, is it going to work or can we go sideways on it.... at the same time having to run a team to get the collections properly registered, catalogued, a lot of work was happening

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ *ibid.*

there.... Having to acquire collections and put them through our acquisition process, so there was a whole heap of stuff in terms of how we managed the objects. Had a group of people working with that madly cataloguing and so on. Setting up spaces where we could do that. Trying to set up times to link in with Jamie and Margaret, so ok, we've got this come and have a look at this and we can work it through that way. In the end there were certain things that Jamie wanted but were really difficult.³¹²

Young's role was partly as editor, selecting objects and refining selections, and also partly as the Museum facilitator, liaising with the Beliches to assist them to develop and realise their concepts. At the same time the role of curator involved her in the processing of the collections, their documentation, and the acquisition of any new items for the exhibition.

Young saw the development of the exhibition as proceeding in two possible ways: 'do you start your exhibition ideas from the collections and see what will come of them, or do you start with concept and to hell with what you've got to support it, and just go through that way?' *City* began with the latter approach, but the development also involved 'going backwards and forwards' between 'collections and ideas'.³¹³ One example of a concept being given an object focus was the Dray. The brief and early footprints pictured a 'dray with all the goods of a new settler, all the stuff that he brought with him, which didn't happen.' Young describes this as a generic concept, 'a generic new settler with a bit of this and a bit of that and a bit of the other.' However, what it was replaced with was the Edgerly Collection, which is a collection of objects (some of them rather unexpected) that an actual settler brought with him. It is displayed with a list of objects that settlers to New Zealand were advised to bring with them. For Young, this 'is a more fascinating idea.'³¹⁴

Margaret Belich summarises this noting that for the exhibition the ideas needed to be translated into a physical representation, respecting both the idea and the objects:

MB: Rose was a very early participant. But obviously she had such a huge impact.... she was very close because she's the curator.... she found the pieces.... In the end it's her exhibition as much as ours, probably more. She did the hard translate, all these meanings into *something* ...that will have

³¹² Young to Smith, op. cit.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

enough of their own resonances but not overwhelm the story, you know, get the balances right.³¹⁵

Thus the process was very much one of translating or ‘working up’³¹⁶ ideas (Young’s term). It was Young’s knowledge of the collection and her considerable experience as a history curator that she could lend to give ‘balance’ to the exhibition.

During this process of ‘working up’ ideas, some major new objects entered the picture. These included the ‘Queen Street Storm Water Drain’, a section of the Ligar canal, and a (broken) wax recording of Sir George Grey’s voice. The former two objects were the result of archaeological evidence coming to light during the development process. The latter was already in the collections. As James Belich recalls it was sent ‘off to Aus[tralia], to try to get it fixed but we couldn’t make it. But, for a while there, it looked like we were going to have for the first time in the 20th century, you know, George Grey’s voice. So that was quite interesting.’³¹⁷ Both the Ligar Canal and the Storm Water Drain displays were entered on the third footprint in November 1988, although only the Ligar Canal made the final cut to be included in the exhibition. The (stone) Storm Water Drain was excluded in the end because of its load weight, the mode of display was deemed disruptive to the flow of the displays, and because the content of the exhibition (with regard to cost) had to be reduced.

Crisis point: A black budget

On 12 November 1998 the net cost summary³¹⁸ for the exhibition was circulated, with the indication that the exhibition was over budget by approximately \$290,000.³¹⁹ This was the crucial moment in the exhibition development as choices had to be made of what was essential, what was desirable, and what was expendable.

DS: Budget was certainly an issue with *City* wasn’t it?

RW: Well it always is. We have a finite sum of money.... The interesting thing is that.... what tends to happen is people get very passionate about the design. The designers do, Jamie and Margaret got very passionate about it, Rose and the folk here get passionate about it, I get passionate about it, so we all gild the lily. There

³¹⁵ Margaret Belich to Smith, op. cit.

³¹⁶ Young’s term for translation. Young to Smith, op. cit.

³¹⁷ James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

³¹⁸ Rose Young *City* Project Files: “Auckland Museum Redevelopment – G.SE “City” display – concept estimate”, 12 November 1998.

³¹⁹ Rose Young *City* Project Files: “PCG Workshop N.8”, [5pp] 24 November 1998, p. 2.

comes a moment of truth, not always, sometimes we get it right, there comes a moment of truth where we've put too much gilding on the lily and that's all.³²⁰

Thus a process of rationalisation was necessary to meet budget. A meeting on the 24 November 1998 reviewed the exhibition 'given that economies have to be made to meet the budget.' The major change resulting from the budget constraints was the deletion of the '60s Pub. This 'mood shift space [was] to be reconsidered focused around Hobson's bed [being] relocated.' Margaret Belich recalls losing the Pub: 'my memory of it is that Rodney just said, "can't do it, no", and we had to move on.'³²¹ It was decided that Wilson and James Belich would seek sponsorship for the games 'Pinball Properties' and 'Night Mayor'. Other parts of the exhibition mentioned for reconsideration included Kiwi House/Backyard Shed, Peoples' Wall, Dr. Who, and the Ligar Canal.³²²

The Pub was deleted primarily for its cost, however, as the introductory point to the exhibition, the concept had not been entirely unproblematic. Firstly, there was the problem of repetition as there was already a pub in the *Centennial Street* on the top floor of the Museum. Secondly, walking through the pub was a jump from the near past of the 1960s, to the more distant past of the 1850s. Thirdly, as an entirely constructed display it was an introduction to the real past through a fictional past. The pub failed to provide a smooth transition into the exhibition, and increasingly looked like fat to be cut in the interests of a leaner exhibition. However, Margaret Belich contends that losing the beginning point made the end of the exhibition harder to resolve.

Following the budget rationalisation *City* increasingly developed towards its final shape. The project timeline established in September 1998, had scheduled completion of the gallery by 23 June 1999, and the budget check does not appear to have curtailed progress towards this. Installation was scheduled to begin at the end of March 1999. In preparation for this, Hawkins was to have a detailed design completed by 18 December 1998, exhibition objects were to be assembled by 27 January 1999, draft label and interpretation texts were to be completed by the curators and James Belich by 5 February, and conservation work was to be completed by 30 March 1999.³²³ Meeting minutes reveal however that the overall design continued to evolve even while the gallery fit-out was in progress, and although some elements existed on paper (Dr. Who, Stormwater Drain) in the end they were not realised in the built gallery.

³²⁰ Wilson to Smith, op. cit.

³²¹ Margaret Belich to Smith, op. cit.

³²² Rose Young *City* Project Files: "PCG Workshop N.8", [5pp] 24 November 1998, passim.

³²³ Rose Young *City* Project Files: "New Zealand Social History Galleries", 9 September 1998.

Summary

In this chapter I have shown how the Museum's history collection was developed without a defined focus and through passive collecting. This aligned to Kavanagh's description of the object-orientated approach to collecting. Through the influence of the context of the colonial museum the collection's focus was upon the colonial past. It was a Pākehā-orientated collection rather than a social history collection that attempted to account for the wider New Zealand past and population.

Prior to the deployment of the history collection into a new history exhibition, the Museum had undergone a process of thorough change and upgrading, of which the creation of a new suite of exhibitions was the final stage. This attitude of change was only partially carried through into the history gallery development process because of the aim of preserving many of the traditional elements of the Museum's identity. However the exhibition development *process* was part of the context of change. With it came the hiring of James Belich as principal storyteller and scholar for the history exhibition. Belich brought with him his own "traditions" in his approach and comfort level with the exhibition medium and Museum context. For this reason the process became pivotal to the translation of ideas into displays. The exhibition concept was developed by James Belich presenting his ideas, which were commented upon by Museum staff, he then altered his concept in response. The exhibition brief that resulted gained a tendency towards a Pākehā based interpretation of the past, despite the Beliches' stated intention of biculturalism. The process through which the brief was translated into an exhibition was analysed with concentration on the broad roles of design and editing as noted in chapter one. These functions were divided across the team with the aim of diffusing Belich's inexperience with history exhibitions. The development faced a crisis when it was predicted to go over budget. This provoked a rationalisation of the components that made up the exhibition, and made the developers more conscious of the financial limits of what could be achieved.

In the process James Belich took the principal editing role and worked in close collaboration with Hawkins to develop the exhibition *vision*. The same sort of close collaboration with Young in the development of the exhibition's thesis did not occur. Rather, Belich and Young worked in a parallel fashion with Margaret Belich moving back and forth between them. After an introduction to the collections and its themes, Belich developed the brief and Young responded to the individual display concepts by

supplying appropriate objects. There was however a failure to establish an equal partnership between academic historian and history curator.

James Belich had stipulated that he would take the contract only if Margaret Belich did the translation work. This proviso was James Belich's attempt to mitigate his inexperience with working in a museum, and the effects this might have on the exhibition, and to help balance the time constraints he was under with his university work. Implied here is also an attitude toward the value of the collection objects as historical evidence, and an assumption that the objects do not communicate meanings without textual accompaniment. Furthermore it suggests a misapprehension of the creative process of translating a concept into a display. Finally, it is also suggestive of an underlying attitude that fails to value the historical and museum expertise of history curatorship. A value that Margaret Belich in her close work with both James Belich and Rose Young was easily able to appreciate.

Although the Museum organisation wanted a collections-rich exhibition it did not insist upon James Belich and Young working in a closer partnership. Rather, by accepting Belich's proviso, the Museum replaced one history authority with another. This reveals that the Museum had a similar attitude to Belich's of history in the Museum.

I do not mean to suggest here that James Belich went into or came away from the Museum with a negative attitude towards Rose Young personally or professionally, only that there was a general misapprehension regarding museum history and exhibition development that affected the establishment of a more effective partnership. My intention is to draw some conclusions regarding the relationships among the various agents in the development process. In the following chapter I will expand upon the political dimensions of the process, and examine them for their effect upon the exhibition. To conclude this chapter it should be noted that the context of the Museum, and the development process, required changes and alterations to the exhibition, and that the sum of these would inevitably mean changes to the meanings that the exhibition was to intended convey.

CHAPTER THREE

Action and reaction: The physics of exhibition development

JB: “I wasn’t in there to be ordinary... and I was permitted to really mix what you might call blokes-and-sheds “nostalgism” with macro history. And I don’t think there are very many museum exhibitions that do that, to be honest.”³²⁴

Perhaps the most fundamental question in *social* history is what makes a society, an entity with some degree of cohesion, from a welter of disparate communities, and what makes the communities from individuals.³²⁵

Introduction

The original exhibition brief may be significantly modified during the process of creating an exhibition. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the politics of the process and how these shaped the exhibition. The analysis also examines what the exhibition communicates about Auckland, past and present.

The first section of this chapter returns to the process of exhibition development, with specific reference to how ideas in the brief were transformed into displays through the political actions of negotiation and compromise. This occurred within the team as part of the processes of workshopping and translation, between the team and the Museum over the professional constraints regarding the conservation of objects and the delivery of project tasks, and between the team and outside contractors.

Referring to the team’s reactions to the development process and the completed exhibition, the second section considers how various aspects of resolving spatial issues challenged the team.

³²⁴ James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

³²⁵ Belich, *Making Peoples*, op. cit., p.412 (original emphasis).

The third section analyses the outcome of the exhibition from the perspectives of narrative, social history, material culture/museum history, and the use of nostalgia. The exhibition is criticised for failing to confront the fallacy of progressive determinism adequately and for its tendency to treat the Auckland population as a homogenous whole.

Action: Constraints, translation and negotiation

During the development process, the ideas presented on paper in the exhibition concept were rendered into three dimensions. Against a backdrop of the organisation's desires and expectations, the possibilities of these ideas were met by the constraints and opportunities embodied in the collections, the constraints of the gallery space and the budget, and the abilities of the agents of the exhibition team to perform their roles according to their own professional standards. In this context of exhibition development the various displays changed, gaining and losing meaning, with both positive and negative results. This section documents the difficulties that arose during exhibition development and how they were met by the exhibition team, through negotiation and compromise; the politics of the process.

Space, budget and politics

At the outset, Hobson's bed was to be placed so as to 'separate Māori and Pākehā Foundations' and was perhaps to have a 'dress uniform' and 'evening dress laid out' on it.³²⁶ The placement made some difficulty for Hawkins' floor plan as Margaret Belich observed:

it was such a big object, and it was so difficult technically to actually... fit it in so people could get past. And there's still going to be these stories... [Māori and Pākehā foundations] complimentary and making sense. Not just sitting there like a great big bloody bed.³²⁷

On the footprints, Hawkins moves the position of the bed several times until the decision was made to remove the Pub display, when it becomes the replacement opening display. Designing the shape of the exhibition and visitor flow was assisted by

³²⁶ "City: Second draft", op. cit., p.2.

³²⁷ Margaret Belich to Smith, op. cit.

the rationalisation following the budget prediction because content was reduced. The use of the bed to signify the “marriage” of peoples was also clarified as the development progressed. Following the deletion of the Pub, this display was crafted to ‘have the key institutions of Māori/Pākehā contact: the bed, the Treaty [of Waitangi], the gun, and the bible.’³²⁸ However, either within the Museum administration or governance, this was perceived as an actual or possible transgression of *tikanga*. Because the Treaty is sacred to Māori, placement of it on a profane object such as a bed was viewed as to be likely to cause offence. Attempts to compromise by projecting its shadow on the white bedcover, or to hang it next to the bed, were deemed unacceptable also.

MB: ...the Treaty... or the events around the Treaty were the marriage of peoples. So then going on a bed was the right sort of feel.... But, of course, you can’t put a sacred object on a bed.³²⁹

JB: ...it was felt that, and I honestly don’t know precisely by whom, that it was vaguely insulting to the Treaty to put it on the bed. Which I disagree with, and said so. No big deal.... That was the nearest we got to a political correctness decision. That went against us, and although it was mildly irritating at the time, I think it was to the museum’s credit that it was basically the only one I can think of off hand.³³⁰

None of the team members appeared to know (or were prepared to say) where this observation originated from, but although there was general disagreement by the team on the issue, they nonetheless submitted to the pressure and the Treaty was removed.



However, the integrity of the display’s intended meaning with the total absence of the Treaty was compromised.

Plate 11 Teutenberg’s bust of Queen Victoria, in the display Naming, Mapping, Ruling. Photograph: the author’s collection.

Other displays, such as Māori Foundations and Māori Trade, gained in their character, interest and meaning through translation with the collection objects. Young notes that for Māori Foundations ‘it was fortuitous... that we had the Teutenberg

³²⁸ James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

³²⁹ Margaret Belich to Smith, op. cit.

³³⁰ James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

sculptures³³¹ where we could have something in the case that was a bit more impressive than simply having a selection of Māori weapons and so on, and actually being able to introduce the people with those stone busts.³³² The Teutenbuerg busts are also used to represent Queen Victoria and George Grey providing concrete illustration to the narrative.

With regard to Māori Trade, Belich notes in the brief that in 1853 ‘Māori flour mills in the Waikato were valued at £8500’ and there were ‘111 Māori-owned trading ships’ on the New Zealand register ‘as late as 1867’.³³³ The adjacent display of a model ship seems at first to imply the Māori traders, although the label describes Auckland’s reliance generally on sea transport, which the model illustrates. Margaret Belich offers another explanation for the object’s inclusion: ‘I remember having an early conversation with one of the guides... [concerning] which are the favourite Pākehā artefacts, and her saying the model ship was one of them.’³³⁴ Asma’s concept of recognition and perception as discussed in relation to how exhibitions communicate in chapter one is important here with both the ship and the Teutenberg sculptures. Margaret Belich observes that for regular Museum visitors, ‘there’s stuff that you know about, that you’re familiar with, that you already have ideas about. We’re going to put it in a slightly different context perhaps than you’re used to, but they’re still going to have all these reverberations for you.’³³⁵ The familiarity of the objects retains a sense of continuity with the Museum prior to the revitalisation, and with the expectations of regular visitors.

An example of the unsuccessful realisation of an idea was in the area concerning the circle of men and businesses that centred on Thomas Russell and ends with the crash of 1886. The Creative Team all agreed that it was this area, the Reading Room, which works least well of all the displays in the exhibition. The space was intended to mimic the reading room in a gentleman’s club, such as the Northern Club. The central object was to be a desk and chair, with reproductions of newspapers to thumb through telling the story of the crash of 1886; of these only the desk is present. Margaret Belich explained: ‘a desk and a chair, was probably one of those things that was never going to

³³¹ The sculptures by Teutenberg are a series of busts which were originally architectural features on the old Shortland Street Post Office (now demolished). Each bust represents someone important to the history of Auckland.

³³² Young to Smith, op. cit.

³³³ “City: Second draft”, op. cit., p.2.

³³⁴ Margaret Belich to Smith, op. cit.

³³⁵ Ibid.

work, because you met with.... the whole conservation issue. And you couldn't build that size of display case because you didn't have the space'.³³⁶ Part of the spatial problem was that the pair of doors in that location are a major staff access-way to the collection stores, and because people and collection objects were moving through that area it needed to remain a clear-way.

Young notes that another problem was that budget cutbacks were called for while the area was being worked through, and the space was never properly reconsidered in this light: 'The reading room is the messiest one that's still there, where the change happened and it didn't. We should've gone back to the drawing board for that, for the design of it, and we didn't. It's still problematic.' One of the difficulties from the display perspective was that there were no objects to illustrate the web of connections between the businesses, the men, and Russell. Aligned to Hall's evocative exhibition style, the display was to resolve this by being a complete construction. Within the overall scheme of the exhibition, the space was important because it represented the end of Rush Phase, with the drama of the crash of 1886. The plan was to use the media to tell the story and the suicide of Whittaker to convey the impact. The space thus was also intended to introduce 'the idea of 20th century being interpreted through the media' with a newspaper telling the story of the crash on the desk, that Young laments, 'still isn't there'.³³⁷ The suicide of Whittaker conveyed with the news of his death in the newspaper and a pistol is disconnected physically from the main story. Placed on the other side of the room to the main stream of the narrative, it loses its dramatic impact. Worse still, the newspaper is absent from the case, and any close reader of the label will note that pistol in the case is not the actual instrument of Whittaker's suicide.

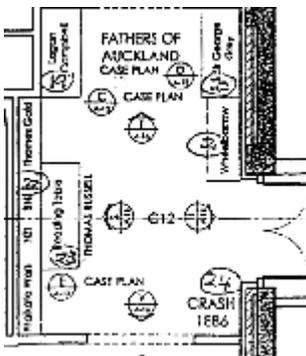


Plate 12 Section of Footprint E showing the Reading Room. Doorway to the collection stores is at the right. Whittaker's Suicide is located where the number 24 is circled.

The area that underwent the most dramatic changes was the Kiwi House and Backyard (Blokes) Shed. In the brief the Kiwi House was periodised as the 1920s-50s state house. In the colonial phase the

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Young to Smith, op. cit.

‘cultural resonance of house ownership’ was ‘associated with economic independency’. By the recolonial period the economic independence of house ownership had lost its substance, but its resonance remained culturally.³³⁸ James Belich described the points that the display might make:

Gendered gardens – front female, back male? Garden shed as male refuge. Outdoor loo with datura tree to reduce smell. Three bedrooms so boys and girls don’t share. Outdoor porch often converted to sunroom subsequently as cure for tuberculosis. Front room, best in house but seldom used – parlour shrine. Sandpit, tree house – domesticated symbols of beach and bush – link with *Wild Child*.³³⁹

In the first drawings, the display was divided between house and garden, with a path running from the house through the backyard and out the back gate, with most of the space devoted to the backyard, which included a ‘laundry’, ‘dunny’, ‘vege garden’, ‘chook house’, and ‘backshed inventors’.³⁴⁰ However finances and the reality of what

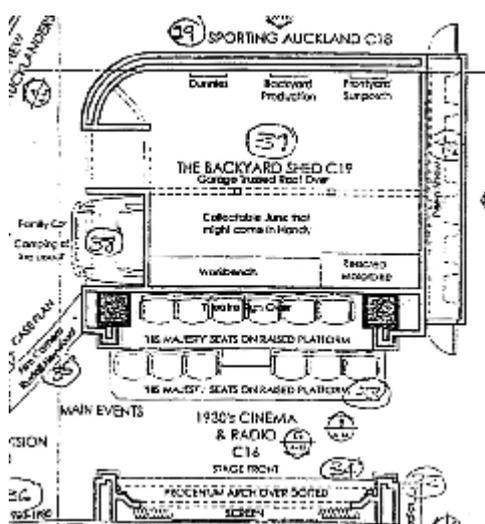


Plate 13 Section of Footprint E showing the Backyard Shed and His Majesty’s.

could fit into the display space called for the concept to be pared back. From observing the house and backyard as a gendered productive unit, where the produce from the male vegetable garden is processed in the female kitchen, the concept took an increasingly nostalgic trajectory. The outcome was the Blokes Shed with the ‘collectable junk that might come in handy’³⁴¹ and the reduction of the Kiwi House to a series of ‘peep hole’ vitrines, set in the 1950s. The display is a generic creation and is not based upon an actual shed or home. In terms of exhibition design it is a play on the period room, and recalls the eclecticism and apparent disorder of the *Kunst und Wunderkammer*. Margaret Belich comments:

³³⁸ “City: Second draft”, op. cit. p.23.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Rose Young *City* Project Files: Footprint dated 30 September 1998, and Footprint “Rev A” 29 October 1998.

³⁴¹ Rose Young *City* Project Files: Footprint “Rev. B”, 2 November 1998.

I mean the Backyard Shed. The story around this was quite lovely because the idea was somewhere in the city you've got to locate the most familiar things. Which is basically the family home.... What's the icon that's of most significance?... So they're living in cities, but where do they go to? For much of this century it's been their own back yard. And that was the idea behind that, that was actually going to be a back yard – [it] had to [get] simplified down because we couldn't get in it. It was going to be too hard to build, it was going to take too long, too complex, so it got pulled down to something - the Shed - and that meant that some of the stories around the whole nature of domestic life got pulled back a little bit³⁴²

The shed thus became the 'salvaged' essence of the original concept. With little support from interpretive text or labels, the Shed interior is stuffed with objects from the 1950s or before, and is evocative to visitors, reminding them of the shed at home, or of their father's or grandfather's. In this respect the Shed responds to the possibilities of material culture, noted by Lowenthal, for a history from below.

The emphasis on nostalgia can be read as developing the Shed as a familiar place to many New Zealanders, evoking recognition. Through its location in the Museum it also evokes a re-conceptualisation, whereby the ordinary and everyday is also history, recapturing the message of ownership lost with the Pub: 'What's history, mate? *You're* history mate.'³⁴³ James Belich seized this fortuitous development with interest. He comments:

that Shed's attracted a lot of attention. It's very interesting to go and watch people look at that. Because essentially the idea there, and it did come through I think, was that here in the heart of this exhibition, is a folk museum. That's what the Shed is. It's an individual's little museum with the bric-a-brac that is kept for no real purpose except to sort of enhance memory, in that Shed. So I thought that worked quite well.

DS: The Shed – that actually changed in meaning quite a bit though, didn't it? I mean originally I think it's back-yard industry you were talking about, is that right?

JB: Well it was kind of looking into a house. Yeah, the message did change there that's true, but that was probably what we should have done in more places. It was just too much for that restricted space for what we were hoping to do. So I'm not unhappy with the change there. Although it's true there was very great change.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Margaret Belich to Smith, op. cit.

³⁴³ "City: Second draft", op. cit. p.2 (emphasis added).

³⁴⁴ James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

The Shed's development appealed to Belich because it conformed to his intention (noted in chapter two) to 'challenge assumptions, such as solemn and reverential notions of museum as secular church'.³⁴⁵ This irreverence, that the ordinary is also historical and can be displayed in a museum also supports his intention to: "break the glass" and 'challenge assumptions about history in general and Pākehā history in particular. Break barriers to empathy with, and general excitement about, [the] Pākehā past.'³⁴⁶

Confronting the Museum

The breaking of glass and barriers carried some literal as well as metaphorical intention. The development of the Shed involved tension over the mode of presentation, and was constrained by the Museum's obligations to protect its collections. As the Shed concept had developed so had the intention to supply a less mediated experience with an open display. Margaret Belich:

we always felt that where we could we should be able to put people into something they could touch and smell, and, well not quite taste, but you know, as many of the human sensory... perceptions... as possible.³⁴⁷

While sympathetic to this idea, Young notes that in the Museum, the responsibility for collection items often over-rides the possibilities of how they can be displayed. The Dray had also been subject to this concern. The idea had been that visitors could climb onto a Dray that was loaded with objects representing what an immigrant would bring to New Zealand in the nineteenth century. The Dray's size, and the lack of protection to the objects it would contain meant the idea was reworked with the encased Edgerly Collection. For the Shed, Young recalls: 'Jamie wanted it as something that people wander into and touch... and had this huge list of things'. The range of objects that would stock the Shed was beyond what was available in the collections. Young:

we didn't have the time to do that sort of collection work with our resources, and process it into the collection, and if it was open - so we did have this huge set of discussions on whether we could have it as an open display or not. And the compromise on that was ok, we will treat everything in there as props.... Kai Hawkins can cast his people and develop it, and we'll treat everything as props and

³⁴⁵ Rose Young *City Project Files*: "Preliminary Proposals for New Zealand history exhibitions at Auckland Museum", p.2.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Margaret Belich to Smith, op. cit.

look at it later, and we might put some of that stuff in the collection. So he had a couple of people do that and they did a great job. There was a bit... [of] keeping an eye on it, and every now and then pulling out certain things because we set it as '50s, so it could be '50s or earlier but not later. So there were a few things we had to weed out because they were later. They did a great job. But in the end they said: "but how are you going to stop people from touching and taking things?" In the end we did end up putting in the fence so in fact [you] couldn't go in. I mean Jamie's thought was: "but you can replace it", he says. No, it's not actually that easy to replace 1950s gear. And there's actually, if it's in the collection... a heap of work every time we put an object in the collection, there's a heap of work involved.³⁴⁸

The issue of the safety of the objects forced a compromise. Calling objects "props" circumvented the Museum's obligation to protect the objects in the way they would the collections, however for the public this is not obvious. Without being processed and documented the public cannot be assured these props are the real things. This issue will be returned to later in the chapter.

Crossing the barrier to a less mediated display format, even though the use of Museum objects had been circumvented, remained difficult to achieve. Margaret Belich recalls:

Kai... got one of his people to go and acquire the stuff, and of course acquiring the stuff was a bit of a – well... maybe underlying [there was] some anxiety [in the Museum] that maybe someone who was a non-professional could go and actually acquire the representation of the Shed adequately. I think underlying there was some professional anxiety about that. Anyway this person, Jenny, went out and did a brave job... she was marvellously proficient, and did it in short order, and all this stuff arrived and gets arranged and put in. And then... we've got the problem of security because you want to let people into the Shed so they can smell and have that whole physical thing of being in the shed but, you know what it's like in museums, people come in and they take things and they pull things and they poke things. So how do we solve that? So the solution obviously was to arrange things as much as possible out of reach, [and] put in a barrier of some sort. We reached that and we agreed the barrier would go [in] there and would mostly keep things out of reach... and then everything else that might be vulnerable would be glued down or whatever. Well... evidently somebody said, "well I 'm not doing that job"... obviously it's a museum job, but somebody said "I'm not doing it". So we got told

³⁴⁸ Young to Smith, op. cit.

there was going to be a barrier across here [pointing to the entrance into the Shed on the footprint] and we said “no way”. And I actually ended up yelling at Michael [Evans, Director of Public Programming] saying “this is a totally unacceptable compromise. We’re not having it,” and “do something about it. Get whoever needs to wield the hot glue gun to damn well go and do it. Or else we’re coming in ourselves to do it,” sort of thing, and it was the only time I really can recall actually raising my voice.³⁴⁹

This example raises two points, each to do with the politics of developing an exhibition in a museum. The first is that seeing an idea through to realisation in the gallery requires the involvement of a number of personnel, and that the core team needs to control this outcome, as was successfully managed here. The second is that such close attention to the project, and the pressure of deadlines, helps create an emotional connection to the project. This affords ownership over the project and pride in its outcomes but can also cloud judgements, such as holding onto ideas that are not working as displays, this may have contributed to the failure of the Reading Room. Margaret Belich also recalls that the ‘question of whether... [Hobson’s] bed was right maybe got lost. But you [have] got to remember we were getting over the disappointment of not having the pub.’³⁵⁰

The problem of inaction

For those ostensibly outside of the project, an inherent pride or emotional attachment to the project was unformed, and this was perhaps responsible for the failure to develop a number of the displays to their potential. In the brief a section called ‘Village City’, was conceived to convey the ‘persistent identities’ of Auckland’s suburbs; of Auckland as a ‘village of villages’.³⁵¹ During the development process this appears to have mutated into a section that was to have computers with Internet access to various local body and community web sites:

JB: One of the things is we were hoping to have this interactive - there was going to be some computers... for people to lock into local history sites, genealogy sites, you know get that interactivity going, the university library, the public library, you

³⁴⁹ Margaret Belich to Smith, op. cit.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ “City: Second draft”, op. cit., p.23. Belich includes: ‘Howick – from Military Pensioner Settlement, through beach resort, to “Chowick”; Henderson, the Split of the South – influence of Dalmations and the wine industry; Devonport the naval base; Pukekohe – Race Capital of New Zealand (racism and car racing); Mission Bay – from centre of missionary endeavour in the Pacific to centre of café society in east Auckland; Westies; Parnell; Ponsonby gentrifying Ghettoes; Remuera; Otara; Paratai Drive; Orakei; Karaka Bay and its pig.’

know so people interested in this stuff could actually work in the middle of this. Sitting there working on history ...I'd like that to happen. I mean I've talked to the librarians, it's just a couple of bloody P.C.s, it's not huge.³⁵²

Three years after opening, this part of the exhibition has not been completed. An empty alcove near the end of the exhibition still waits for the arrival of the computers.



Plate 14 Alcove waiting for installation of computer terminals. Photograph collection of the author.

The problem of inaction also appears with the development of the Tram in *Shifting Gear*. This is the 'hinge or fulcrum' between Rush Phase and Queen City.

The reconstruction of the tram is the central icon, a symbol of Auckland's suburbanisation. This houses a looped audio-visual presentation that attempts to explain why 'urban New Zealand shifted from the Big Four Cities' of Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland, 'to the Big One,' of Auckland only. The audiovisual depicts historic footage with a voice over by James Belich explaining the causes he sees effecting this change. The presentation is projected onto the "windows" of one side of the Tram, suggesting history rushing past. This presentation is pivotal to the development of the exhibition narrative, laying out reasons for Auckland's continued growth until the present (as depicted on the Isthmus Map). However, the team accept that as a display it is problematic, as few visitors sit through the presentation although small boys appear to enjoy pretending to be tram driver. The Beliches put the failure down to the technical delivery. The design conceived the film to show on three separate screens, but the contractors delivered it as a single screen. The result is the image is split in three, and this is difficult to watch. James Belich:

I don't think that that video piece that I do voiceover on is particularly good.... I didn't think the visuals were particularly good. And I did one take. The video company - I mean they probably didn't get paid enough but they didn't really take to the project. So my voiceover was one take. And it was o.k., but could have made

³⁵² James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

one or two more, and they kept asking what I wanted, what I wanted, rather than coming in like Kai and being sort of creative.³⁵³

The company's lack of enthusiasm disappointed Belich, and he blames this for the Tram's faults. Insufficient financial resources and a lack of follow-up to ensure the concept was realised also help to account for the failings. The task of ensuring components are completed to the satisfaction of the core team (as with The Shed example) was the Team's responsibility.

In summary, this section has shown that while the Creative Producers attempted to retain the essence of the ideas within the process of their translation into display, and to control the meaning and intended message, the rationales, compromises and accidents encountered became the source of another transformative power. These were the politics of the process, and they challenged the control of the authors of the exhibition.

Reaction: The Team

In this section the Creative Team's reactions to the process and the finished exhibition are documented. Central to the team members' own critiques are the problems negotiating the three-dimensions of the medium. This pertains both to the objects as central to the story, and their organisation in the displays and of the gallery space generally.

Thinking in 3-D and organising space

Hiring specialists had practical advantages and disadvantages. Wilson had chosen Belich to be the storyteller-shaman for the history galleries. As a Museum outsider this was likely to bring in a fresh outlook, someone who would be determined to challenge conventions and not be hampered by the Museum's traditional *modus operandi* and professional concerns, but at the same time deliver accurate and scholarly history. However the other edge to that sword was that the lack of experience with material culture and working in a museum context could also hamper the execution of the brief. The workshop process helped to diffuse these positives and negatives across the team.

For James Belich, his inexperience with three-dimensional history hampered his ability to convey the dynamic history of Auckland in a more coherent way.

³⁵³ James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

JB: I'm disappointed with the liveliness of the first section - [looking at footprint] where's the entrance, oh yeah - I was hoping that [Rush Phase] would be a bit livelier and more colourful.... I think this side worked [Queen City], somehow visually this worked better than that [Rush Phase].... I think we probably just tried to cram too much in.... Sort of ran out of steam a bit. And that's not our fault, but the money ran out and people at the Museum had other projects.... I think it's the failure of this side [Rush Phase] to really convey dynamism. That would be my big pick.³⁵⁴

It is arguable that the process did lose its momentum towards its end, however the failings that Belich points out were located in the first area to be realised in the exhibition, and that were affected least by the budget crisis. Since Belich had begun the process with the Rush Phase, it therefore seems more likely that its failings were due to his inexperience with the medium - in imaginatively catching that dynamism as a spatial idea - than with the allotted funds or energy for the project by the Team and staff.

Young repeated the criticism of not adequately accepting the limitation of the size of the gallery as one of the major factors that affected the realisation of the concept. She also put this down to inexperience with the medium.

DS: So, what is your opinion about contracting the concept development for *City* exhibition outside of the museum? Problems, benefits.

RY: Well there can be problems where there's a big learning curve bringing in someone from outside and they've had nothing to do with exploring history in a display as opposed to writing a book. So there is a big learning curve in terms of what's possible. I think I've actually heard Jamie say that that was a big learning curve for him, and visualising something as a display. I mean a lot of the ideas were much bigger than the space could accommodate.... the learning curve can be a problem, in terms of - you do spend a fair bit of time playing some of those things through.³⁵⁵

Although the team approach was able to offset this inexperience to some extent, Young suggests that time and energy for the project might have been saved with a more experienced Creative Producer. Perhaps most crucially, this impacted on communicating the major scholarly contribution that Belich could provide.

RY: The other thing that really got cramped out was Jamie's big concept. [He] had these three periods of time, and really it came down sort of to two.

[....]

³⁵⁴ James Belich to Smith, op. cit.

³⁵⁵ Young to Smith, op. cit.

I guess with Jamie coming in, he has an over-arching theory on New Zealand history... Now, having said that, I don't know if the public read that at all. I don't know that it's something where you could say, ok did we fail. Was it so significant that we should have absolutely made sure that the display conveyed that theory, to give the public some up to date history theory.... I mean it's good to have an overview of how your displays work, of how to group things. If you do it in a conceptual way like that it can be useful, but I don't know that the public go into that at all....³⁵⁶

The exhibition does not clearly communicate the three phases of New Zealand history around which Belich arranged the exhibition. During the development process the colonial and recolonial periods came to dominate the gallery. Furthermore, visitors are not assisted in locating how the periods fit into the exhibition with a map or explanatory text. There is also no introduction to Belich's organising principle. In this way the communication of the scholarship on which the exhibition is grounded is unclear.

The design also fails to clearly promote Belich's three phases. Although the narrative develops chronologically, building arguments about what fuelled the growth of Auckland, visitors are not clearly directed through the exhibition to follow this. Young:

I always find it difficult taking people through the gallery, because there is the bit where you go around or in, and there isn't a single flow.... But, and this is going back to this overall concept, if Jamie had really wanted people to take on that concept and follow it, then we would have needed a much more directional thing. I mean people come in any which way, and go around any which way so... if that concept is critical for people to get a feel of it, then it should have been designed with a different sort of visitor flow.³⁵⁷

The visitor flow design is divided between a linear Rush Phase and a mosaic plan for the remaining exhibition. Although the organising principle is basically chronological, the exhibition is ambiguous when translating this to the gallery floor. Instead of a clear recolonial and then postcolonial phase, there is a merging of the two, over which the recolonial dominates.

Other design issues also impinge on the visitor experience. The entrance to the exhibition is not clearly defined from the adjacent exit. This leads to many visitors into experiencing the exhibition against the narrative flow. Although this is less important

³⁵⁶ Young to Smith, op. cit.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

for the twentieth century side of the gallery, the texts of the strongly narrative (nineteenth century) Rush Phase would be experienced as disconnected. However, even following the narrative flow of Rush Phase, reading Māori and Pākehā Foundations, which are to be read in tandem (against each other), is not supported by the layout of the display cases. In effect the visitor is forced to retrace their steps on one side (or read right to left). Young:

spatially, I don't think it works. OK so you've got the Māori side there and the Pākehā side there, and this presumption, ok we're reading them against each other, I mean people walk down that way or they might wander back to that, but that double sided long passage way, how people go or do they go from side to side and read that as a whole. If you wanted to do that sort of thing you are really needing to create a series of rooms where it's read as a group and then go on and read another group. So people tend to go through early Auckland first and they meander along and stop off, you know something captures their interest. Some people read their way through but it is difficult because of that double sidedness of how to do it.³⁵⁸

Thus the design offers both a confused visitor flow, and weak support to the narrative. These are issues of design that should have been noticed early in the process and, particularly with the display case layout, fixed. As noted in chapter one, a display case's layout with regard to the distance between objects and labels is crucial in the communication process for the visitor. This should have been overseen by Hawkins, the exhibition's core designer.

That these faults remained can be explained to some extent by the division of labour in the exhibition's design. Young:

With the design process there is sort of an odd thing happening where you've got Kai doing the large-scale stuff, defining the cases, the flow, and everything. But everything that happened inside the cases was in-house...

[...]

Now initially there was this thing that [Paul Connell, the graphics designer] was sort of working to Kai and then there were our people who were putting the objects in cases and designing that case. I felt the structure was sort of wrong - there needed to have been far more mixing up of all of that.... At some stage Paul started working much more closely with our in-house [designer], so that was Max [Riksen]. He was doing the case stuff and Paul was doing the graphics.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ Young to Smith, op. cit.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

The design process was layered. The problem appears to have been one of communication and overseeing between Hawkins, Connell and the Museum. There was a general difficulty with the contracted members of the Creative Team in realising the extent of the work required outside of their core team-roles to ensure delivery. Thus the boundaries between the roles of the team were perhaps being too rigidly adhered to. As the people with the vision of how the outcome should look, the Creative Team needed to be more active in overseeing the completion of the exhibition components.

Young was an exception to this general observation with respect to the delivery of the exhibition texts.

RY: Initially I had expected, ok, it's their show they can write all the labels, because I've always done exhibitions where you've got the big labels and you're telling the story up there but you're also telling the story through the little labels. I had initially expected that Jamie and Margaret would do that part but in the event that came back for me to do that bit.³⁶⁰

Thus the object labels became part of Young's role in the exhibition, and were written separately to the main narrative texts. The layering of the narrative, lead by the organising principles of the main concept is also developed through the object labels. This expectation was also noted in the minutes of the first meeting in January 1998.³⁶¹ However, Young also worked outside of her strictly defined role by conducting image research and writing up the personal accounts for the Peoples Wall.

RY: I ended up doing the stuff of looking for the images that we could tell the smaller stories with, so the smaller stories ended up coming directly out of the image research, whether it was an overview of a particular group or whether it was an individual story.³⁶²

The supply of the exhibition texts is the editor's role, which in this case should have been the Beliches. However, there was effectively a division in supply of these between James Belich and Rose Young, with Belich supplying the overall conception and narrative, and Young separately supplying supporting narratives by way of the object labels. This division in the process was a threat to the coherence of the narrative developed across all the texts.

The development of the People's Wall, and the similarly conceived Sporting Auckland opposite it, reveals a major failing by the Museum staff. The Museum should

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ 'JB to produce all texts for both exhibitions.' Rose Young City Project Files, "Inaugural Meeting for History Galleries Project" (30 January 1998), p.2.

³⁶² Young to Smith, op. cit.

have challenged the concept of the display that essentially commits the cardinal sin of being a book on a wall. As noted in chapter one, 80 to 100 words is the rule of thumb for exhibition texts, otherwise most visitors leave them unread. The Walls break this rule and most visitors pass them by.

The Peoples Wall is an important display for the overall narrative and we shall concentrate on it rather than on the Sporting Auckland display. The Wall develops the growth of the Auckland population through immigration and broadly supports James Belich's three-phase thesis of New Zealand history. Supporting the interpretive texts is a personal story from each migrant group, images and a key object to represent them. The impetus for the Wall's design came from the Beliches:

MB: The idea of the Wall was accepted right at the beginning, that was the way to do it, but I suppose you could have had debates within that. They started to, and I think we said no, just organise it on this basis, here's Jamie's conceptualisation of the past to it, here's how it all fits together, the overall sort of story consistent with the rest of the exhibition.³⁶³

It is unclear if its likely success as a mode of communication was questioned, although the issue of object content was a concern to the Museum.

RY: initially Jamie saw [it] as a purely, and we've still got it as a very flat surface, but he saw as totally graphic. I put up an argument and had the director's support me on that one, saying: "no, we've got to have some objects there, we need some collections. It is a museum and people come for objects."³⁶⁴

From the Museum's point of view, the right of representation also appears to have been a concern. However, time and Belich's thesis militated against developing the debate:

MB: it's so contestable too, the notion of have you got the right to tell people's stories. Whereas the way that Jamie conceived it was you could, of course you could but you had to do it as a sort of totality, so that it was a big sweep, so that it was obviously somebody's, in this case Jamie Belich's, view³⁶⁵

That the Museum allowed the text-heavy display to go ahead against the received wisdom is difficult to account for. Its failure to succeed as a communication negatively impacts upon the exhibition's representation of the Auckland population. The consequences of this failure are discussed in the next section.

³⁶³ Margaret Belich to Smith, op. cit.

³⁶⁴ Young to Smith, op. cit.

³⁶⁵ Margaret Belich to Smith, op. cit.

Analysis

In this section the exhibition is analysed for its narrative style, its qualities as social history, and how it confronts the problem of accounting for the typical problems addressed in the first chapter, and for the range of social categories that constitutes the Auckland population. Following this, the section turns to how objects were worked into the exhibition and harnessed into communications, and the nostalgia and authenticity of the history shown, before turning to how the exhibition can be evaluated against the requirements of the Auckland War Memorial Museum Act.

City as urban biography

Urban history became a popular movement among social historians in the 1960s and 1970s and has had an enormous impact on understandings about social and geographic mobility, recovering the lives of actual individuals from the past in great detail. In contrast to the gains of academic urban history, Michael Frisch writes that in the American context the museum portrayal of ‘city identities have long been commonly projected in terms of economic growth with progress, the frame of urban biography has been... a linear, heroic form into which a city’s growth and development must fit.’³⁶⁶ As we noted in chapter one, the urban biography and similarly Schlereth’s national character approach tends towards the fallacy of progressive determinism. The narrative form of urban biography has not tended to support interpretations of the whole urban experience, such as that of the poor or of minorities. This narrative form is reinforced by the complex mix of audiences that visit the museum, including schoolchildren, (‘presumed to need a simplified, graspable storyline’), visiting tourists and dignitaries, and ‘a diverse general population that many museums have sought to gather under a unifying historical umbrella, building and reinforcing community through the act of celebrating it historically.’³⁶⁷ Such an optimistic assessment of the present and future of the city complements official or semi-official sponsorship of the museum, which would want to be associated with this positive outlook. The approach effectively homogenises the community both as visitors and as historical subjects, overlaying their differences and the diversity of experience. David Fleming, writing from a British perspective, questions if, ‘as museums have entered the tourism market-place, is there really much

³⁶⁶ Michael Frisch, “The presentation of urban history in big-city museums”, op. cit., p. 40.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

economic mileage in city museums which insist on addressing the true horrors of much urban life?’³⁶⁸ Museums must take into consideration their financial support and if it could be jeopardised by making a negative interpretation, and if the visiting public will support and be served by such an interpretation. These factors can add up to implicit or explicit self-censorship.³⁶⁹

Although critical of the “celebratory impulse,” and the lumping of the public into an all-embracing fictive community, Schlereth and Frisch observed that the narrative form of the urban biography might be a real resource; ‘as much part of the solution as part of the problem.’³⁷⁰ Noting the “narrative turn” in history, Frisch supports the (careful) use of the familiar narrative style for its accessibility by the diverse audience. ‘Thus the conventional frame of the municipal biography may offer a useful structure for realising that elusive presentational synthesis of particular social experiences with broader political and economic analysis.’ Furthermore, the gains of the urban history movement can contribute to urban history exhibitions via the historiography by recapturing the urban life of those normally left out of the artefactual record through the fecklessness of data survival.³⁷¹ As noted in chapter one, even a minor revision to the traditional approach can promote a more sophisticated understanding of the past to visitors.³⁷²

J. Lavery proposes that the history of a city is best understood if studied within the context of its hinterland or region, and in comparison to other cities. He reports J.M.S. Careless’ method for studying neo-European cities hinges on the term metropolitanism,³⁷³ which Careless described with the concept of a “metropolitan chain” in which a city may be a tributary to another, and still be the metropolis of “a sizeable region of its own”.... Thus development at the “frontier”, contrary to frontier theory, is dominated by the metropolitan centre “which supplies it with capital, organises its communications and transport, and markets its products”.³⁷⁴ This bears a striking resemblance to Belich’s approach in *City* where Auckland is a tributary of

³⁶⁸ David Fleming, “Making city histories”, in, Gaynor Kavanagh, ed., *Making histories in museums* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), p.132.

³⁶⁹ On this point see Margaret Anderson, “Oh what a tangled web... Politics, history and museums”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol.33, no.119 (April 2002), pp.179-185.

³⁷⁰ Frisch, op. cit.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41

³⁷² Schlereth, “History museums and material culture”, op. cit., p.396.

³⁷³ “Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History”, *Canadian Historical Review*, 35 (1954) pp.1-21, cited in, J. R., Lavery, “The study of city and regional history in Australia”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Volume41, special issue (1995), pp103-138.

³⁷⁴ Lavery, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

London, and is the metropolis, firstly during Rush Phase to the Auckland region, and thereafter to New Zealand as a whole, thus tying Auckland's history with New Zealand's.

The choice of this approach will partly have been influenced by the collections, or an expectation of them, so as to provide a platform for exhibiting consumer goods and objects relating to the building of the city. However, the collections did not offer great support to this approach, and objects that James Belich expected the Museum to have were not in the collections.³⁷⁵ A collection of typical museum history objects such as “electric servants” for The Farmers and domestic objects for Women's Work was necessary.

Using the model of the metropolitan chain, Belich took a largely economic approach to the growth of Auckland, arguing that internal and external immigration to the city fuelled a circular dynamic, whereby consumer demand outstripped supply, fuelling growth.³⁷⁶ An economic approach, by including busts as well as booms, should mitigate the celebratory impulse. However, the busts after the Rush Phase were never strongly developed on the gallery floor. Economic depression and industrial action in the twentieth century are dealt with in Main Events and Fighting on the Streets which are located in a narrow corridor to the side of the main visitor flow. The section is easy to miss and, if found difficult to read through. Overall, the economic approach casts an overly rosy glow on Auckland's development after Rush Phase.

Although avoiding anthropomorphism, *City* treats Auckland as a whole organism. After the Rush Phase³⁷⁷ in particular, there is little sense of specific locales or different urban and suburban identities. At the same time there is no statement in *City* that attempts to encapsulate a sense of Auckland as the ‘one city’ that James Belich claims it is. There may have been an assumption that visitors from Auckland know their recent history, even so the development or reasoning behind the division of Auckland under various local government bodies still requires some explanation in light of the claim that Auckland is ‘one city’. This is contestable and remains an untested claim in the exhibition.

³⁷⁵ Young to Smith, op. cit.

³⁷⁶ In *Shifting Gear*, “City: Second Draft”, op. cit.

³⁷⁷ In the display titled ‘Naming’, as well as Mission Bay, there was the ‘geography of class – Officials, Commercial, and Mechanics Bays.’ Ibid.

Fleming observes that ‘City histories are big histories. In cities, everything that could happen, happens; everything that could have happened, has.’³⁷⁸ Making interpretations (‘doing history’) however involves selecting from the nebulous past. Belich’s three-phase thesis of New Zealand history was the organising principle of this selection, and it tends to dominate the narrative. The problem with a macro history approach is that it generalises, and minority and subaltern discourses and experiences can be obscured in the general. In the second half of the exhibition, in *The Shed* recolonial Auckland dominates over the representations of diversity in the Peoples Wall and the tableau *Coming Out*. This develops an overall resonance of social (and experiential) conformity. In concentrating on growth and development, the varied social experiences of living in the city are overwhelmed. After *Rush Phase*, *City* only occasionally gives us a sense of the perspective of ordinary individuals in their historical context that connects to the organising principle. As Belich’s approach to the exhibition became freer and his narrative imposition lighter (in the second half of the exhibition), a broad sense of the social experience of Auckland becomes less apparent. *City* errs towards the homogenous and celebratory, not in the brief but in the delivery. Although Belich notes that a demographic explosion is a key element of the ‘fast history’ of the ‘neo-European mega-city’, the particular social experiences of the *dēmos* in all their variety, is understated and subordinate to the broader historical synthesis. Belich’s intention to present ‘responsible cutting edge’³⁷⁹ history was lost in the process of translation; *City* is thus inclined towards the fallacy of progressive determinism.

Social history

While the portrayal of the city as a single organism in an urban biography is one approach to a city history narrative, as outlined in chapter one, an alternative is to emphasise the city as a sum of parts, a composite of diversity and variety that interacts in complex ways. The people who visit *City* are also its subject (“What’s history, mate? *You’re* history mate”), and as the Museum Board recognised, Aucklanders are culturally diverse. Auckland as ‘the world’s largest Polynesian city’³⁸⁰ could have been amplified more in the exhibition. This might have connected *City* with the other ground floor galleries more strongly by looking at the socio-economics of Māori and Polynesians in

³⁷⁸ Fleming, op. cit., pp. 133-134.

³⁷⁹ Rose Young *City* Project Files: “Preliminary Proposals” op. cit., p.2

³⁸⁰ Peter Menzies, *Annual Report 1996-1997*, p.63.

Auckland, the associated health, education and crime statistics, memories of dawn raids (1976-1977)³⁸¹, the banning of umu pits in urban back yards (1998)³⁸², Ngati Whatua's Bastion Point Orakei protest (1977-8)³⁸³, the gentrification of Ponsonby,³⁸⁴ or Auckland as a city of Asian migrants.³⁸⁵ The bicultural opening to the exhibition with Māori Foundations and Trade considered with Pākehā is not woven through the rest of the exhibition, nor is the issue of the Treaty of Waitangi, although that document's pervasiveness now reaches into the Museum's own Act. Developing the exhibition around the alternative experiences of Auckland would have tested the growth upon growth economic analysis and the outward homogeneity of the recolonial period; it also would have displayed a critical Museum reflexivity in its attitude to its treasures and their cultural originators.

A quick glance at the footnotes from the above paragraph will inform the reader that Belich has certainly considered these issues. He writes in the brief that 'Auckland now has no ethnic majority'. 'In 1996, Auckland's population was 13 per cent Pacific Island, 12 per cent Māori, and 10 per cent Asian – a total of 35 per cent. If people of Irish, Dalmatian, Dutch, German and other non-British descent were deducted, "Anglo-Scots Pākehā" would be a minority'.³⁸⁶ These statistics might help us interpret the Museum's collection policy for history, which focuses on Auckland and Aucklanders, but *City* does not show how these groups interact. In *Paradise Reforged* Belich discusses the enmity of the dominant Pākehā (here widely defined as 'European') population directed variously towards urban Māori, Pacific Islanders, and Asian immigrants, and notes the early twentieth century sectarian conflict between Irish Catholicism and Protestantism (1912-22).³⁸⁷ By including these divisions, *City* would have benefited by providing the unexpected within the usual civic harmony of an urban biography.

Amareswar Galla writes that city museums 'are not only about the genesis of urban centres dealing with the history and development of the particular urban context but also the process of urbanism covering the organic evolution and continuation of the urban centre itself. The latter includes community health and housing, transport and

³⁸¹ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, op. cit., p.535.

³⁸² "City: Second Draft", op. cit.

³⁸³ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, op. cit., pp.478-9.

³⁸⁴ "City: Second Draft", op. cit.

³⁸⁵ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, op. cit., pp.535-7.

³⁸⁶ The People's Wall, "City: Second Draft", op. cit.

³⁸⁷ See for example the section 'New Migrations', *Paradise Reforged*, pp.531-9; on sectarianism, see p.114.

communication systems, places of work and employment, the dialectic of dominant and subaltern cultural ideologies and so on.³⁸⁸ Galla sees the museum as having a role to play in the ‘exploration and articulation of the sense of shared and contested meanings of urban cultural borders and subaltern histories.’³⁸⁹ Museums need to be conscious of their role in the broader heritage and cultural sector of urban environments, and examine their position in hegemonic discourses. Museums should be inclusive, accessible and promote participatory practices.³⁹⁰

In much more contested city spaces than Auckland, with its problems of infrastructure, Bill Maguire discusses city history in Derry (Londonderry). At the Tower Museum the decision to deal with the city’s troubled history face-on was made. ‘There was a good deal of nervousness about this in some quarters; as history these events were so recent and so sensitive that almost any attempt to portray them would cause controversy.’³⁹¹ The most recent events were related through videos composed from various sources of archival film. These were prepared and shown to representatives of the Protestant and Catholic communities for comment. ‘When Unionist councillors first saw the video they were not satisfied that it did justice to their point of view and asked for additional material relating specifically to the Protestant community to be included. This was done so successfully that it earned the praise even of the Revd Ian Paisley MP, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, who attended the opening of the museum.’³⁹² By carefully developing a balanced presentation and by engaging with the community in this process, the Tower Museum was able to display the most contested urban history in the United Kingdom. Maguire concludes that ‘visitors will bring their own beliefs, perceptions and emotions to what they see, and must be allowed to draw their own conclusions from the materials of debate presented to them. The number of original objects in the Derry Story is limited, but those that are shown are very powerful’.³⁹³ The sensitivity to context allowed the objects to be appreciated by visitors as evidence in a history of their city.

³⁸⁸ Amareswar Galla, “Urban museology: An ideology for reconciliation”, *Museum International*, vol.47, no.3 (1995), p. 41.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ Galla, *passim*.

³⁹¹ Bill Maguire, “City museums and their role in a divided community: the Northern Ireland experience” in Gaynor Kavanagh and Elizabeth Frostick, eds., *Making city histories in museums* (London and Washington: Leicester University Press, 1998), p. 48.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

³⁹³ Maguire, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

The Tower Museum did not shy away from the controversial events of its city's past (and present). Rather, it incorporated them and let them energise the exhibition. In this example, the curator produced the interpretive overview, thus maintaining control over representation, but by involving community representatives a balanced and objective portrayal was ensured. For visitors the exhibition could provide an encounter with oppositional viewpoints in a neutral context. Indeed, the museum placed itself directly into an active cultural role, as Maguire writes: 'If an object[ive] of the display was to help reconcile the city's two main communities... and to promote respect for the traditions of both, then the issue could not be ducked.'³⁹⁴

Similarly, the People's Wall was an opportunity for community participation that could have energised *City* with alternative or dissenting viewpoints, testing the characteristics of the three phases of New Zealand history that Belich proposes. On one of my research visits to the exhibition, another museum visitor mused that he should stick a photo of himself to the People's Wall. Such a response to commemorative exhibits and displays is not uncommon. A famous example is the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C., in the United States, where a vast range of objects are left as offerings or mementos.³⁹⁵ On the top floor of Auckland Museum in the Memorial Galleries, poppies are often left by names on the Rolls of Honour. The Peoples Wall does not inspire such emotional and interactive responses. Although it is not a memorial wall as both my examples are, migration/immigration is nonetheless an instance of a life-changing experience that Auckland's various communities could have been involved in remembering for the exhibition. The Petone Settlers' Museum, a comparatively tiny institution, has successfully undertaken a series of exhibitions on migration to New Zealand based on community participation. Following this example would have been an opportunity to infuse the Wall, and the exhibition generally, with a sense of living Auckland. For example, by undertaking research in the behaviouralistic paradigm the meanings that connect individuals and objects carried from the old country and seal identity by symbolising integration or differentiation, might have been uncovered. Instead individual's stories were approached on the whole from the distance of textual evidence, without the communities themselves being involved.

For the Museum administration, there would have been difficulties supporting such a participatory approach from the available resources. It would have required

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ These objects are collected and exhibited by the Museum of American History at the Smithsonian.

collecting and primary research to build up a corpus of material that the time frame and budget would have been stretched to support, and given the allowance of space, some of components of the exhibition existing presently would have to have been deleted. On the other hand, if the concept had originally taken into account this approach, it would have built in a deeper sense of familiarity into the exhibition, evoking recognition from participant-visitors. Furthermore, following Kavanagh's Croyden Museum Services example,³⁹⁶ objects might be borrowed and returned to the owner when the exhibition changes, rather than enter the permanent collection. In this approach emphasis is placed upon gathering information uncovering the object's contextual meanings.

However, participatory approaches where the authority of the interpretation is shared with the community can as easily overbalance an interpretation as lend to it. Michael Wallace cautions that it is not always straightforward who has the right to speak for a community or locality, and warns that community affirmation can 'easily tumble over into uncritical celebration.' He also notes that a relentless focus on one category of minority status, for instance ethnicity, 'can overlook internal divisions – along lines of class, gender, age or micro-culture – and even veer off towards an essentialist nationalism.' In the same way, too relentless a focus on 'culture' can deflect attention from power, as history from the bottom up can 'neglect the top-downs doings of the rich and powerful.'³⁹⁷ "Doing history," especially in a public sphere is a political act involving the representation of not only the historical participants, but of the common past. Equally however, historians are trained to consider bias in interpretation, to weigh evidence as impartially as can reasonably be claimed, and to present a balanced thesis. Certainly, as noted in chapter one, many smaller and lower funded New Zealand museums have successfully incorporated inclusive community approaches into their exhibitions.³⁹⁸ These can be developed on a rotational basis between communities, which has the added bonus of refreshing long-term exhibitions in short cycles. Community participation can add the experience of cultural immanence (the insider's view) to an exhibition, and without such meaning an exhibition can be a static retrospective portrayal.

The People's Wall is a text-based historian's response to the difficulty of accounting for all the social categories in a culturally diverse city, and within the

³⁹⁶ Kavanagh, "Collecting from the era of memory", op. cit, p.84.

³⁹⁷ Michael Wallace, "Razor ribbons, history museums and civic salvation", in Gaynor Kavanagh and Elizabeth Frostick, eds., op. cit., p.28.

³⁹⁸ See Cameron, "Pathways to access", op. cit.

organising principles of his interpretation. The text-orientated nature of the Wall is in itself the main problem. As noted in the first chapter, two of the qualities of material culture evidence over text are its three-dimensionality and the affective understanding it offers. Text has an “averaging-out” quality, reducing diverse human experiences to permutations of the same 26 symbols.³⁹⁹ By displaying Auckland’s diversity primarily by text the People’s Wall homogenises the population.⁴⁰⁰ Lowenthal states that material culture has the power to ‘make historical knowledge more populist, pluralistic and popular.’⁴⁰¹ Ironically the very strength of the museum medium to communicate difference through the affective understanding that material culture allows was underplayed at the precisely the wrong moment.

Dealing with difference



In the postcolonial end piece to the exhibition, another attempt at dealing with difference is made with the displays *Old Grey Mayors* and *Coming Out*. The theme of gender is first encountered in *Rush Phase* with *Wife Rush* and *Women’s Work*, and is woven into the second half of the exhibition with *Lenses on Auckland* and the *Peep Holes*. It is concluded with the *Old Grey Mayors*. In this display the stories of two women Mayors of Auckland are contrasted and leave the visitor to make her or his own conclusions about changes in attitudes towards

Plate 15 Tableau. Photograph author’s collection.

women in offices of power. The treatment of homosexuality is oblique in the form of the tableau *Coming Out*. A reporter for a local Auckland paper wrote:

Strangely, the final exhibit of City comprises four statues titled *Coming Out*. The Hero Parade marching boy and a naked gold-painted Freda Stark, lesbian-and -

³⁹⁹ Schlereth, “Material culture and cultural research”, op. cit., p.13.

⁴⁰⁰ I thank David Butts for drawing my attention to this point.

⁴⁰¹ Lowenthal, op. cit., p.244.

proud in the 1930s, befit this theme, but why are they with an Auckland Blues Super 12 rugby player and a jogger? Museum, please explain.⁴⁰²

Frieda Stark and the Hero Parade marcher are obvious references to increasing openness to homosexuality in New Zealand society. However Stark's openness about her homosexuality in the 1930s goes against the grain of Belich's argument about recolonial conformity. Furthermore the Polynesian face clad in rugby clobber is rendered in the same white plastic as the two unpainted Pākehā with European features in the tableau. Strange indeed.

Making object stories

One of the challenges of mounting a history exhibition is striking a balance between the different categories of evidence (objects, graphics, texts) that, running from the concrete to abstract past, are uneasy partners. Critics 'have faulted the museums for... permitting an obligation to display their "things" to overwhelm interpretation,' that is, taking the object-centric over context-orientated approach. However, it is also true that 'historians have often undervalued the artefactual base of most museum collections and what these artefacts contribute to the museum experience. Indeed, scholars have often proved quite insensitive to the whole notion of how and why a museum exhibit is interesting to its visitors.'⁴⁰³ The difference lies in the processes of history practice in academic and museum contexts. Gibb and Davis observe that

scholars primarily rely on archival data... for their research. Museum curators while they also use these sources, interpret the past with artefacts. They must convey the ideas of scholars with objects that played no part in the original research. As a result, artefacts are often used only as illustrations of points raised in exhibit text, rather than providing the interpretive focus on exhibits.⁴⁰⁴

Ultimately these criticisms ring true for *City*. James Belich appears to have at least begun the exhibition development process with no clear position on material culture and its role in history discourse in the museum. Throughout the process the written word remained the vital and central vehicle of historical communication for him, hence the People's Wall. However, the development of the relatively text-less Shed and his appraisal of its outcome, as well as the juxtaposition of the objects on Hobson's bed,

⁴⁰² L. Shannon, "Exhibition a trip down memory lane", in *Central Leader*, 26 January 2000.

⁴⁰³ Frisch, op. cit., p. 42.

⁴⁰⁴ Gibb and Davis, op. cit., p. 27.

reveals that the power of objects to operate as the primary mode of communication did, eventually, make an impact on him.



Plate 16 Pistol and bible in the display Hobson's Choice. Photograph author's collection.

Hobson's Bed stands out as the most adventurous display in the exhibition, but unlike the rest of Rush Phase was fixed later rather than earlier in the process. It has already been noted that the display was intended to have included the Treaty as well as the pistol and bible, but, as the display stands, the free use of juxtaposition is an example of how much objects can communicate. The bed, bible and pistol, represent mechanisms of colonisation. For various visitors, the bible might allude to religion and the missionaries, culture contact, and literacy in Māori and English. The pistol might allude to the conflict and violence of the colonial period, the New Zealand Wars (and the earlier Musket Wars?), and a later history of wars in the hemisphere where the pistol was manufactured, wars where Māori and Pākehā were on the same side. It might also allude to colonialism as the seeds of ongoing conflict between Māori and Pākehā, to an uneasy union. Rather than a metaphorical marriage of peoples, the bed might suggest a more literal cross-fertilisation between Māori and Pākehā, the sex industry (and by extension trade) of early New Zealand, notably at Kororarereka. Within the exhibition narrative, the founding of Auckland initially as New Zealand's capital (Hobson's Choice) is connected to colonialism. For an exhibition about Auckland, this introduction however, suggests much more of an emphasis on social relations and experience than is eventually developed. Comprising totally of objects of a European origin, it does however set the scene that the exhibition is Pākehā history.

The division of labour saw James Belich creating the exhibition narrative from traditional academic sources, Rose Young developing the object contents (and stories) in response, and Margaret Belich working as intermediary, while Kai Hawkins developed the design concept with James Belich, and in response to the objects selected. The team workshop meeting was the forum where the various areas of expertise could be brought together to unite the ideas and evidence into displays, but throughout, Belich's ideas developed from his knowledge of the textual evidence dominate. Thus the material culture evidence remains mostly illustrative.

While the Beliches describe the physical realisation of the display concepts as a translation of ideas, Young uses her own term of 'working-up ideas'. This difference suggests quite different understandings of the exhibition process and the value of ideas in developing exhibitions. Translation is the act of transferring or converting a meaning or expression performed in one language to another. It is a process whereby the translator grapples with meaning in the original language and the conceptual possibilities and limitations of the other language for replicating the intended meaning. Where the Beliches see the transference of concept into exhibition as the end of the translation process, Young sees a starting point. The implication of Young's term is that there is an ongoing creative process from idea to its expression in the gallery. The addition of texts, graphics and exhibit layouts impacts on the accessibility of the display's meaning, they can also affect its conceptual foundation. There is a semiotics to exhibition development, where objects, texts and graphics become units of meaning within an overall narrative arrangement. For example, as already noted with *Hobson's Choice*, the juxtaposition of the objects alone communicate a great deal without words. This exhibit achieves the sort of excess of meanings of an artistic expression. By arranging units of meaning, messages are created. An exhibition is not just a report about the past. It is a cultural production that utilises traces of the actual past in its communication.

Young describes an exhibition narrative as operating in three layers. The top layer is the narrative that the exhibition as a whole is intended to convey. This is originally stated in the brief. In the gallery it is developed through the ordering of display through design and editing. Each display is a component of the whole narrative and a narrative in itself. This second layer is primarily communicated through text panels and the concept for the display. The third layer works at the object level, whereby objects, object labels, and all the other units of meaning are components that support the display text and concept, but also convey their own narratives. These substratum stories expand upon the upper levels, but can also be read independently of the main narrative designed to link them together. On the one hand, the objects are the details of the whole story, but on the other, they are the stars of the show. It is the displaying of the objects that is the prime motivation for the deployment of the narrative in the first place.

While the top two narrative layers were developed primarily by James Belich with the team's input, the lower layer narrative was Young's responsibility. The

sequence of development thus saw the top levels of narrative developed first, while the two lower level stories were “worked up” in response. Young’s failing is that she did not utilise the labels as a vehicle to convey the collection objects as active in social relations, as evidence rather than illustrations. Like Belich, and perhaps following his lead, their portrayal is largely static. The labels make a brief narrative statement and note an object’s donor and provenance. In spite of her awareness of the literature that urges critical historical practice in the museum, as described in chapter one, Young did not assert such an approach.

The historical value of the exhibition is, as with academic history, judged by its correspondence to an actual past, or rather, with what the past could or could not have been. Each object is a historical truth, in as much as it reflects its past cultural existence. As evidence, an object is only meaningful in relation to context, to how it was deployed by cultural agents in social praxis. Because culture past or present is dynamic, greater correspondence to the actual past is achieved by reference to this.

The Edgerly Collection, for example, does provide evidence and is expressive of the past on its own terms. The strangeness of some of Edgerly’s choices of items to bring with him conveys how different someone’s thinking in the past could be. A cultural difference is conveyed, but it is static, illustrative. A theoretically informed approach to material culture can mediate between academic and museum history, and break the deadlock of object as illustration. As accounting for change over time is central to any history, Gibb and Davis advocate that:

A theory that ...recognises the active role of artefacts in the creating, maintaining and changing of social relations permits a dynamic interpretation of a society and its material environment. Individuals and groups of individuals within a community become the units of analysis rather than a state, society or culture; for it is the individual who manipulates objects in the pursuit of social ends.

An approach that recognises the active role of material culture thus places the individual experience at the centre of the historical experience. The objects are meaningful because they have been involved in the social actions of individuals. A static view of material culture is therefore faulted because it

regards objects as expressions or passive reflections of the values and world view held in common by participants in a culture. Exhibits, therefore, can use objects to recreate the material environment of a society and to illustrate how that society viewed its world.... [but] variability within a culture is ignored or dismissed as the

incompetence of some participants. More important, with this view a change in material culture can be seen as reflecting a change in worldview, but it cannot be used to explain that change. Indeed, the concept of worldviews upon which this theory of material culture is based seems to preclude cultural change.⁴⁰⁵

A static view homogenises the historical experience of the individual, and freezes objects into a historical moment. A static approach fails to recognise the evidential value of the object, which as is shown in chapter one, is linked to how it has been active in social relations. For example, objects are thus not revealed for their role in symbolising the integration and differentiation of individuals and groups. While the Edgerly Collection is statically cast, the Rush Phase with its asides on different individuals' experiences does manage to convey, or at the very least allow the inference, of the existence of layers of class in settler society.⁴⁰⁶ However, the variety of settler attitudes, for example to Māori,⁴⁰⁷ and how these affected cross-cultural interactions, are absent after Pākehā settlement is established. Differences relating to ethnicity within Pākehā are also absent until the People's Wall. Furthermore, because these are absent from the beginning, it is not possible to see if they mutate over time into recolonial and then postcolonial attitudes.

A dynamic approach recognises 'the existence and explanatory value of variability among participants in a culture. The meaning of an artefact is shared by these participants, but it is a meaning defined in social practice – a social convention subject to change.'⁴⁰⁸ A dynamic approach is better able to recognise cultural agency, which is precluded from a static approach. Gibb and Davis:

Individuals are capable of novel interpretations by using an artefact in different ways or in new contexts.... Individuals can physically and symbolically manipulate material culture to create and dissolve social relationships, and to physically and symbolically control social intercourse.... individuals are active agents in cultural-historical processes, with material culture providing the instruments through which

⁴⁰⁵ Gibb and Davis, op. cit., p. 28.

⁴⁰⁶ For example the class of geography in Naming, the implied class division by Mary Swanson in Wife Rush, or the class division in the list that accompanies the Edgerly Collection advising immigrants on what to bring.

⁴⁰⁷ Belich has written that 'Europeans saw Pacific peoples through various lenses of preconception.... stereotypes of 'Black' (permanently inferior), 'White' (convertible), and 'Grey' (dying) Savages.' See his 'Myth, race, and identity in New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol.31, no.1, 1997, p.10. In a lecture in 1994 Belich's colour palette was wider still with brown, red and green stereotypes and with a clear lens also. See "Race and New Zealand: some social history of ideas" (unpublished paper, The MacMillan Brown lectures, Canterbury University, 1994).

⁴⁰⁸ Gibb and Davis, op. cit., p.28.

they act.... a dynamic theory of material culture necessarily focuses on social intercourse and change.⁴⁰⁹

The difference here is not just a diachronic approach, but one that casts objects dynamically within that narrative. It requires museum history to concentrate on social experience as the context of the objects' social existence. This involves conceptualising collection objects in exhibitions as evidence of cultural agency, not mere illustrations of the text.

Collections can however exert considerable constraints on interpretative freedom. As I have already noted, the social history collections at Auckland Museum are not extensive, and so the task of creating a collections rich exhibition was immediately problematic. The complexity of cities makes collecting their history difficult. Fleming writes that 'museums' collections are not representative of the history of a city in any but the narrowest of areas.... it is impossible to assemble collections which are more than purely symbolic of modern urban society – it is too changeable, dynamic and complex.'⁴¹⁰ The collected material culture is unlikely to supply a coherent body of primary evidence for constructing a 'total history' narrative about the whole city. Despite Fleming's pessimistic view, targeted collecting to aspects of the urban experience, with well-documented contexts has proved to be a successful approach.⁴¹¹ Even so, existing collections often remain a burden to curators. Past object-centred collecting practices place constraints on the narrative possibilities of exhibitions and in addition can present overwhelming professional duties. Care for the collections, working through backlogs of cataloguing, in addition to administrative tasks and fielding public enquiries overtakes the curator's work-life leaving little or no time for research. Tight budgets can prevent active large scale collecting, demanding that exhibitions be created from the existing collections, while busy exhibition schedules lend to reliance on the historiography over original research.⁴¹²

Frisch laments that 'academic historical discourse and the museum's traditional concern with the uses of collections and the power of artefacts remain on separate tracks.' Yet bridging the divide is possible. Although 'the conventional municipal exhibit is usually not about a focused collection but must use a wide range of objects to tell a broader story far from explicit in the artefacts themselves', a unified, inquiry-

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Flemming, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁴¹¹ Frisch, "The presentation of urban history in big-city museums", *op. cit.*

⁴¹² Young to Smith, *op. cit.*

driven approach, involving collection development as well as historical interpretation of the evidence that includes allowing for a dynamic reading of material culture, will lead to scholarly museum history exhibitions.⁴¹³ In the case of *City* it was a failure of the Museum's attitude to history, the development process, and the curator that the approach to the objects was not more dynamic.



Plate 17 Electric servants in The Farmers display. Photograph the author's collection.

Collecting for *City* was based on a static aim, repeating the object-centred or antiquarian approaches of the past. The context and content of *a shed* were not collected; rather, objects that according to Belich *ideally* should be found in a shed were collected. The collecting was a creative rather than documentary process. Therefore, the Shed does not have its own story. It lacks authenticity and is little more than a nostalgic collection. The approach to collecting for The Farmers was based upon matching objects to a period Farmer's catalogue.⁴¹⁴ Here, although documentary based, emphasis was based upon the object resembling the catalogue rather than the historical connection of the object to Farmers. Furthermore the claim of the display that "electric servants" actually increased the amount of domestic work was not tested against testimonies of women who remembered housework before their advent, nor by experiment. The collecting, like the deployment of the collection generally, was undertaken for illustrative not evidential reasons.

As the history curator it was Young who had the relevant expertise and knowledge to introduce a more dynamic reading and approach to collecting the material culture. The sum of Belich's and the Museum's attitudes to history in Auckland Museum, and the way these were reflected in the development process meant that Young was operating in a climate that did not place value upon interpretations

⁴¹³ Frisch. op. cit, p.43. For a successful example see his review essay "'Brooklyn's History Museum': The urban history exhibit as an agent of change", in Kenneth Ames, Barbara Franco, and L. Thomas Frye, eds., *Ideas and images: Developing interpretive history exhibits* (Nashville: A.A.S.L.H., 1992), pp253-82.

⁴¹⁴ Young to Smith, op. cit.

developed from the collections. This appears to have stifled any alternative interpretations that may have contested Belich's authority as the project's historian. Certainly, Young failed to assert any critical influence over the exhibition. However, it is clear from this analysis that what the project required was a detached critique informed by an awareness of critical museological practice, a role that the curator should have supplied. Furthermore, one might speculate that had the process required a closer partnership between the curator and academic in generating the exhibition brief, then a less illustrative approach to the collections may have been fostered.

"Nostalgism"

When questioned about the nostalgic tendencies of *City*, James Belich replied: "What is nostalgia but the evocation of your own sense of the past?"⁴¹⁵ In *City* Belich was trying to create an 'empathy with, and general excitement about, Pākehā past.'⁴¹⁶ Evoking nostalgia was one of the ways he went about this.

L. Shannon advises the *Central Leader* readers that *City* is a 'trip down memory lane', and that while, for 'men, the "blokes shed" is likely to spark a few memories' for 'many women the nostalgia trip is in the replica of His Majesty's Theatre' and with 'the selection of 1950s appliances from the old Farmers Trading Company on Hobson St.'⁴¹⁷ His Majesty's Theatre is a re-creation of an Auckland building including the original seats that 'once stood proudly off Queen Street but faced the wrecking ball in the 1980s'.⁴¹⁸ The exhibit harks back to the Centennial Street exhibition created in 1966 that is still housed on the top floor of the Museum. This fictional street is lined with (albeit diminutive) reproductions of actual shops and buildings from nineteenth century Auckland, each of which are supported with photographs and street maps pin pointing where they had been situated. The staging was static, with each shop supplying a context to display collection items not necessarily originally connected to it like The Farmers in *City*, but fiction resonated with the real sites. His Majesty's is historical, it connects to a real past (shown on the screen) and Auckland topography outside of the Museum's walls. But the feeling of nostalgia is only accessible to those who remember.

⁴¹⁵ B. Rudman, "Those were our young years", *New Zealand Herald*, 18 December, 1999.

⁴¹⁶ Rose Young *City* Project Files: "Preliminary Proposals", op. cit., p.2.

⁴¹⁷ Shannon, L., "Exhibition a trip down memory lane", *Central Leader*, [Auckland] 26 January 2000.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

It is biased against the age group too young to remember, and any outsiders. In this way nostalgia is an “othering” device.

In contrast to His Majesty’s, the Shed is a complete creation. A vestige of the original concept of back yard production, the Shed is based on no actual shed, but the idea of one. The display label celebrates the Shed as a museum of the everyman, a Bloke Museum, a folk curation of objects that “might come in handy some day”. This museum within a museum, by evoking recognition, integrates visitors into a community of people who identify with this displayed “past”. In a broad sense the Shed is an icon of national identity; it could be from anywhere in New Zealand. It is an icon in the mode of “kiwiana”. However, “kiwiana” is iconic because it is out of its time, it exists anachronistically, it is quaint and evokes nostalgia. The culture that it represents is from the past that has been left behind. In this way the Shed captures a sense of recolonial New Zealand, and evokes this for those who recognise it, or remember its vestiges. Like all communities, this community of remembering is necessarily defined by those who are members and those who are not. Those outsiders will include the very young and visitors from overseas, and whether they “read” the Shed as historic or contemporary would depend on the individual. Part of the original concept also remains in the gendered nature of the Shed as the male domain. Meanwhile, the female domain of the Kiwi House is recognised with a minor presence. Represented by windows (voyeuristically referred to in the exhibition documents as peep holes) into 1950s home life, the Kiwi House was reduced to a series of vitrines each housing a domestic object with kiwiana appeal. In this way the Shed repeats maleness in the national culture, for example the myths of war and rugby, that helped forge national identity.

At its worst, recourse to the device of nostalgia is likely to support rather than confront the traditional approaches to history in Auckland Museum. The device of nostalgia contributes to the homogenisation of the Auckland population in *City*, and alienates those who do not connect a sense of nostalgia to the displays. It is also a static deployment of the material culture. Essentially these displays align with the methodological paradigm of cultural reconstructionism, but without the detailed empirical research.

In the Old Radios display however, iconic figures such as Aunt Daisy and Uncle Scrim are woven into Main Events, as cultural markers in twentieth century history. Looped sound recordings give access to historic events in the voices of the time, and thus are utilised like an artefact. The approach to the display aligns with the meaning-

making paradigm. A sense of change and movement through time is conveyed, as are dissenting viewpoints. Coupled with *Fighting in the Street*, this is the section of the exhibition that most conveys Pākehā society in the twentieth century as layered. Prosperity, civic peace and freedom are shown to have not been a given. However, as previously noted, the design and placement of these displays in the gallery make them difficult to access, so that the nostalgia of the Shed and theatre dominate.



Plate 18 Old Radios. Photograph the author's collection.

Little white lies and historical truth

Although claiming to present “the real thing,”⁴¹⁹ the Museum used props when actual objects were not available to be used. The Beliches were also prepared to make do with props in the interests of thrift.⁴²⁰ This resulted in props masquerading as collection objects, fictions acting as the real thing. For example, while the pistol and the bible are objects with direct associations respectively to Hobson and the translator of the Treaty, Henry Williams, the bedstead is noted in the label's fine print as ‘attributed’ to Hobson. The white bedspread that was to be the backdrop to the Treaty, the pillows and mattress, in terms of evidence are apparently nothing to do with the story, as they are not noted on the label. A bare bedstead, of course, would not have been believable as a marriage bed. The props fill out the display and help complete the “drama”. Their presence is to

⁴¹⁹ Auckland Museum's ‘vision is to be part of the culture of our community, presenting real treasures and real tales’. Wilson to Smith, op. cit.

⁴²⁰ Rose Young *City* Project Files: “Preliminary Proposals”, op. cit., p.2.

assist the visitor in suspending disbelief, to engage in the display imaginatively to make meaning.

Similarly, the Shed is not an actual shed, nor are the contents or their arrangement derived from the collecting or documentation of a shed and its creator, as research in the behaviouralistic paradigm might have instructed. The display is a representation, a convenient fiction approximating actual sheds. Museum exhibitions that cross between fact and fiction, prop and evidence, actual and reconstruction, create illusions of, and allusions to, the past. They are spectacles as well as windows. They play with the visitors' trust in the truth of what they witness. Extracting meaning does not come without engagement with the display by the visitor. By telling little white lies the Museum assists the visitor in "playing along" with the display. It is the visitors, in the end, who bring life to the Museum, they bring their experiences and knowledges to bear in the galleries. By their engagement, or lack of it, they read or create the meanings of the displays, and unlock the static past to connect it to their present.

Living up to the Act

The final aspect of analysing the exhibition is to consider how it fulfils the Museum's aims. *City* is not an isolated statement, but occurs within the wider representations of the Museum. Scholarship is a core aim of the scientific museum type that Auckland Museum belongs to; it is also a legislated objective of the Auckland Museum. The Auckland War Memorial Museum Act, 1996 states that:

In carrying out its functions... the Board shall recognise and provide for [...] (f)
The advancement and promotion of cultural and scientific scholarship and research⁴²¹

Point (f) was repeated in the 1996 *Annual Report* as one of the institution's core values, and in 1998, part of the museum's mission was declared to be 'Gathering knowledge – studying and interpreting our heritage and environment through our treasures.'⁴²²

Furthermore, Section 11, of the 1996 Act has two other points of particular pertinence to the pursuit of social history in the Museum:

(a) The recording and presentation of the history and environment of the
Auckland Regions, New Zealand, the South Pacific and, in more general

⁴²¹ Section 11, Auckland War Memorial Museum Act 1996, *The Statutes of New Zealand*, vol. 4, 1996, p.3065.

⁴²² *Annual Report*, 1995-1996, and 1997-1998.

terms, the rest of the world:... (c) Celebration of the rich cultural diversity of the Auckland Region and its people⁴²³

Even though history has not been a scholarly activity in the Museum in the past, the fact that the Museum has recognised history as a category for collecting and exhibiting means that scholarship must be considered as an underlying aim, at least following the implementation of the 1996 Act. Certainly *City* was developed after the Act had been implemented.

Since the 1996 Act, the refocusing of the scholarly activities has been outside of the Museum, in cooperative ventures. Wilson's concern over the previous insular nature of the Museum is symbolised by this move. This is consistent with the choices made in the "grand design" of *City*, and is reflected generally in the contracting of outside scholars as storytellers for the refurbishment of the Museum galleries.

Rodney Wilson contracted James Belich to develop the post-contact history galleries because he recognised Belich as being a historian "with a point of view."⁴²⁴ The advantage of this for the museum was that it could involve itself in delivering that point of view to the public. Wilson stated that:

Points of view are great, because we wanted to be a museum with a point of view, because points of views can be contested and they can be challenged.... knowledge is contestable, its always contestable, I think that those are fantastic things that museums can involve themselves with.⁴²⁵

This observation is certainly in keeping with the characteristics of Belich's publishing career (and recent television excursion). *City* is a historiographic overview developed around an original approach to conceptualising New Zealand's past. Belich supplies knowledge, connecting historiography with history collection. However, knowledge is not contested, or shown as contestable, within the exhibition. The anonymity of *City*'s presentation (James Belich's involvement is not noted anywhere in the exhibition) means that there is no public face to direct conflicting or dissenting viewpoints toward, nor is there a process or forum for lodging disagreement built into the exhibition. The presentation tends towards knowledge as impregnable fact of the cultural transmission paradigm. Without the involvement of the communities from which the material culture

⁴²³ Section 11, Auckland War Memorial Museum Act 1996, *The Statutes of New Zealand*, vol. 4, 1996, p.3065.

⁴²⁴ Wilson to Smith, op. cit.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

is derived, and which give Auckland meaning – as a social context – then the value of the Creative Team’s sense of the past is put forward at the cost of others.

It is interesting to note in light of this analysis that critiques *City* for its tendency to treat the Auckland population as a homogenous whole, that the Taumata-a-Iwi does not appear to have reviewed the exhibition at any stage. The 1996 Act set up the Taumata-a-Iwi, a Māori advisory committee, to ‘make recommendations’ to the Board on a number of matters, such as: ‘Display policies, including presentation of Māori taonga to the public in a culturally appropriate and informative manner’.⁴²⁶ *City* was not a matter of policy nor were many taonga displayed. Strictly then, the Taumata-a-Iwi need not have been involved. However, Māori history was presented in the exhibition. Or rather, as I have argued, Māori history failed to play a large part in the exhibition. This might be taken as further evidence that the Museum’s conception of history remains object-centred.

Summary

City is a brisk walk from a landscape dotted with Māori and Pākehā habitation to a sprawling metropolis. The exhibition is an outline and introduction to a bigger and wider past, both of Auckland’s and New Zealand’s. It is a bold exhibition, which was one of the Beliches’ criteria, grasping at a large and complex subject, and it is to be expected that at least some aspects of that subject would slip through the fingers of a tightening grip.

In this final chapter it was shown that the politics of the development process within the team, between the team and the Museum and with outside contractors, wrought changes to the exhibition concepts, which in sum altered the balanced history presented in the brief. Working in the third dimension proved a problem conceptually in communicating historical ideas, and practically in organising objects and displays to convey the narrative. *City* was considered as an urban biography, which as a narrative strategy tends towards the fallacy of progressive determinism. Although social historians break down a society to various elements and observe how they cohere (or fail to) *City* only ineffectively displayed this function in counteracting the typical narrative failings. It was also observed that the use of objects was static and illustrative and that collecting continued the object centred approaches of the Museum’s past. The

⁴²⁶ Section 16, Auckland War Memorial Museum Act 1996, *The Statutes of New Zealand*, vol. 4, 1996, p.3069.

use of the device of nostalgia to connect to community was considered for its merits as well as its “othering” tendency. It was also noted that the exhibition played with fact and fiction. Finally, although the scholarly integrity of the Museum was upheld, it was not advanced as open and critical scholarship. The challenge offered by a rich and diverse material culture collection to celebrate the cultural diversity of the region was not accepted.

It is argued here that the major fault with the exhibition is that it is effectively depoliticised. Through the urban biography narrative, the sidelining of civil unrest, and the ineffective explanation of social and cultural differences, the population of Auckland is corralled into an all-embracing fictive community. The acknowledgement of different cultural identities is not energised within the exhibition to display alternative and contesting viewpoints. *City* does not offer a view of history through the collections; rather the voice of its author dominates. This is in spite of the Beliches’ intention of creating an exhibition in which visitors could create their own storyline. Rather than being in the mode of the meaning making paradigm, the exhibition tends towards the more traditional form of cultural transmission. Despite the original and intriguing historical synthesis and some novel displays, beneath these innovations lies a rather conventional city history. *City* updates but does not change the pattern of history at Auckland Museum.

Conclusion

Can critical inquiry flourish in a museum? Can contemporary historical scholarship find a congenial second home there? Can material culture-based museum exhibitions adequately convey this scholarship to public audiences? Museum historians and their professional colleagues find it increasingly necessary to confront these questions as they attempt to satisfy rising standards in critical historical interpretation in their exhibits.⁴²⁷

The term scholarship in the academies is associated with publishing the results of research to inform, and for criticism by, the community of peers. It is also a term that has had currency in the parlance critical museology. At an American museum conference Wilcomb Washburn argued that scholarship in the museum context must follow similar lines by being original, perpetuated in print or other media as well as exhibitions, and must be peer reviewed.⁴²⁸ At the date of writing, a review of *City* has not appeared in the pages of the *New Zealand Journal of History*, nor any other scholarly journal to my knowledge (although James Belich's television documentary *The New Zealand Wars* has). In the absence of fine-grained peer review of the historical interpretation, this thesis evaluates the exhibition as museum history. As previously noted, the Auckland Museum Act requires the Museum to advance scholarship and celebrate Auckland, the region and its cultural diversity. By way of conclusion each of Washburn's criteria and that of the Act will be addressed in turn, before answering the questions posed at the outset.

Review

City fulfils the criterion of original research. Although *City* is not based on a large body of original primary object research, it can be considered scholarly because it contributes

⁴²⁷ Clarke-Hazlett, op. cit., p. 57.

⁴²⁸ Wilcomb Washburn, "Scholarship and museums: Roles and responsibilities. Keynote address", in, Bryant Tolles, ed., *Scholarship and museums: Roles and responsibilities. The proceedings of the Ninth Museum Studies Conference cosponsored by the Museum Studies Programme and the Museum Studies Association, University of Delaware April 9, 1988* (University of Delaware, 1988), p.8.

new knowledge in the form of the documentary research and historiographical interpretations presented. In this respect it reports on research done outside the museum context. Even though the deployment of collection objects in the exhibition was largely an illustrative one, the objects were grouped into novel configurations, and were connected to the historiography in a new approach to periodising New Zealand history. *City* is innovative in that it attempts to translate a new historical thesis into the museum context.

Washburn's second criterion, that of creating a permanent record, is not so successfully fulfilled. No publication accompanied or complimented *City*. However, in the sense that *City* is a national history, then Belich's books *Making Peoples* and *Paradise Reforged* do compliment the exhibition. However, there is no formal linkage to the exhibition in either book, nor in the exhibition. Indeed Belich's name is not present in the gallery. As new configurations of the tangible past, the displays of *City* (for example Hobson's Choice) represent new communications about the past, which, albeit three-dimensional, are historiographical and their going unrecorded risks them being consigned to history's dustbin after the twelve-year lifespan of *City* expires.

There has been no fine-grained peer review of *City*. However, this thesis as an examination of the process and politics of the exhibition's development does offer an assessment. *City* conforms to the urban biography/national character approach. This is typical of many urban history exhibitions. The main weakness of this approach, as Schlereth notes, is it is prone to the fallacy of progressive determinism, and as Frisch notes often bundles the population into an all-embracing fictive community. In Rush Phase, *City* partly accounts for these weaknesses by providing stories of individual deviance and failure such as those of Cyrus Haley and William Watt, and by including references to class and to general social deviance in Gaol (see appendix two). In the second and third phases, sections account for social strife and conflict, for example, Fighting in the Street and Protest. While major displays they are, however, sidelined, particularly Fighting. Meanwhile the central theme of economic development seems to suggest the movement towards a more enlightened and open post-colonialism. So although the exhibition does account for the fallacy, it does not account for it as much as might be desired.

Turning to the requirements of the Act, although the methodology employed is not known, *City* is the result of high-level research and scholarship, and is certainly an advance on museum history exhibitions such as the colonial street. The value of a city

as a case study in a discourse on national history is that the proximity of all social categories offers the widest possibility for cultural exchange in daily social interactions. If this is a factor in how a national culture is formed, then a city such as Auckland, with its large pluralistic population, represents an intensive microcosm of that formation process. The backdrop of James Belich's *Making Peoples* and *Paradise Reforged* form a comprehensive national history. In *City* they are condensed into a museum exhibition. *City* shows who Aucklanders and New Zealanders are by showing who they have been, and how they have arrived at the present. *City* is focused primarily on the Auckland Region and secondarily at the national level, and thus fulfils that expectation in the Act. The criterion of conveying the cultural diversity of the Auckland region's population, however, is less straightforward. Strictly speaking, the exhibition does conform to this requirement. As chapter three discusses though, in effect, the strategy used to communicate Auckland's cultural diversity, the text driven People's Wall, negates this affirmation. The wording of the Act requires the "celebrating" of Auckland's "rich cultural diversity" and on balance, it has been argued, *City* does not realise this requirement.

By painting a portrait of Auckland from its beginnings to the late 1990s, and with the broadest of strokes that try to include everyone and everything, *City* became a depoliticised picture of Auckland. Social stratification and how the various social categories connected to each other are either absent or unclear in the three periods of the exhibition. The main exception to this observation is the treatment of the Treaty of Waitangi and the marginalisation of Māori in early Auckland situated at the very beginning of the exhibition. However, the long-term consequences for Māori are not returned to later in the exhibition, even though, for example the Bastion Point Orakei protest of 1977-78 was made by Ngati Whatua⁴²⁹ who are focused upon as having sponsored the creation of Auckland in the 1840s. Overall, the economic foundation to the exhibition narrative fails to include history's losers (the disempowered and economically maligned).⁴³⁰ The end of the exhibition is jovial (Pinball Properties and Night Mayor games), and also celebratory (Coming Out), while the attention-grabbing Shed, which offers a space for nostalgic reverie, dominates the second half of the exhibition. Social realism in the recent past is limited to clips lasting just seconds on television screens, which are easily missed or overlooked.

⁴²⁹ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, op. cit., p.478

⁴³⁰ Schlereth, "History museums and material culture", op. cit., p. 400.

City must be recognised as new knowledge. It was also an innovative approach to creating a history exhibition for Auckland Museum. Its contents anticipated the completion of Belich's two-volume history of New Zealand, offering the public an insight into recent history scholarship. In this respect it is certainly unique. *City* is a scholarly exhibition, but that attribution carries caveats. In an increasingly multi-cultural city such as Auckland (as recognised by the Museum Board) the making of Pākehā, of Māori, of Aucklander or New Zealander through interaction are ongoing phenomena. But those phenomena are not described. The process and politics of *City*'s development discouraged the possibility for object-based research, and no catalogue or other written accompaniment was produced that might have explored the issues further in essay form. The exhibition is difficult to navigate and it is doubtful that most visitors grasp the principles behind Belich's organisation of the narrative. Furthermore, the exhibition remains boxed into the traditional museum demarcations of material culture. Māori and Pacific Islands cultures are not brought into the general social history of Auckland and New Zealand. Those cultures remain largely separated in the Māori and Pacific galleries of the Museum, and thus social history effectively remains Pākehā. Unexpectedly, for a project involving James Belich, safety and a high degree of museum conformity was the outcome the exhibition.

Answering questions

In the introduction a primary research question and four subsidiary questions were posed. Below, the answers to the subsidiary questions followed by the primary question are summarised and then discussed.

With respect to *the relationship between the context of the museum, and the possibilities and limitations of history in the museum*, it was found that the museum defines the aptness of a critical approach to the history that it collects and exhibits. Auckland Museum recognised the limitations of the collections and saw the historical narrative and its academic pedigree as the way to counter this. However, its requirement of a collections-rich exhibition diluted the extent to which this could be an effective approach. The Museum culture, its past and traditions, influenced the grand design of the project and the choice of exhibition concept to be developed. Where change was needed in the conception of history at the Museum, constancy prevailed.

By examining *the roles of the curator and hired academic, and how they related to each other in the context of City*, it was found that in many respects, Young's role

shadowed James Belich's. Where Belich led the development with narrative, Young followed with objects, Belich developed the texts, Young responded with labels; context, and object. Thus each shared the editing role. The exhibition would have benefited if each had worked more closely in the development of the brief, bringing context and objects closely together in the narrative at the outset. Belich, Young and the other members of the Creative Team worked effectively together. Although the Museum's process empowered this team, it perhaps did so at the cost of a more effective curatorial input.

The role of scholarship in the creation of City, and in museum history in general was found to have greater potential than was realised with *City*. As stated above, the exhibition does fulfil enough criteria to be considered as museum scholarship in a strict sense. However, while updating the history exhibited at Auckland Museum, it has been argued that *City* does not greatly advance it. The best of the scholarship in the exhibition remains academic, not Museum. However, the exhibition does set a new benchmark for history in Auckland Museum, and although flawed, it is a platform on which the practice of history in the Museum can be developed in a more critically informed and informative direction.

The final subsidiary question examined what history was *in the context of City at Auckland Museum*. Chapter one showed that the predominant characteristic of history in the museum is that it is visual in evidence and communication. If objects are to be the centre of museum history exhibitions, then museum history is limited by the collection, how the objects were collected, and how critically they are interpreted, including whether or not the museum context is part of the interpretation. *City* implies that history in print takes precedence over a museum-based approach, leaving history in Auckland Museum as the academy's much-impoverished cousin.

The answers to the subsidiary question helped inform the overall answer to the primary question, which was: *how did the processes and politics of exhibition development shape the outcome of City?* The answer was found to be that that despite the Creative Producers' intentions, with the absence of a critical museological approach, they directed *City* towards the orthodox. Orthodoxy, defined here as the inclination to established norms (a conservative outcome), was an effect of the process and politics of exhibition development. This supported the thesis argued which has been that despite the extensive restructuring, the introduction of new processes and a new outlook at

Auckland Museum, the conception of history has not changed and therefore its practice cannot.

Reviewing the argument, it was shown in chapter one that the scope of museum history presented a wide range of possibilities and a number of problems. Included in these was the contracting of an academic into the unfamiliar museum context. Objects were shown to be highly meaningful as material culture evidence and as museum object, and museums were shown to be visual communicators, a characteristic that resonated through the practice of history in the museum.

In chapter two, Auckland Museum's history collection was found to have been defined in negative qualities (by what it was not), and developed with a culturally narrow Pākehā focus, particularly on the settler or colonial past. The 1990s as a context of change and the backdrop to the refurbishment of the galleries was overviewed. It was noted that the meaning and constancy of the architecture of the Museum presence on the Auckland landscape was to be retained, and within the galleries the Museum establishment was to resonate in the renewed building. The creation of the grand design reflected this. The development process for the exhibition described the order in which work was to be done, and favoured an ideas first and team workshop approach for collectively filtering and developing those ideas. It teamed an outside storyteller and designer with Museum personnel and designated the roles each team member was to play. The process required the exhibition to be 'collections rich,' and the subject was to be 'New Zealand history post-European arrival and settlement'. The first task in the process was to decide which concept to develop; this was a process of discussion and negotiation in which the 'culture' of the Museum showed through. Crucially it was not produced through collaboration between the complimentary areas of expertise of the academic historian and history curator.

During exhibition development translation of the display concepts occurred twice. The original concept developed by James Belich was, in partnership with Hawkins, developed into a visual concept. This was then processed to be effective as displays of objects (while fulfilling conservation requirements) that also represented the historiographic statements. The outcome of working back and forth between these translations, and the completion of the development process, is the exhibition installed in the gallery.

Translation was a creative process. It affected the meaning and appearance of the conceived displays. While some concepts gained in meaning and became more

powerful communicators, such as Hobson's Choice, others became obscured, for instance the Reading Room, or were entirely transformed like the Kiwi House and Backyard into the Shed.

While the brief had offered an extensive overview and informative ordering of the historiography, its clarity was lost in its execution. The balance of boom and bust and the concept of the three phases of New Zealand history lost definition, plurality became effectively homogenised, and contesting views and conflict were sidelined. The economic narrative dominated, and the exhibition tended to conform to typical museum templates, including the inclination to be celebratory.

The range of methodological paradigms for studying material culture was reviewed in chapter one. It was found in chapters two and three that *City* does not fall specifically into any one of these models. Broadly *City* corresponds to the methodological paradigm of the national character approach, which finds its exhibition form in the urban biography. Using this approach the material culture was cast to illustrate the narrative of Auckland's becoming. However, within this broad correspondence, individual displays such as the Shed and His Majesty's leant towards a cultural reconstructionist approach. This mix of approaches corresponds generally to James Belich's own learning curve with the museum medium. The exhibition concept and the displays developed earlier in the process were in the national character paradigm. As his experience with the medium grew during the development, he changed towards the cultural reconstructionist approach. Later, more metaphorical displays such as Hobson's Choice and Coming Out, showed deeper awareness of the communicative power of objects and the medium generally.

Standard criticisms are applicable to each of the main paradigms identified. The national character approach is prone to the fallacy of progressive determinism. Schlereth argues that this weakness can be countered by balancing the official versions of civic success stories with negative experiences, revisions, and alternative points of view. Cultural reconstructionist approaches are criticised for being highly static portrayals. In the analysis of the exhibition it was argued that *City* did not adequately account for these standard weaknesses. The result of this was *City*'s orthodoxy.

In a more critical setting, Schlereth states, the study of material culture is undertaken to reveal the culture. Lowenthal argues material culture has qualities that allow it to make 'historical knowledge more populist, pluralistic, and public,' thus making critically informed knowledge about the past more accessible. However,

Auckland Museum's focus on creating an object rich exhibition, rather than energising critical reflection on the objects as evidence of culture, remained in the traditional mode of an object-centred approach, albeit with greater scholarly support than in the past. Therefore the origins of this orthodoxy was not located in the exhibition development per se, but the grand design and the Museum context.

Focusing on historic artefacts can hide history as well as reveal it. In a review article on city heritage in Australia, Jim Russell draws attention to a case study of the area known as The Rocks in Sydney that 'has been tidied up to create a shiny new past, fit to reveal the progress of the nation, but censoring conflicts integral with its formation.'⁴³¹ To an extent this criticism can also be levelled at *City*. In chapter two the collection policy is noted as investigating the themes:

local history, Auckland history, Auckland and Aucklanders, migration and settlement, history of local businesses and organisations, how we lived⁴³²

It was also noted that the test of the policy would be the definition of what constituted an "Aucklander", "local", "history", and the "we" in "how we lived" in practice. It was found that *City* failed to substantially advance these terms to match the broadly multicultural society that Auckland now is. The collection was conceived passively as illustration to the narrative rather than as a direct narrative source. Because the constraints of the collection were not addressed, this is what was communicated when displayed, its limited representativeness.

Because of its elite social position as a cultural producer and conveyor of knowledge, the museum and its collecting practices are a text that reflect the dominant attitudes to culture. What is in the collections *represents* what has been considered to be, at least at one time by one person that which in the service of knowledge is necessary to save for the future. The gaps created by what was not collected are now acknowledge by practitioners as just as informative. In creating the exhibition Auckland Museum did not engage in critical reflection on its practice in a public way. The objects in the Museum's collections are among history's winners. By being collected, the objects' futures are prolonged and meaning is added. They exist in the collections as a result of affirmative choices of retention, exacerbating their passive uncritical acquisition, and the collection's limited definition. In the absence of a critical and

⁴³¹ Jim Russell, op. cit., p.13. He cites T. Bennett, "History on The Rocks", in D. Barry and S. Muecke, eds., *The apprehension of time* (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 1988), pp.4-15.

⁴³² Young to Smith, op. cit.

reflexive museological approach, they come to represent a wider past than they actually reflect as evidence.

Auckland Museum has been a part of Auckland city since 1852, however the Museum itself is absent from *City*, even though a number of the city's 'Fathers' and some of the 'Old Grey Mayors' had served on its Board or otherwise contributed to the Museum and Institute. The Museum itself was for a short period housed in the Northern Club, the inspiration to the Reading Room.⁴³³ The Museum's collections and the web of staff, collectors, donors, and others connected to the Museum convey a great deal about the interconnections between cultures and social strata in Auckland, New Zealand and the Pacific; and the collections are evidence of this. This is the social history of museum knowledge. By including a critical appraisal of the "gaps" in the collection, of how cultures and groups were excluded, an analysis of the effects of top-down power relationships in the construction of knowledge, and official concepts of culture could be made. This could also be the basis of a subject-based approach to a social history of Auckland.

There is a growing body of literature critiquing the collection and display of taonga in museums, and its connection to the construction of Pākehā identity in New Zealand museums by either opposition or cooption.⁴³⁴ It would be informative and interesting if Auckland Museum, which has built a reputation on its ethnographic collections, partook in that debate through its exhibitions. Furthermore, by revealing what Mary Bouquet refers to as the 'hidden populations' behind the creation of museum collections,⁴³⁵ Auckland Museum would be engaging in a critical museology that demonstrates the contestability of knowledge, consonant with Belich's own revisions of New Zealand history, and Wilson's belief in the possibilities for museums. This would reveal the dialectic of integration and differentiation in operation.

For a museum that is "all about the objects,"⁴³⁶ the epistemology of history collecting and display at Auckland Museum is left to inference. *City* does not convey what the things that the Museum has collected mean to the Museum, what they hope to achieve by and through their history collecting, what their utility is. Are the objects to

⁴³³ Oliver Stead, "Nga mahi o te papa whakahiku: The works of Auckland Museum", in, Oliver Stead, ed., *150 treasures* (Auckland: David Bateman Ltd., 2001), p.10.

⁴³⁴ See for example the theses of two Auckland Museum staff: Victoire Clarke, op. cit.; Paul Tapsell, 'Taonga: A tribal response to museums' (unpublished PhD thesis (museum ethnography), University of Oxford, 1998).

⁴³⁵ Mary Bouquet, "The art of exhibition-making as a problem of translation", in, Mary Bouquet, ed., *Academic anthropology and the museum: Back to the future* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2001), p. 185.

⁴³⁶ Wilson to Smith, op. cit.

be a vehicle for understanding the past better as evidence? Are they to be a tool for helping envisage the future? Are they there simply to be celebrated for being part of the past surviving in the present? What is the Museum's position? Taken as a text to answer these questions, *City* does not inspire hope of a turn to a critical approach to museum history. There is a lack of intentional position by the Museum and this was perhaps the crucial underlying weakness of the process by which *City* was developed. It certainly helps explain the depoliticised social history exhibited as *City*.

By hiring James Belich, Wilson was placing into the museum a non-museum thinker, someone who writes challenging academic history, and pushes the boundaries in his arena. In this way Wilson was hoping to push the boundaries of social history exhibitions at Auckland Museum. However, even though the Creative Producer was effectively offered a clean slate on which to devise the exhibition, it soon became clear that the institution and the collections (as limitations) were going to imprint themselves on the outcome.

The process of exhibition development defined roles and the order of events, and these were rigidly observed. The corollary of this rigidity was that the team did not display a great deal of agency. There was a great deal of creativity, but this is not synonymous. Thus the exhibition stays within the structured boundaries of history and exhibitions at Auckland Museum. As the process moved towards completion and James Belich became more experienced and comfortable with the exhibition mode, he became more inclined to populism. This can be explained by the absence of the notion of critical museology as a requirement in the 'Creative Direction'.

What arises as unsatisfactory from the analysis is *City's* orthodoxy. This conformity is an unexpected outcome for a team of creative and boundary challenging practitioners in their own fields. This was certainly behind Wilson's thinking when he assembled the exhibition team. The analysis has identified a number of limitations on practice: the collections, the budget, the time frame, the gallery space, Museum expectations (traditional and fitting for a War Memorial), scholarship, organisational culture, professionalism, conservation of objects, object rich displays. Even so, a team that worked so well together creatively and practically, and who are not people inclined to be dictated to, could reasonably be expected to respond by pushing the set boundaries back to create something – surprising.

The tool they did not have or use was a critical museological approach. Adopting a more reflexive approach towards the History Collection and the collecting

undertaken for the exhibition would have directed the exhibition development towards advancing the practice of history in the Museum. Although the focus of this thesis has been on exhibition development, the findings suggest that future research would benefit from directing its focus upon the roles of Wilson, Young, and the organisational context.

The process adopted for developing new exhibitions at Auckland Museum was innovative and has the potential for advancing the history practised in the institution. A cohesive exhibition team was shown to be valuable in developing museum history. However, museums must not undervalue the role that they can play in developing the scholarship. Centrally this involves critical and reflexive practice. Without this, the result of the process and politics on the exhibition concept was a metamorphosis over which the context of Auckland Museum exerted a conservative effect. The findings of this thesis suggest that by committing to changing the attitude to history in the Museum, by demanding critical museological practice by staff and contracted professionals alike, and by supporting this in its mission and programmed aims the Museum will create more meaningful statements about the past, for the public. Perhaps the ideal place to begin would be to undertake a programme of visitor studies and evaluations of *City*, consonant with the practice of critical museology. Although largely neglected in the past, this study has shown that in Auckland Museum, and in the practice of museum history generally, there is potential to take a more critical and scholarly role in informing the public's conception of the past. Through close research and development of its history collections, it might also contribute to an underdeveloped area of New Zealand's historiography.

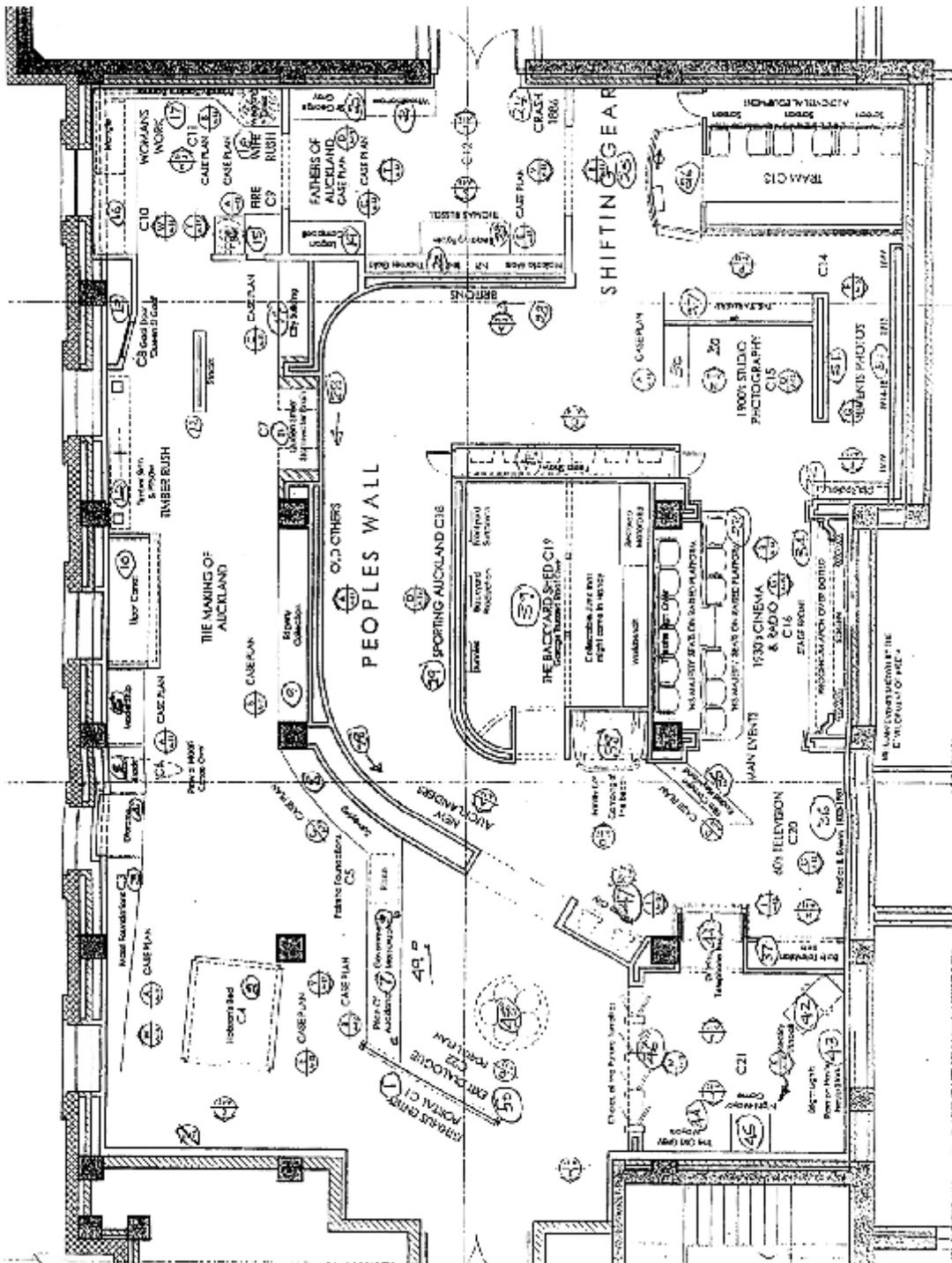


Plate 19 Footprint E showing the final proposed layout for City exhibition. Rose Young City Project Files.

Appendix One

City is located in a gallery in the rear corner of the first floor of Auckland Museum. Beyond the stone steps and columns, and the revolving door and cashiers that must be passed to enter the Museum, the exhibition is accessed by walking through three other galleries. The first is the Pacific gallery with its upright cases of weapons and fishing equipment. The second is the Māori hall, with more upright display cases and the waka Te Toki a Tapiri at its centre. The third is the *Wild Child* exhibition gallery. To reach *City*, it is necessary to walk past Raja the elephant, skirt around the tree house and cross the small foyer to the entrance to *City*. To the right, one of the displays at the end of the exhibition – a group of mannequins – show their backs (plate 56),¹ and further on are turnstiles and neon signs (plate 55). To the left, the word “CITY” in white light washes across the floor and up onto a large silhouette of the Auckland isthmus (plate 20). The isthmus indicates the growth of the city beginning with a single red dot that repeats itself, proliferating over the isthmus in a growth sequence that ends with the word “City” lighting up, also in red. All the while, refrains of God Save the Queen, an old theme to the television news, the National Anthem, advertisement jingles and the occasional ding from a pinball game bounce around the gallery creating a busy aural atmosphere. Opposite the isthmus is the introductory text.

¹ All photographs in Appendix One are the author's. All quotations are from the exhibition texts and labels.

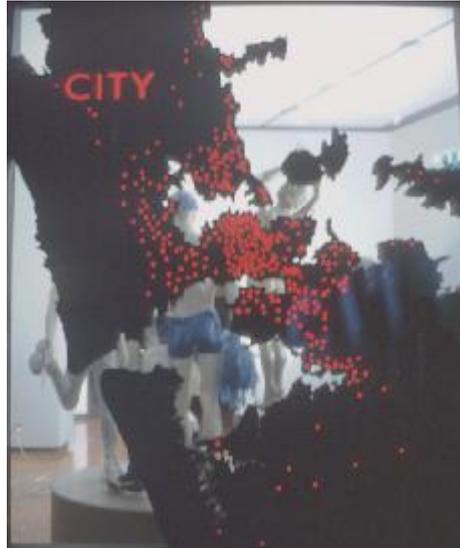


Plate 20 Auckland Isthmus.



Plate 21 (left) Hobson's Choice. Bed: 'half tester believed to have belonged to William Hobson', (Old Colonists Museum). Plate 22 (above) Flintlock Duelling Pistol: 'given by Governor Hobson to his secretary', (Old Colonists Museum). Bible: 'owned by Marianne Williams, whose husband,

missionary Henry Williams, helped translate the Treaty of Waitangi', (on loan).

Plate 23 Lively Capital (left) and the Price of Auckland (right). Goods representing the cost of approximately 50 acres. Copy of deed of purchase (Courtesy of Auckland Public Library).



Introductory text

‘Auckland in the 19th century grew in frantic spasms based on timber rushes, gold rushes, war booms, and stock market booms. In the 1880s, the rush-phase ended and Auckland had to shift gear dramatically. In the 20th century, the city grew again, to become New Zealand’s “Queen City” – a queen with her share of problems.

There are many Aucklands. Local variation and local pride is important. But Auckland’s division into various local authorities can disguise the fact that it is, historically, a unified whole – one City.’

Hobson’s choice

‘William Hobson (1792-1842) was the first Governor of New Zealand. It was he who chose and named the site of Auckland city. Hobson had signed the Treaty of Waitangi on 6th February 1840 at the Bay of Islands, then the main centre of culture contact. But Hobson felt his capital should be further south. In late 1840, in cooperation with local Māori, he and his officials established Auckland. Hobson made his formal move south in February 1841, with his wife, Eliza.

William Hobson died the following year of a series of strokes brought on by “violent mental excitement” – he did not find New Zealand history boring. He was governor for only two and a half years. But he deserves remembrance as a founder of Auckland, and one partner in the official marriage of Māori and Pākehā. Both the bed and the Treaty were to be the key institutions in the future relationship.’

The price of Auckland

‘Hobson paid Ngati Whatua a few pounds and a few trinkets for 3000 acres of central Auckland. But Te Kawau and Ngati Whatua were not fools. The real price for their land, they hoped, would be permanent and equal partnership with a Pākehā town which provided them with goods, protection, markets, and mana. For a few years this is what they got. But as the Pākehā population and power grew, Ngati Whatua were increasingly shunted aside. The implicit deal of 1840 – the partnership in return for cheap land – was broken.’

Lively Capital

‘Auckland was founded as a planned capital, but soon went freelance. Its geography began with class – Officials, Commercial, and Mechanics Bays.

Auckland was capital of New Zealand (1840-1865), capital of New Ulster (to 1852) and of Auckland Province (to 1876).

The Governors were not slow to recreate genteel life on this new frontier. Government House became the centre of the Auckland social scene, or at least its upper end.'



Plate
24
(left)
Māori
Founda-
tions.
Plate
25
(right)
Māori

Foundations, detail, extreme lower left. Iron patu found in the Bay of Islands. Tomahawk with whalebone handle, hand forged axe head made in New Zealand. Tūpara, double barrelled shotgun. Brought to New Zealand by Dr. Thomas Secombe, surgeon on HMS Fox. Used at the battle of Ōtatau near Patea in 1869, (Old Colonists Museum). Percussion musket (flintlock conversion), 1840s. Possibly used in New Zealand as a trade musket. Cartouche box and belt. Taken from the Māori who shot Colonel Nixon during the New Zealand Wars, (Old Colonists Museum). Pou whenua, Ngati Whatua style. Waka Huia. A.G.F. Angus print.



Plate 26 (left) Māori Trade. Plate 27 (right) Colonial Auckland was linked to the rest of New Zealand and the world, by sea. It had its own ship builders – like Henry Niccol, who built 181 ships between 1843 and 1887 – and its own shipping companies, like the Circular Saw Line, which ran 25 ships between the 1880s and 1890s. Throughout the 19th century, Auckland's ships tended to be smaller and more numerous than those of the southern cities, relying on sail and less on steam.

Māori foundations

‘Huge terraced hill-pa sites, like Maungakiekie on One Tree Hill, bear witness to the fact that Māori have occupied the Tāmaki Isthmus for centuries. By 1800, Ngati Paoa had an established presence in the region. But the inhabitants of the original site of Auckland city were Ngati Whatua. In 1800, Ngati Whatua were among the most powerful of northern Māori tribes. In 1807-8 under their great chief Murupaenga, they routed Ngāpuhi rivals from further north. But Ngāpuhi had earlier access to Europeans and their guns, and in the 1820s the tables were turned. Under their dreaded leader Hongi Hika, the hammer of Tāmaki, they defeated Ngati Whatua in 1825-6 and killed Murupaenga. The battered Ngati Whatua clung to their land, especially their base at Ōrākei, but were ever mindful of the threat from the north.

A meeting at Kohimarama early in 1840, combined by their leading chief Apihai Te Kawau, Ngati Whatua decided that a Pākehā (European) settlement might solve their problem.

Te Kawau and Paora Tūhaere, his successor as chief, along with the rest of Ngati Whatua, were among the “Fathers” of Auckland. Without their help, the city could not have been founded. Like Dr. Frankenstein, they soon discovered that the monster they had created was not easy to control.’

Te Wherowhero and the Tainui connection

‘The Tainui tribes of Waikato had ancient links with Ngati Whatua, who turned to them too for protection against Ngapuhi. At Ngati Whatua’s invitation, some Waikato settled at Mangere in the 1830s. The great Waikato chief Te Wherowhero lived at Mangere in the 1840s and 1850s and was another Māori “Father of Auckland”. When the Nga Puhi chief Hone Heke wanted to attack Auckland in 1847, Te Wherowhero informed his that “between Ngapuhi and the Pākehā was his body – it must be disposed of first.” In 1858, as Pākehā pretensions to dominance grew, Te Wherowhero left Auckland and became the first Māori King.’

Māori Trade

‘In the 1840s and 1850s, Auckland was a European town with a Māori hinterland. In 1845 Auckland Pākehā had only 1800 acres under cultivation, including grass – about a quarter-acre section each to grow food. The town was largely dependent on Māori agriculture for its food. Mechanics Bay was the main market for the canoe-borne goods which flowed in from Coromandel, Hauraki, Tauranga and the Waikato.’



Plate 28 (left) Mapping, Naming, Ruling. Plate 29 (right) 'What To Bring – The Edgerly Collection. John Edgerly (1814-1849), botanist and settler, migrated from England to Auckland in 1843 with his bride Sarah, formerly Newnham. The Edgerlies faced the great immigration decision: what to take to equip yourself in your new life at the other end of the world? John had previously visited New Zealand in the late 1880s. Despite this experience, his choices were a little eccentric. Match the following list to the numbered items displayed.'



Plate 30 The Ligar Canal. 'In late 1998 city drainage contractors uncovered the remains of the Ligar Canal two meters below street level. The planking of jarrah rested on massive pohutukawa 'sleepers'. This section came from the Queent Street Fort Street intersection, Archaeologists monitored the excavation and reported details of the canal and the 1860s brick and motor storm water drain above.'

Plate 31 Timber Rush.



Mapping, naming, ruling

‘Hobson named the new city after his patron George Eden, Earl of Auckland and Governor General of India. It transpired that Hobson had buttered up the wrong man when in 1842 Lord Auckland was held responsible for the loss of a British army in Afghanistan.

Surveyors were the forerunners of Pākehā settlement drawing and quartering the land in preparation for sale and subdivision. Felton Matthew is said to have modelled Auckland on the English city of Bath, once a Roman resort.

Some of the new names failed to “take” – the proposed suburb “Anna” was never seen again.

Maps and plans reduced the land to something controllable. Names such as “Queen Street” symbolised the fact that naming and ruling went hand-in-hand.’

Ligar Canal

‘Colonial cities faced drainage and sewage problems. Sir James Hector estimated that Dunedin in 1864 produced an impressive 20 000 tons of excrement – more than three kilos a day for each man, woman and child. No equivalent statistic exists for Auckland, but it too had its difficulties.

The Ligar Canal, originally a natural stream, was turned into Auckland’s main drain in 1842 at a cost of 48 pounds, 12 shillings and sixpence. The “brook of abomination” soon became a trap for unwary drunks – a sobering experience given the “canal” contained sewage, offal and other rubbish as well as wastewater. It ran along the side of Queen Street which itself was prone to stagnant ponds. It was named after Surveyor General Charles Ligar, but he got little thanks for it.

“Of the many nuisances created in this town by our Surveyor General the Ligarian Ditch or Canal is the most dangerous.” ’

Timber Rush

‘The Auckland region was heavily forested in 1840. By 1910 after a long “timber rush”, most of the useable timber had been felled. Timber exports, especially kauri, were important until that time. Kauri was originally valued for masts and spars, then as planking for buildings – forests literally transformed into city. Not only Auckland, but also parts of such cities and Wellington and Melbourne were built from Auckland kauri. The kauri export industry briefly boosted the Kaipara harbour into a major international port, with 42 timber wharves and 250 ships visiting in 1900.’



Plate 32 (left) Gaol Cell Door. Plate 33 (right) Queen Street Gaol Peep Holes. Looking in the peepholes the visitor can see archaeological findings from old gaol site.



Plate 34 (left) City Building. Plate 35 (right) Women's Work.

‘Exports were only the tip of the woodberg. Colonial New Zealand was “a world built of wood”. Wood was used for cooking fuel, heating, water heating, packing – almost everything was boxed and barrelled – roading and bridges, ships and boats as well as fencing and buildings. Totara was used for railway sleepers, kahikatea for butter boxes. In colonial Auckland, wood was not just wood, but functioned in the place of plastics, aluminium, steel and electricity we use today.’

Queen Street Gaol

‘Colonial Auckland had crime rates that dwarf those of the present. Then, as now, young single men were the perpetrators. But in the 19th century Pākehā were very much more crime prone than Auckland Māori. Women lawbreakers were few but active. A prostitute named Mary Robinson, with 150 court appearances, was personally responsible for 4% of women’s crime in Auckland between 1850 and 1870. Conditions in the gaol were harsh. Rations were meagre, and “hard labour” – which helped make Auckland streets – was hard indeed.

Queen Street gaol was the best used public building in town.’

City Building

‘Colonial Auckland was no country town. It had few big factories but many small ones. Woodworking involved many manufactories and workshops, and there were also brickworks, kilns and potteries. Building and its associated trades was the main manufacturing industry. It built houses, warehouses, shops, office buildings, public buildings and public works for the next echelon of immigrants – a pyramid-selling system of growth through growth.’

Women’s work

“Housework” in colonial Auckland was a euphemism for an even wider range of tasks than it is today, many of them more muscular. Basic housework included cleaning, washing, mending, and cooking, all requiring heavy equipment. These tasks were not just necessary for daily life, but for “respectability” – clean, well-mended clothes, a clean doorstep, and baking to feed visitors. If no men or children were available to chop the wood and carry water, women did this too.

Other housework, such as making clothes and candles, replaced goods that would otherwise have to be bought with scarce cash. The line between city and country was blurred. Many urban households had vegetable gardens, fruit trees, and fowls, and some had goats or a cow for milk. Tending plants and animals and preserving food were economic activities, not housework, but still were often women’s work.

If times were hard, or a husband was useless or dead, or had deserted, women's work expanded yet again. Washing, sewing or boarders were taken in, and the kitchen/laundry became even more like the engine room of a small business.'



Plate 36 (left) Wife Rush. Plate 37 (right) Fire City.
 'Private business arrangements and private fire brigades to deal with fire in Auckland proved unsatisfactory. Premises might be reduced to ashes while the details of insurance coverage were sorted. Asher decided to establish a volunteer Fire Brigade which would serve everyone. The idea soon caught on.'



Plate 38 (left) Reading Table. Plate 39 (right) George Grey. Centre top is the phrenological chart of George Grey, below this is the Teutenberg bust from the old post office.

Wife Rush

‘Adult males in early Auckland outnumbered adult females by about two to one. Men advertised for wives, and made proposals at the drop of a hat. Families tried to control courtship, but with much less success than in the old countries. Women themselves had more choice. Divorce was rare; desertion and death of a spouse were not.

“Fancy, the mother of a [servant] woman I had for a month had a wooden leg, a son of 27 and six [other] children, yet has just married again! No-one need despair after that I think.” Mary Swanson, Auckland, 1884.’

Fire City

‘In a wooden city, fire was the ever-present danger, battled by more-or-less organised volunteers. The first uniformed fire-fighting in Auckland occurred in 1850. A fire broke out at mechanics Bay during a Fancy Dress Ball at Government house. Costumed participants led the fire fighting charge: Colonel Wynyard, the acting Governor, dressed as De Bois Guilbert from Ivanhoe, Mr Ligar of canal fame as Edward IV, and a Mr Johnson as the chief of Montenegro.

An inner city fire on 7 July 1858 destroyed fifty houses, despite the fact that a house in Shortland Street was blown up to check its spread. Another fire on 17 January 1863 did £60,000 worth of damage on Queen Street.’

Cyrus the arsonist

‘Cyrus Haley arrived in Auckland with his wife Emily, a singer, and three children in 1870. Emily performed a concert at the Music Hall which was panned by reviewers. The Music Hall was soon gutted by fire. Cyrus established a reading room and 200-seater restaurant in the New Zealand Insurance building, and claimed to have invested £3,000 in the Caledonian Mining Co. Thomas Russell was behind both companies. Haley’s mining investment was lost in 1871, and Haley blamed Russell. In August 1871, the NZI building went up in smoke, costing the company not only the building but also major insurance claims from lessees such as Haley. In December, the Choral Hall, which replaced the Music Hall, also burned down. In January 1872, eight shots were fired into Thomas Russell’s Onehunga mansion, and five days later Haley was caught fleeing after having set fire to hayricks on Russell’s property. Haley was tried and sentenced to three terms of life imprisonment. In 1875 he was shot dead while trying to escape.’

George Grey

‘George Grey, “the great proconsul”, was one of the outstanding figures of the 19th Century British Empire. As Governor of New Zealand (1845-53 and 1861-8), Superintendent of Auckland (1875-6), Premier of New Zealand (1877-9), and famous private citizen lurking in the wings of his retirement retreat on Kawau Island, he spent more time in and near Auckland than anywhere else. An autocratic democrat, friendly and deadly enemy of the Māori, philanthropist and imperialist, Grey remains an enigmatic colossus in the history of Auckland, New Zealand, and the British Empire.’

Logan Campbell

‘Campbell was widely acknowledged as “Father of Auckland”, largely because of his munificent gift of Cornwall Park to the city – possibly the most valuable private bequest in New Zealand history.

Yet Campbell had a love-hate relationship with his child. “The fact is I am also on the horns of dilemma which there is no getting over.... I love this place but not the people.” Campbell initially tried to socially separate himself from Auckland, by living in Europe off his Auckland profits. When this failed, he tried to civilise Auckland.’

Thomas Russell

““Thomas Russell, I want your blood”. These were the words Cyrus Haley had yelled as he committed the crimes that led to his death. Who was Thomas Russell? He was “the outstanding commercial figure in nineteenth-century New Zealand.” “Long before he was 40 Russell was undisputed leader of Auckland’s business community”. The most unsung of Auckland’s founding fathers, he was the Holy Ghost of New Zealand’s colonising Trinity, whose other members Edward Gibbon Wakefield and Julius Vogel.

Russell’s specialty was raising money in London to invest in Auckland. He was often entrusted with loan negotiations by Colonial Government, whose interests converged with his own. William Rolleston stated in 1873 that: “the vulgar idea... is said to exist, that Mr Thomas Russell is not the representative of the Colonial Government, but the Colonial Government is the representative of Mr Thomas Russell””

Gold

‘London investors were one key source of capital for Russell. Another was Thames and Coromandel gold. Gold mining there boomed from 1868, shifting into capital-intensive quartz mining as the century wore on.

It is easy to forget that Auckland was once a gold town. “Nearly all the Thames gold was traded through Auckland.... At the corner of Shortland Street and Queen Street, under the verandah of the Post Office, stock brokers, their agents and investors waited expectantly for telegrams from the gold-fields relaying news of the latest finds....” .By 1871, 130 Auckland-based companies with capital of six million sterling were involved in the Thames goldfields. Quartz-mining machinery was built in Auckland, gold companies established the Auckland stock exchange, and Auckland profited more from gold than it did from the older kauri gum industry.’

War

‘War was another of Thomas Russell’s interests. His sole incursion into politics was as minister of Colonial Defence during the Waikato war of 1863-4, when a large Auckland based army invaded the territory of the Māori king movement. Russell designed the policy of confiscating Māori land, at this time, and in subsequent years invested heavily in it.’

Russell’s web

‘Russell was spider to many webs. He was the key founder of numerous public companies including two which remain with us today: New Zealand Insurance (founded 1859) and Bank of New Zealand (founded in 1861). He and his three brothers founded four law firms, all of which survive to the present, including Russell McVeagh and Bell Gully.’

A genteel business

‘Russell and his fellow merchant princes lived well. They met, schemed and networked in each others’ palatial homes and at two gentlemen’s clubs: the Auckland Club and the Northern Club, still bastions of genteel capitalism.

Frederick Whitaker

Lawyer and politician, Frederick Whitaker was Thomas Russell’s chief lieutenant. Eighteen years older than Russell, he was Superintendent of Auckland province in 1865-7, and twice premier of New Zealand (1863-4 and 1883). With Russell, he invested heavily in Thames gold and Waikato land – too heavily.’



Plate 40 (left) A Genteel Business and Russell's Web. Opposite this display is a 'gilt framed mirror' and a small display case with a '.45 cal. 5 chamber muzzle loading revolver'. In the case is a label which reads: 'Suicide of Mr. F.A. Whitaker. From the Weekly News, 11 June 1887, p.10 (use New Zealand herald).' [The Weekly news excerpt however has never been placed in the case.] Plate 41 (right) Gold and Thomas Russell.



Plate 42 (left) Tram, Shifting Gear. Plate 43 (right) The Farmers.

Shifting Gear

‘During the 19th Century, the Auckland economy was dynamic and varied, but also in some ways less sophisticated than that of the southern cities Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. It relied more on water transport and less on rail for transport; more on sailing ships and less on steam ships; less on farming (it handled very little wool) and more on extractive industries – timber, gold, and kauri gum. The decline of these industries, and the 1886 collapse of the speculative bubble which Auckland’s merchants had led, might have resulted in the decline of Auckland relative to the southern cities. Yet by the early 20th Century, Auckland had re-established itself economically, and begun to pull away from southern rivals – a change which those rivals found hard to accept.

In 1881, both Dunedin and Christchurch were larger than Auckland. By 1936 Auckland’s population equalled both combined. By 1999 it was well over twice that of both combined – and was three times the size of Wellington, New Zealand’s number Two city.

Why did urban New Zealand shift from the Four Big Cities to the Big One?’

Farmers

‘The importance to Auckland of its farming hinterland is highlighted by the name of its most famous department store: Farmers’. The Farmers’ union of the Auckland region formed a trading company in 1910. In 1918, this merged with a large mail-order firm, Laidlaw Leeds, and in 1920 opened a huge new store for city retail business. With its free trams and buses linking it to Queen Street, its tearooms seating 300, its children’s playground, its Christmas Parades, and its five acres of floor space, it was Farmers’ that introduced many Aucklanders to modern consumerism and consumer goods. Hector, the centenarian parrot was a famous Farmers’ mascot.

Consumer goods from the 1920s developed a new category, which Farmers’ hastened to supply: electric servants. These machines were intended to make women’s lives easier and to replace human servants. Sometimes, they merely increased the amount of work expected. But Aucklanders were big buyers – and sellers – of domestic technology.’

Radio

‘Today the city of Auckland is represented to itself as much by its radio by anything else. [sic] The first Auckland radio broadcast, on 13 April 1922, was by Radio Services Ltd operating from the Strand Arcade. At first, some dismissed radio as a passing fad,

or searched for hidden gramophones behind the radio set. In 1924, there were 2,800 licensed radio receivers in New Zealand. By 1935 there were 150,000. The first instant mass medium had arrived.’



Plate 44 Old Radios – Main Events.

Colin Scrimgeour (1903-87), ‘Methodist missionary and socialist, became in 1931 the Auckland broadcaster known as ‘Uncle Scrim’. In the midst of the Depression, his weekly ‘Man in the Street’ broadcasts “gave voice to the concerns of the common people, and under the guise of religion he was to push the rigorous censorship of broadcasting to the limit.” On the evening before the 1935 election, ‘Man in the Street’ was jammed on the orders of the Coalition Government. Scrim was Controller of Commercial Broadcasting under the new Labour government from 1936 to 1942, when he fell out with Prime Minister Peter Fraser.’

Aunt Daisy ‘Maud Ruby Bashun (1879-1963), known to a million New Zealanders as ‘Aunt Daisy’ was originally a singer who sang occasionally for the Auckland radio station 1YA in the 1920s. In 1930 she replaced an announcer on holiday for two weeks. The two weeks turned into 33 years, and Aunt Daisy became New Zealand’s most famous radio personality.’

Micky Savage ‘Michael Joseph Savage (1872-1940) first Labour Prime Minister, was the first New Zealand politician to be a broadcasting personality. Radio news of his election victory in 1935, and of his death in 1940, was etched permanently into many minds. Savage’s announcement of New Zealand’s entry into World War Two in 1939 “Where Britain goes, we go” may be the most famous radio speech in the country’s history. Savage lived in Auckland for the last 32 years of his life, and was buried here.’

Great news. ‘By 1953 with 500,000 registered radio users, most New Zealanders got their news, good and bad, by radio. That year they heard that Aucklander Edmund Hillary had conquered Mount Everest; that the new Queen, Elizabeth II, was receiving rapturous welcome; that a train from Wellington on its way to Auckland had been derailed at Tangiwai on Christmas Eve, with the loss of 151 lives.

The Queen sympathised on radio in a broadcast to the Commonwealth from Government House, Auckland.’

Radio drama. ‘On 1 April 1949 1ZB’s Phil Shone announced Auckland was about to be invaded by a huge swarm of wasps “one mile wide and several hundred yards deep.” The April Fools joke was not appreciated by everyone, most radio drama was more sedate.’

Pirate Radio. ‘By the 1960s, radio was responding to the challenge of television by broadcasting its appeal, helped by better records and the advent of talkback. Private radio began to challenge the state monopoly. In 1966, Radio Hauraki began pirate radio broadcasts from the Tiri in the Hauraki Gulf.’

Fighting in the Street

‘For the first half of the 20th century, Auckland was a safe place by international standards. But there were episodes of riot and civil unrest. Between 5,000 and 10,000 Aucklanders joined the Great Strike of November 1913, during which ships of the British navy trained their guns on the waterfront. “You would imagine”, wrote one unionist to his mother, “that Auckland was in a state of civil war, warship guns pointed at the town, armed men everywhere”.

During the great depression of 1929-35, tension between government and unemployed reached fever-pitch in April 1932. A crowd of 15,000 demonstrated outside the Auckland Town Hall. When one of their leaders, Jim Edwards was struck by a police baton, they rioted – the Queen Street Riots. Dozens of shops were looted, over 200 people were injured and 40 arrested.

In 1951, during the Waterfront Dispute between government and watersiders, rioting again occurred in Auckland’s streets. In an “almost hysterical” national radio broadcast, Prime Minister Sidney Holland claimed that “a very determined effort has been made to overthrow orderly government by force”. An Auckland newspaper editorial suggested that the police should open fire on the defiant watersiders.’



Plate 45 (left) Looking towards Old Aucklanders on the People's Wall, Lenses On Auckland case in foreground.

Plate 46 (above) One of the Peep Holes that looking into the Kiwi House.

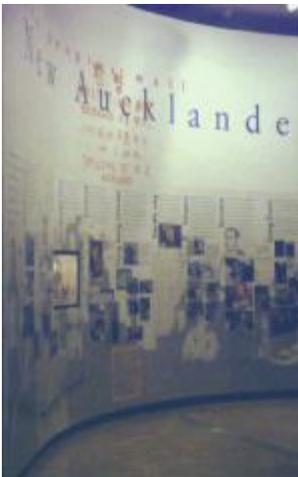


Plate 47 (left) The People's Wall – New Aucklanders. Plate 48 (middle) Looking down the corridor of text. On the left the People's Wall sweeps up and around to Old Aucklanders, on the right is Sporting Auckland. Plate 49 (right) Sporting Auckland.

Lenses on Auckland

‘Aucklanders first saw themselves clearly through photographs. The first photo’ – of George Grey’s wife, Eliza – is thought to have been taken in 1848. Equipment improved radically over the next half century. By 1900, photography was at the leading edge of popular technology. Auckland was said to have more photographers per capita than the USA. Its photographic record is rich. The works of John Kinder (1819-1906) and Henry Winkleman (1860-1931), for example, are important sources for social historians of Auckland. Then there was Herman Schmidt who won 28 international awards for photographs of male nudes in the 1920s. Auckland also produced a remarkable cluster of women photographers. They include Elizabeth Pulman (1836-1900), probably New Zealand’s first woman photographer; Margaret Matilda White (1868-1910), whose fascination with Māori subjects led her to photograph herself with full moko; and Una Garlick (1883-1951) the first woman photographer to enter the guild of Auckland Photographers Society, in 1921. A fourth important woman photographer was Amy Harper (1900-), whose portrait studies in Queen Street and Karangahape Road became popular with Aucklanders.’

Bloke Museums: The backyard shed

‘In looking at the history of a big city it is easy to forget its most important building-blocks: people and their homes. Out the back of many Auckland homes is that strange male citadel, the shed. “It might come in handy some day” is the usual justification for shed collections, but many are like personalised museums, folk curations of objects whose use is only one of their meanings.’



Plate 50 (far left) The Blokes Shed. Plate 51, (left) Shed interior.



Plate 52 (left) Brescians and Haywards. Plate 53 (right) Televisions.



Plate 54 Protest.



PLate 55 Bright lights. To the left is the pinball real estate game "Pinball Properties, centre is Old Grey Mayors", and below that display is the game Night Mayor.

Brescians and Haywards

‘The Brescians Theatre Troupe was established in England about 1885. It consisted largely of the three Hayward brothers and their wives, the three Martinengo sisters from Brescia, Italy. The Brescians began touring New Zealand in 1905. In 1909, Henry and Rudall Hayward settled in Auckland and moved into the motion picture business. By 1912, they controlled 33 cinemas. They merged in 1913 with John Fuller and Sons. Rudall’s son, Rudall junior, became New Zealand’s greatest early film-maker. Uncle Henry offered him £50 to destroy his first picture, “The Bloke From Freeman’s Bay”, made in 1920. Later movies were more successful. They included “Rewi’s Last Stand” (silent 1925, talkie 1939) and “The Te Kooti Trail” (1927). Rudall Hayward also made documentaries on such subjects as the 1949 Carpenter’s Strike and the famous dolphin, Opo. His last feature, “To Love a Māori”, was made in 1972.’

City futures

‘Almost one in three New Zealanders now live in Auckland. For better or for worse, it is the country’s only really big city, and is likely to remain so. Growth has and both virtues and vices, and it is not always easy to know which is which. Has Auckland yet come to terms with being big? What does the future hold for the city?’

Old grey mayors?

‘Local government in Auckland began badly in 1851. Within 18 months, the first “Borough of Auckland” had been cancelled to lack of interest its.... The Auckland City Council was established in 1871. By 1888 it had been joined by six other borough councils in administering the Auckland region.

An element of unity finally emerged in 1963, with the establishment of the Auckland Regional Authority, but the issue of whether Auckland is best governed as one city or several remains unresolved.

“Our local rulers” wrote subject expert Graham Bush in 1980, “are anything but a cross-section of society, the archetypal member being a middle-aged, middle-class male.”

This was certainly true of most mayors of Auckland city and region. An early exception was Elizabeth Yates (1840?-1918), who in 1893 was elected mayor of Onehunga. “The first woman mayor in the British Empire” faced instant male hostility. The Town Clerk and four councillors resigned immediately and “an orchestrated policy of opposition” led to defeat in 1894, after barely a year in office. Yet “even her enemies conceded that she had been an able administrator.”

A late exception to male dominance of local government was Dame Catherine Tizard (1931-), who served as Mayor of Auckland City from 1983 to 1990 after excellent training in “domestic duties, 1951-63”. In 1990, ‘Dame Cath’ echoed Elizabeth Yates on a grander scale, by becoming the first woman Governor General of New Zealand and the “British Empire”.’



Plate 56 Coming Out. On the day this photograph was taken a school group had just been through the gallery and had partially undressed the mannequins.

Coming Out

‘As recently as 1960, Auckland society was closed and conformist.... By the 1990s, a generation later, all this had changed. Auckland had ‘come out’.

Auckland’s symbol of this process of opening up is Frieda Stark, who danced at the Civic Theatre in the early 1940s, naked except for a g-string and a coat of gold body paint. She had a lesbian love affair in the 1930s and was, for the times, astonishingly open about it. “I walk proud.” Frieda Stark died in 1999, at an age of 88.’

Appendix Two

The exhibition brief

The document titled, “City: Second Draft, History Gallery Proposal for the Auckland Museum, by James and Margaret Belich, August 1998”, is reproduced here.

Preamble

When the world thinks of New Zealand, it thinks clean and green, sheep and cattle on rolling pastures, ski-fields and fiords. Yet New Zealand is, and has long been, among the most urbanised countries in the world. By far its biggest urb is Auckland.

Like a hundred other million-plus cities, Auckland takes pride in its dynamism, its economic leadership, its vibrant cultural mix, its sense of *action*. But there is a downside: crowding, infrastructure seeming to teeter on the brink of collapse, busts as well as booms – a love-hate relationship with its own growth.

Some cities in Asia and Europe have been around for millennia. When John Logan Campbell, “Father of Auckland”, stood on the shores of the Waitemata in 1840, he stood virtually alone. When he died in 1912, his city already exceeded a hundred thousand people. Another long lifetime later, it joined the million-plus club.

Almost one in three New Zealanders now live in Auckland.

It is a place where history happened *fast*.

Introduction

The exhibition presents an overall story of Auckland’s history, while going into greater depth on selected themes in social, cultural and economic history and their intersections. It focuses on the period since 1840 and on the greater Auckland urban area, but with some treatment of earlier times, of the wider region, and of national and international history. The modern explosion of the City crosses cultures, and Auckland is simply too big for its history to be wholly separated from that of New Zealand.

Auckland’s growth, from nothing to metropolis of over one million in two long lifetimes, is an exciting story, and the exhibition seeks to do justice to its dynamism. Yet the story must not be told solely in triumphalist or singularist terms. We need to cover busts as well as booms; hidden and varied histories as well as the homogenous official one; bad news as well as good. There are also intrinsic difficulties in presenting demographic and economic history as lively museum exhibitions, and lending broad coherence to diversity.

The need for coherence could lead to blandness and inanimation as well as triumphalism; the need for diversity could lead to a dog’s breakfast. We hope to avoid both dangers by using a broad connecting theme which is also an ongoing debate: the shift from the Big Four to the Big One, New Zealand’s love-hate relationship with Auckland, Auckland’s love-hate relationship with its own growth, its tendency to busts as well as booms, the downs as well as the ups of a rollercoaster history.

The number of iconic objects (which could be displayed for their own significance) relevant to this proposal in Museum’s collections is not great. On the other hand, the number of generic objects (eg household goods, utensils, furniture) which might clothe generic displays is substantial. Furthermore, visual resources such as maps (eg 1908 City Council survey maps) and photographs (eg Kinder, Winkelman, Richardson collections) are quite rich. These considerations underly some of the display suggestions below.

Exhibition Overview

The Exhibition begins with an Entry Arch. An A/V display on the arch lights up progressively to show Auckland’s population and area growth. Some lights could then change colour to form the word “CITY”. Visitors are then encouraged to enter a 1960s public bar, with introductory A/V. This is intended to function like an airlock, shifting visitor’s mood, and questioning their conception of what histories – and museums – actually are. “What is history, mate? You’re history, mate.”

They then proceed along a “Main Route”, divided into two legs, “Rush-Phase Auckland” and “Queen City”, with a hinge or fulcrum between entitled “Shifting Gear”. Rush-Phase, which covers foundations

and the reckless but dynamic “rush-phase” of Auckland’s history, is mainly 1840-1886, but stretches back and forward a decade or two in some displays. “Shifting Gear”, single cluster of displays, is 1880s-1920s, focussing on the rise of the Protein Industry, the new “Recolonial” relationship with Britain, the “Second Industrial Revolution” and Auckland’s role as the key interface of all three.

Queen City traces Auckland’s rise, from one of the Big Four to the Big One, during the 20th century. It shifts from static displays, suggesting continuity (The Kiwi House, The Backyard), to several channels, suggesting sequential change from homogeneity to pluralism. Visitors exit through the obverse side of the Entry Arch, whose display represents possible futures for Auckland, good and bad.

Several strands weave through this Main Route. One simply lists years and population figures, giving visitors clear points of reference. Others are displays which provide visual echoes of each other. For example, tiles and pipes, petrol tins, and Auckland Books can all be colourful and slightly vulgar pastiches functioning as dividing barriers as well as displays.

A more complex strand displays the media which image or represent Auckland. They come on stream in the main Route after being introduced in their own displays. For example, photographs enter late in Rush-Phase Auckland, after a display on early photography and photographers. The same happens with cinema in Changing Gear, and television in Queen City.

Connecting themes are: the roller-coaster ride of a dynamic urban history, with ups and downs; Aucklanders love-hate relationship with their own growth; the rest of New Zealand’s love-hate relationship with Auckland. A key thematic question is: why did Auckland shift from one of the Big Four to the Big One?

Entry Displays

Rollercoasting History

A/V filmed from rollercoaster, rushing up and down, intercut with split-second images of the gallery’s displays, or icons representing them, as though going past it. Possibly also intercut with historic images and footage of Auckland. Years as sub-titles speeding by. Stops for a second at some displays.

Mapping Growth: Entry arch in the shape of a large map of the Auckland Isthmus, scale somewhat adjusted. North-south is left-right rather than the conventional up-down. Visitors enter through the Manakau Harbour/Auckland International Airport area. Lights show population growth in repeating cycles of a minute or so. Lights change colour towards end of cycle to form the word “City”.

Exit is on reverse of arch.

We need:

- a technical appraisal of how this could best be done
- once technical and cost viability is established, an historical research exercise mapping growth, using official [sic] statistics and council records. Precision will be difficult, but a roughly accurate portrayal of the timing and placing of Auckland’s growth should be possible.

Pub with A/V

Pub A/V

6 o’clock closing Auckland City Public Bar, circa 1965. Hoses into seven ounce glasses; 1965 prices; flyblown pies etc; standing/leaning only; bar with metal slops tray at bottom; 1965 juke box; dowdy décor; racing and rugby memorabilia.

Shrill bell goes every few minutes for drinking up time, forcing each group of visitors out.

Screen visible though door behind bar. Race commentary from radio. Fades. Linda Topp appears on screen, larger than life. Made up as scruffy Kiwi bloke barman, black singlet, trademark hitch of tits.

Script something like:

“Giddyay. I’m Lyndon Topp. Betcha didn’t expect to see me here. Welcome to the City. To youse blokes from Auckland looking for a spot of culture, you’ve come to the right shop, mate. Trip up memory lane – find out why our olds were such bastards – just joking. To youse from south of the Bombay Hills, and

from overseas, a special welcome to the Big Smoke. We're going to show you how it got big, and nearly went up in smoke a few times. Don't get scared; Auckland doesn't bite – not always, anyway.

This here where we start is the Shrine of Kiwi Manhood, the Pub. Until 1967, the rules were clear and simple: no seats, no drinks except beer, no drinking after 6 o'clock, and no sheilas. You got in after work about 5.30, and downed a nice relaxing 14 glasses of beer by 6. No goodam poofy cappu-bloody-cinos in those days, Blue. These were times when men were men, the beer was 3%, and a City was a bloody City. What's history, mate? *You're history mate. Now bloody well move along.*"

Bell rings. "Time Please! Drink Up! On your bike! ... Yes, that means you too."

Rush-Phase Auckland – 1840s-1880s

1 Foundations

1.1 Maori Foundations: *Hongi Hika, Hammer of Tamaki, and the Ngapuhi Invasions, 1820s. ApihaiTe [sic] Kawau of Ngati Whatua, founder of Auckland. How could Ngati Whatua protect Tamaki from the threat from the North?*

At a meeting at Kohimarama in early 1840, Ngati Whatua decide that Pakeha may be the solution to their problems.

*"I will go and fetch the carved post.
And establish it in the Waitemata
Our desire will then be fulfilled!"*

Hongi Hika's carved self portrait.

Carved Ngati Whatua Pou Whenua representing carved post?

Objects and images associated with Te Kawau.

Ngati Whatua or Ngati Paoa treasure box, representing Pandora's Box?

Maori European-Armoury: musket, tupara, cartridge belt and other accessories, tomahawk, iron patu – these are the reasons Ngati Whatua needed Auckland.

1.2 Pakeha Foundations - Hobson and co: *Foundation of Auckland as a planned capital which soon went freelance. The geography of class – Officials, Commercial, and Mechanics Bays.*

18 September 1840 – Auckland's birthday – account of foundation regatta etc from *NZ Avertiser* [sic] and *Bay of Islands Gazette*, 24 Sept. 1840.

Early surveying equipment – drawing and quartering the land. Felton Mathew is said to have modelled Auckland on the English city of Bath, once a Roman resort. Theodilite points to ...

Early town plans, drawings, paintings of Auckland. P.J Hogan views? Others?

Speculative suburban developments, plans and advertisements. Some take, eg Epsom; some don't, eg "Anna"- the Lost Suburb.

Namings: Images and text associated with George Eden, Earl of Auckland, Governor General of India and a patron (not "friend") of William Hobson, for whom Auckland and Mt Eden were named. The naming was an act of blatant sucking-up by Hobson.

Images and objects associated with William and Eliza Hobson (but see 1.3). See Eliza Hobson book.

Images and objects, if available, associated with Felton Mathew, George Cooper, Captain David Rough – officials and co-founders of Auckland who hoped to make a fortune from it. Felton Mathew could be incorporated into surveying display above.

- 1.3 Hobson's Bed:** used to separate Maori and Pakeha Foundations into dual entrance to rest of exhibition.

Dress uniform/evening dress laid out on bed?

- 1.4 The Other Capital:** Auckland as capital of New Zealand (1841-1865) and capital of New Ulster (to 1852) and Auckland Province (to 1876).

Objects and images associated with these governments and with both Government Houses. First (shipped out in pieces from England) burns down 1848.

De Thierry sketch of the first Government House.

Photos of Parliament Buildings, corner of Eden and Parliament Streets.

- 1.5 The Price of Auckland:** Land deed, 20 October 1840, between Hobson and Te Kawau. “£50, and a quantity of blankets, clothing and goods” for 3,000 acres.

Deed of Purchase

Goods and money paid for Auckland – the whole amount would be dramatic. 50 blankets, £50 in cash, 20 trousers, 20 shirts, 10 wasitcoats [sic], 10 caps, 4 casks of tobacco, 1 box of pipes, 100 yards of gown pieces, 10 iron pots, 1 bag sugar, 1 bag four [sic], 20 hatchets.

Current valuations of goods and 3,000 acres.

2 The Maori Trade

In the 1840s and 1850s, Auckland was a European town with a Maori hinterland. In 1845 Auckland Pakeha had only 1800 acres under cultivation, including grass. The town was largely dependent on Maori agriculture for its food. Mechanics Bay was the main market for canoe-borne goods.

Canoe containing goods sold by Maori – pork and potatoes, expanding into wheat, flour, fruit, fish, fowls, kauri gum, flax, firewood.

Goods bought: axes, blankets, guns and ammunition, shirts, caps, dresses, tobacco, sugar, patent medicines, Maori language books – bibles but also Robinson Crusoe etc.

Diorama with Maori boat.

Heaphy painting.

Trade statistics. Maori flour mills in the Waikato valued at £8500 in 1853. Maori-owned ships trading with Auckland (111 Maori-owned ships on NZ register as late as 1867), canoes landing at Auckland. (In A.S Thomson, “On the Progress of Civilisation”, p.419 if not elsewhere.)

3 Makings of Auckland

- 3.1 Dray,** containing Pakeha trade goods above, or building equipment? Visitors should be able to climb on dray.

- 3.2 Timber Rush:** *Auckland as timber town. Auckland kauri forests also used to build other New Zealand and Australian cities. Wood the main material – used for fuel, roading, packaging as well as building.*

Saw pit with pit saw, other equipment. Slice of kauri trunk. (Visitors should be able to walk into pit).

Equipment, models, photos – bullocks dragging timber, lumber camps, kauri dams, Auckland timber mills. Can go up to 1900 on kauri lumbering.

Images and objects associated with Union Sash and Door –early Auckland made furniture, wooden tools etc.

Amount of wood used in a week by the average household?

Images of buildings, in Auckland and elsewhere, known to have been built from Auckland kauri, eg Government Buildings, Wellington.

Map of native forests Auckland region, 1840-present.

Wooden objects for which non-wood materials now used – eg wooden packaging, wooden bricks and tiles.

3.3 **City Building:**

Bricks, tiles, pipes, chimney pots.

Advertisements for building services and houses.

Ropewalk?

The Great Kiwi Realty Game: Real Estate Interactive computer game could be placed here?

Accounts of housebuilding – eg *William Watts Journal*.

Nov 25th “Commenced building my house. Find it very tiring work, can’t get labour – sent away both my men for impertinence ... Weather very rainy, principal reason in retarding operations. Moreover, not having completed my fencing, cattle and pigs... break in and have destroyed my potatoes, corn, gardens etc, which makes it very unpleasant and I frequently lose my temper which is foolish, as young settlers must expect these annoyances before they get a start”

Move in 16 Dec 1851, drink last bottle of champagne, but roof only lightly thatched with one layer of nikau leaves.

“We covered our bed with my oilskin coat and the oilskin table cover with a blanket underneath. The children kept tolerably dry by sleeping under the table”

Finished helped by Holman.

24 March 1852 “dwelling house is finished, at least as far as Mr Holman is concerned”

Feb 27th 1855 “House burnt down”

From Alison and L.R Drummond, At Home in NZ, 1967. AK, pp84-5.

NB Possible problem: I think Watt’s house was in Whangarei.

4 **Camp City**

Camp life for the crews who built Auckland. Life in a sub-rural city, a city without infrastructure.

Tent or hut with lamp, fern mattress, camp oven, damper and bully beef.

Favoured quack cures.

Images of Queen Street with impressive frontages, then with streams, stagnant ponds. The Ligar Canal, “the brook of abomination”- open sewer down side of Queen Street, often blocked. People fall in, “even when perfectly sober”. Butchers slaughter in town, especially Chancery St, to 1848. Goats and cows graze on street verges.

Queen St Gaol – archaeological display (place here or with Victoria Hotel). Info about men’s and women’s crime (see Barbara Anderson thesis and MP files).

Working model of stocks, in which visitors can place head? (Three hours in stocks as 1840s punishment for drunkenness [sic] to 1845, when Governess FitzRoy bans.)

Entertainment possibilities:

- Promenade on lawns of Government House while regimental band plays once a week – band music?
- Early theatre – first ‘permanent’ theatre 1844 Shortland St – company quarrels and splits later same month. Another theatre Queen St – both called “Royal Victoria”.
- Cockfighting, brothels, drinking.
- Cricket. Two clubs established 1842. Union Club “formed mainly of mechanics” beats genteel Albion Club by 47 runs in 1844.
- Black and White Minstrel Performance 1850.
- Balls, especially Queen’s Birthday Ball at Government House. See William Swainson.
- Fancy Dress Ball, Government House 1850. Costumed participants had to rush off to fight fire at Mechanics Bay. Col Wynyard dressed as De Bois Guilbert from Ivanhoe, Mr Ligar as Edward IV, and Mr Johnson as a Chief of Montenegro.

Fire – the ever present danger. Objects and images? Statistics.

Firefighting equipment – reel hoses? “Very primitive fire engines”.

Inner City major fires of 7 July 1858, 17 Jan 1863, 28 August 1866.

5 **Victoria Hotel**

Archaeological Display – possibly displays from other digs relevant to period, such as Auckland Goal? Suggestion that Victoria should go after Pub A/V as though cellar thereof.

Additional items - early bottles for alcoholic drinks; recipes for colonial drinks such as “Stonefence”, per capita consumption statistics.

Equal emphasis on food consumed. Breakdown of types available from bone analysis.

6 **A Friendly Society?**

Desire to avoid pauper’s burials and the poor house boost Friendly Societies in Britain. All the more need in new country without kin or developed charity systems. As the progressive colonial economy began to look more fragile, Friendly Societies began to look more attractive. Membership increased from 8500 in 1876 to 21000 in 1886. It reached a peak of 108,000 in 1936, before declining with the advent of the Welfare State.

“Friendly Labourers and Benefit Society” formed 1851.

“Operatives Sick and Benefit Society” with own regalia and rituals, formed 1851.

Articles and objects associated with Friendly Societies – Rechabites, Savages. Foresters, Masons.

(Note Ak Phd. thesis current)

- 7 Early Newspapers**
Early printing equipment
- Mangle such as that on which *Auckland Times* was printed, 5 Sept 1842.
- Images and objects assoc with newspaper editors such as Samuel Martin.
- Samples of early newspapers – firts [sic] newsp = *The NZ Herald* and *Auckland Gazette*, 10 July 1841, one shilling per copy of four pages, 250 copies printed.
- Establishment of *NZ Herald* in 1863.
- Auckland Weekly News*, with illustrations?
- 8 Wife-Rush**
Adult males in colonial Auckland outnumbered adult females by about two to one. Men advertised for wives, and made proposals of marriage at the drop of a hat. Families tried to control courtship, but with less success than in the old countries. Women themselves had more choice.
- Advertisements for spouses.
- Objects and images associated with social occasions intended for courtship.
- Marriage announcements
- Wedding clothes, trousseaus, rings.
- Objects, images and texts associate with wedding ceremonies and parties.
- Marriage registers.
- Objects and images associated with “surplus males”, and their inner city boarding house quarters.
- 9 Women’s Work** (work dress links with Wife-Rush wedding dress)
Objects and images associated with women’s work in a colonial city. Centres on working class kitchen? Hearth with colonial oven, pots etc, kitchen table piled with work. Emphasise heavy objects – women’s work as hard labour.
- Candle making, butter making, fruit growing and preserving, poultry, dairy, cows, pigs, vegetable and herb growing.
- Cooking – potstand, heavy pots and utensils.
- 10 Te Wherowhero**
The great Waikato chief and general who lived in Auckland in the 1840s and 1850s, and was arguably the most powerful man in it. He was guardian of the settlement after Te Kawau, but like him became disillusioned with it. Te Wherowhero left Auckland and became the first Maori King in 1858.
- Hone Heke sounds out about attack on Auckland, 1847. Te Wherowhero replies “between Ngapuhi and the Pakeha was his body – it must be disposed of first”
- Images and objects associated with Te Wherowhero and Tainui, the King Movement, and the Waikato War.*
- Pen used by Wiremu Tamihana to sign peace agreement 1865.*
- 11 Furniture-Based Trio of Displays**

11.1 Gold City: *Auckland as gold town. The Thames goldfields, 1860s, 70s; The Martha Mine 1900s, other Thames. High-tech quartz mining; Auckland as a gold town. Manufacture of quartz-mining machinery in Auckland.*

Gold assayers counter, Auckland. Scales. Examples of coins, jewelry [sic], nuggets, gold-bearing quartz. Advertisements for the diggings.

Equipment, photos and other images – wheelbarrow and spade.

Story of Thomas McDonnell inspecting his pile, when it was blown away by a gust of wind.

Chart showing gold as proportion of Auckland's exports.

Objects and images relating to emergence of public companies to finance quartz mining.

11.2 Webs of Credit: *Auckland banking and business links in rest of NZ, Aus and Britain, 1880s. Note London ends dominated by Auckland ends in this era. Thomas Russell and the formation of the BNZ. BNZ crisis of 1890s, and 1980s.*

Russell's desk as centre of web.

Map showing links.

Russell memorabilia if any;

Relevant company float notices.

Objects, signs, images, advertisements, banknotes associated with BNZ, NZI, NZLMA.

Objects, signs, images, advertisements, associated with law companies descended from those founded by Russell and his brothers, eg Russell McVeagh.

Images of "Houses of the Merchant Princes" (John Stacpoole).

11.3 The Crash of 86: *Whitaker suicide in the Northern Club. Sufferings of Logan Cambell [sic], Russell [sic], and other Makers of Fortune. Wyndham Street "Wind-em up Street". Of 122 public companies formed in Auckland between 1881 and 1884, only 5 still existed in 1904. Unemployment and exodus among the working class.*

Bankruptcy notices, headlines. Lists of defunct Auckland companies. Charitable aid and emigration statistics. For sale notices.

Room in Northern Club. Luxury furniture. Newspapers on table with crash headlines. Revolver beside chair.

Shifting Gear

In 1881, both Dunedin and Christchurch were larger than Auckland. By 1936, Auckland's population equalled both combined. By 1996 it was well over twice that of both combined – and over three times the size of Wellington, New Zealand's Number Two city. This continuing trajectory – from the Big Four Cities to the Big One – is a central theme of Auckland's – and New Zealand's – modern history.

During the 19th Century, the Auckland economy was dynamic and varied, but also in some respects less "modern" than the economies of the southern cities. It relied more on water and less on rail for transport. It relied more on sailing ships and less on steamships. It relied less on farming (especially wool, of which it handled very little) and more on extractive industries – timber, flax, gold, and kauri gum. The decline of these industries, and the collapse of the speculative bubble which Auckland merchant princes had led, might have resulted in the decline of Auckland relative to the southern cities. Yet, by 1920s, Auckland had re-established itself economically, and begun to pull away from its southern rivals. What caused this big gear shift in Auckland's history?

One answer is the rise of the “Protein Industry”: the export of frozen protein (meat, cheese, and butter) to Britain. The industry began in the 1880s, and boomed in the early 1900s. It was even more important to Auckland than to the other big centres. The Auckland region had always been relatively weak in the production of wool, which had become the only major export alternative to protein. Until the advent of the protein industry, Auckland had not had a very large Pakeha farming hinterland. From the 1880s, however, dairying and fat lamb farming began to grow in South Auckland, Northland, the Bay of Plenty, the Thames Valley, and (especially) the Waikato. By the 1930s, the Auckland and North Auckland regions produced twice as much butter and cheese as the rest of the country put together. Auckland was as [sic] last growing its own hinterland, and it proved to be a rich one.

The Protein Industry helped tighten New Zealand’s links with Britain. In the 1860s, Britain had taken less than half of New Zealand’s exports. By the 1920s, it took around eight percent of New Zealand’s far larger exports. New Zealand became London’s town supply district, 12,000 miles removed. This tightening of links with Britain had cultural, technological, and political dimensions as well as economic ones, and has been described as a process of “Recolonisation”. Combined with various technological changes (from home-produced coal to imported oil, for example), and with the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, the system increasingly demanded a single interface between New Zealand and world: Auckland. The world was mediated to Auckland through London and, increasingly, through Auckland to the rest of the country – which found this change hard to accept.

Other factors contributed to Auckland’s growing dominance: plentiful space for new kinds of factories, plentiful space for old kinds of housing, changing attitudes to climate, and the preference of modern immigrants for the Big Smoke. All these factors combined to create their own momentum [sic] (more consumers=more consumer [sic] industry=more jobs=more consumers) and to make Auckland New Zealand’s Queen City.

The Protein Chain: Moving display with hooks suspended from overhead track? U-shape of killing chain. Objects, or cases containing objects, associated with the Protein Industry and Auckland’s exports and imports, hang from hooks.

(May need to resort to different design idea to convey this effect.)

Lamb carcass; butter boxes; butter sculpture like those used to represent the NZ economy at exhibitions in Britain.

Photos and advertisements relating to NZ protein products on display in Britain. Include display of NZ lamb at Harrods, Photo C19087 ATL.

Advances in dairying technology – cream separator, equipment associated with the Babcock test, equipment associated with artificial insemination of stock?

Imports from Britain – books and magazines such as “Country Life”; port and sherry (made in Spain and Portugal but packaged, named, and lent prestige by Britain); car parts, tractor parts; Oxo – a meat product imported into NZ, like coals to Newcastle.

Chain passes by other displays as backdrop.

The Works: Images and objects relating to the establishment and growth of the Westfield (or Southdown) freezing works. Establishment of the “chain system” in the 1920s. Industrial action and protest related to this and other issues.

Assembling It: An important new type of industry was the assembly of consumer machinery (cars, later fridges, stoves, televisions) from imported components. This began to emerge in the 1920s in Auckland, where it was especially important. The industry used assembly-line techniques, which required large single-storied plants, which required unoccupied flat land with easy access to port. There was more of this in Auckland than in Dunedin or Wellington.

Car manufacturing plant, 1920s to closure in 1990s. Examples of first and last cars built by plant. Note shifts from American to British (1930s) to Japanese cars (1970s).

Put this display in 1960s-style car box?

Big Four, Big One: Big copy of cartoon “A spur to action”, NZ Historical Atlas, plate 65. ATL no. C16289.

Aerial photos of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, then last three superimposed on the first?

Map of chart showing relative growth of the four main centres.

William Fox on large number of Australian ex-convicts.

Southern newspapers on Mercury Energy.

Constantine Dillon of Nelson, on 1840s Auckland: “A horrid place, always raining ... everything dirty and shabby, the people all Jews or people from N.S [New South] Wales”

Growing a Hinterland: Map from NZ Historical Atlas, Plate 61, bottom right, showing Auckland region’s dominance in dairying.

Growing a hinterland: Maps showing growth in farms, grassland, stock numbers, dairy factories and freezing works, roads and railways from Auckland.

Map showing Farmers branches in the hinterland – tentacles of the Auckland octopus.

Getting In: Commuter travel in Auckland – Suburban spread – Aucklanders getting away from their own growth and so perpetuating it.

Trams, 1884-1956, initially horse-drawn or steam-driven.

Cars: 841 in Auckland in 1917. By 1954, 40% of people entering CBD drive own cars. Traffic lights, 1947, parking metres, 1953, parking buildings, 1957, Harbour Bridge, 1959. Nippon Clip-on?

Old tram containing images, objects, and texts associated with above. Early parking tickets, metres etc.

Auckland: New Zealand’s Gateway to the World:

Sea Links: Map showing sea routes, with Auckland at hub. Importance of the opening of the Panama Canal and the replacement of steam with motorships, and smaller with larger ships.

Advertisements, photographs of overseas passenger and cargo ships.

The Docks: Images and objects related to developments on the Auckland docks, 1880s-1950s. Also currently planned developments.

Map showing reclaimed land.

The Advent of Containers, 1971, and the opening-up of docklands for other uses.

Air Links: Air transport was initially more important for rapid mail services than for passengers. Apart from a pigeon post service from Auckland to Great Barrier Island in the 1900s, an experimental airmail flight was made from Auckland to Dargaville in 1919. The first New Zealand Australian airmail was in 1934. Airmail became common only after World War Two.

Auckland had its own major pioneer of the air routes: Jean Batten.

Jean Batten Collection*

Emergence of mass air travel, global shrinking through transport and communications; increasing need for single major inter-face with the rest of the world, namely Auckland. Flying boats, propeller airliners, jet services.

Display travelling times/communications times to various destinations, 1860s, 1920s, 1980s. Early air passenger seats and food. Fall in airfares in real terms. Other?

Beach City: Changing attitudes to climate may have been a factor in Auckland's growth. In the 19th Century, Britons were suspicious of hot climates. They were believed to have an enervating, degenerating effect on the "White Race". Bracing climates like those of Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin were thought to preserve individual and racial vigour. In the 20th Century, more hedonistic attitudes to climate took over, and Auckland benefited.

The beach is a border land – between land and sea; in and out; 'civilised' and 'uncivilised' behaviours, puritanism and hedonism.

Beach Wear: photographs or models of beachwear, male and female, 1840s-present. Beach Food: shellfish and tea boiled on beach; urban fishing and gathering on Auckland beaches. The rise and fall of the toheroa. Beach gear and games. Items found on Auckland beaches.

Farmers': The Recolonial System and its Protein Industry explains why one of Auckland's leading retailer stores should be called "Farmers".

Farmers Collection. 1913-30s. Photos, catalogues, posters, signs, advertising etc and (where possible) actual products supplied by Farmers.

- 1913-4 or earliest inventories of goods available from Farmers in Auckland City to farmers in Auckland region.
- Main focus on 1920s/30s/ Needs to note products sourced from Britain (ie Auckland as interface between NZ and Britain) and products made or assembled in Auckland.
- Farmers special promotions – Hector the Parrot, Father Christmas.
- Catalogues, tea rooms menus etc – could these be plastic-covered to allow people to flick through?

3) Queen City, 20th Century Auckland

Six groups of displays:

City Life

Imaging

Main Events

Four-One-Four

Kiwi House/Backyard

People's Wall

City Life

Fast Food:

From pies to fish and chips to burgers to shashimi.

Advertisements, signs, photographs, price boards/menus, sauce bottles, packaging, the first burger bar.

Fish Fridays: Catholic origins; photos of queues at fish and chip shops on Fridays.

Staying in Touch: The first NZ telephone exchanges were established in Auckland and Christchurch in 1881, only two years after London. Ten years later, Auckland had 507 telephone subscribers.

Early Phone Books – some plastic covered and available for perusal?

Telephone Exchange*

Party Line – several phones. Visitors pickup and interrupt each other's conversations, as in party line, or hear interrupting voices speaking.

Earliest public telephone booth, with appropriate phone, signs, phone book and graffiti. Penny stuck in coin slot.

Electric Servants: The rise of domestic whiteware and other consumer technology from the 1920s. Electric lighting and water heating, followed by stove, heaters and fridges, followed by freezers, microwaves and dishwashers.

Did this new technology free women from domestic drudgery, or did it merely increase the standards they were expected to maintain?

The advent of radio and television.

Examples of whitewear [sic] over time, with relative costs and proportion of people who had them. First television and radio programmes in Auckland.

Red Lights: Sex Industry at Kororareka; sex workers Auckland, 1860s, 1900s, 1990s. Freda Stark at the Civic; Rainton Hastie and K Road.

Book City: Display of books published in Auckland, perhaps in circle around display below.

The Sargeson Circle: Objects and images associated with Frank Sargeson and his circle.

Getting Out: Aucklanders have long had an urge to get away from themselves - to take time out from being urban. Few if any big cities have higher rates of boats, beaches and baches per capita.

Excursion destinations and transport before the advent of the car. Trains, steam ferries, carts. Waiwera Hot Springs Hotel, North Shore, Titirangi, Piha, Waiheke.

Modern Excursions: The dirty weekend, hippy festivals, Sweetwaters, Nambasa, weekend packages to Sydney, hot pools in Rotorua, the Hotel Du Vin, camping ground at Mount Maunganui on New Year's Eve.

Coming Out: Decline of censorship and myths of cultural homogeneity. Women's liberation, the Maori resurgence, Gay Auckland. Bastion Point; Broadsheet; The Hero Parade.

Associated footage, images, objects.

Imaging

Shooting It: Photography was at the leading edge of mass engagement with new technologies. In the 1900s, Auckland was said to have five or six times as many professional photographers per capita as the USA. Its photographic record is therefore exceptionally rich. *Early camera equipment, Auckland's leading photographers, and collections not used elsewhere [sic]. Women photographers.*

Movies: Advent of cinema. The first screening of moving pictures in Auckland was by Alfred Whitehouse in 1896. CHECK this was less than a year after the first screening in Europe, which underlines how well Auckland was now plugged into the world. When motion pictures of waves were first shown in Auckland, the audience fled the theatre to escape the onrushing water. The first purpose-build cinema opened in central Auckland in 1910, followed by a dozen more by 1916.

Films were silent until 1928. Live orchestras of up to thirty provided musical accompaniment, with scores for 52 distinct moods, including Chopin for Monotony. Suburban cinemas opened in the 1920s. By the 1930s, there were fifty cinemas in Auckland, selling up to eleven million tickets annually.

Some central city cinemas were palatial. The Majestic [sic, His Majesty's], which opened in 1925, cost £160,000 to build and had a capacity of 2000.

- Majestic chairs, signs, photos, advertising posters
- Icecream sellers tray? Cinema equipment
- Large screen possibly with doorway through showing
- Movies popular in Auckland, footage of Auckland. Cinema advertisements if any?

Auckland society in the twenties ...

Associated footage, music, images, objects, costumes.

Television:

Main Events

The Crash of 29: The whole system depended on good prices for protein. But these plummeted after the Wall Street crash – even more than the price of imports. Depression struck Auckland at least as hard as the rest of New Zealand, leading to the Queen Street riots of 1932.

Headlines, photos, wanted posters, batons etc used. Footage or radio reporting of riots?

Huge decline in consumption of luxuries, such as icecream. Poverty, relief work, sugar bag clothes here? Ernest Davis and the Kelly Gang?

Queen Street Riots:

1913

1951

Showing Off: Auckland Industrial and Mining Exhibition, 1898
Auckland Industrial, Agricultural and Mining Exhibition, 1913-4.

Sports City: Empire Games, 1950; Commonwealth Games 1990; the America's Cup 1999.

Violet Walrond Collection

The Crash of 87: The stockmarket, real estate, and consumer boom and bust of the 1980s in Auckland. The emergence of conspicuous wealth. In the previous era, a wealthy Aucklander ensured that all his cars looked exactly the same, so that people wouldn't realise he had so many. In the 1980s, you had Waimana. 1886, 1929, 1987 – Cycles in History? The Queen Street Riot of the 1980s.

Images, footage, objects associated with above. Percentage decline in champagne consumption after each crash.

Four-One-Four

Old Grey Mayors

Small black and white photographs [sic] of all of Auckland's Mayors.

Establishment of local bodies.

Elizabeth Yates, Mayor of Onehunga in 1894. "The first lady Mayor in the British Empire".

See book by Judith Devaliant. Note sarcastic contemporary cartoons about woman Mayor.

Dame Cath Tizard. The first woman Governor-General in the British Empire???

Divide and Rule?

The Four Cities of Auckland. Does the split facilitate Wellington's influence over Auckland, and a lack of regional strategic planning?

Night Mayor (Computer Game)

Congratulations, you have just been elected Mayor of Greater Auckland. Unfortunately, there is no time to spend the evening celebrating. Electricity, water, sewage, and public transport systems are all in crisis. The Museum is making a profit, but meningitis is rampant in the southern suburbs, road rage is also reaching epidemic proportions in the north, and a cyclone is imminent. You have five minutes in which to make the decisions which will save or destroy the city.

Village City

Aucklanders want to live in a big city, but to live on quarter-acre sections and have local communities. Aucklanders' efforts to get away from themselves have led to suburban sprawl, which combines with the persistent identities of outlying settlements to create a village of villages. Examples might include:

Howick – from Military Pensioner Settlement, though beach resort, to “Chowick”.

Henderson, the Split of the South – influence of Dalmatians and the wine industry.

Devonport, the navel base.

Pukekohe, Race Capital of New Zealand (racism and car racing)

Mission Bay – from centre of missionary endeavour in the Pacific to centre of café society in east Auckland.

Westies...

Parnell...

Ponsonby - Gentrifying Ghettos.

Remuera...

Otara...

Paratai Drive...

Orakei...

Karaka Bay and its pig...

The Kiwi House

Social history and anthropology of the common-and-garden Auckland house. Family bungalow/developed state house circa 1920s-50s. Examples of points to make:

Gendered gardens – front female, back male? Garden shed as male refuge.

Outdoor loo with datura tree to reduce smell. Three bedrooms so boys and girls don't share. Outdoor porch, often converted to sunroom subsequently, as cure for tuberculosis. Front room, best in house but seldom used – parlour shrine. Sandpit, tree-house – domesticated symbols of beach and bush – link with wild child.

Original cultural resonance of house ownership associated with economic independency. Looses substance, but keeps resonance. Lawn mowing as ritual harvest.

Over the back fence, on one side, is an affluent Pakeha middle-class backyard, set for a barbecue. On a table is a television showing Billy T James advert for barbecues, early 1980s. On the other side is a Polynesian working-class backyard, with hangi. A trestle table shows newspaper open to banning of Pacific Islander's backyard umu, 1998.

Sounds of lawn mowing. Smell of fresh cut-grass?

Large but not life-size roof-removed model? Viewers lean on fence and look in?

The Peopling of Auckland – The Peoples' Wall

Long wall with pastiche of images, text, and objects related to ethnic and other settler groups – ideally with a coherent mosaic effect from a distance.

Unravelling Auckland's “Britons”

For most of its history, Auckland – like the rest of New Zealand – was prone to claim that its people were overwhelmingly “British”. It was commonly asserted that 98.5% of New Zealand's population was British. It is true that most Aucklanders had ancestors from the British Isles, and that Auckland's population before World War Two was quite homogenous compared to the explosion of ethnic diversity after 1945. But it was not that homogenous, and it was not that “British”.

For one thing, the “98.5% British” included Maori, Indians and others who had been born British subjects. For another, the category “British” included the descendants of British immigrants, whereas estimates of non-British immigrant groups, such as the Germans, did not include their offspring. Finally, British included Irish. In most places, calling Catholic Irish “British” risked a punch on the nose. In New Zealand, it was quite common.

Irish Auckland: In 1851, the Irish population of Auckland was 31.3%, compared to 2.6% in Wellington. Apart from Westland, Auckland has always been the stronghold of New Zealand Irishness. Catholic schools and churches have underwritten the subtle persistence of difference.

St Patrick Day parades. The sedition trial of Bishop Liston. Irish pubs and Irish music in recent times...

The Auckland Scots: See previous display proposal.

Auckland-Prone English: Early cohorts of assisted English immigrants included 500 “distressed weavers from Paisley” (1842); 92 “Parkhurst Boys”, young criminals credited with introducing the underworld to New Zealand (also 1842); 32 “needlewomen” (said to be largely prostitutes) assisted to Auckland by the British Female Emigrants Society in 1851; and over 1700 Military Pensioners sent out 1847-9.

Not all parts of England were equally Auckland-prone. Main sources of English: London and South-East; Oxford and Gloucester, Cornwall and Devon.

Images and objects associated with Military Pensioners and other assisted English immigrants.

Auckland links with particular parts of England - churches, street-names, artworks, craft techniques, dialect?

Sister Sydney: The main component of early Auckland’s population was people from Sydney, who were said to comprise over half the civil population in 1853. Small capitalist refugees from recession in Sydney began Auckland business, including loan and land sharking.

Transport links and visitor statistics between Auckland and Sydney over time. The Harbour Bridges. Auckland Maori in Sydney. Rugby super-league in Auckland.

Old Others

The Tangata Whenua: The road to Bastion Point. Ngati Whatua, Orakei, and Bastion Point. See Hazel Petrie thesis; Kawharu articles. Consult Maori advisers.

Dalmation Croats: (see Steve Jelich)

Auckland’s Germans

Baron Karl Von Hugel had his arm moko’d when visiting the Auckland Region in 1834.

Puhoi: Between 1863 and 1876, several hundred German-speaking Bohemians, led by Martin Krippner, settled at Puhoi, north of Auckland. They saw themselves as German, but began calling themselves Bohemians in response to anti-German feeling during World War One.

Gustav Von Der Heyde: To Auckland 1865. Director timber mill and important “Circular Saw Shipping Line”, M.P. for Waitemata 1874-5. When objections were raised to his being an alien in Parliament, he noted that his father had been born in Hanover, then a possession of the King of England.

The Old Chinese: See Manying Ip

Auckland’s Indians: The first Indian migrant to the Auckland region, who was also the first in New Zealand, was a “Bengali Lascar” who settled among Northland Maori about 1810 - about the same time as the first European settlement. It was “lascars” (Indian sailors) who developed a New Zealand connection with the port of Surat, in Gujarat, from which most of Auckland’s Indian migrants came. The big inflow was between 1890 and 1920, when race-based immigration laws were tightened.

The New Aucklanders

In 1996, Auckland’s population was 13% Pacific Island, 12% Maori, and 10% Asian – a total of 35%. If people of Irish, Dalmation, Dutch, German and other non-British descent were deducted, “Anglo-Scots Pakeha” would be a minority – the largest and most important of Auckland’s ethnic minorities, but a minority none-the-less. In short, Auckland now has no ethnic majority. Some may regret this, but no-one [sic] can deny that it has improved the restaurants.

Baby Boom: The rise of romantic marriage and associated magazines, books, radio and TV shows. Teen mothers. The Maori baby boom – even bigger and longer than the Pakeha, indeed one of highest growth rates in world demographic history.

Statistics. 1950s ante-natal films. Family benefit. TV ads directed at families – change in “typical” child numbers over time. Women’s magazines 1950s; the new paraphernalia of parenthood (modern push-chairs, basins, etc, dummies); photos showing youth of mothers.

The Drift North: Pakeha born outside Auckland were major contributors to Auckland’s growth until the 1980s. Between 1971 and 1986, Auckland made a net gain of 38,000 from internal migration – far more than anywhere else. By the 1990s, however, shifting *to* Auckland was balanced by shifting *from* Auckland, and population growth came (roughly equally) from births and external migration, not internal migration. But the fact remains that many adult Aucklanders were born south of the Bombay Hills. This may help explain the fact that Aucklanders hostility to the rest of NZ appears to be less great than the reverse.

Advertisements for jobs in Auckland. Images of Auckland presented to the rest of NZ. New Pakeha housing areas. “Gone to Auckland” signs, if any. Reverse advertisements for migration to smaller centres and the country.

Akarana: New Maori Migrations: Maori Auckland combines both the drift to the cities, and an even bigger and longer version of the Pakeha baby boom. In the Maori case, the drift is south as well as north – Nga Puhi and other Northland tribes are big contributors to Auckland Maori.

Urban Marae and Trusts – eg Hoani Waititi Marae – Community groups etc – emphasise good news to counteract media emphasis on bad. But do not ignore tribal/pan-tribal tension.

Links with The Mixing Place.

An Asian City

New Chinese – Taiwan, China and Hong Kong.

New Asians – South Koreans, Vietnamese, Malaysians, Thais, Filipinos.

Howick/Chowick? *Images of parts of Auckland that look like parts of Hong Kong? Signs in Chinese?*

The Pacific City

In 1936, Auckland had only 465 Pacific Islanders. By 1966, it had 16,000, plus their New Zealand-born offspring. By 1996, it had 130,000.

Images from Tangata Pasifika. Photos of Pacific Islands All Blacks and Silver Ferns.

Like “European” and “Asian”, “Pacific Islander” is a useful but deceptive term, lumping together groups that consider themselves distinct. Focus on Samoans, Tongans, Cook Islanders.

Samoans – by far the biggest Pacific group. Consult Cluny McPherson.

Focus on a particular church and local community?

Similar with Tongans?

Cook Islanders as somewhat different community? Unrestricted access since 1900s.

Going Dutch: The Dutch were the first Europeans to see New Zealand – on Abel Tasman’s visit in 1642. Maori killed four of Tasman’s crew, and this reception put the Dutch off New Zealand for 300 years. But when they came back, they came in force, and they came mainly to Auckland.

Dutch descent population estimated at 50-100,000.

Ons Dorp, Dutch retirement village in Auckland, opens 1984.

Ten Pound Poms: Despite all the above, the English remain important to Auckland. Recent cohorts include war brides from World War Two; the “ten pound poms” of the 1950s and 1960s, and young English reversing the “OE” phenomenon. *Representations? Recent documentary on Ten Pound Poms.*

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