



The Victorian display, featuring a pillar of gold, at the International Exhibition, London, 1862
by Joseph Nash
watercolour and pencil
State Library of Victoria

Representing colonial Australia at British, American and European international exhibitions

by Louise Douglas

I have just minuted a paper sent to me by Sir Robert Duff asking me to join in an exhibition in Antwerp in 1894 to say that the colony will not join. I am full of affairs of this sort; our work is to be done at home. Besides, nine times out of ten the result is too costly ... once in a quarter of a century

should be sufficient and then only to first rate capitals of Europe. (Letter, George R Dibbs, Premier of New South Wales, to Lord Jersey, 12 August 1893)¹

In venting his frustrations about the potential participation of New South Wales

in yet another international exhibition, Premier Dibbs neatly encapsulates the views held by many nations, states and colonies caught up in the ‘exhibition fever’ gripping the world in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Australian colonies had been enthusiastic participants since all extant colonies first exhibited at the inaugural *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations* in London’s Crystal Palace in 1851. However, 42 years later, in 1893, only New South Wales — on a grand scale — exhibited at the *World’s Columbian Exhibition* in Chicago. This paper summarises aspects of the development of colonial displays and explores the challenges colonial organisers faced in negotiating colonial identities through the displays. It suggests that Australia’s colonies were caught between their desire to present a picture of modernity, democracy and civilisation and the perception of them as places for exploitation, and at the very best, of opportunity and potential.²

International exhibitions have become a lively field of scholarship with the publication of both overviews of American, British and French events and in-depth studies of specific exhibitions.³ Interest in the representation of indigenous cultures has increased while exploration of the role exhibitions played in the development of nation-states has only recently begun.⁴ Work on Australia’s role as exhibition host and participant has been underway for some time, with Judith McKay’s comprehensive history of Queensland’s representation the most notable Australian scholarship. Important collections of essays have appeared on the 1879 Sydney exhibition and the 1880 and 1888 Melbourne exhibitions, and recent unpublished doctorates have substantially advanced our knowledge of Australasian participation in international exhibitions.⁵

The international fashion for exhibitions

The tradition of modern international exhibitions is commonly agreed to have commenced in 1851, setting off a hectic timetable with exhibitions held approximately every two years somewhere around the world until 1893. Findling and Pelle identify 39 exhibitions significant in terms of foreign representation and the universality and breadth of their themes (usually focused on ‘industrial progress’) and an additional 173 events with a narrower focus.⁶ London hosted two international exhibitions in 1851 (which established the template for categorising exhibits — ‘Raw materials’, ‘Machinery’, ‘Manufactures’ and ‘Fine arts’) and 1862, before opting for exhibitions limited to specific categories in the 1870s. In 1886, Britain changed its approach again, initiating a series of exhibitions only for members of the British Empire.⁷ Paris hosted four increasingly extravagant *expositions universelles* in 1855, 1867, 1878 and 1889. Although Australia had sent displays to other countries from 1851, it did not host its first major international exhibition until the *Sydney International Exhibition* in 1879. Modest in comparison to British, European and American events of the same period, it nevertheless proved immensely popular with colonial society. The two major exhibitions which followed in Melbourne in 1880 and 1888 were equally popular.⁸ America (where these events were generally called ‘world’s fairs’) began unsuccessfully in 1853 in New York but went on to great triumphs in Philadelphia (1876) and Chicago (1893). The 1893 event was the most extravagant, expensive and largest exhibition — with 50 nations and 37 colonies foreign participants — and also the last great exhibition of the nineteenth century.⁹

Promoters, backers and patrons, in the interests of making their events bigger and more successful, made overblown claims that exhibitions enhanced peace and harmony, developed prosperous societies, advanced progress and strengthened global trade.¹⁰ Sir William Henry Preece, prominent engineer and organiser of British exhibitions, illustrated the rhetoric surrounding exhibitions when he said in 1907 that they ‘stimulate enterprise’, ‘encourage national emulation’ and ‘... advertise novelties, they excite invention, they impart knowledge, and they tend very much indeed to promote the progress of industry, craftsmanship and art’.¹¹ The claims that exhibitions offered everything that was new in the world — ‘discovery’, ‘invention’ and ‘originality’ featured heavily in the promotional language of exhibitions — were partially true. Britain’s Post Office, for example, adopted new developments in the electrical industry seen for the first time at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris.¹²

The prospect of seeing something new and modern and the opportunity for self-improvement was motivating for some visitors, particularly businessmen and women interested in the latest technological advances in their field. However, the increasingly large, and architecturally fantastic, amusement areas were as much a drawcard. Exhibitions advertised they had ‘something for everyone’ and indeed enormous numbers of people from across all classes visited these events. The 1851 exhibition attracted 6 million visitors, rising to more than 27 million for the 1893 event in Chicago. Attendance statistics in turn became part of the battery of arguments used by organisers to attract support and justify the next event which was always more extravagant than the last.

Yet exhibitions did not have unanimous support, with concerns focusing on the lack

of tangible, measurable benefits and the substantial cost, particularly in relation to hosting exhibitions. The debate crystallised in a British Board of Trade enquiry set up in 1907 to investigate ‘the nature and extent of the benefit ... [and] whether the results have been such as to warrant His Majesty’s Government in giving financial support to similar exhibitions in future’.¹³ Evidence came from many key figures responsible for exhibitions in the period 1860–90 and, while they identified fundamental issues in the organisation of exhibitions, their evidence was generally favourable. The only Australian to give evidence was George Collins Levey, an organiser of Victoria’s exhibitions since 1873, who presented a more sanguine view when he reflected that ‘the modern exhibition is a sort of megalomania, and each has tried to be larger than the other; but they defeat their own purpose’.¹⁴ The significance of the enquiry is not so much in its conclusion – that it was impossible for Britain, or any nation, not to participate — but in the crescendo of complaint that created it.

The colonial exhibitionary impulse

Despite the debates over the efficacy of participation, most nations, states and colonies found it difficult to resist the opportunity for promotion to such vast audiences. In an age of rising nationalism, exhibitions were the most glamorous promotional vehicle of the day. In 1862, Victoria’s JG Knight saw this with great clarity:

The lifeblood of success in trade, commerce and the arts is publicity, and exhibitions are pre-eminently useful in imparting information in this most popular form ... Experience has shown that Exhibitions afford the cheapest and most effective means of advertising,



The New South Wales display at the Chicago exhibition, 1893
 Government Printing Office collection, State Library of New South Wales

without which, in some form or other, but a few people engaged in trade and commerce at the present day meet with success.¹⁵

For Tasmania's Lieutenant Governor, William Thomas Denison, himself a frequent exhibitor, the possibility that exposure to developments in other countries would elevate 'slovenly' colonial agricultural practices was a prime motivation.¹⁶ Pragmatism combined with lofty goals were articulated by organisers such as Robert Burdett Smith, New South Wales Commissioner for the *Colonial and Indian Exhibition* of 1886, who argued that 'these displays ... do an immense deal of good, to take the lowest view they give a great deal of employment, and ... hope that the material and moral condition of mankind is improving'.¹⁷

Victoria, the colony with the most advanced manufacturing industry from the 1860s onwards, was not surprisingly the most active and aggressive colonial participant. As McKay has demonstrated, Queensland, which separated from New South Wales in 1859, was a very active and proud exhibitor from the 1860s. New South Wales, less economically developed than Victoria but nevertheless the most senior colony, was also a constant presence at exhibitions. The less wealthy colonies did not exhibit at the same level. Tasmania (formerly Van Diemen's Land), the oldest colony after New South Wales, was an early and energetic participant. Over time, with its economy and population not growing as fast as those of its mainland counterparts,

Tasmania's contributions were comparatively small. Similarly, the younger colonies of South Australia and Western Australia developed slowly and generally sent less ambitious displays than the wealthy colonies.

Sir Horace Tozer's remark in 1901 that Queensland had 'borne an unfair share of maintaining the "general Australasian advertisement"' reveals both the tension between colonies over the extent of their respective contributions, and that national representation was an important concept.¹⁸ Although the level and frequency of colonial participation varied over the nineteenth century, the 1876 *Centennial Exhibition* in Philadelphia illustrates the general pattern of colonial investment, with Victoria investing £10,000, Queensland £5500 and New South Wales and South Australia £4000.¹⁹

Together or separate?

As Richard White says of this period, 'nations were imagined in an international context, in the company of other national identities ... [and] national standings and league tables were being negotiated'.²⁰ Nowhere were these transactions more evident than at nineteenth-century exhibitions.

Exhibitions gave Australian colonies an unparalleled opportunity to develop their international profile, but constructing and communicating their identity through tiers of shifting international, imperial and national structures was a complicated process. For exhibitions both within and beyond the British Empire, colonial identities were refracted through British exhibition authorities who controlled their location on the exhibition grounds (as close as possible to other British colonies) and their size. At imperial exhibitions, the colonies were highly visible as senior members of the British Empire but at

exhibitions held outside the Empire, they were substantially subsumed within a British framework and their utilitarian displays contrasted to their disadvantage with the colour and exoticism of India's displays.

The 1886 *Colonial and Indian Exhibition* in London was the first in a series of exhibitions to showcase the economic, cultural and political progress and achievements of the Empire. From this point, exhibitions were a key vehicle in Britain's increased efforts to shore up the value of the Empire in the face of debate about the value of the colonies to Britain and the costs of imperial maintenance. In the imperial agenda, it was critical that the economic contribution of the colonies, particularly as a source of raw materials, be dominant in both British and colonial displays.

The territorial tensions of the real world were often manifested on the exhibition grounds. The allocation of space, and how that space was used and styled, was a consistent source of friction between organisers and local and foreign exhibitors. For Australia's colonies, this tension was manifested in the unresolved debate over how they should be physically arranged — within a national framework or as independent entities. Logically, in a local context it was accepted that with international attention focused on Australia, each colony had an obligation to differentiate themselves from the others, and they displayed separately, and as grandly, as possible. For imperial exhibitions, it was expected that the achievements of individual colonies should be heightened and consequently they displayed separately. From the 1870s, Britain promoted the virtues of its Empire more energetically and encouraged colonies to greater heights resulting in Queensland, largely through the efforts of agent-general Richard Daintree,

Significant international and imperial exhibitions, 1851–93

LOCATION	YEAR	ACREAGE	DAYS	ATTENDANCE	EXHIBITORS	SPECIAL POINTS	AUSTRALIAN COLONIES PRESENT
London (international)	1851	21	144	6,039,000	13,937	First international exhibition and first British exhibition — established the key elements for the exhibition template	NSW, WA, SA, VDL
Paris (international)	1855	24½	200	5,162,000	23,954	First French exhibition — celebrated 40 years of peace since Waterloo and showcased Napoleon III's regime; greater emphasis on culture than 1851	Vic, NSW Qld
London (international)	1862	23½	171	6,211,000	28,653	Second British exhibition — affected by death of Prince Albert and the civil war in the US, but confirmed template for international exhibitions	All colonies
Paris (international)	1867	37	217	10,200,000	50,226	Second French exhibition — projected France as the pre-eminent Western nation and introduced carnival atmosphere for first time	Vic, NSW, Qld, SA
London (international)	1871, 1872, 1873, 1874			1,142,000 (1871) 467,000 (1874)		An unsuccessful attempt to move away from the excesses of the one-off universal event by holding four small, thematic exhibitions over four years focused on scientific and industrial education	Participation varied, but not substantial
Vienna (international)	1873	280	186	7,254,000	70,000	First major non-Parisian European exhibition — largest number of exhibitors	Vic, Qld, SA
Philadelphia (international)	1876	60	159	9,910,000	30,806	First successful American exhibition — celebrated centenary of independence	All colonies except Tasmania
Paris (international)	1878	100	194	16,032,000	40,360	Third French exhibition — marked recovery from Franco-Prussian War and Commune Revolt of 1870–71	All colonies except Tasmania
Sydney (international)	1879	15	216	1,117,000	9345	First Australian international exhibition — 24 nations and British colonies, with emphasis on natural resources	All colonies
Melbourne (international)	1880–81	29	143	1,330,000	12,792	Second Australian international exhibition — 37 nations and British colonies, with emphasis on manufactured goods	All colonies
London (imperial)	1886	24	188	5,500,000		First in a series of British Empire exhibitions — indicates move to shore up the significance of the Empire to Britain	All colonies except Tasmania
Melbourne (international)	1888	38	160	1,963,000	10,240	Third Australian international exhibition to mark the centenary of European settlement — stronger cultural and artistic program than previous exhibitions	All colonies
Paris (international)	1889	75½	185	28,149,000	60,000	Fourth French exhibition — highest visitation of the 19th century exhibitions	None
Chicago (international)	1893	207½	183	27,529,000		Second American exhibition — the most extravagant and last great exhibition of the 19th century	NSW only

Sources: Arthur Renwick, *Report of the Executive Commissioner for New South Wales to the World's Columbian Exhibition, Chicago, 1893*, Charles Potter, Government Printer, Sydney, 1894, p. 411; John E. Findling & Kimberley D. Pelle (eds), *Historical Dictionary of World's Fairs and Expositions, 1851–1988*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1990.²¹

erecting the first separate Australian building at a major overseas exhibition at the 1872 exhibition in London.²²

By the 1880s, regular premiers and intercolonial conferences enabled the colonies to agree on some mutually beneficial arrangements such as, for example, integrated transport and communication systems.²³ However, their different historical experiences and environments, compounded by their still relative isolation, meant the individual colonies were used to high degrees of autonomy. The inability of the Federal Council, established by Victoria in 1885, to secure the participation of New South Wales or South Australia, indicates how fractured intercolonial relationships could be. Until the commencement of discussions in the 1890s which led to Federation, the only real sense of connection between colonies came from occupation of the same continent and their derivation from the same Anglo-Celtic stock.

On the matter of combining to create a unified national display for overseas exhibitions, Australian colonies could not agree. As early as 1866, Victoria's Redmond Barry suggested a single display for the 1867 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris. New South Wales and Queensland were not interested, and in any case, the British commissioners, whose authority extended to decisions of this kind, would not agree. For the 1876 *Centennial Exposition* in Philadelphia, Victoria again proposed (perhaps as a tactical move to enable Victorian manufacturing exhibits to shine in comparison to the under-developed industries of other colonies) that one display would reduce repetition and enable the best exhibits to be selected.²⁴ Again, there was no agreement.

By the time colonies were considering their individual invitations to participate in the 1893 *World's Columbian Exposition* in Chicago, many were exhausted by the exhibitionary effort of the last 10 years.

Economic depression and drought had descended, and they were also preoccupied with complicated and hostile intercolonial discussions about Federation. Debate about Australia's participation began in August 1891 when South Australia proposed joint representation 'for purposes of economy' supported by the Sydney Chamber of Commerce. The considerable benefits in visitors seeing Australia as a single entity were also discussed.²⁵ In late 1891 the New South Wales Exhibition Commission proposed that a combined display, 'while likely to be of little value in connection with the local work of collecting exhibits of each Colony, would prove a most excellent thing in America, where it was advisable that the Executive Commissioners representing the various Colonies should work together for the general interest'. Tasmania agreed, and Queensland was at first in favour, suggesting that 'a united Australian building would reduce costs and represent to visitors "the spirit of [Australian] Federation"'.²⁶ Unsurprisingly, New South Wales insisted their commissioner be appointed the executive commissioner for the whole exercise. This no doubt partly influenced all colonies, except New South Wales, to conclude by February 1892 that it was impossible to send a display — whether together or separate.

New South Wales bemoaned the loss of this opportunity to show 'the world a practical proof of the value and importance of the Federal idea as it is regarded in Australia, together with the opportunity afforded for a united representation of Australasia on an economical basis'.²⁷ In June 1892, Premier Dibbs, impatient at the 'scant courtesy' of the American organisers (particularly the 'shabby looking colonels' sent to encourage colonial participation) and the wrangling over appropriate space, was on the verge of withdrawing the last

remaining Australian display.²⁸ Despite these exasperations, New South Wales sent a comprehensive group of exhibits, totalling 50,000 square feet across eight separate buildings, recognised as being ‘represented in a splendid manner in every department of the Exposition’.²⁹

The last opportunity for the colonies to demonstrate the ‘federal idea’ before Federation through a unified display was the final imperial exhibition of the nineteenth century, the 1899 *Greater Britain Exhibition* in London. However, as had been the tradition with previous imperial exhibitions, the colonies again stood separately.

Making colonial exhibits: people and processes

Following the British model, colonial governments provided exhibition commissions with limited subsidies that enabled transportation costs to be covered, but did not support any other costs associated with the development of exhibits generally supplied on a voluntary basis. Therefore voluntary exhibitors, whether commercial organisations, learned societies or private individuals, had to fund all costs involved in creating and ‘decorating’ their exhibit. This practice aligned with the British Government’s view that as exhibitions created substantial opportunities for the commercial world, businesses should carry the majority of the costs. It was not a constructive approach as it disadvantaged private exhibitors and created yet another factor which worked against coherence in the displays. Over time, carrying the cost of exhibiting meant the private sector became more disinclined to participate. This discontent was evident in the 1907 British Board of Trade Enquiry that concluded the ‘trouble and cost which the preparation and

display of a creditable exhibit entail under modern conditions’ was a strong disincentive to participation from the private sector. It was also noted that many businesses found the ‘cost of preparing an effective exhibit is usually out of all proportion to the direct results obtained’, conclusions just as relevant in the colonial context.³⁰

The supply of exhibits was partly dependent on the generosity, goodwill and pride of individual colonists — gentlemen scientists, artisans, teachers, military men, housewives, amateur artists and photographers — and, towards the end of the nineteenth century, increasingly of educational and cultural organisations, and government agencies such as jails, children’s homes and Aboriginal protection boards. A substantial number of exhibits came from burgeoning private collections with state-funded museums, established from the 1850s as ‘extensions of the enthusiasm for collecting, classification and encyclopedic knowledge’, increasingly important contributors.³¹

Once colonial governments accepted an invitation to participate in an overseas exhibition, exhibits were generally first brought together in a display for local consumption. Victoria, for example, displayed preparatory exhibits in Melbourne for every overseas exhibition, the largest held in 1875 for the 1876 *Centennial Exhibition* in Philadelphia.³² By 1862 an organisational blueprint, with some variations, had been set and each colony took a similar approach to coordinating their displays. A committee (usually called a ‘commission’) of eminent citizens from government, the public service, the military, the business world and the professions was appointed to select and recommend suitable exhibits. Appointment to an exhibition commission carried considerable status, and although the exhibits represented a cross-section of

colonial society, the commissioners did not. The commission's brief was to find the exhibits and arrange their transportation to the exhibition site. In New South Wales in 1862, for example, letters were written to 'all the Police Magistrates, Benches of Magistrates, and other influential persons through the Colony' and the organisers 'published from time to time addresses to their fellow colonists, soliciting cooperation and support in the undertaking in order that this colony might be enabled ... an adequate illustration of her extensive and varied resources to maintain that position to which she is entitled'.³³

The commission faced a number of hurdles in fulfilling their responsibilities. The fact that exhibitors had to fund their own exhibits meant there was often a shortfall in the number of exhibits volunteered by the specified date, and the quality was poor or unrepresentative. Much to the chagrin of Alfred Stephen (chairman, New South Wales commission for the 1855 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris), colonial society was slow to understand the importance of contributing exhibits. In his report on the exhibition he pointed out that the 'indifference *generally* of the Colonists' had resulted in the compilation of exhibits being:

abandoned to chance, regardless of entreaties from the Board for co-operation, — and that some of our most importance branches of Industry, in consequence, have been left wholly without (or with very incomplete and defective) illustration, — are facts not creditable to the character of the Individuals concerned, for activity, foresight, or patriotic feeling; nor consistent with even a just perception of their own interests and the fair claims upon them of the Community.³⁴

Again, in 1862, after a poor initial response to the call for exhibits, the commission found it did not have 'a

sufficiently large collection of articles to excite considerable interest, and attract much attention', citing the 'apathy of their fellow colonists, and ... monetary dullness'. On these grounds, they were forced to seek additional funds to augment the voluntary exhibits.³⁵ The lack of specific guidelines and criteria for potential exhibitors and the absence of a conscious thematic vision invariably meant exhibits of all kinds were offered, and few refused, giving the display an undeniably democratic air. Finally, the commission had little control over what happened to their display once at the exhibition site, with host-nation organisers resolving the inevitable problems of fitting an overwhelming multitude of material in nearly always inadequate spaces.

While eminent commissioners provided overall guidance and approval, executive commissioners, sometimes called secretaries, were responsible for a complicated management exercise which ensured appropriate exhibits were located, transported, set up and returned successfully. They were typically polymaths, often with military or civil service in the outposts of the British Empire, and their role was critical in not only managing the practicalities, but also in framing and transforming nineteenth-century knowledge through their exhibitions.³⁶ With the exception of Margaret Windeyer, who organised a major exhibition of women's work from New South Wales for the 1893 *Columbian Exposition* in Chicago, exhibition commissioners were men.³⁷

Trophies, pyramids and obelisks

During the late nineteenth century, innovations in display practices, techniques and ideas were evolving in department stores, museums and, increasingly, in the

world of advertising. Exhibitions both borrowed from and influenced these forms. Executive commissioners oversaw the collection, selection, placement and decoration of exhibits as one continuous process with their previous professional experience influencing the style of displays for better or worse. Richard Daintree, exhibition organiser for Queensland's displays in the 1870s, brought an unusual combination of experience to the role of creating displays having trained as a geologist, worked as Queensland's agent-general in London and developed skills as a photographer.

Exhibition organisers struggled firstly to categorise and organise the myriad of new and diverse objects from the natural, industrial and cultural world and, secondly, with the volume of exhibits submitted. While there was loose international commitment to core categories, classification systems were constantly being reworked according to the national predilections and cultural preferences of the host nation. The overall trend was to expand categories, resulting in the initial 30 growing to 968 between 1851 and 1893.³⁸ This did not concern foreign participants so much in the 1850s when all exhibits were displayed together and they controlled their own display spaces. However, from the 1860s, the exhibits of foreign participants were divided between their own national court or pavilion and separate halls or palaces holding exhibits in a particular category from all participating nations. For these thematic buildings, foreign participants had to adhere, often unhappily, to the host nation's classification system.

Within their own courts, Australian colonies presented their displays as they wished, and, with few exceptions, a 'cabinet of curiosities' approach prevailed, exhibits being crammed together with little regard for the implications of their

juxtapositions. With a preference for typological comprehensiveness, rows and rows of showcases and cascading piles of exhibits were common. Colonial displays gave visitors little information about the exhibits but did provide extensive statistics, maps and a range of ancillary written material. A prime example is the set of 19 essays New South Wales provided at the 1893 *World's Columbian Exposition* in Chicago which covered Aboriginal life, an overview of progress and resources in the colony and a comparative analysis of Australia and America.³⁹ Australia's enterprising approach to the use of printed material is also clear at the 1878 *Universelle Exposition* in Paris where special French editions of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Illustrated Sydney News* proved enormously popular with French visitors. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported this as a 'trump card' for New South Wales.⁴⁰

Adding to the organisational challenge was the nineteenth-century propensity to display multiple, even hundreds, of samples of the one object. The design principle was a simple one: the greater the number of objects, the better the impression. Allied to this was a fondness for gigantism, most prominent in building architecture, but equally evident in displays. The inverted triangle, reminiscent of Egyptian civilisation and suggesting simultaneously 'bulk, height, achievement and aspiration', was a popular display device at nineteenth-century exhibitions.⁴¹ Australia used it for displaying all kinds of material and products, with huge trophies of canned meats, pyramids of wool and obelisks of gold frequently features of colonial displays. At the 1862 *International Exhibition* in London, Victoria's gilded obelisk, which stood 44 feet high and represented the 800 tons of gold mined in Victoria since 1851, was one of the most popular exhibits. At the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, visitor Frederick Young particularly admired the:

trophies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland ... obelisks towering up almost to the dome indicated the wealth of gold produced from our great southern colonies; while a special one, still larger than the others, was shown by South Australia to represent the yield of her copper mines.⁴²

While the design of colonial displays generally emulated British and European styles, some design elements were distinctive. Australia, for example, appears to have taken to the relatively new medium of photography more enthusiastically than other nations or colonies. By the 1870s, thousands of photographs of prominent white colonists, landscapes and metropolitan and regional development, as well as images of Aboriginal Australians, were being produced for private and public consumption in Australia and overseas. Australian scientists and anthropologists, recognising the capacity of photography to represent their research, discoveries and theories, created another stream of images.⁴³ While photographic images of Australia appeared in earlier exhibitions, they made a significant impact in the 1876 *Centennial Exhibition* in Philadelphia. American Edward C Bruce observed that ‘no American state could “show anything to compare with these pictures of the face of the country and its structure ... a perfect portraiture, in short, of the country”’, after seeing Richard Daintree’s coloured photographs of Queensland’s ‘landscapes, geological formations and Aboriginal scenes’ and Barnard Otto Holtermann’s unprecedented photographic panorama of Sydney.⁴⁴

Negotiating colonial identities

The nature and balance of content in colonial displays enables us to chart the journey of Australia’s colonies along a

number of historical trajectories. They provide a snapshot, in material form, of colonial consciousness at the moment of the exhibition, and symbolise many of the dilemmas and paradoxes confronting colonial governments and exhibition organisers in the nineteenth century.

Being seen as modern was essential for participants in nineteenth-century exhibitions, and the idea of modernity as it was manifested at exhibitions was inextricably linked to industrialisation. The colonies struggled to create an image of a viable manufacturing base. As Michael Bogle says, ‘the contents of the colonial displays and the rhetoric accompanying them provide a measure of the slow move toward the independent conversion of the colony’s raw materials into valuable finished goods’.⁴⁵ Understandably, only a small number of artisans or skilled tradesmen — mostly cabinet-makers and coach makers from Van Diemen’s Land — were represented in the colonial displays at the 1851 *Great Exhibition* in London. Twenty-five years later, Australia’s industrial performance had improved only slightly, with few (only Victorian) manufacturing exhibits on display at the 1876 *Centennial Exposition* in Philadelphia. By the 1893 *World’s Columbian Exposition* in Chicago, colonial manufacturing exhibits still comprised a lacklustre collection, this time of boots, bookbinding and an exhibit of horseshoes.⁴⁶ The continuing absence of industrial technology, and its products, reinforced the view of Australia as a natural but undeveloped paradise waiting for people and capital to civilise it.⁴⁷

Thinly populated and desperate for labour, Australia’s colonies looked for avenues to attract immigrants and found exhibition attendance numbers, and the prospect that some could be enticed to emigrate, irresistible.⁴⁸ Australian displays

therefore contained objects and images designed to prove to potential immigrants that one colony more than the other offered the most appealing future for the working man and his family, with an abundance of information about education, housing and employment. The virtues of the climate were romantically blended with seductive photographs of rural and urban locations. Even demonstrations such as gold washing machines and exhibits, which applied ‘modern science and technology to a seemingly limitless agricultural and mineral foundation’, were part of the sales pitch to potential settlers.⁴⁹ Investment opportunities were heavily promoted though this was hardly necessary — British capital came easily and at high level from the 1870s, with investors financing the housing construction boom, the pastoral and mining industries and the creation of essential infrastructure such as transportation and communication systems.⁵⁰ Forensic analysis of national economic statistics following participation in overseas exhibitions remains to be done, but there is some evidence, particularly from Queensland, to suggest that promotion at overseas exhibitions did indeed attract immigrants and capital. After the 1862 *International Exhibition* in London, Queensland Commissioner Matthew Henry Marsh wrote: ‘I think the Exhibition has done wonders in bringing the Colony into notice. Within my knowledge, it has induced great numbers to emigrate ... many of them with considerable capital’.⁵¹ Later in the century, a rush of investment in Queensland mining after the 1886 *Colonial and Indian Exhibition* provides one of the few examples of a direct correlation between participation in an exhibition and an increase in colonial economy activity.⁵²

Pride also motivated exhibition commissioners and organisers to present the best picture possible of the degree to which

the colonies possessed the accoutrements of civilised society. However, there was a constant contest between images of civilisation and those representing Australia as a boundless source of raw materials. From the beginning of the exhibition movement, educational organisations, collecting institutions and learned societies were all deployed in the name of civilisation. Initially, the Royal Society of Van Diemen’s Land sent a collection of papers and proceedings (with Californian gold leaf used in the lettering) to the 1851 *Great Exhibition* in London.⁵³ In subsequent exhibitions, an increase in categories such as ‘instruction’, ‘works of art’ and the ‘liberal arts’ assisted the colonies, to some degree, to present themselves as diverse and cosmopolitan. Exhibits from women, without whom moral and social progress were not possible, were also encouraged. Interestingly, Orr has calculated that, at least for the three exhibitions held in Australia between 1879 and 1888, women contributed between 11 and 14 per cent of exhibits across all categories. This compares with a participation rate of 1–4 per cent for American, French and British women at the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris.⁵⁴

Exhibitions represented one of the few public forums where women could both be visible and at the same time have their place in the private sphere reinforced. At the 1851 *Great Exhibition* in London, women’s exhibits included clothing, with those made from opossum dominating. For example, Mrs Morrison from Sydney sent stockings and mitts, Mrs MacKenzie and Mrs E Tooth from Van Diemen’s Land sent gloves, and Mrs MacKenzie also sent a lady’s cape. A more exotic exhibit — a ‘book of pressed algae’ — came from Mrs Sharland of George Town, Van Diemen’s Land.⁵⁵ By the 1893 *World’s Columbian Exposition* in Chicago, displays of women’s work had expanded

and become a major feature.⁵⁶ In Australia's 1893 displays, clothing made from opossum fur was prominent again but exhibits also reflected that women were now involved in a broader range of activities: '30 specimens of furs, a number of the most remarkable birds and animals, specimens of woods, various exhibits in photography, lace making, knitting, illuminating, modelling, painting and printing'. The dynamic Margaret Windeyer, president of the Woman's Work Committee, reassured readers of her final report that 'the skills in ... plain and fancy needlework ... brought to the far-off land by our mothers and foremothers has not degenerated'.⁵⁷

Despite the efforts of organisers to emphasise culture and sophistication, the trope of Australia as a source of minerals dominated colonial displays both in terms of space and attention from visitors. Tangkillo Reedy Creek Mine and the Barossa Range Mining Company were the first to represent the mining wealth of Australia with their small exhibit of copper ore samples at the 1851 *Great Exhibition* in London. Later milestones included Queensland's full-sized gold battery at the 1886 *Colonial and Indian Exhibition* in London which 'crushed and treated some 300 tons of ore sent from the colony'. This was seen as the 'quintessential symbol of colonial progress' and 'amongst the leading features of the Exhibition'.⁵⁸ Queensland also sent an impressive gold trophy comprising 1407 specimens of ores and quartz.⁵⁹ By the time of the 1893 *World's Columbian Exposition* in Chicago the mining display occupied 11 per cent of the total space allocated to Australia and featured a handsome 40-foot high 'silvered column' erected by Broken Hill Proprietary Company.⁶⁰ It is worth noting that mineral exhibits also performed an important role as advertisements to stimulate further investment in the colonies.

The emphasis placed on Australia as a primary producer partly countered the message that Australia was more than a source of raw materials for British and world manufacturing. Lieutenant Colonel Macarthur sent 132 merino wool fleeces, derived from his father's original flock, to the 1851 *Great Exhibition* in London and, from then, wool dominated colonial displays just as it did Australia's economy.⁶¹ Wool's profile was enhanced by winning prizes, including a grand jury prize awarded to New South Wales wool at the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris.⁶² The design of Australia's wool displays consistently attracted comment. The New South Wales wool display at the 1893 *World's Columbian Exposition* in Chicago featured a 'solid wall of wool' and 'pyramidal trophies of wool bales' with a 'very large entablature ... in large letters and figures the most important statistics of our wool industry'. The executive commissioner reported that 'the court ... was visited by all the leading wool-growers of America and elsewhere, and in all the leading papers dealing with wool, commendations of the highest character were expressed at the value and interest of the exhibition. No other country had such a display, and it was universally acknowledged to be the finest and best arranged in the Agricultural Building'.⁶³

The idea of Australia as an egalitarian and classless society, where advancement and prosperity could be gained for any man or woman with commitment and enterprise, was another strong theme of colonial displays. Functioning primarily as part of the promotional apparatus to attract immigrants, the principle of inclusiveness clearly did not apply to Australia's first inhabitants. Aboriginal Australians were not considered part of the colony's citizenry and were regarded with either pity or fear or strictly as the focus of scientific interest. Nineteenth-

century museums and exhibitions reflected these attitudes in the way Aboriginal people were present, or absent, in their displays.⁶⁴

Aboriginal life was represented at the 1851 *Great Exhibition* in London by four models of ‘canoes of the aborigines of Van Diemen’s Land ... made of *Melaleuca squarrosa* bark’ and described in the catalogue as being used to travel between the mainland and ‘Brune [Brunie] Island’.⁶⁵ On reviewing these models, one British commentator deplored the decimation of Indigenous Tasmanians. This gave colonial display organisers an early indication that some parts of the international community were aware of the decline of Aboriginal society, making their presence in overseas exhibitions potentially problematic.⁶⁶ A broader group of objects collected by John Hunter Kerr, a sympathetic squatter in Victoria’s Loddon River district committed to documenting Aboriginal culture, was displayed at the 1855 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris.⁶⁷ The display included photographs taken by Kerr and objects relating to women’s work, items of ceremonial significance, tools and weapons, skins, and ‘two ‘native drawings on bark’, one showing a kangaroo and other animals being hunted, and the other one Aboriginal dancers wearing emu feather headdresses.’⁶⁸ As Willis argues:

The products and crafts of Indigenous peoples of the colonised world — the objects that would be dismissed as ‘curios’ or ‘curiosities’ by later generations — then formed part of the large displays presented by colonial powers and were not separated off into disconnected displays arranged by ethnicity. It was colonialism, rather than race or ethnicity, that was being displayed. Indigenous items were on display in the 1850s essentially as examples of ‘native industry’ and adaptability, and as indicators of the workmanship and common humanity of people from all parts of the world.⁶⁹

By the 1860s, following increasing violence between Aboriginal people and settlers, the emphasis had shifted to portrayals of Aboriginal people ‘on the other side of the frontier’ who were to be feared and overcome. In this context, weapons, as signifiers of the threat under which heroic settlers lived, were increasingly prominent. When New South Wales sent a large collection of Indigenous material to the 1867 *Universelle Exposition* in Paris, Aboriginal people were described in terms of their ‘stone age’ state and used to contrast with ‘man in the golden age of his present civilisation, as existing in the great capitals of the old world’. Although the exhibits included decorative and functional items, objects associated with death and weapons were highlighted. They included ‘aboriginal memorials’: ‘two caps of clay, worn by the aboriginal widows for 12 months during mourning’, and a ‘skull of an aboriginal female’.⁷⁰

Weapons were often used as a major element of display ‘decoration’. Contemporary photographs of nineteenth-century colonial displays reveal how multiple spears in vertical rows were often placed at the entrance to colonial courts. In some cases, such as the 1876 *Centennial Exhibition* in Philadelphia, organisers specifically sought Aboriginal weapons and implements from ‘amateur collectors, government offices and public institutions’. Here they were displayed not only to contrast with the progress of European civilisation but also to ‘draw parallels between the American and Australian frontier experience’. The display contained nullas, clubs and boomerangs (from Thomas Brown, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Eskbank, Bowenfels), ‘mogos’ or stone hatchets (from JF Wilcox, Clarence River) and included a description of how they were made.⁷¹ The already established pattern of making weapons prominent was reinforced as a result of

the Australian specimens being compared with 'an international array of swords' in a publication entitled 'A study of the savage weapons at the Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia, 1876', by Edward H Knight. Knight was 'struck by the absence of metal work and the limited variety', 'astonished by the Aborigines' success with the throwing stick', but dismissed other signs of skill in the development of weapons, 'as technological transfers from outside Australia'.⁷²

The attitude of colonial exhibition commissions to the practice of featuring living Indigenous people at overseas exhibitions illustrates one aspect of the ambivalence of Australian governments towards the representation of Aboriginal people. The practice began at the 1867 *Universelle Exposition* in Paris and grew to become one of the most popular aspects of nineteenth-century exhibitions. Depending on the nature of the overall exhibition and whether the organisers saw the Indigenous component as amusing or educational, Indigenous peoples were presented variously as craftsmen, curiosities or freaks, specimens or objects of scientific curiosity, or trophies of conquest in the amusement zone.⁷³ By the 1880s, exhibits of Indigenous people were an integral part of the colour and exotic atmosphere of the exhibition site. At the 1886 *Colonial and Indian Exhibition* in London, a compound outside the main exhibition featured Indigenous people from Britain's empire, including Red Indians from British Guiana and Hong Kong Chinese.⁷⁴ France brought whole villages from their empire to the 1889 *Universelle Exposition* in Paris.

There is no evidence that any colonial government seriously entertained the idea of using Aboriginal people as exhibits at overseas exhibitions, despite high levels of scientific and anthropological interest. In 1891, the New South Wales organising committee for the 1893 *World's Columbian*

Exhibition refused an offer from Mr Harry Stockdale 'to display of 50 or 60 natives of the Northern Territory of South Australia'.⁷⁵ Roslyn Poignant's work, in tracing the story of two Aboriginal groups taken from Queensland to tour the world in the 1880s and 1890s by an entertainment entrepreneur, indicates that one of these groups may have performed for a short time at the 1893 exhibition, but not as a formal part of the exhibition program.⁷⁶ Nervous because the plight of Aboriginal Australians had become a matter of international debate, colonial organisers continued to prefer wax figures in dioramas, pictorial images and objects rather than living Aboriginal people who undoubtedly would attract even more unnecessary international attention. By the end of the century, live exhibits began to fall out of favour and the enormous village of Filipinos present at the 1904 *International Exhibition* in St Louis (as a symbol of American imperialism) was the last substantial display of this kind.

Conclusion

Young colonies, embarking on the process of economic, social, cultural and political formation, were even more keenly motivated than mature nations to participate in, and sometimes host, exhibitions. Exhibitions, which operated as a key force in international information networks for government, commerce and culture, were important to Australia's colonies for two reasons. Pragmatically, they were used to attract people and capital to Australia and, more conceptually, they enhanced colonial identity in the wider world. However, perceptions of the colonies were refracted through complicated national and imperial frameworks which affected how the messages of colonial displays were

received. Although Melbourne and Sydney were highly cosmopolitan centres, colonial attempts to present themselves in the most positive and optimistic light were also thwarted by the reality that their economies were still in the early stages of development.

Colonies' conscious attempts to represent an advanced level of modernity and civilisation struggled in the context of the overriding perception that they were primarily sources of raw materials or primary produce. This was exacerbated by Britain's view that their value was in the economic contribution their raw materials made to British industry and to the strength of the Empire. In other words, what the colonies wanted to emphasise in their displays was not necessarily in the interests of Britain or the Empire. In representations of Aboriginal Australians, display organisers found it difficult to resolve the tension between high levels of scientific and popular interest and the worldwide awareness of the decimation of Aboriginal life. That Aboriginal people could not be presented as part of mainstream colonial culture in the displays also contradicted the message that Australia was a free and democratic society.

The 'together or separate' narrative running through the development of colonial displays for overseas consumption neatly charts the lack of resolution around intercolonial relationships. As Orr contends, local exhibitions played an important role in solidifying a national consciousness primarily because they could be experienced by the Australian populace. In contrast, colonial participation in exhibitions overseas was more abstract and imagined, and therefore a less potent force in the development of momentum towards Federation.

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Notes

- 1 In Tom Campbell, 'George R Dibbs: Letters and publications', unpublished ms., 1996, p. 220.
- 2 The following terminology is used in this paper: 'exhibition' for an international exhibition; 'display' for a subset of exhibitions, for example, those of the colonies; and 'exhibit' for specific items or groups of items.
- 3 Robert W Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1984; Robert W Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century of Progress Expositions*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1993; John E Findling & Kimberley D Pelle, *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 2000; Burton Benedict et al., *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: Panama Pacific International Exposition, 1915*, Lowie Museum of Anthropology with Scolar Press, London and Berkeley, 1983; Peter H Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001; John M MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1986; Jeffrey A Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1999; Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851–1939*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1988.
- 4 Annie Coombs, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1994; Elizabeth Willis, 'Exhibiting Aboriginal industry: A story behind a "rediscovered" bark drawing from Victoria', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 27, 2003, 39–58; Penelope Edmonds, 'The Le Souef box: Reflections on imperial nostalgia, material culture and exhibitionary practice in colonial Victoria', *Historical Studies*, vol. 37, no. 127, April 2006, 117–39; Maurice Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996.
- 5 Judith McKay, *Showing Off: Queensland at World Expositions 1862–1988*, Central Queensland University Press, Queensland Museum,

- Rockhampton and Brisbane, 2004; David Dunstan (ed.), *Victorian Icon: The Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne*, The Exhibition Trustees, Melbourne, 1996; Peter Proudfoot, Roslyn Maguire & Robert Freestone (eds), *Colonial City, Global City: Sydney's International Exhibition 1879*, Crossing Press, Sydney, 2000; Graeme Davison, 'Festivals of nationhood: The international exhibitions', in SL Goldberg & FB Smith, *Australian Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988; Graeme Davison, 'The culture of the international exhibitions', in Dunstan (ed.), *Victorian Icon*; Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne University Press, 1978 and 2007; Martha Sear, 'Unworded proclamations: Exhibitions of women's work in colonial Australia', PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2000; Kirsten Orr, 'A force for Federation: International exhibitions and the formation of Australian ethos, 1851–1901', PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 2005; Ewan Johnston, 'Representing the Pacific at international exhibitions, 1851–1940', PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 1999.
- 6 John E Findling & Kimberley D Pelle (eds), *Historical Dictionary of World's Fairs and Expositions, 1851–1988*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1990, pp. 382–402.
 - 7 *ibid.*, p. 45.
 - 8 Other exhibitions in Australia had international representation, for example, the 1887–88 *Jubilee International Exhibition* in Adelaide, the 1894–95 *Tasmanian International Exhibition* in Hobart and the 1897 *Queensland International Exhibition* in Brisbane. However, these are generally not accorded international exhibition status due to their smaller size and low level of foreign representation.
 - 9 Arthur Renwick, *Report of the Executive Commissioner for New South Wales to the World's Columbian Exhibition, Chicago*, 1893, Charles Potter, Government Printer, Sydney, 1894, p. 51.
 - 10 Jeffrey A Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1999, p. 4.
 - 11 International Exhibitions Committee, 'Report of the Committee Appointed by the Board of Trade to Make Enquiries with Reference to the Participation of Great Britain in Great International Exhibitions', in *Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors and Others*, vol. 49, January 1908 – 21 December 1908, His Majesty's Stationery Office by Wyman and Sons Ltd, London, 1907, p. 57.
 - 12 *ibid.*, p. 8.
 - 13 *ibid.*, p. 1.
 - 14 *ibid.*, pp. 181–2. Collins took Victorian displays to Vienna in 1873, Philadelphia in 1876 and Paris in 1878. He organised the Melbourne Exhibition in 1880–81 and then the British Section for the Adelaide Exhibition in 1887.
 - 15 JG Knight, *The Australasian Colonies at the International Exhibition, London, 1862 — Extracts from the Reports of the Jurors and Other Information taken from Official Sources*, John Ferres, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1865, p. 2.
 - 16 Sir William Denison, Address to Members of Australian Agricultural and Horticultural Societies, Reading and Wellbank, Sydney, 1855, quoted in Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, p. 132.
 - 17 Robert Burdett Smith [*Collection of speeches made and printed to honor departure of Robert Burdett Smith to Indian and Colonial Exhibition 1886*], n.p., n.d. [pp. 12–13].
 - 18 Letter, H Tozer to Chief Secretary, 2 December 1901, in McKay, *Showing Off*, p. 4.
 - 19 McKay, *Showing Off*, p. 9.
 - 20 Richard White, 'Imagining: Representing Australia', in Graeme Davison & Kimberley Webber (eds), *Yesterday's Tomorrows: The Powerhouse Museum and its Precursors 1880–2005*, Powerhouse Publishing in association with University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2005, p. 130.
 - 21 Australia exhibited frequently in many other cities around the world, including in Calcutta in 1883–84 where Australian displays were similar to others, but with a slightly stronger orientation to encouraging trade between Australia and India. For a comprehensive analysis of Australian displays in British Imperial India, see Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*.
 - 22 *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, London, vol. 10, 1878–79, quoted in McKay, *Showing Off*, p. 33.
 - 23 FJ Mines, quoted in KT Livingston, *The Wire Nation Continent: The Communication Revolution and Federating Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p. 17.
 - 24 Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, p. 10;

- Despatch Book: Governor to Secretary of State, vol. 8, nos 64, 15 June 1875; 65, 6 July 1875; and 92, 6 September 1875, Victoria Public Record Service, VPRS 1084, quoted in Marc Rothenberg & Peter H Hoffenberg, 'Australia at the 1876 Exhibition in Philadelphia', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, vol. 8, no. 2, June 1990, 55–62 (p. 57).
- 25 Chamber of Manufacturers of Premier, 'Papers in connection with *Chicago Exhibition*', 30 September 1891, quoted in Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, p. 123.
- 26 'Correspondence and papers relating to the *World's Columbian Exposition*', Chicago, 1891–1893', quoted in Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, p. 10.
- 27 [William McMillan], *Report of the President of the New South Wales Commission: World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893*, Charles Potter, Government Printer, Sydney, 1894, pp. 5, 10, 15–16.
- 28 Letter, George R Dibbs to Sir Edmund Barton, New South Wales Attorney-General, 23 June 1892, in Campbell, 'George R Dibbs', p. 121.
- 29 *Royal Commission for the Chicago Exhibition, 1893: Official Catalogue of the British Section*, William Clowes and Son, London, 1893, p. vii; John J Flinn, *The Best Things to Be Seen at the World's Fair*, The Columbian Guide Company, Chicago [1893], p. 143.
- 30 International Exhibitions Committee, 'Report', p. 4.
- 31 Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 18; Ann Moyal, 'A Bright and Savage Land': *Scientists in Colonial Australia*, Collins, Sydney, 1986, chapter 5.
- 32 Dunstan (ed.), *Victorian Icon*, pp. 23–4.
- 33 *Official Catalogue of the Natural and Industrial Products of New South Wales, Forwarded to the International Exhibition 1876 at Philadelphia*, Thomas Richards, Government Printer, Sydney, 1876, n.p.
- 34 *Catalogue of the Natural and Industrial Products of New South Wales Exhibited in the Australian Museum by the Paris Exhibition Commissioners, Sydney, November, 1854*, Reading and Wellbank, Sydney [1854], p. 88.
- 35 *Catalogue of the Natural and Industrial Products of New South Wales*, pp. 3–5, passim.
- 36 Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, p. 36.
- 37 Sear's 'Unworded proclamations' provides a comprehensive account of Margaret Windeyer's exhibition management role.
- 38 For a detailed discussion of the evolution of the classification systems used at international exhibitions, see John Allwood, 'International exhibitions and the classification of their exhibits', *Journal of Royal Society of Arts*, vol. 128, 1979–80, pp. 450–5; for a succinct overview see Benedict et al., *The Anthropology of World's Fairs*, pp. 27–41.
- 39 *Pamphlets issued by the New South Wales Commissioners for the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893, for the Information of Visitors to the Exhibition, the American Public and Others Interested* (2 vols), Charles Potter, Government Printer, Sydney, 1893.
- 40 Article, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 1878, quoted in Linda Young, 'Let them see how like England we can be: An account of the Sydney International Exhibition, 1879', MA thesis, University of Sydney, 1983, p. 35.
- 41 Davison, 'The culture of the international exhibitions', p. 13.
- 42 Frederick Young, *England and her Colonies at the Paris Exhibition [1878]: A Paper Read at the Opening Meeting of Session 1878–79 of The Royal Colonial Institute, 19 November 1878*, Unwin Brothers, Printers, London, 1878, p. 9.
- 43 Helen Ennis, *Photography and Australia*, Reaktion Books, London [2007], pp. 27, 37.
- 44 Edward C Bruce, in McKay, *Showing Off*, p. 25; Rothenberg & Hoffenberg, 'Australia at the 1876 Exhibition' (p. 58).
- 45 Michael Bogle, *Design in Australia, 1880–1970*, Craftsman House/G&B Arts International, Sydney, [1998], p. 28.
- 46 Renwick, *Report*, p. 223.
- 47 Rothenberg & Hoffenberg, 'Australia at the 1876 Exhibition' (p. 59).
- 48 With the shortage of labour a critical issue, the colonies competed fiercely against each other to attract the best and most migrants until the Commonwealth took responsibility for migration in 1920.
- 49 Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, p. 142.
- 50 Peter Cochrane, *Industrialisation and Dependence: Australia's Road to Economic Development, 1870–1939*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1980; Robert Birrell, *A Nation of Our Own: Citizenship and Nation-Building in Federation Australia*, Longman

- Australia, Melbourne, 1995, p. 82.
- 51 Letter, MH Marsh to Colonial Secretary, 22 November 1862, in McKay, *Showing Off*, p. 6; see also Robert D Grant, *Representations of British Emigration, Colonisation and Settlement: Imagining Empire, 1800–1860*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2005 for a comprehensive discussion of the earlier period.
- 52 Letter, JF Garrick to Chief Secretary, 10 September 1886, QSA, COL/A99, 1886/7811, quoted in McKay, *Showing Off*, pp. 38–9, 42.
- 53 Robert Ellis (ed.), *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851*, Spicer Brothers Wholesale Stationers and W Clowes and Sons, Printers, London, 1851, vol. 1, pp. 987–1000.
- 54 Kirsten Orr, 'A force for federation: International exhibitions and the formation of Australian ethos, 1851–1901', PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 2005, p. 157.
- 55 Ellis, *Official Catalogue*, pp. 968–1000.
- 56 For detailed analysis of both the preparatory exhibition and the display that went to Chicago, see Sear, 'Unworded proclamations'.
- 57 [McMillan], *Report*, pp. 51–2.
- 58 Letter, JF Garrick to Chief Secretary.
- 59 *ibid.*
- 60 Renwick, *Report*, p. 141.
- 61 Information on the contents of Australian exhibits is taken from Ellis (ed.), *Official Catalogue*, pp. 987–1000. This section of the *Catalogue* implies that Van Diemen's Land appears to have the larger display in terms of the number of exhibits contradicts information on spatial allocations on p. 17 of the *Supplement* where New South Wales has the largest area by square feet. Official catalogues, often produced in great haste in time for opening even though not all the exhibits had arrived at the exhibition, and when last-minute changes were being made to the location of displays, are notoriously unreliable.
- 62 Young, *England and her Colonies at the Paris Exhibition*, pp. 11–15, *passim*; McKay, *Showing Off*, p. 9.
- 63 Renwick, *Report*, pp. 90–1.
- 64 See Lynette Russell, *Savage Imaginings: Historical and Contemporary Constructions of Australian Aboriginalities*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2001, especially 'Images of Power: Colonial Relationships and Museum Representations of Aboriginal Australia', pp. 38–72.
- 65 Ellis, *Official Catalogue*, p. 997. Although they were not listed in the official catalogue, Elizabeth Willis cites a contemporary London journalist who describes Tasmanian shell necklaces, baskets and water vessels made from seaweeds which appear to have been displayed in conjunction with the canoes: Willis, 'Exhibiting Aboriginal industry', p. 48.
- 66 *The Crystal Palace and its Contents*, quoted in Willis, 'Exhibiting Aboriginal industry' (p. 48); Ian Coates, senior curator, National Museum of Australia, has recently studied the Indigenous collections of the British Museum and has located a number of these objects which the British Museum believes were exhibited in the 1851 exhibition.
- 67 JH Kerr's contribution to the 1855 exhibition and the approach to the collection and display of Indigenous Victorians in the 1850s and 1860s has been researched and described by Elizabeth Willis in 'Exhibiting Aboriginal industry' (pp. 39–58).
- 68 The full list of exhibits in Kerr's display is: 'no. 7 Skins of opossums worked by Aborigines; no. 10 Waddies; no. 11 Kangaroo Rat Skins used in Corrobberys; no. 12 Boomerangs — Loddon and Murray Tribes; no. 13 Native Tomahawks; no. 14 Native Boys' Play Sticks; no. 15 Native Grass wrought by Lubras; no. 16 Native Drawings on Bark; no. 17 Spears; no. 18 Emu feathers used in Corrobberys; no. 19 Spear Throwers'. See *Official Catalogue of the Melbourne Exhibition, 1854, in Connexion with the Paris Exhibition 1855*, F. Sinnett and Company, Melbourne, 1854.
- 69 Benedict et al., *The Anthropology of World's Fairs*, p. 41.
- 70 TA Murray, *A Description of the Natural and Industrial Products of New South Wales as forwarded to the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867, in Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia, Melbourne 1866–67: Official Record, Containing Introduction, Catalogues, Reports and Awards of the Jurors and Essays and Statistics of the Social and Economic Resources of the Australasian Colonies*, Blundell and Co., Melbourne, 1867, p. 356; *Catalogue of the Natural and Industrial Products of New South Wales forwarded to the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867 by the New South Wales Commissioners*, Thomas A Richards, Government Printer, Sydney, 1867, p. 38.

- 71 *Official Catalogue of the Natural and Industrial Products of New South Wales*, p. 43.
- 72 *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution ... for the Year 1879*, quoted in Rothenberg & Hoffenberg, 'Australia at the 1876 Exhibition' (pp. 59–60).
- 73 Benedict et al., *The Anthropology of World's Fairs*, pp. 43–5.
- 74 John M MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1986, p. 114.
- 75 [McMillan], *Report*, p. 9.
- 76 Ros Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, Yale University Press, New Haven [2004].

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