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CONTENTS

Foreword: Welcome to Aviemore

Bill Taylor 3

Sparking the fire of regeneration

Alistair McIntosh 4

Love – the vital spark of interpretation

Jane James 6

Energising your creative talents

John Pastorelli 9

The impact of the artistic

Susan Strauss 12

What do you mean, my heritage?

Shonaig Macpherson 15

Living on Upoko Road

Jette Sandahl 17

From interpretation to protection

Sam Ham 20

The next issue will feature: Interpretation Awards 2007

'Interpretation enriches our lives through engaging emotions, enhancing experiences and deepening understanding of people, places, events and objects from past and present.'

For more information about the Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI), send an email to admin@heritage-interpretation.org.uk or write to the Administrator, AHI, 18 Rose Crescent, Perth PH1 1NS.

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FOREWORD: WELCOME TO AVIEMORE

Welcome to this AHI Journal which focuses on the Vital Spark Conference in Aviemore, Scotland, in the heart of the Cairngorms National Park. This has been AHI's biggest conference and a large number of members, and others, from all over the world came together for an outstanding event.

2007 is a special year for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, as it celebrates the area's traditional and contemporary culture in a reflection on the old and a celebration of the new. Recognising this, a group of Scottish based interpreters got together in early 2005, to plan this event, to celebrate the role of interpretation in connecting our heritage with our communities and visitors. Over 250 people explored, debated and shared ideas, and we hope that this Journal will give you a flavour of some of the quality presentations from respected speakers from around the globe.

Keynote speakers addressed the conference themes of:

- The Vital Spark: interpretation as the driver for cultural regeneration
- Creativity and innovation: interpreting remote and fragile areas
- Voices in interpretation: languages, cultures and communities
- Authenticity and re-interpretation: traditional icons in the 21st century

Alistair McIntosh made an impassioned plea for leadership, from our national institutions, to 'reclaim history that tells of our past and vision that tells of our future'. For him, connecting with environmental and cultural heritage begged only one question – does it give life?

Jane James asked us: what's love got to do with it? Conjuring up poignant and wistful memories for most, she made a strong argument that for engaging and meaningful interpretation all you need is love!

A challenge to energising our creative talents was the subject of John Pastorelli's workshop and he offered many tips that will work for those who consider themselves to have had a creativity bypass. His creative sandpit concept can enrich our perspectives of the world.

Susan Strauss – no creativity bypass here – engaged the artistic to recover the vital spark in our work as interpreters. Through examples of Thomas Moran and John Muir, she revealed how their mastery of art and writing turned image into meaning and changed the course of conservation in the USA. 'Archetypal truth and soul had found its way into a singular image and look at the response'.

Shonaig Macpherson spoke of the challenges of reinterpreting key stories in the life of a country – the challenge of 'overturning myth' and seeking truth and authenticity. She clearly saw the role of the interpreter as the guide who makes the connection.

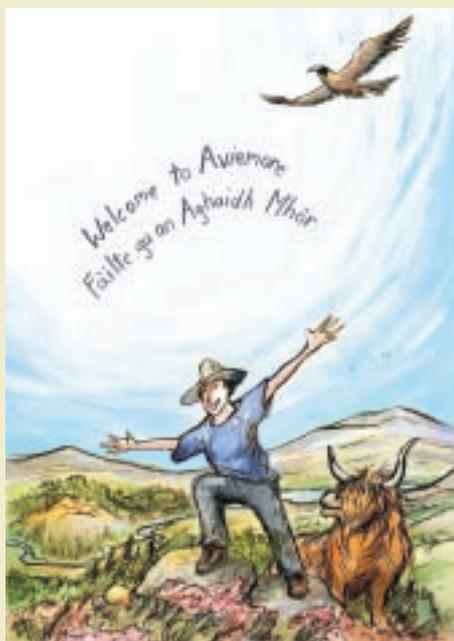
Jette Sandahl talked of the need for cultural democracy in the museum world and the belief that cultural participation and plurality represented our most important source of revitalisation. All this presents challenges of control and who gets to speak.

Finally, on the 50th anniversary of Freeman Tilden's classic book, Sam Ham reviewed the basic assertion that 'through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection'. Based on the recent advances in cognitive and behavioural psychology, Tilden had it absolutely right!

Ruth Taylor and Bill Taylor

Joint Chair of Conference Steering Group

Jointly run by Interpret Scotland and AHI this event has been made possible through 11 separate funders and the tireless work of the steering group and many other volunteers.



SPARKING THE FIRE OF REGENERATION

Alastair McIntosh argues that interpretation can play a life and death role in community regeneration – but only if it has the courage to reach the deepest roots of what it means to be human.

Every couple of months or so when I was in my late teens on the Isle of Lewis, word went round that 'the puffer' was due in at the local seaweed factory. The seaweed was sold as an industrial gelling agent. It started off all covered in mud and maggots, but ended up refined into food and medical products like ice-cream and toothpaste. Imagine that next time you're brushing your teeth!

Our job was to shift the sacks from the factory to the puffer while the tide was high. Each bag weighed a hundredweight. It was gruelling work. Your body was left feeling like a living corpse dragged around for two days after, but it didn't matter. What mattered was that you got an amazing thirty pounds for a few hours work – a week's wages in less than a day. But more than that, and this is my connection with our conference theme – we also experienced *The Vital Spark*.

This year's conference theme comes from the name of Neil Munro's fictional 'puffer' or cargo ship that plied the west of Scotland under the redoubtable command of Para Handy. According to Amazon's website, he and his insuperable crew 'are now part of Scotland's genetic make-up'. Now, this vital spark that likewise entered us when the puffer came was more than just gold in a pay packet. It was also something less tangible and more lasting. It arose from the urgency and the responsibility of having to turn the puffer around before her increasing weight ground onto the rocks beneath a falling tide.

'IT STARTED COVERED IN MUD AND MAGGOTS... BUT WE EXPERIENCED THE VITAL SPARK'

As a workforce we could only achieve this by intense cooperation. The younger men, like me at first, would be assigned the lighter jobs. But as soon as we grew strong enough we'd eagerly graduate onto the heavy stuff, catching and throwing bags from off the head of the conveyor belt.

It was simple work but one of those demanding common tasks that builds community. That rite of passage into the interconnection of meaningful community was *the vital spark*. Our capacity was tested to the limits. Our bodies became mixed with time and tide and produce of the environment. In such ways our identities developed.

We are talking here about something that was able to *quicken* the spirit. It cut to the *quick* – to the source of life. It generated wealth that was not just outer, but inner. And I think that this is what we need today as humanity struggles to find sustainable ways of continuing life on Earth. Wanton consumerism is trashing the earth. As Mark Twain put it, 'familiarity breeds contempt', and such is the nihilism demanding the generation of never-satisfied wants that we must reverse.

We are looking here at the need to re-enchant our world; to bring back a connection with magic, with spirit, with the essence. To find ways of quickening to not just any old life, but 'life abundant'. That is what the visitor seeks from Scotland. Enquire of the French or the German – and consider. What is the Loch Ness Monster to them? What are the standing stones? Or the savagely beautiful mountains and the tresses of tumbling streams? And what

RIGHT:
The late Colin Macleod, founder of the GalGael Trust, is seated front right.



the mystique of whisky, the peculiarity of haggis, the warmth of shortbread and even the sparkle of Irn Bru or the own-goal joke of See-You-Jimmy hats? Don't cringe! Just try absorbing these icons for what they are. They have power because they stand for archetypal realities. As Carl Jung said in *Symbols of Transformation*:

One who thinks he can live without myth... is like one uprooted, having no true link either with the past, or with the ancestral life which continues within him... sunk in a subjective mania of his own devising, which he believes to be the newly discovered truth. *This plaything of his reason never grips his vitals.*

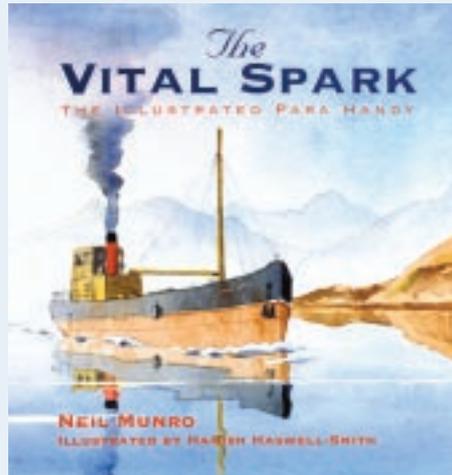
Regardless of what a Scot might or might not wear under the kilt, it is the vitality of the vitals that grabs me! I believe that people come to Scotland – and we Scots love the place – because it brings to life qualities often deadened by the hum and drum of the more mainstream modern world. Our national symbols stand for the wild, mysterious, passionate, generous, dancing, laughing, venerating and free. Like Calgacus the Pictish king against the Romans, or in those famous words from the Declaration of Arbroath, they represent an 'accent o the mind' expressed by freedom. If we cringe to the skirl of the pipes, it is from *freedom* we withdraw. For that skirl tells 'Freedom, come all ye!' to all the world.

Interpretation is education. But we must re-ground education. The world is full of people who have been trained, but too few are educated. True education, as the Latin origin

'WE ARE LOOKING AT THE NEED TO RE-ENCHANT OUR WORLD – WITH MAGIC, WITH SPIRIT, WITH THE ESSENCE'

BELOW:

The Vital Spark is "now part of Scotland's genetic make-up." Photo: Amazon.



of the word implies, is about 'leading out'. The secular world cannot see this for it has no metaphysical context into which to be led. But the ancients like Empedocles and Socrates got it. They saw the meaning of every life as being to express its God-given highest potential. The Greeks even had a word for this – *areté* – pronounced *ar-et-ay* – usually translated as excellence, quality, virtue, justice or the good. But more than any of these, *areté* really means to fire on all cylinders as a complete human being – head, heart and hand. And as Buddha, Jesus and Burns all so clearly saw, this means firing up to a life powered by love.

And there, in my view, lies the vital spark. In Govan I am a founding director of the GalGael Trust, started by the late Colin Macleod and coordinated by his wife, Gehan. We provide elementary training such as carving, weaving and boat-building. But it's elementary in both senses of the word. It's about reconnecting hard-pressed people with fire, air, earth and water; with community one with another and with the natural world. 'Why did you become a drug addict?' I asked a participant.

'Because,' he said, 'heroin took away my pain... but it also took away my soul.'

For GalGael the interpretation of cultural and environmental heritage is not an entertainment. Neither is it training in the narrow sense of that word. Rather, it is a matter of calling back the soul with those whose lives have rendered them the canaries down the noxious mines of communities poisoned by poverty, racism, sectarianism and the class system; poisoned by the knock-on intergenerational traumas of the wounded and stunted human heart.

That is why we need we need interpretation, above all, for cultural regeneration. We need it in a manner like MacDiarmid's 'little white rose of Scotland/That smells sharp and sweet and breaks the heart.'

That demands deep leadership, even eldership, from our national institutions. We must reclaim history that tells our past and vision that tells our future. And there is a performance indicator to be applied as the measure of all we do. It is the only one that ever really mattered: 'Does it give life?'

Alastair McIntosh is visiting professor of human ecology at the Centre for Human Ecology, University of Strathclyde, and the author of *Soil and Soul*.

LOVE – THE VITAL SPARK OF INTERPRETATION

Jane James demonstrates the similarities between love and interpretation and shows that you can't have one without the other.

Rimsky-Korsakov's music *Scheherazade* is an evocative piece, based on the 1,001 tales of the Arabian Nights which include the sagas of Sinbad the Sailor, Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves, and Aladdin and his magic lamp.

The story of Scheherazade provides the narrative thread between the tales of the Arabian Nights and tells of the Arabian Sultan Shahriyar who had been betrayed by his first wife, and, in anger and grief, he not only executed her, but vowed to marry a woman each night and kill her the next morning. The Sultan's cruel order was obeyed for three years, until Scheherazade came up with a plan to stop him. She convinced her father, the Grand Vizier, to offer her as the Sultan's next wife.

Scheherazade talked the Sultan into letting her sister spend the night with them in the bridal chamber, and in the morning, as planned, Scheherazade's sister begged her to tell a story. She began one of the exciting tales but stopped before the story ended, causing the Sultan, who had listened as well, to delay killing her until she could finish her story the next evening. Scheherazade, of course, never finished her tales, but kept her husband enthralled with story after story for 1,001 nights. By that time the pair were in love, had produced three sons and the Sultan, convinced of his wife's fidelity and wisdom, revoked his death sentence.

This not only demonstrates the power of a good story – it can keep you alive – but also suggests that love may also be involved.

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

There is a quote from Plato on a marble slab in the Colosseum in Rome that says 'love is the desire to possess what is good forever'. (Plato Symposium, XXIV).

Interpretation is a bit like this as it aims to tell the story of places and objects in a way that brings out the very best of both and in a way that maintains that 'good' forever.

There are many different kinds of love and the things that characterise love can also be applied to interpretation.

PUPPY LOVE

Interpretation, like love, requires passion. This is what good interpreters feel for their sites or special places.

With sites that have had little or no interpretation, but then perhaps get the resources needed to establish an interpretation strategy, there is often an enthusiasm for the project which results in inappropriate interpretation.

This is puppy love – an exuberant reaction to a place, a desperate desire to please, but little if any prioritised thought about what should be interpreted and how. In the past, this has resulted in such things as the ubiquitous computer touch screen in interpretive centres and museums that rarely meets the needs of visitors and often contributes to a level of frustration in the visitor experience.

It has also resulted in interpretation that tries to interpret everything to everyone, and ends up succeeding with none at all.

Perhaps another way of looking at this is to be 'head over heels in love'. And, let's face it, if you are head over heels, you can't possibly be looking where you are going (with your interpretive planning)!

'DON'T FALL PREY TO THE LOVE AFFAIR, WHERE THERE IS JUST YOU AND YOUR SITE, WITH EYES ONLY FOR EACH OTHER'

BELOW:

'Love' quote from Plato in the Colosseum in Rome.

Every desire for good and happiness is for each person a very great and insidious Love.
 (...) Love is the desire to possess what is good for ever.
 Plato, Symposium, XXIV

Puppy love could also cover interpretation for children, an area that in recent times is receiving more specific attention, as interpreters realise that children don't 'do' scenery, and that their needs for interpretive product are different, as recognised by Tilden in 1957.

UNREQUITED LOVE

Then there is unrequited love, where there is all promise but no delivery. A site with great potential, but the interpretation has failed to light the spark.

Interpretation, like Plato's love, desires to enrich the visitor experience by providing a three-way connection – a ménage a trois – between the place or object, the audience and the way the story is told, by the interpreter.

If the interpretation message isn't clear and matched to the interests and needs of visitors, and to the goals of the organisation or site host, then there will be a case of unrequited love and disappointment on both sides.

The interpreter will not understand why visitors are not actively engaged in their site and reacting enthusiastically to the experience they have there. And visitors will have perceptions of the site which are not endorsed and expectations that are not met.

So it is crucial to know what is special about your site, which is based on sound and accurate information, and it is vital to understand your visitors, so that a visit to your site can build on the experiences, knowledge and interests of your expected audience.

With any site or object you can't change the product, but you can change the packaging. So know what you've got, know who you want to 'give' it to, and then work out how to wrap it.

LOVE IS BLIND

Love is also blind. Many people have a favourite site, where they return for another 'fix' or regale others to visit. Their own visit is recalled with passion and with happiness, much like first love. The interpretation at the site obviously worked on that first time visit. The memories are good.

BOTTOM:

Interactive stylised bull rushes on the Yarra River Embankment, Melbourne.

But once someone feels that they know a site, they may react adversely to changes that take place, or may in fact be unaware or 'blind' to further developments, building on the initial interpretive experience.

There are sites which provide special sensory interpretive experiences – perfumed garden trails, twilight bird walks, stylised bull rushes waving in the wind – which provide a unique experience using senses not always included in the interpretive experience.

A strong argument exists at some sites for there to be no interpretation at all, but rather to let the site speak for itself.

The philanderer does interpretation for the wrong reasons. Is this the cost accountant who wants the visitor numbers and a healthy income? This results in interpretation strategies which are the dull sparks which fail to ignite interest or a response in visitors.

There is an important role for entertainment in interpretation. Often that can include humour as a way of engaging the visitor and is a good way of imparting messages, even those with an underlying serious intent.



BELOW:
Rising flood waters, Osney
Island, Oxford, July 2007.



LOVE ME TENDER, LOVE ME TRUE

One of the most important roles of interpretation is the contribution it makes to the conservation and preservation of heritage sites. If not, then sites are in danger of being loved to death.

These are not only the natural and cultural sites that are of significant value from a scientific, aesthetic or historic perspective, but also include the intangible heritage that forms part of our customs, rituals and ceremonies. These are the things that make us who we are and give some sense to our place in the world.

Much of this intangible heritage is part of cultural differences and often is the unseen. Cultural awareness and sensitivity are important in getting the interpretation right. The interpretation needs to be culturally sensitive to both visitors and locals so that it maintains the integrity of sites, and, like love, means never having to say you are sorry.

The importance of authenticity cannot be underestimated. The real story is the one that needs to be told. It represents the truth about the site and will build a sense of empathy between you, your site and your visitors, and trust – another important aspect of love.



RIGHT:
Immigrants statue at
the Migration Museum,
Adelaide, South Australia.

'SCHEHERAZADE DEMONSTRATES
THE POWER OF A GOOD STORY –
IT CAN KEEP YOU ALIVE AND
HELPS YOU FALL IN LOVE'

LOVE ON THE ROCKS

Interpretation needs to be continually evaluated. It can get run down from constant use, which can be seen as a sign of having given good value, but doesn't necessarily impress the new visitor, in which case it needs to be revitalised.

Most interpretation is never finished, its planning and implementation are ongoing, in its aim to 'promote what is good forever' (with apologies to Plato).

Perhaps this could be considered smouldering love – where there is the potential to burst into flames, where the best is yet to come.

THE LOVE AFFAIR

And remember, don't fall prey to the love affair, where there is just you and your site, with eyes only for each other. A love affair is a secret thing, no one knows about it, so no one talks about it. If that is the case, then you will get no visitors. It is, however, true to say that once the secret is out about the love affair, then everyone talks about it. Isn't that word-of-mouth promotion – the people talking about it – what you want?

So remember, for good, engaging, interactive and meaningful interpretation – all you need is love!

Jane James is Head of Cultural Tourism at Flinders University in South Australia, Tourism Commission Director and chairs the National Parks and Wildlife Council.

ENERGISING YOUR CREATIVE TALENTS

John Pastorelli guides us through 'the creative sandpit' to help us discover the vital spark in all of us.



Being an Australian, I'm prone to a good glass of beer. Whilst Australians aren't the biggest drinkers of beer, this liquid still constitutes a core part of the Aussie culture. So it came as a surprise when I couldn't answer a friend's simple question: 'Where do you reckon they first started making beer and who do you think were the first people to drink it?' I was stumped! Curiosity later led me to discover that beer-making was discovered by accident by the Sumerians.

'ACCIDENTS' HAVE CHANGED OUR LIVES

Lots of good things are discovered by accident. Think Dr Alexander Fleming who discovered penicillin after noticing that blue-green mould was killing off bacteria he had growing in his lab. Or George de Mestral who hit on the idea of Velcro when he and his dog returned from a country walk to discover that burrs were stuck to his clothing and to his dog. Whilst these

serendipitous discoveries required inquisitive minds to realise their value there is no doubt that luck and good timing played a significant role.

From these experiences, it seems that one way you can gain ideas for your interpretive project, activity or medium, is to wait for 'accidents' to come along – and go from there. However, I'd encourage you to take a more active role in your creative destiny. That's not to say there isn't a role to play for serendipity (such as the discovery of beer) – just that the better prepared and more deliberate you are about your idea generation, the higher your probability of creating ideas.

WHAT IS CREATIVE THINKING?

Creative thinking is to bring into existence that which was not there before. One of the obvious benefits of creative thinking is to be able to

ABOVE:
Generating ideas
for new activities.
© Anne Rebus.



ABOVE:
Creative thinking
sandpit at work.
© John Pastorelli

'CREATIVE THINKING CAN ALSO ENRICH OUR PERSPECTIVES OF THE WORLD AND INCREASE OUR ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE AN ISSUE FROM SEVERAL POINTS OF VIEW'

increase the range of choices you can call on to achieve a particular outcome. Creative thinking can also enrich our perspectives of the world and increase our ability to understand and appreciate an issue from several points of view.

THE CREATIVE SANDPIT CONCEPT

Liam Hudson, an Oxford psychologist, originated the idea that thinking can be either divergent or convergent. In essence, convergent thinking is about evaluative, literal, criteria and rational based activity. In contrast, divergent thinking is a more expansive and generative thinking activity, creating 'novelty'.

Generating ideas requires both forms of thinking. We need the ability to generate ideas, but ideas on their own have little value until we massage, sort and place them into a useful context. The problem is that whilst we are pretty good at convergent thinking, we tend to falter when it comes to divergent and generative thinking.

This situation was a challenge for me when I first started facilitating creative thinking workshops. In working through this challenge, I noticed that people who displayed traditional 'convergent thinking' styles and who believed they lacked creativity were actually quite creative in generating a myriad of objections and reasons as to why something couldn't work.

Working with this awareness, I developed the 'creative sandpit concept' as a space which can be either imaginary or real (or both) and within which people would feel safe, playful and productive when needing to generate ideas. Essentially it's a concept which can be applied anywhere. In fact, some organisations now have 'hot rooms' in which staff work with large pieces of paper, coloured pens (felt tips) and music to help them generate ideas.

HOW THE SANDPIT WORKS

The underlying principle with the creative sandpit is that any blocking thoughts, ideas and behaviour are captured, recorded and then left outside the sandpit. These thoughts include:

- We have tried that before and it doesn't work.
- We can't do that.
- We don't have the money or the resources.

Other elements best left out of the sandpit include:

Being restricted by myths such as:

- Creative thinking is only for the gifted – the ability to be creative is within all of us, for example, is the artist any more creative than a single parent who has to continually think of new ways to juggle kids, career and a social life?
- People are born creative – creative thinking is a learnable skill.
- Creative thinking 'spontaneously' creates the one brilliant idea – lots of effort usually goes into generating the 'spontaneously' brilliant idea.

Negative and restrictive attitudes such as:

- 'I can't do that.'
- Considering creative thinking to be a silly concept.
- Blocking ourselves when generating ideas.
- Adhering to frameworks and using language such as 'We've always done it this way', 'You must work within the policy framework'.

WHAT IT TAKES TO PLAY WITHIN THE SANDPIT

- A positive and playful attitude.
- Creating an environment of no right or wrong.
- Creating a safe environment that allows for freedom of thought and action.
- Using positive language, collecting inspiring thoughts, giving yourself permission to write down silly ideas.
- A questioning attitude: How could I make this idea work? How else could I do this? What is tempting about this idea?

KEEPING AN IDEA ALIVE

An important principle within the sandpit is to keep an idea alive even when it might seem useless. It requires us to accept and honour all ideas as valuable within themselves but also as potential platforms to lead us to other more valuable ideas. One way of doing this is to put your idea on the centre of a page and link it to as many associated concepts as possible.

STEPPING OUT OF THE SANDPIT

Capturing 'blocks' and leaving them outside the sandpit not only facilitates the creative thinking effort but it also provides us with filters and evaluative criteria when we step out of the sandpit. For example, if one blocking thought was that there were limited funds available for your project, then any ideas you generate need to be evaluated against how much they cost. Or else you step back into the sandpit and

think about how you can make your chosen idea cost-effective or revenue generating or whatever else it needs to exist.

CREATIVE THINKING TECHNIQUES

Before engaging in a creative thinking technique, it is important that you are reasonably clear of the outcome. Not necessarily absolute in its clarity, but at least of sufficient degree that allows it to become a destination for our creative effort. The following are a few deliberate thinking techniques to take with you into the sandpit.

The 60 second plunge

A momentum based technique requiring you to generate as many ideas as possible within 60 seconds. The important point is that you must keep going, even if you write the same idea down a few times because nothing else comes to mind. The moment you pause (for whatever reason) you halt the process and compromise its effectiveness.

The quota

The quota is a technique which, as the name suggests, requires you to reach a predetermined target number of ideas. You establish this target before you start. Whereas with the 60 second plunge it was okay to repeat words and ideas, with the quota you must not. With this technique you might find that the first ideas flow easily, but as you push on and search for more ideas, you often discover the 'eureka' ideas.

The provocative switch

Years ago, I was facilitating a creative thinking workshop and started the session with participants generating a list of useless ideas – submarine with windows, waterproof tea bags, etc. I then asked each group to nominate their most useless idea and turn it into something useful. One group shifted their useless idea of 'a shirt fabric that dissolves when exposed

'I DEVELOPED THE "CREATIVE SANDPIT CONCEPT" AS A SPACE WHICH CAN BE EITHER IMAGINARY OR REAL (OR BOTH) AND WITHIN WHICH PEOPLE WOULD FEEL SAFE, PLAYFUL AND PRODUCTIVE WHEN NEEDING TO GENERATE IDEAS'

to the sun' into a useful idea of 'a fabric that changed colour after a period of exposure to the sun' thus alerting people that the UV burning process is underway. There are now bracelets on the market which do exactly this.

AND NOW TIME FOR A BREAK

One final technique I'll leave with you is the deliberate break – the time out to allow your subconscious to earn its keep. Basically, you plan to have a break in amongst your deliberate creative thinking. This could be anything from 30 minutes to days to weeks. And talking of a break, I think I might head off for a beer. Cheers!

John Pastorelli manages Ochre Learning, a business in Australia focusing on learning, heritage interpretation, creative thinking and presentation techniques.

THE IMPACT OF THE ARTISTIC

In this paper, Susan Strauss uses the example of two 19th c American artists to demonstrate just what is the artistic, and, in very practical ways, how can we engage the artistic to recover the vital spark in our work as interpreters.

From this small slice of earth, cradled against the rugged pull of bully seas came two of the world's most influential forces in conservation, John Muir and Thomas Moran. Their artistry was singularly responsible for the formations of Yellowstone, Yosemite and the American National Park System, as well as igniting a wilderness ethic that spread its influence throughout the world.

SONS OF AN INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Thomas Moran, the son of a long line of domestic hand-loom weavers, was born in Bolton, a town described by Lord Byron in his first speech to the House of Lords as demonstrating the early horrors perpetrated on the human soul by the Industrial Revolution. Friedrich Engels described Bolton, in his famous study of the English working class, as 'among the worst' of the industrial towns near Manchester, 'even in the finest weather a dark, unattractive hole' containing 'a dark-coloured body of water, which leaves the beholder in doubt whether it is a brook or a long string of stagnant puddles'.

From this place of pollution, poverty and violence, young Thomas was determined to make his mark as a painter in his new home, America. Well acquainted with the poetic works of Percy Shelley and Lord Byron, Moran brought the poets' vision of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage – of man, alone in nature, receiving the spiritual nourishment that can come only from being alone in nature – and infused his exquisite wilderness landscapes with this soulful vision. Long before he joined the Hayden expedition to Yellowstone, he was well known for painting 'a glorious and inspiring poem' while also rendering 'nature with firm mastery of technical detail'. Two months after the unveiling of Moran's masterpiece, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, the American congress voted to establish Yellowstone as the first National Park.



It is interesting to compare this event with the work of another exquisite image-maker, Subkanje Banjeree, the Indian-born American scientist who produced the first photographic exhibition on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. He sold his worldly possessions to purchase camera equipment to photograph the world heritage site. After living four seasons in the Arctic, he produced a body of work that was worthy of the finest New York galleries. Yet, when his images were scheduled for exhibition at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, politicians with strong oil-drilling interests in the refuge, blocked it. His exhibition was censored, down-sized and removed to a basement location that was hard to find. An article on the controversy appeared in the back pages of *Vanity Fair*. This caught the attention of a science foundation and fine arts foundation who jointly sponsored his work in a national exhibition and lecture series originating at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. It was another kind of

ABOVE:
John Muir with Theodore Roosevelt during a four-day trip to Yosemite.

'AS A WRITER, POSSESSING THE QUIET, CONTEMPLATIVE EAR OF THE READING MOMENT, MUIR HAD AN AUDIENCE WITH THE DIRECTION OF HISTORY'

response, equally complementary to the artist, demonstrating again what an image can do. Hence, the first hallmark of the artistic is that it engages the imagination – the image-making capacity of the human mind.

GOD'S WILD GOLD

When we look at the life of John Muir, it seems like a picture of the miracle of destiny. Raised by a severely religious father, with a violent distrust of anything remotely artistic, educational or pantheistic, John found his way to all three. The results show in his writing, his chosen medium. Although deprecating himself, resisting all encouragements to write and claiming 'something (was) not quite honorable in thus dealing with God's wild gold... transforming his raw bush sugar and mountain meal into magazine cookies and snaps', Muir's writing took off like wildfire. His first published works were devoured and pole-vaulted him into a notoriety that gave him audience with Ralph Waldo Emerson and President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt requested a four-day camping trip alone with only Muir in Yosemite. Following this trip, Roosevelt exerted political pressure to create a National Park Service. Muir would have first thought of himself as a scientist, inventor or farmer. Yet, as a writer, possessing the quiet, contemplative ear of the reading moment, Muir had an audience with the direction of history. The artistic demands of us to expand our idea of audience and how the audience digests, not just hears, what we have for them.

BOTTOM:
Moran's masterpiece:
*Grand Canyon of the
Yellowstone, 1872.*

As with Moran, Muir had the capacity to translate meaning into image. But as a writer, Muir could do something more; he added music, rhythm and syntax or 'groove' and 'punch' as hip musicians call it. Also, through attention to the sounding of language, his writing had real life. If we could think of language – our speaking and our writing – as a corporal experience verses a heady proclamation of information, we would make language musical. Thereby it would become artistic, experiential and life giving. We hear this corporal quality in Muir's description of a thunderstorm near Mt. Shasta in northern California, 'Presently a vigorous thunder-bolt crashes through the crisp sunny air, ringing like steel on steel, its startling detonation breaking into a spray of echoes among the rocky canyon below. Then down comes a cataract of rain to the wild gardens and groves. The big crystal drops tingle the pine needles, splash and spatter on granite pavements, and pour adown the sides of ridges and domes in a network of gray bubbling rills. In a few minutes the firm storm cloud withers to a mesh of dim filaments and disappears, leaving the sky more sunful than before'. He said, 'I like the feel of words in my mouth better than bread'. That corporal, experiential quality in his language passed on Muir's passionate ideal of recreation, that being the re-creation of the spirit so necessary for work and civilisation weary humanity.

A BIRTHRIGHT TALENT

This bring us to the art of storytelling. As I have often said, 'Storytelling is like a field trip without the bag lunch'. Storytelling is such a



BELOW:
John Muir circa 1900.



perfect art because it draws on all the arts at once – words, pictures and music. It is as alive, in the moment of telling, as experience itself or else the audience would be lost (because the audience is always free to snatch whatever meaning they want and, if the story is good, it will provoke discussions or silent reflections), and because storytelling is everyone's art. The fact that telling even the simplest story is a birthright talent is lost on most modern people. If only self-confirmed non-storytelling interpreters could remember:

- Even the simplest story engages the listener's ability to make mental pictures. Think of it as a visual art.
- By following along even a simple scenario, the listener draws together multiple experiences and creates meaning.
- In a storyteller's attempt to hold attention, they stumble on rhythmic turns of a phrase or impersonate the voice of a character or the wind. Think of this as music and don't be too fancy about it either.
- If the teller becomes so emboldened as to embody the story in face, body movement or gesture, we enter the realm of sculpture.

BELOW:
Moran's sketch of Grand
Canyon on expedition
1871.

'STORY LIVES IN THE PLAY OF CHILDREN WHO FIND TUNNELS AND CASTLES IN THE FLORA, BRANCHES, ROOTS, ROCK AND FALLEN LOGS OF A SCHOOL PLAYGROUND, BOTANICAL GARDEN, PARK OR WILDERNESS'



It is also important to think of these things reciprocally. How an entire story can be in one image. How one observation offered in a conversation may further the story. How silence can be a statement. Story is a journey in picture and sounds connecting people to archetypal truth, soul wisdom, living in that something beyond what Muir called 'the gobble, gobble school of economics'. Story lives in a community restoration project. Story lives in the play of children who find tunnels and castles in the flora, branches, roots, rock and fallen logs of a school playground, botanical garden, park or wilderness.

One of the most moving stories I can remember was told by a woman in one of my training workshops. She took us back to a day in the botanical garden when she was hosting a group of children. Several things didn't go as she had expected. The wind and weather worsened and she said, 'Finally, I had to give up and give in to the children and give them a story. And then, they all fell in and paid

attention!' There, the spark was lit. Now, some imaginations and possibly some ethic or ideal was fired. Those words sing in me today like a choir of angels, 'Finally, I had to give up and give in and give the children a story'. How deeply we are entrained to give education as a kind of information medicine – and how suspicious we are of beauty, enjoyment and the artistic. I look forward to every moment that asks of me and I hope that for all of us in this profession, we can bear the joy in those moments that ask of us: to give up and give in to the artistic and renew the vital spark.

**Susan Strauss is an internationally recognised storyteller, teacher of natural history themes and author of *The Passionate Fact: Storytelling in Natural History and Cultural Interpretation*.
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WHAT DO YOU MEAN, MY HERITAGE?

In this paper, Shonaig Macpherson looks at what the Scots might regard as their heritage and questions whether it is relevant to the multicultural Scots society today.

As the largest conservation charity in Scotland and one of the most important guardians of Scotland's cultural and natural heritage, the National Trust for Scotland has a key role to play in helping today's Scots and visitors to Scotland to understand Scotland's heritage. While at the National Trust for Scotland we have a rich collection of iconic places and artefacts in our care, are these places and artefacts what most Scots today regard as being symbolic of their heritage? Are they of any relevance? How do we explain their significance to a diverse population of today's Scots, both at home and abroad?

THE 'HERITAGE' WORD

Our starting point must be to understand what we mean by heritage. It is a word that is open to a multiplicity of interpretations, let alone then having the challenge of interpreting its significance as represented by a place, a building or an artefact. It is a difficult word for many people, young or old. For some, it is seen in terms of stone and mortar, whether as a castle, an historic house, an industrial building, a monument or a tenement. For others, it conjures up images of landscapes such as Glencoe or St Kilda and the communities who lived and died there. However, for many today

their most important place in defining their identity and their heritage is likely to be a more contemporary place, devoid of the more formal traditional historic context, such as Hampden stadium or the local multiplex.

HERITAGE OF THE FUTURE?

In agreeing what constitutes our heritage we must ponder on what is the heritage of the future and why steps are not being taken now to conserve it. Our oil industry is undoubtedly an important part of Scotland's history, yet there are no 'museum rigs' to explore; our fishing industry has almost disappeared unnoticed yet it remains virtually un-interpreted.

HAND-ME-DOWN HERITAGE

The majority of our own thoughts as to what constitutes heritage have been informed and inherited from previous generations and is arguably both incorrect and imaginary. Advances in research techniques often increasingly result in our history and our heritage being reinterpreted as we have recently found with Culloden and no doubt will at our new museum in Alloway for Burns. We would argue that heritage is itself a transient creature as heritage is about special places and people and how individuals relate to them during their lifetime on the basis of the stories and information available to them at that time. This brings challenges to us at the National Trust for Scotland as we care for our properties and affects how we choose to interpret them for today's and tomorrow's generations.

AUTHENTICITY V DISNEY

At Newhailes we have chosen to leave the house largely as we found it on being passed to the Trust in 1997. This has been challenging for many visitors as it has failed to meet their expectations of how such a house would be inhabited and how we as the Trust should conserve properties. Do we tell the truth in its unvarnished glory or do we Disneyfy?

BELOW:
Culloden, near Inverness, is the site of the Battle of Culloden that took place on 16 April 1746.





ABOVE:
Dining Room at Newhailes,
a 17th-century house
located at Musselburgh,
East Lothian.

BELOW:
Burns' Cottage, the
birthplace of Robert Burns,
the poet, in Alloway,
Ayrshire.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Currently at the National Trust for Scotland we are focused on delivering two major projects, both of which have been the victims of hand-me-down heritage.

The first project is at Culloden, one of Scotland's most important sites. It is often interpreted as being a battle between Scotland and England, a romantic campaign that suffered an ignominious and brutal defeat, and became the catalyst for the start of the highland clearances. Our challenge is to tell the truth and overturn the myths, while at the same time recognising and accepting the impact that Culloden had on the culture of the Gaels.

Our second project is the creation of an international museum at Alloway to celebrate the life and legacy of Robert Burns. He is recognised by most as our national bard but how many can explain why he holds that revered position? To do that we believe that you first of all have to understand the man and his times – in an age obsessed with ephemeral celebrity. Burns wrote in Scots which, while spoken today by so many, is incomprehensible when committed to the written word. In bringing the man to life we will be dependent on a collection which is manuscript-based together with other artefacts of his life and times. So how do we use 18th-century manuscripts to explain why a poet of humble beginnings remains universally popular today?

'OUR OIL INDUSTRY IS UNDOUBTEDLY AN IMPORTANT PART OF SCOTLAND'S HISTORY, YET THERE ARE NO 'MUSEUM RIGS' TO EXPLORE; OUR FISHING INDUSTRY HAS ALMOST DISAPPEARED UNNOTICED YET IT REMAINS VIRTUALLY UN-INTERPRETED'

In each of these projects we seek out the truth and authenticity, stripping away the myths and romanticism with the objective of explaining to the generation of today and tomorrow that a brief and bloody battle and an Ayrshire poet are part of their heritage.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, MY HERITAGE?

With our portfolio of properties at the National Trust for Scotland we have to continuously question what heritage means to Scots today and in the future, and to visitors, to ensure that our properties remain relevant and vibrant. This may mean re-examining how we have interpreted our properties in the past, as research sheds new light on history and its impact. In addition, we should not confuse the medium through which our interpretation is delivered as being of more importance than the interpretation itself, in our quest to engage with all sections of society. We believe that everyone has the innate ability to appreciate their heritage provided that they have an able guide, in the form of excellent interpretation, rather than a gimmick to deliver it.

Shonaig Macpherson gave up the law to concentrate on more spiritually rewarding occupations such as chairing the National Trust for Scotland, The Princes Trust in Scotland and ITI Scotland Limited.



LIVING ON UPOKO ROAD

In her paper, Jette Sandahl argues that although that some professional members within the heritage sector regard cultural participation and plurality with unease and scepticism, she believes they represent our most important source of revitalisation.

WEALTH, PRIVILEGE AND POWER

Museums are potent institutions in the expression and in the formation of cultural and national identities. As scientific institutions, we take pride in our traditions of enlightenment and discovery. Some of our critics focus more on the way the heritage sector serves the political needs of a purely celebratory national identity. Only with hesitation is our sector coming to terms with the meanings of the power, privilege and oppression that also define our history.

This reluctance is significant, for nowhere do these surface more clearly than in the material heritage. Rural and urban landscapes are intersected, divided, split and partitioned, segregated by the contours of power and ownership. The greater the difference in wealth, the higher the demarcation of boundaries – some are powerful enough to be visible from outer space.

Museums are only just beginning to unpick and unravel the consequences of power and the weight of definitions in a colonial context. A specific interpretation of ownership allowed the looting and transfer of cultural property from one end of the earth to another. It allowed museums to lay legal claims to cultural property to which no moral laws could grant possession.

'IS LOVE OF PATRIMONY AND PRIDE IN HERITAGE AN EXCLUSIVE RIGHT, A BIRTHRIGHT, OR AN EARNED RIGHT? OR NO RIGHT AT ALL, BUT A PRIVILEGE TO BE ENJOYED, A CUSTODIANSHIP TO BE EMBRACED, A RESPONSIBILITY TO BE SHARED?'

READDRESSING ISSUES

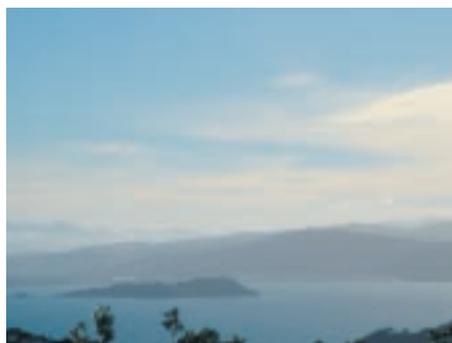
Today, in some of the countries colonised by European settlers, the land itself is being wrestled from their colonial inscription – often, interestingly, as a new interpretation of an earlier, original ownership. Museums like the National Museum of the American Indian and National Museum of Australia have created processes of research, consultation and community involvement that readdress these issues.

Generations of anger and grief find reconciliation and closure as ancestors are repatriated from museums overseas and return to home soil through the Marae of Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand. And yet, the trafficking continues, in objects and in people, in a steady flow from poorer and vulnerable countries to richer regions of the world. In the exhibition *Trafficking*, the Museum of World Culture in Sweden confronts the violent and colonial origin of its collections as well as the contemporary forms of human trafficking.

CULTURAL OWNERSHIP

Professional organisations, like Unesco and the International Council of Museums, offer basic and useful guidelines on cultural diversity and democracy for institutions looking for ways out of the maze of institutional, interpretative monopolies.

RIGHT:
Upoko in Maori has many meanings. The earliest name for Wellington is 'Te Upoko o te Ika a Maui' which means 'the head of Maui's fish'. Maui was a mythical Polynesian navigator who caught a huge fish that then became the North Island of New Zealand.



BELOW AND RIGHT:
The Wall at
OurSpace@TePapa.

They encourage us in recognising cultural diversity as a wealth in human heritage and cultural pluralism as a basic condition for peace, harmony and cultural stability. However, they also advise us that cultural democracy is a process of conflicts, contradictions and negotiations rather than easy accord.

Some countries have egalitarian, national policies of access to culture, intending to give everyone, regardless of gender, age, class, ethnicity or education, the opportunities to experience and participate creatively in cultural life. Initiatives are created to ensure the active involvement of groups who experience barriers towards cultural self-expression. Still, the heritage sector is finding it difficult to respond to the increasing local, national and global expectations of cultural participation and cultural democracy that were part of the trends of the 20th century.

For heritage interpretation – as for the rest of society – issues of ownership to land and history, heritage and cultural identity are complex. Is love of patrimony and pride in heritage an exclusive right, a birth right, or an earned right? Or, no right at all, but a privilege

'IT ALLOWS MUSEUMS TO LAY LEGAL CLAIMS TO CULTURAL PROPERTY TO WHICH NO MORAL LAWS COULD EVER GRANT THEM POSSESSION'

to be enjoyed, a custodianship to be embraced, a responsibility to be shared? How do we find a tone of voice that is respectful of tradition, while also embracing and including the new? Are there ways for us to address the disenfranchisement, cultural segregation and exclusion experienced by and within an increasingly diverse population?

Cultural democratisation concerns both the context and the perspective from which a given history or heritage is interpreted, and by whom the (re)interpretation is done.

The Peopling of London at the Museum of London was a landmark exhibition testifying to the diversity of heritages and the heterogeneity of cultures. *All Roads are Good* at the National Museum of the American Indian was another

innovation, exploring a plurality of voices and perspectives. *A Journey Unlike Any Other* at the National Museum of Denmark dealt with the brutal obstacles and raw emotions of asylum seeking. As an interactive experience it transcended the boundaries for both exhibitions and performances as forms of interpretation.

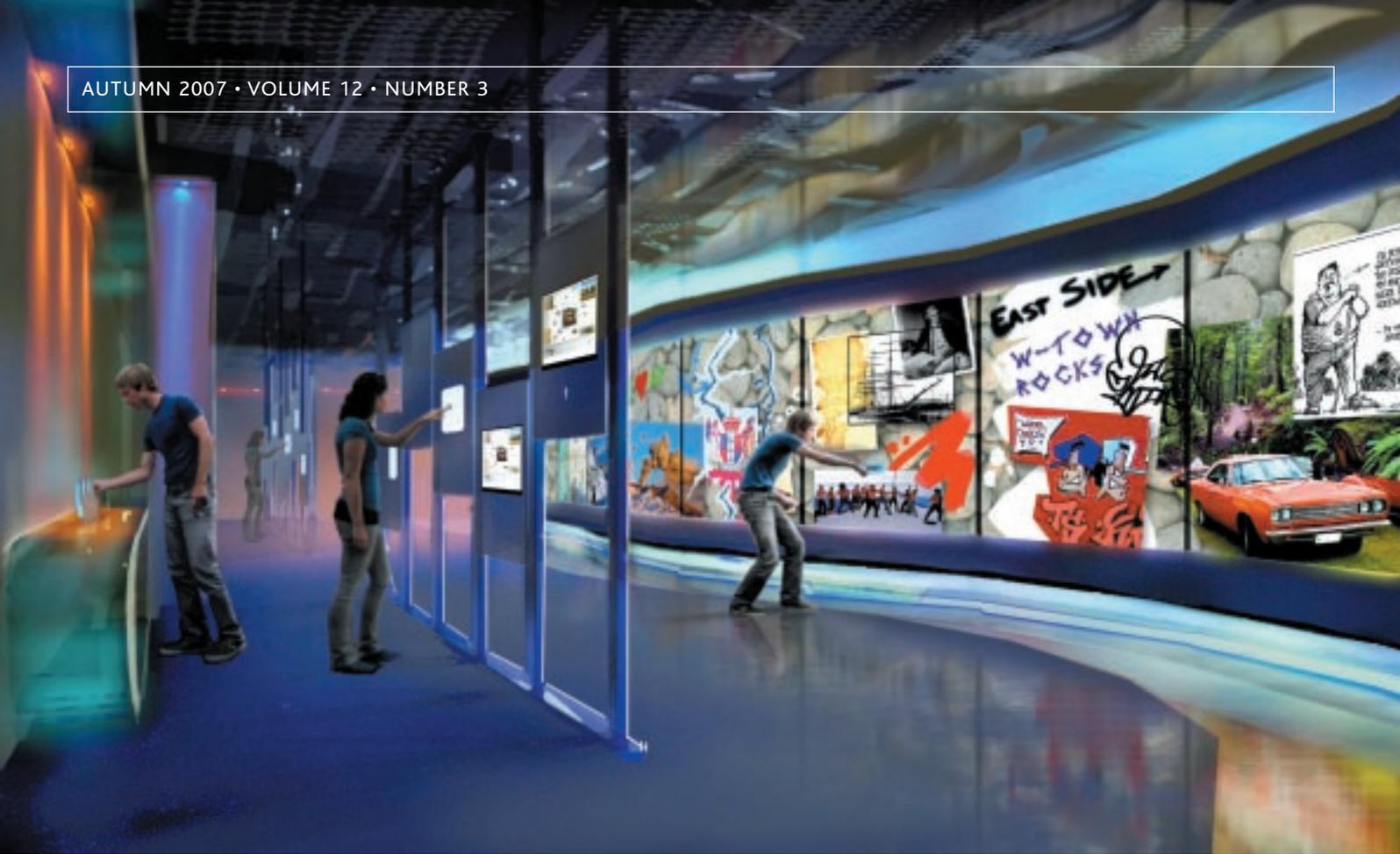
A SHIFT IN PARADIGMS

Cultural democracy and cultural participation entail a shift in paradigms of what constitutes scientific inquiry, knowledge and interpretation, towards including and recognising subjective and personal perspectives, knowledge and expertise.

Some members of the professional communities in museums and the heritage sector regard these new trends and their implications for staff and governance, for recruitment and training, with unease and scepticism. Others believe, as do I, that the growing assertions of cultural participation and cultural plurality represent our most important source of revitalisation. Both in Andean and in Maori world views the past lies, visibly and transparently, in front of us. The future, however, is still hidden and unknown behind us.

Current heritage interpretation is about combining these viewpoints, the past and the future. In recent years, my perception of history and heritage has moved from the past to the present, to a prospective as much as a retrospective focus. Our former obsession with territory and history, and static, almost deterministic models of identity seem increasingly inapt and uncomfortable. My attention becomes more and more directed towards the dynamics where cultures, countries, regions, or individuals meet, overlap and merge. I place my emphasis where cultures want to take themselves, who they want to be and who they want to become in the future.





GIVING UP CONTROL

Accepting the notion of shared authority with people outside our institutional boundaries requires that we, as professionals, let go of the monopoly of information and interpretation. It means giving up control and entering a multitude of reciprocal relationships but without relinquishing responsibility and accountability. Redefining the boundaries of our professions, we become both experts and facilitators for more personal and decentralised forms of knowledge in a continuous renegotiation of history.

We give up on disciplinary boundaries and begin to mix media. We integrate natural history, contemporary art, documentary material, historical objects, personal testimony, and political commentary. Film, video, music and performing arts enclose and juxtapose material objects.

We expand into platforms and dynamic hubs for networks and social interactivity. At our best, we begin to engage people with not only our museums, our institutions, but with each other. The web provides us with not only tools, but new models for communication where users access masses of available information on demand, to create, exchange and discuss an ever richer content.

OUR SPACE

Te Papa is currently producing a major installation, tentatively called *OurSpace@TePapa* which combines the web2.0 features of user interaction with the three-dimensional, spatial exhibition medium. Visitors to the space will be able to access a huge database of New Zealand material, most of which originates in the museum's collections of natural environment, history, taonga (Maori cultural treasures), and art. They will be able to change, manipulate, reinterpret, juxtapose, and supplement this material with their own digital material. They can play, by themselves or together, with all this on the Wall, a 20 metre multi-user, multiple-interface interactive media screen, and – if all works out as we hope – upload and download their creations back on the web. The Wall will give the opportunity for infinite questions and answers, an infinite variety, blend and fusion of stories, needs and hopes, up-close and personal interpretations.

WHO GETS TO SPEAK?

The process of cultural democracy depends on people respecting and feeling comfortable with disagreement, difference and heterogeneity, and on society developing concepts of equality that do not impose sameness, homogeneity and uniformity.

Seeing, understanding and empathising with the views of others are at the core of interpretive and educational programmes of a number of contemporary museums. The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, US, uses 'facilitated dialogues' to engage discussions of contested and difficult subject matters. The Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg, Sweden, uses the term 'exercises in democracy' to define its guided tours and learning programmes. They are aimed at raising participants' awareness of what and who is included or excluded in a given statement, a given communication or setting – in other words, who gets to speak.

In a pluralistic society agreement and inclusion involve a continuous process of negotiation, in often contradictory and contested processes. The bigger the diversity in society, the greater the range of cultural 'differences', the more difficult and the more acute are the responsibilities and accountabilities towards the inclusion of the voices and rights of 'the other'.

Jette Sandahl is Director Experience at Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand. Most recently she was a founding director of the Museum of World Culture in Sweden.

FROM INTERPRETATION TO PROTECTION

In his paper, Sam Ham looks at whether there is a theoretical basis to Freeman Tilden's philosophy that from interpretation flows understanding and finally protection.

Perhaps the most oft-cited phrase in all the interpretation literature is a nine-word sentence written by an anonymous US National Park Service ranger a half century ago:

*Through interpretation, understanding;
through understanding, appreciation;
through appreciation, protection*

When Freeman Tilden (1957: 38) quoted the ranger in *Interpreting Our Heritage*, he said he hoped interpreters everywhere would remember and recite the philosophy frequently. Were he alive today, however, even he would be struck by the reach of his own impact. A half century later, those nine words have evolved into a philosophical orientation around which interpreters across the globe have rallied.

But does the chain of events Tilden describes really stand up, or are his words just a nice, warm and fuzzy phrase? Is there a substantiated theoretical basis for claiming that 'interpretation' can create a kind of 'understanding' that would indeed lead people to 'protect' the places they visit? I think the weight of the evidence says, 'yes'.

If we see interpretation as a communication process, we're able to draw on recent advances in cognitive and behavioural psychology to examine the cause-and-effect-relationships he (and the anonymous ranger) claimed would occur when interpretation is done well. In fact, in the past 30 years, hundreds of published studies have looked at these very relationships. The two main theoretical foundations that have guided these studies are the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion (ELM). When we re-examine Tilden's hypotheses in light of these theories, we're led to the inescapable conclusion that the man was even more brilliant than we had known.

'MEANINGFUL THINGS MATTER TO US, AND GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACT ONE WAY OR ANOTHER WITH RESPECT TO A MEANINGFUL THING, WE WILL NORMALLY CHOOSE TO BEHAVE IN A RESPECTFUL OR PROTECTIVE WAY'

THROUGH INTERPRETATION, UNDERSTANDING

Interpretation is provocation, not instruction. In other words, we're not trying to teach anything to anybody; we're simply trying to provoke them to deep thought about something. In psychology, effortful thought is called elaboration. The process of thinking about something produces a person's subjective understanding of it. That is, when we think deeply about a thing, we make our own meanings about it, and these meanings constitute our understanding of it. Therefore, the more interpretation provokes people to think about something, the more they understand the thing in their own way. Tilden referred to these as 'personal truths'.

Research on the ELM has demonstrated that the more communication provokes us to think, the more we create personal meanings about the subject. That is, provocation leads to meaning, or understanding. But notice that understanding is not the same as 'knowledge'. In fact, studies show that the more an interpreter blows people away with her/his interpretation, the less likely those people are to do well on a test of the facts that were actually presented. Understanding is a more personal set of 'facts' that wouldn't necessarily be included in a factual-recall evaluation. Somehow, Tilden knew this, even though it flew in the face of prevailing communication theory during his time.

Your understanding about something is simply what you think about. It's like having sentences in the head (or 'schemas' as we call them in psychology). These sentences are the beliefs you have. They may not be entirely accurate, and other people might disagree with them, but they are *your understanding* of the subject.

So when interpretation provokes a person to think, it causes an elaboration process that creates or otherwise impacts understanding, generating a sort of internal conversation in the person's mind that, in turn, produces new beliefs or causes existing beliefs either to be reinforced or changed. Since what you believe about something constitutes your understanding of it, Tilden was on the right track by claiming that interpretation done well can lead to understanding. So far, so good.

THROUGH UNDERSTANDING, APPRECIATION

But how might understanding lead to appreciation? Enter here the TPB that has led to hundreds of studies showing that people's beliefs about something give rise to their attitude about it. Attitudes are not the same as beliefs. Whereas a belief describes what 'is', an attitude describes what a person feels about it, whether it's good or bad, right or wrong, positive or negative. Feelings such as liking, loving, caring and appreciating are attitudes. When Tilden says that our understanding of something can lead to an appreciation of it, he's saying that our beliefs about a thing give rise to attitudes about it that are consistent with the beliefs. This is well established by psychological studies, provided that we're clear on the thing the beliefs and attitude refer to.

The last sentence above is important because a concept like 'appreciation' is vague until the object of appreciation is specified. In other words, what is it that is being appreciated? For understanding to lead to appreciation, that is, for beliefs to lead to attitudes, the



BELOW:

A Maori guide captivates his audience with a demonstration of hand-to-hand combat strategy. Whakarewarewa Thermal Village, Rotorua, New Zealand.

Photo: Sam H. Ham.

beliefs and attitude must focus on the same thing. If we wish visitors to appreciate a *place*, then it will be their understanding of the *place* that will determine their attitude about that place; if we want them to appreciate a concept like *biodiversity*, then it will be their beliefs about *biodiversity* that will determine their attitudes about it. This need to match beliefs and attitudes to their object is called the principle of compatibility (or symmetry). The evidence supporting this principle is so deep that it is now being discussed as a law of human psychology (Ajzen 2005). To influence an attitude about something, a communicator *must* first influence the beliefs a person holds about that same thing.

What Tilden was saying, which is now supported by dozens of studies, is that if an interpreter provokes an audience to think and make personal meanings about something,

then appreciation of that thing is going to be a consequence. Again, Tilden's claim holds up well, provided that the meanings made are positive ones.

THROUGH APPRECIATION, PROTECTION

When Tilden described the link between appreciation and 'protection', he was saying that having an appreciative attitude about something would lead to certain behaviours.

'Appreciation' to Tilden was a special type of attitude, a *general* one of the kind a parent feels for a child. He reasoned that people would not knowingly harm the things they love. Since he was referring to a general case, he couldn't possibly anticipate every conceivable action a person might or might not carry out. But the point he was trying to make was that if a person is provoked to deep thought about



ABOVE:
An interpreter shows the qualities of a desert plant that is ideal for making spears. Baja California, Mexico.
Photo: Sam H. Ham.

a thing then that person will make a lot of personal meanings with respect to it. Meaningful things matter to us, and given the opportunity to act one way or another with respect to a meaningful thing, we will normally choose to behave in a respectful or protective way. Both common sense and research back up this claim.

Today, however, interpreters are often interested in using interpretation as a management tool aimed at very *specific* visitor behaviours in fragile settings. My own research in just the past ten years has dealt with problems of proper food storage by campers in bear country, reducing wildlife feeding in national parks, persuading visitors to carry out litter left by other visitors, keeping dogs on leads, and convincing tourists to donate to local conservation funds. The behaviour of interest in each of these cases is very specific, and the word 'protection' in Tilden's philosophical statement doesn't capture the specificity of each of these behaviours or the differences between them.

A consistent finding in studies on human behaviour modification is that in order to be successful in influencing people to behave in a *specific* way, we must succeed in influencing those people's beliefs about that specific *behaviour*. If their beliefs about engaging in the *behaviour* are predominantly positive, it will lead them to have a positive (appreciative) attitude about the *behaviour*, which in turn increases the likelihood that they will behave as we want. Studies, however, do not back up the idea that a general attitude about a thing will lead to specific behaviours with respect to the thing. Rather they show that other factors influence our attitudes about a specific behaviour that might have little to do with our general attitude. This explains why all environmentalists don't recycle at home, and not all of them donate money to every cause or join every conservation organisation. Those

'THE MORE INTERPRETATION PROVOKES PEOPLE TO THINK ABOUT SOMETHING, THE MORE THEY UNDERSTAND THE THING IN THEIR OWN WAY'

behaviours are subject to beliefs, not just about nature and the environment, but about the specific behaviour in question. This is the above cited 'principle of compatibility' at work again. According to many TPB studies, to influence a behaviour we must start by influencing people's beliefs about that specific *behaviour*.

But the principle of compatibility does not in any way refute Tilden's logic that 'appreciation' leads to 'protection'. Indeed, if we think of 'appreciation' as having a positive attitude about something, and if that something is a behaviour, then the attitude-behaviour link holds up well according to hundreds of published studies. Therefore, interpretation that provokes the formation of positive beliefs about the outcomes of a given behaviour will result in a positive attitude about that behaviour. When this occurs, the likelihood that a visitor will engage in the desired behaviour is significantly enhanced. In other words, through appreciation, protection.

CONCLUSION

While Tilden clearly knew what he was talking about, we must remember that the chain of events he described was based on an intuitive understanding of communication that was not supported by cognitive science at the time. His idea that meanings were personal conclusions generated in the visitor's mind (rather than being put there by the fact-bearing interpreter) was nothing short of radical in the 1950s when a more didactic view of communication was prevalent. Yet somehow Tilden had figured out that the only caring any of us is even capable

of doing will be that which is based on the meanings we, ourselves, make. Interpretation that provokes visitors to think in positive ways about a thing will make that thing matter. When things matter to us, we act on their behalf. Although today this makes plain sense to most interpreters, Tilden's understanding of this suggests that he (and perhaps the anonymous ranger) were even brighter than we might have thought.

Sam Ham is Director of the Centre for International Training and Outreach and Professor of communication psychology and international conservation in the Department of Conservation Social Sciences, University of Idaho, USA. He is author of Environmental Interpretation and is a leading international thinker, teacher and trainer in interpretation. He is the recipient of many awards including the University of Idaho's Excellence in Teaching Award, the university's highest honour. sham@uidaho.edu

BELOW:
Interpretation from Southeast Alaskan wilderness.
Photo: courtesy of Linblad Expeditions, New York.

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