



FOUNDATION EXPO '88

'Progressing the World Expo 88 Vision'

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report

MUSEUMS & CITIES FORUM
3 September 2004

Foundation Expo 88 has recently had the pleasure of attending the inaugural 'Museums & Cities Forum' co-jointly hosted by the Museum of Brisbane and Griffith University at the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University Southbank Campus.

The one-day mini-conference featured speakers from as diverse locations as Melbourne, Glasgow, Leeds, and of course, Brisbane, and focused on ways in which Museums and Cities interact – do they exist for each other, or, are they independent of each other? How do Museums build community? Should these facilities be centralized or de-centralized?

After a traditional welcome to country by local elder Auntie Barton, Professor Glyn Davis, Vice Chancellor and President of Griffith University, and the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Councillor Campbell Newman, opened the proceedings, welcoming the 150 delegates to the Forum. The unique partnership developed between Griffith University and Brisbane City Council was highlighted here, as well as seminal work on the creative industries – 'The Rise of the Creative Class' – by author Richard Florida.

Mr Nick Winterbotham, the Head of Arts & Heritage at Leeds City Council, was the first speaker, whose paper investigated the role of the City Museum in today's world. Part of this investigation involved research on the internet of the terms "City/Museum", to see what would come up, and resulted in a detailed analysis of what image City Museums are trying to project in this new wired world. Finally, his three point guide to a successful exhibition proposal – 'Is it clear? Is it exciting? Does it work?' (on one A4 sheet of paper) - underlined the problems sometimes facing Art Committees that seem to get stuck on voluminous Briefs, Preparation Notes for the Brief, and so on, thereby losing focus.

Professor William Logan, UNESCO Chair of Heritage and Urbanism, and the Director of the Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific at Deakin University, then followed, giving a detailed précis of the role of Museums, community identity and urban heritage from an Asia-Pacific regional perspective. Using the infamous 'Hanoi Hilton' and its not so well known transformation into an international Hotel and Museum space as a case-study, Professor Logan highlighted some of the community social and political factors involved in preservation of urban heritage, and reasons behind their success or failure.

"A Museum in a City – or a Museum for a City?" was the title of the next paper, given by Glasgow Museums Open Museums Manager **Ms Morag Macpherson**. Ms Macpherson's paper delved into the policy of 'inclusivity' and the now popular catchcry of 'popular engagement' – identifying ways in which Museums can interact with their public, bringing the Museum space to the people and building a sense of community citizenship.

Dr Mark Peel, of Monash University, focused on the history of the disadvantaged classes – the poor and neglected – in a paper entitled "Doing Justice to Disadvantage". Arguing that history has not been kind to this marginalized sector of society, Dr Peel's paper highlighted the challenges and opportunities faced by historians who wish to record their stories, and the possible ways Museums could tackle presenting this history. Dr Peel is also author of "Good Times, Hard Times: the Past and the Future in Elizabeth, A Little History of Australia".

The two last papers were given by **Professor Brendan Gleeson**, Head of Urban Policy & Management, Griffith University, and local Brisbane writer, **Mary-Rose MacColl**. Professor Gleeson's paper interestingly investigated the link between Australians' love of the suburbs and the apparent lack of Arts & Museums facilities in these areas – arguing that suburbanization of such facilities is needed to strengthen 'the bonds of solidarity and citizenship in the principle theatres of Australian life'. Mary-Rose MacColl concluded the day investigating the common bonds of creativity between author and curator – citing the strong impact Museums have had on her creative make-up.

The day's proceedings were topped off with an informal drinks session at the top of the Queensland College of Arts building overlooking the beautiful Southbank Parklands and the Brisbane River.

It is hoped that through many of the contacts made during this landmark forum Foundation Expo 88 shall progress it's goals of re-vitalizing the World Expo 88 dream.

For further information on future forums please contact Ms Alice-Ann Boylan, Director, Museum of Brisbane, dlob@brisbane.qld.gov.au.

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