

Call for Papers

Culturally-Specific Museums: Between Diasporic Culture and Australian Heritage

To migrant communities in Australia and their descendants, dedicated archives and museums documenting culturally-specific material and experiences have been significant spaces for activism, integration, reflexion and community identity. These archives and museums first emerged in the 1950s and 60s, possibly fulfilling similar roles to community associations. Some may have been inspired by a growing interest in local Australian history at this time when many historical societies in regional areas were established; others adopted a more explicitly activist role, viewing their diaspora and its cultural maintenance as a form of opposition to homeland political developments. These early museums and archives include the Estonian Archives in Australia (Sydney, 1952), Lobethal Archives and Historical Museum (Loebethal, 1956), Lithuanian Museum (Adelaide, 1961), Jindera Pioneer Museum and Historical Society (Jindera, 1968), Latvian Museum, (Adelaide, 1970), Ukrainian Museum (Adelaide, 1979), and the Jewish Museum of Australia (Melbourne, 1982).

After the introduction of multicultural policies from the 1970s onwards—in response to grassroots activism emanating from the migrant rights movement and ethnic welfare societies—local and state governments have also funded culturally specific museums as a part of tourism initiatives, particularly in culturally specific precincts, including the Museum of Chinese Australian History (Melbourne, 1984) and the Museo Italiano (Melbourne, 2010), which grew from Co.As.It. Italian Historical Society. At other times, policies around social cohesion in the wake of major events like September 11, 2001 led to the funding of culturally specific museums by Federal and State governments, such as the Islamic Museum of Australia (Melbourne, 2014).

A great deal has been written on the question of community engagement and cultural diversity in museums, as well as diasporic heritage and memory in the Australian context (Szekeres 2011; Darian-Smith and Hamilton 2019; Dellios and Henrich 2021; Kornfeld 1997; Witcomb 2013). The special edition of *Humanities Research* edited by Claire Farago and Donald Preziosi in 2009, for example, was instrumental in thinking critically about the tensions between multiculturalism, pluralism, and the dictates of national cohesiveness in Australian museums. It was in this context of inquiry that further attention started to be paid to culturally-specific museums and archives, with seminal contributions documenting their history in Australia and the specific place they hold in the museum landscape (Viv Szekeres 2011; Light 2016). Conversations about migrant heritage, however, has remained primarily focused on state-funded museums, often overlooking how these dynamics unfold within community-operated, culturally-specific museums and archives.

We are seeking contributions about culturally-specific museums and archives in Australia, the social roles they have played for migrant and diasporic communities in Australia and beyond, the multilayered identities they promote, their relationship to multiculturalism (as a prescriptive policy framework and as a descriptor of the social milieu), as well as the opportunities and the challenges they represent for the communities that operate them. We are also interested in contributions that examine their relations to

local government, state and national museums, libraries and archives dedicated to social history in Australia, exploring differences and similarities in terms of curatorial practices (collecting, preserving and exhibiting), community engagement and institutional features.

Questions underlying this special edition include:

- How and why did culturally-specific museums and archives emerge in Australia? What do museums or archives have to offer to migrant/diaspora communities in Australia that other means of representations do not?
- How can culturally-specific museums and archives act as both cultural repositories and dynamic spaces to continue national, transnational, and cross-cultural imagining?
- To what extent do culturally-specific museums and archives share in a common discourse of interculturality, or alternatively, respond to localised debates and frames of reference?
- How specific is museum and archival practice in a culturally-specific/community-operated museum?
- What engagement have culturally-specific museums and archives make with First Nations' heritage and experiences?
- How have culturally-specific museums and archives handled relationships with the governments of their places of origin, which can include being involved with Australia's diplomatic relations with those governments?

Interested participants, please submit your abstract by 20 December to Dr. Virginie Rey at virginie.rey@deakin.edu.au; cc Dr Alexandra Dellios alexandra.dellio@anu.edu.au and Dr Karen Schamberger at kschamberger@nla.gov.au