

Museum Victoria and JSW Foundation, recognising the work of Dr Sarah Kenderdine, for the PLACE Hampi project at Kaladham Museum, Vijayanagar, Karnataka, India testimony

The stunning new museum at Vijayanagar, commissioned by JSW Foundation results from a profound Australia India collaboration that spans over 30 years of research at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Hampi. The new Museum initiated by Sangita Jindal forms part of an extensive new arts and cultural precinct called *Kaladham*. The new Museum was curated and conceived by Dr Sarah Kenderdine of Museum Victoria and inaugurated in November 2012 by former Federal Minister Simon Crean and State of Karnataka Minister of Tourism Infrastructure Development Anand Singh.

The central feature of the Museum is a pioneering interactive artwork by Sarah Kenderdine and the Australian media artist Jeffrey Shaw, *PLACE-Hampi*. The exhibition presented at Kaladham brings together decades of research at the site, predominantly led by Australian art historian Dr George Michell AO and his archaeological collaborator Dr John Fritz. It also includes extensive photographic records by the eminent Australian architectural photographer John Gollings. The Museum builds upon *Ancient Hampi: The Hindu Kingdom Bought to Life* an exhibition at the Immigration Museum, Museum Victoria, Melbourne (2008-2010).

Hampi is a monumental heritage precinct and a vibrant centre for contemporary pilgrimage — where history, the natural environment, mythology and everyday cultural practices are closely interwoven. Sangita Jindal explains her passion for Hampi, the inspiration that initiated the Museum.

Hampi has always been close to my heart ever since I first visited it in 1985. The ruins of palaces and gateways set amidst giant boulders and vegetation, spread in 26 square kilometre area, silently spoke to me the story of infinite talent and power of creativity. I'm sure they also touch the many visitors in the same vein, as every rock, every path and every monument at Hampi speaks the same language of glory and beauty.

When I first saw the exhibition at a museum in Melbourne, Australia, I thought it was a ground-breaking new media art installation that elevated cultural heritage to a new level of experience. I wanted more and more people to see this new approach to the expression of the cultural experience and thus embarked to bring and display the exhibition here, very nearby Hampi at our township at Vijayanagar.

The Museum at Kaladham contains five galleries and draws upon the products of the cultural imaginary and the visual languages of archaeology, photography and new media. In the exhibition these elements converge to reveal the ancient Hindu Kingdom of Vijayanagara from a myriad of perspectives. Through interactive technologies and stunning panoramic 3D photography visitors engage in sensorial and experiential encounters with Hampi as an historic place and a living cultural landscape. The Kaladham art village is also inspired by the Hampi monuments, landscape and irrigation systems, and is built in a contemporary style using local materials like granite, bamboo and thatch. Kaladham was constructed by local talent emphasizing traditional skills and was built using sustainable building techniques. The complex also houses performing arts facilities.

Kaladham is now hailed nationally in India, and at the bequest of JSW Art Foundation, Dr Kenderdine will lead over two years of fieldwork documenting a myriad of tangible and intangible heritage throughout the State of Karnataka, creating a seminal archive of 360 3D photography and 360 video recordings of life performance, traditions, rituals and festivals. This archive will be a world first of ultra-high-resolution recordings of numerous variations of cultural practices and heritage never before documented.

In March 2013, Museum Victoria also celebrated the launch of a new book conceived as an enduring record of the extraordinary achievement of *PLACE-Hampi* and the new Museum in India. *PLACE-HAMPI: Inhabiting the Panoramic Imaginary of Vijayanagara* (KehrerVerlag (<http://www.artbooksheidelberg.de/html/detail/en/place-hampi-978-3-86828-124-8.html>)). The author is Dr Sarah Kenderdine with original contributions by Professor Anne Marie Duguet, Dr John Fritz, John Gollings, Professor Jeffrey Shaw, Professor Lev Manovich and Dr George Michell. In this book theoretical, archaeological and art historical texts complement eighteen double gatefold panoramic images of the landscape and monuments to provide readers with an appreciation of the projects' multiple layers of signification.

PLACE-Hampi was conceived in 2006 and was the subject of an Australian Research Grant (UNSW, Museum Victoria, Epidemic and ZKM). It toured across the globe to France, China, Singapore and Germany before 'returning home' to India in 2012. The development of the project involved extensive exchange between Indian and Australian teams including the of training Indian artists and animators in all aspects of stereographic animation at Paprikaas Animation Studio (the first ever to be done in India), the filming of a seminal Indian classical dancer in a motion capture studio (a world first), and the provision of superb compositions by the renowned Carnatic violist Dr L. Subramaniam and his wonderful endorsement of the project. It was sanctioned by the Archaeological Survey of India and supported by the Save Hampi Trust. Two PhDs (Anita Kocsis, Swinburne University, 2011 and Patrizia Schettino, Politecnico de Milano, 2013) have been written about *PLACE-Hampi*, and it is the subject of numerous scholarly articles. *PLACE-Hampi* and the new Museum are considered seminal undertakings in heritage interpretation and representation.

PLACE – Hampi Museum at Kaladham is a very deserving recipient of the ICOM Australia Award for International Relations 2013.

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Australian High Commission India (<http://www.india.embassy.gov.au/ndli/pa3812.html>)

Graham Crouch's photo archive of Minister Crean at the launch (<http://grahamcrouch.photoshelter.com/gallery/-/G0000mDuyuQCchDY/>)

Sarah Kenderdine and Minister Anand Singh (<http://grahamcrouch.photoshelter.com/gallery-image/Simon-Crean-Hampi-India/G0000mDuyuQCchDY/I0000JKOcmY2IC6q>)

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The curator of the Place - Hampi exhibition, Sarah Kenderdine from Victoria Museum, Australia's Minister for the Arts and Regional Development, Simon Crean, and leading Australian architectural historian Dr George Michell at the Kaladham Museum in Vijayanagar, Karnataka. Mr. Crean opened the Museum, which features interactive 3-D panoramas of Hampi. Picture by Graham Crouch — in Hampi, Karnataka. (<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=410804288989094&set=a.410804092322447.94184.392726330796890&type=3&theater>)



The Kaladham Museum in Vijayanagar, Karnataka, features interactive 3-D panoramas of Hampi created by Sarah Kenderdine from Museum Victoria. Picture by Graham Crouch — in Hampi, Karnataka.

(<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=410804972322359&set=a.410804092322447.94184.392726330796890&type=3&theater>)

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