

Thematic Matrix: Collection Interpretation

Nothing is innocent. Every archive, photograph, audio-visual recording, or artefact has been informed by a combination of forces that give it agency. Interpretation allows us to consider collections in their historic context, as well as reinterpret from alternative perspectives, placing them within the greater matrix of the unique West Australian experience.

The State Library is charged with contextualising its collections, examining - amongst others - their historical, cultural, sociological, environmental, socioeconomic, and political conditions and consequences. Our collections give us access to voices from the past and provide opportunities for encounter with a variety of historical lives and experiences.

Interpretation themes provide an interface between collections, critical research and community engagement. Themes for interpretation enable discovery of connections across collection materials and help to generate pathways for meaningful engagement with West Australian past and present experiences.

Three themes guide the State Library's interpretation to 2025: grounded, journeys and unsettled. Within each theme three sub-themes can be applied to further refine thematic focus. The themes provide a matrix to guide interpretation in exhibitions and public engagement programs to 2025.

Grounded

Grounded reflects on Western Australia's sense of place, use of resources and interaction with the landscape. Connection and belonging are expressed throughout our collections.

Country

Elemental

Sustenance

Narratives are commonly tethered to a sense of place: a setting that provides a unique set of conditions and significance to situations, experiences, and lives. Country relates to a sense of belonging and connection to this place as well exploration of the West Australian landscape, its biodiversity, and efforts towards conservation. Elemental reflects on the ways in which the West Australian experience is existentially bound to elements that lay beneath. It also provides a metaphor for the exploration of identity, belonging and the imagination. Sustenance both physical and metaphysical explores concepts of sustainability, food security and insecurity, shelter and expressions of home through architecture and design, as well as religious and spiritual practices overtime.

Journeys

Journeys explores the stories of Western Australia's people and their multifarious and complex life stories and experiences.

Lifetimes

Places

Perspectives

The West Australian story is as complex as it is exceptional: youthful as a singular political entity, but home to the planet's oldest continuing civilisation and cultures, and the most ancient landscape on earth. The stories of WA's people are profoundly multifarious, abundant in complexity and contradiction: each one revealing a critical truth into our unique and compelling experience. Lifetimes reflects many life experiences and stages of life across Aboriginal lives, migration stories, multicultural experiences as well as women's life experiences, LGBTQI experiences and individual legacies. Places shows the way in which regional experience has shaped life in WA in unique ways from stories of Cossack to Ravensthorpe, Leonora to Fremantle. It also shows how continuing global connections link West Australians with places across the world in ongoing ways either imagined or real. Perspectives focuses on understanding differing viewpoints using primary sources and voices.

Unsettled

Western Australia has an unsettled history. Stories of injustice, marginalisation and struggle need to be brought to the fore. Truth-telling allows us to better understand where we've come from and inform where we're going.

Injustice

Counterpoint

Discord

Something is only as it is perceived. To some it may be settlement, for others it is forced dislocation. What for some may be belonging is for others an experience of exclusion. Often defined through a sepia-hued lens of sun, sea and suburban splendour, Western Australia has an uneasy history, underwritten by injustice, marginalisation, struggle and - often - uncomfortable truths that remain unresolved. Our collections play a pivotal role in truth-telling about Western Australia's past. This theme allows us to interpret traumatic histories, nuances in our collections, and grapple with historical legacies that inform broader forces at work in our society.



State Library of Western Australia
Perth Cultural Centre
25 Francis Street, Perth WA 6000

EMAIL info@sla.wa.gov.au
WWW. slwa.wa.gov.au
SOCIALS @statelibrarywa

PHONE +61 8 9427 3111
PHONE 1800 198 107 (*Country Callers*)
FAX +61 8 9427 3256