



NEWSLETTER NO. 5 | August 2019

Kett Museum Opens Its Public Exhibition Gallery

The Museum's public exhibition gallery was officially opened on Monday May 20 in the Amies Theatre by the Victorian Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Anthony Carbines MP, representing the Victorian Minister for Health, The Hon Jenny Mikakos, MP.



The picture shows Mr Anthony Carbines MP and archivist Mr Michael Aitken cutting the ribbon in the company of the other Kett Museum archivists, Colin Bates, Joe Chakman, Barry Cole and Pamela Sutton, and the CEO of the Australian College of Optometry, Ms Maureen O'Keefe.

The Amies theatre was filled by Friends of the Museum, members of the ACO and representatives of other Victorian museums, all of whom toasted the future good fortune of the Kett Museum with champagne in eager anticipation to be among the first to view the Gallery.

They were not disappointed – they emerged from their tour full of praise for the gallery to enjoy a light lunch and engage in telling historical anecdotes.

Gallery Named to Honour Michael Aitken



The exhibition gallery has been named in honour of veteran archivist Michael Aitken. He was one of the foundation archivists appointed in 1970 when the Kett Museum had its beginnings. He was recruited by the late Brian Flynn, then a councillor of the ACO, who had taken on the responsibility of curating the historical artefacts held by the College.

Michael is still an active archivist nearly 50 years later, and a generous one at that. Some time ago he donated his valuable collection of early ophthalmic books, the oldest published in 1674, which is the nucleus of the Kett Museum's historic book collection.

He also made a very large donation toward the cost of the public exhibition gallery without which the gallery would not have been possible.

What is in the Gallery

The Gallery displays over 450 items selected from the nearly 4000 items held by the Kett Museum to tell the story of the history of optometry.

It is unique: it is the only optometry museum gallery in Australia and one of a small number in the world.

The Gallery's story begins in the foyer with a large panel depicting eleven portraits of the "greats" who laid the foundations of modern optometry from Benito Daza de Valdés, who wrote the first optometry text book in 1623, to Franciscus Donders who wrote the foundation text book for modern optometry in 1864. The portraits are dramatic and were sourced from art galleries around the world.

On entry you will not miss the glittering display of early eye baths and eye ointment pots. The museum is divided into Section 1. Spectacles and other optical aids to vision, Section 2. Early optometry, Section 3. Detection of eye diseases, Section 4. Expanding the scope of optometry in the 20th century; binocular vision. low vision, colour vision, and contact lenses.



The centre-piece is a recreation of a 1930s optometric consulting room sourced from Australian optometric practices around the country.

There is also a computer in the Gallery where you can get more information about the items on display

When can you visit the Aitken Gallery?

The Gallery is open whenever the ACO front doors are open. It's on the first floor and clearly sign posted. Full lighting is switched on in the Gallery when a visitor enters.

You can visit before an ACO evening seminar but take your time – there is a lot to see. Please remember that all visitors to the College building must sign in at the front desk.

The Gallery is designed for self-guided tours. However, one of the honorary archivists can provide a guided tour by appointment by contacting the archivists at acomuseum@aco.org.au.

We would love to show you around the Gallery.

THANKS TO THE GENEROUS DONORS TO THE BUILDING OF THE AITKEN GALLERY

Principal Donor
Michael J Aitken

Major Gifts

Barry L Cole AO
Jean S Colledge PSM
Ross W Harris
Alan Isaacs AM
John Nathan OAM

Valued Donors

Peter S Dwyer AM
Andrew K Harris
Graham O Hill OAM
Dawn G Odgers
Maureen O'Keefe
Pamela R Sutton
Duncan R Waite

We also thank the many people who have donated the small treasures that have been chosen for display in the Gallery.

Contact:

Corner Keppel & Cardigan Streets, Carlton VIC 3053 Australia
Phone +61 3 9349 7487 Fax: +61 3 9349 7498 Email: acomuseum@aco.org.au.

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