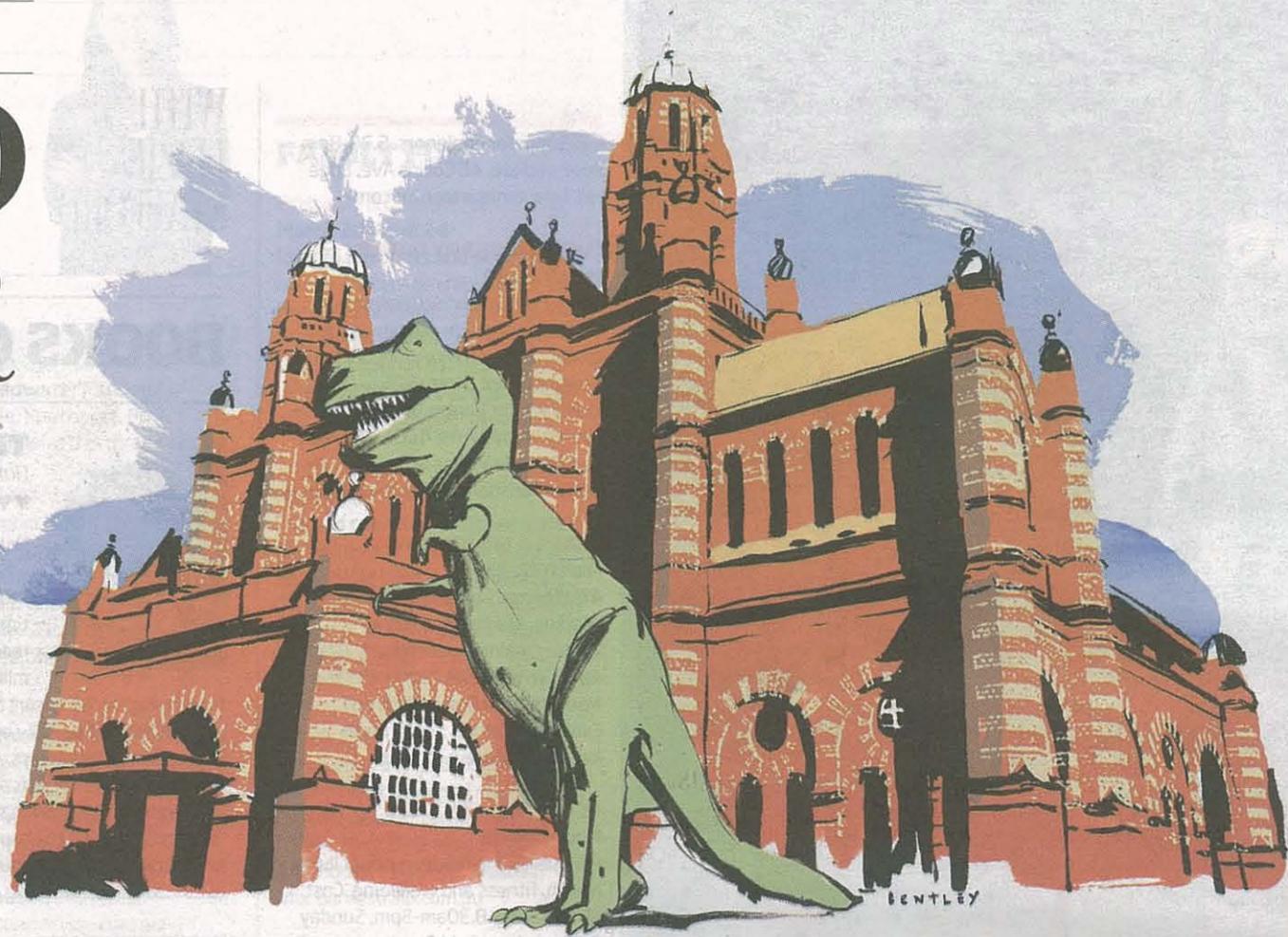


The story behind ...

HOLD DEAR PAST JOYS

WITH RUPERT McCALL



It wasn't the Old Museum back then. It was just the museum.

To turn the corner and catch a glimpse of those tyrannosaurus teeth was to detonate an adrenalin rush at a time long before *Jurassic Park* had steamrolled through our cinematic lives in 3D.

I can't remember whether there were two or three life-size dinosaur models strutting their stuff among the army tanks and palm trees outside that beautiful tribute to Brisbane's early architecture, but I do remember that T-Rex was king. He owned the joint. One look into that homicidal, blood-thirsty eye of his and the mystery of what lay between the walls of the building he was protecting took on seismic proportions.

Protecting not only the progressively eclectic design of George Henry Male Addison, but a legacy. In 1891, Addison's inspiration was built on land previously occupied by a skating rink which had burnt down. Before the turn of the century, it seemed the perfect place for a museum. Not Brisbane's first though, for that honour lies with the colony's oldest surviving building, the Wickham Terrace windmill, back when dinosaurs roamed the Earth. Well... from 1862 anyway.

The legacy of a museum also incorporates stints at old Parliament House on George, the old Post Office on Queen and the old State Library on William. Sounds like our hip has been replaced and the walking frame ordered here, but I guess it only takes one newer page to turn for society to call the previous chapter "old".

There was nothing old about the bus pulling up in front of that magical museum for my primary school excursion in 1977. With an excitement that can only be associated with the thrill of tasting something for the first time, I was as young as I'll ever be. And T-Rex had me by the claws.

He and his prehistoric mates, of course, migrated to the southern banks of the river 10 years later, to guard Queensland's new museum, but turning that Gregory Terrace corner today, I can still feel the razor of something carnivorous.

And I can still smell that smell. What was it? The smell of history being preserved? Was it the stuff they put in those jars or the glue employed to connect ancient bones? Whatever anthropology smells like, that's what it was and whenever I set foot in the place for a modern-day music gig, it's still in my nostrils.

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Known as "The Exhibition Hall", its psyche is etched with the soprano of Dame Nellie Melba and the ivory of famous Polish pianist, Ignaz Paderewski. Today, home to Queensland's Youth Orchestra and Show Choir, the old museum also plays host to a new wave of free-flying musos. It seems the pageantry has come full circle.

I attended a concert there last November. With his road-worn guitar and well-travelled voice, the artist's name was "Passenger", although I was the one with my head out the car window and the wind on my face when a cover version of Simon & Garfunkel's *Sound of Silence* was sung. *Because a vision softly creeping, left its seeds while I was sleeping,*

and the vision that was planted in my brain, still remains

Closing my eyes as each note echoed blissfully through the air, the vision of George Henry Male Addison visited me. For it became the vision of something spectacular for an inquisitive child and it remains the vision of something worth preserving for a proud and responsible city.

Because compared with many other places in the world, Queensland is not really "old" in terms of architecture and the like.

But we are old enough now to identify our treasures. And we should be wise enough to not let them go in the way of the dinosaurs. For to do that would be to truly court the sound of silence.