From Dreamland *to* Dodgem Cars

100 Years of Luna Park

An exhibition of works from the
Port Phillip City Collection

the Gallery
ST KILDA TOWN HALL

The Port Phillip City Collection

Louisa Scott, Curator CoPP

Luna Park has inspired visual artists, photographers and families for generations with its laughing facade and promise of fun. Featuring significant contemporary art and heritage artefacts from the Port Phillip City Collection, *From Dreamland to Dodgem Cars* pays homage to the artistic influence and social impact of this iconic pleasure park over the past one hundred years. It also demonstrates the significant depth, stylistic and contextual range of material in the Collection, assembled together to reflect upon a single theme.

St Kilda's reputation as a cosmopolitan and creative community is born out of its development as a resort and holiday playground in the 1880s. At that time promenading became a popular pastime for locals and day trippers to the bay area. The introduction of the railway, and later cable trams, made an outing to the precinct and its attractions accessible to all Melburnians and established the locality as one of the leading beach resorts in Victoria. It provided the ideal setting for public gatherings and an opportunity to take in the spectacle of the surrounding amusements. Distinctive characteristics of the area that engaged both residents and visitors alike included the sea, piers, boulevards, gardens along the St Kilda foreshore and later Luna Park (1912).

Commencing with the 'Figure 8' image of Dreamland, built in 1906 on the Luna Park site, *From Dreamland to Dodgem Cars* reflects on Luna Park's remarkable endurance, despite the restrictions and financial hardship throughout the First World War years, the Depression and its struggle to compete with alternative entertainment sites in Melbourne, many of which have met their demise over the past century. This exhibition also explores the significant popularity of its iconic features as a source of inspiration for local artists and the Park's social and cultural impact on the broader Port Phillip community.

Photographic records from the Collection dating from 1912 through to 1994 document the changes that occurred on the Luna Park site including the initial construction of the Scenic Railway in 1912

View of Luna Park Showing Rotor and Bumper Cars c1960s

Judith Van Heeran *St Kilda Festival Poster* 1992

and the introduction of the Carousel in 1923. The photographs of specific attractions such as The Giggle Palace, River Caves, Gee Whiz and High Wire performers authenticate the attractions on offer across several decades as well as providing a sense of changing public taste. Two colour photographs from the 1960s convey an appreciation for the popularity of the Park even before the onset of technological advancement when earlier rides were replaced by modern mechanical ones.

Modernist progress and innovation is nowhere more apparent than in the stark contrast between the 1920s image depicting two horses hauling a crescent moon decorative piece to a new site and a 1950s postcard featuring modern transportation outside the entrance of the Park. Many of the historical and contemporary images portray the changing environment in the area surrounding the Park through views along The Esplanade, aerial views of the site and community events such as the St Kilda Festival or those that include people going about their daily business.

Several photographs document the ways in which Luna Park adapted to specific events and circumstances. The World War I patriotic carnival images portray children enjoying special performances despite the Park being closed due to shipping and manufacturing restrictions. Luna Park remained closed until 1923 however occasional carnivals were presented including the staging of the Carnival of Allies in February 1915 and the St Kilda Patriotic Carnival of 1919. For the Royal Tour of Queen Elizabeth II in 1954, specially made decorations were installed at the River Caves.

The Palais de Danse, the local picture theatre, the cafes, boarding houses, hotels and promenades of St Kilda attracted World War II troops on leave. Luna Park was dimmed by the 'brownout' and patronised with visiting American soldiers, who were billeted nearby, and their companions. This is captured in Danila Vassilieff's watercolours, *Serviceman and Girl* and *Street Parade* (1941). During this period Luna Park became a site for respite and an opportunity to escape reality.

The representative image of Luna Park that circulates most prominently within popular culture is the iconography of the unique entrance face. The changing facade of Luna Park, from its first appearance as an extravagantly lit silver moon face in 1912 to its colourful restoration in the 1990s is well represented in the photographic collection. However, the face of Luna Park as an iconographic motif in the work of local contemporary artists is also significant within the collection.

In Sue Ford's *Two Naughty Things: Before you go to Hell* (2008), the Luna Park face is menacing and intimidating. This work references Ford's religious upbringing in St Kilda in the 1960s and the fear that was instilled by nuns in order to ensure children behaved appropriately. The threatening nature of the nuns' instruction is highlighted by the repetition of the iconographic face. Ford did not receive the sacrament of Confirmation allowing her only two naughty forays before she went to hell. The children who had participated in the sacrament could do three naughty things before they went to hell.[1]

War Time Patriotic Carnival at Luna Park c1915-1919

St Kilda Patriotic Carnival Program 1919

Greg Irvine
Untitled (Luna Park Mouth) 1981

Sue Ford *Two Naughty Things: Before You Go to Hell* 2008

Charles Blackman *Luna Park* c1953

Jon Cattapan *St Kilda Festival Poster Design* 1985

From 1980, Luna Park has been an inspirational design tool for promotion of the St Kilda Festival through the annual poster competition. The spontaneous calligraphic gestures of Jon Cattapan's work (1985) where the sinister Luna Park mouth engulfs its patrons is contrasted with Greg Irvine's beautifully constructed ink drawing of the Luna Park entrance (1981), while Judith Van Heeren's design (1992) depicts the Park illuminated against the night sky and incorporates the curious figure of a monkey positioned in front of the entrance face. In Charles Blackman's charcoal drawing *Luna Park* (c1953) the entrance face is also illuminated, casting shadows over its visitors as they enter through the mouth. An additional light source is generated from the street photographer's camera flash that inverts the focus back on the viewer.
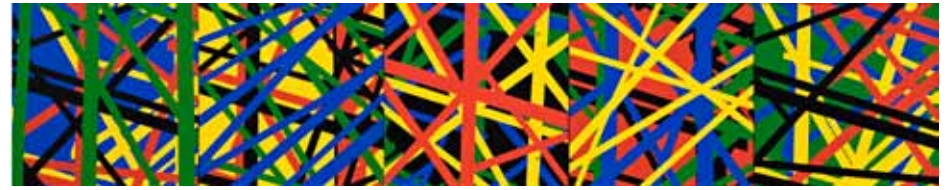
Some artists have shifted their focus away from the Luna Park entrance to the geometry of the Scenic Railway or the symbolism of the Carousel. John Dunkley-Smith presents a striking interpretation of the Railway, emphasising the recurrence and geometry of the struts through close up, bright bands of colour in *Studies for Perspectives in Conscious Alterations in Everyday Life (Olympia)* dated 1991. In contrast, a 1913 postcard produced in the Whitney Brothers Photographic Studio includes an aeroplane with a moving propeller over a miniature scaled model of Luna Park to give the impression of being 3,000ft in the air. This postcard finds its contemporary counterpart in the painting *Saint Kilda* by Geoff Lowe (1982) where a female figure is depicted seated on the bluestone bricks of the foreshore overlooking the bay and holding a similarly scaled model of the Park.

In Siobhan Ryan's festival poster design (1990) the surreal image of the Luna Park complex floats playfully out to sea, while the figures in Sue Ford's *The Big Dipper* (2008) and Brian Kewley's *Luna Park Lovers* (1967) are bound or enveloped by the structure of the Scenic Railway, evoking a poignant response from the viewer.

Other artists, such as Robert Rooney, skirt around the environment of Luna Park. In Rooney's fifty-one colour photographs from 1975 the surrounding parkland is notably absent of human beings and instead peopled by trees, with the Scenic Railway appearing intermittently, rising and falling in the background throughout the series.

Over time, the City of Port Phillip has developed a distinctly 'local' heritage collection which emerged from the 1994 amalgamation of the three former Councils (St Kilda, South Melbourne and Port Melbourne) and an acquisition program for contemporary visual art, which has been active since 1980. Whether documented in historical photographs, represented in colourful schematic elevation maps, glimpsed from afar or dominating the scene in contemporary artworks, the iconography of Luna Park remains immediately identifiable in its cultural association with the landscape of St Kilda and symbolic of the artistic consciousness and diverse urban character that is prevalent within the City of Port Phillip.

John Dunkley-Smith *Studies for Perspectives in Conscious Alterations in Everyday Life (Olympia)* 1991

Geoff Lowe *Saint Kilda* 1982

Danila Vassilieff *Serviceman and Girl* 1941

Brian Kewley *Luna Park Lover* 1967

Sue Ford *The Big Dipper* 2008

A Brief History
of the Luna Park Site

Luna Park occupies a four acre, triangular piece of Crown Land bounded by The Esplanade, Cavell Street and Shakespeare Grove. Early maps indicate that the area was originally a lagoon which was drained in the 1870s.[2] At one stage it was used as a municipal tip 'receiving eleven cartloads of rubbish a day, until the swamp was filled.'[3] In 1884 it was levelled, grassed and reserved for public recreation.

In 1906, the Foreshore Committee was formed to manage St Kilda's Crown Lands and use of the foreshore area. An increase in its utilisation for commercial outdoor entertainment purposes did not go unnoticed by the City of St Kilda Council who began leasing sites on the foreshore to help fund improvements such as reclamation and landscape gardening.[4]

At the first Foreshore Committee meeting held on 22 June 1906, Mr Erle Sigismond Salambo, a vaudeville performer, applied to lease the land to erect an outdoor amusement park.[5] On 2 November 1906 he opened St Kilda's first amusement park – Dreamland. Its attractions included Mount Fujiyama, Heaven and Hades, The Rivers of the World, the Destruction of San Francisco, the Underworld, slot machines and a novelty uniformed band. The park was surrounded by an 8ft fence decorated with towers, minarets and pagodas.[6]

The Dreamland project collapsed after three years when poor financial returns due to the high entry prices (singles-three pounds and sixpence, family-ten pounds and sixpence) forced Salambo to close the premises. This was no surprise as by 1909 there was also a certain level of public apathy evident about the degraded state of the site. In a letter appearing in *The Argus* on 7 August 1909, the author 'Common-Sense' appealed to the editor:

Sir, - Will you draw attention to the disgraceful eyesore inflicted upon the ratepayers by the fence around Dreamland, at St. Kilda beach. The enclosure is said to be let to a milkman as a pasture for cows. This is, surely, an improper use to be made of so important a site. All that is required is the removal of the unsightly fence, the clearance of rubbish, and the placing of a few seats. – Yours &c., COMMON-SENSE. St. Kilda, Aug. 5.[7]

The 'Figure 8' ride, however, proved popular enough to be retained and continued to operate after the demolition of Dreamland until the opening of Luna Park.

The site remained unused until May 1911 when Americans, James Dixon Williams and the Phillips Brothers (Herman, Leon and Harold) joined forces to form the Greater J D Williams Amusement Company. J D Williams sailed to Australia in the early years of the century with the intention of setting up outdoor amusement parks but he was also interested in the world of moving pictures and in the building of picture theatres. The Phillips Brothers first became involved with Williams through the staging of a six day bike race, held in Melbourne in 1910.[8]

The company succeeded in securing a 10 year lease at 400 pounds a year to build a Steeplechase Park similar to the one at Coney Island where the boundary of the park is comprised of a ride of artificial horses. Other proposed attractions were a roller skating rink, a horse show, roof garden, motor show and a moving picture theatre. However, the Steeplechase project was withdrawn due to considerations for safety of women and children.[9] In 1912 Luna Park Ltd was formed as a subsidiary of the Greater J D Williams Amusement Company and alternative plans were initiated to build Luna Park based on the highly successful Coney Island model built in 1903.

The team that conceived and built Luna Park in Melbourne were specialists in their field with many years of experience in funfair development. T H Eslick, an expert in fairground construction, was commissioned to design and build the Park. He had previously managed the construction of the Great Durbar Exhibition of Old Bombay, created for the visit of King George V to India in 1911.[10] The Scenic Railway at Luna Park is almost an exact replica of the one that was built for the Durbar exhibition.

Louis A Corbeille was appointed manager of the Park and was responsible for the creation of illusion effects and stage production. The Whitney Brothers, from Coney Island, led a team of twenty American funfair designers and technicians, including E A Robie (an electrician), George Coulter (who designed the interior) and V Churchill (a scenic artist who also designed the entrance face). The Whitney Brothers were also the inventors of a 'while you wait' photographic system which was a successful component of the Luna Park attractions.

In the winter of 1913 J D Williams returned to America where he founded First National Films which subsequently became Warner Brothers. Prior to his return to America he engaged Lieutenant Colonel John Monash (Chairman of Directors), Herman Phillips (Amusement Director) Gerald Robinson and Percy Cook (Directors) and A C Sutherland (Company Secretary) to manage the company.

Figure 8, St Kilda (Dreamland) c1906-1907
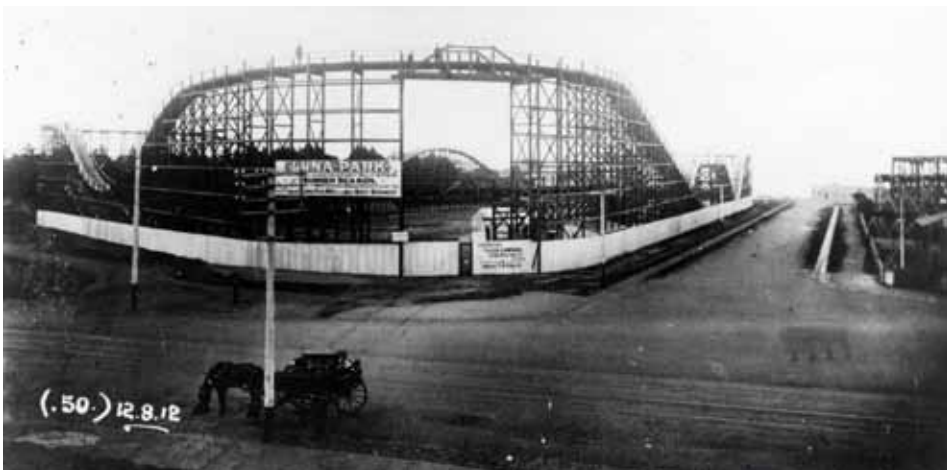
Luna Park During Construction 12 August 1912

Dreamland, The Salambo Amusement Co. 1907

Front Entrance to Luna Park 1912

The Opening
of Luna Park

On Friday 13 December 1912 from 8pm Luna Park Melbourne welcomed 22,319 visitors through the entrance for the first time. It was a highly successful occasion, drawing great crowds. So greatly anticipated was the opening that large numbers of people were turned away.

One can only imagine that the Park on opening night was a site to behold for local visitors. Descriptions from the time indicate that on arrival people entered through the Mr Moon mouth, painted silver with its eyes rolling around and illuminated with 5,000 electric lights. The entire structure of Luna Park was extravagantly adorned with approximately 80,000 electric lights.[11]

Similarly, the visitor experience once inside was reported to be very gratifying and indicated the magnitude of Luna Park Ltd's financial investment in the venture. According to newspaper reports visitors paid their entrance fees outside where they were greeted by staff at ticket booths decorated as gilded Roman chariots. Once inside they were transported to another world through the combination of thrill seeking rides, novelty sideshows, illusions, fascinating foreign-derived decorative themes and American inspired food such as 'Coney Island Crispettes' (popcorn).[12]

Undoubtedly, the live entertainment was the main attraction: High Wire artist the Amazing Grenodo, trick acrobats, cyclists and unicyclists, performing animals in a band and a Swedish diver, Miss Thelin, who plunged from a 50ft tower into a tub of blazing water with her 'tight fitting woollen bathing costume' alight). [13]

The Luna Park opening received extensive reviews in The Argus, *The Herald* and *Table Talk*. The review of the opening event in *The Argus* gives a comprehensive account of the Park and its numerous attractions:

Successful Opening:

"Luna-park," the new J. D. Williams's amusement resort, on the St. Kilda Esplanade, was opened last night. The opening was attended by great crowds of people, the change in the weather having come most opportunely for the management. Generally speaking, Luna-park is the most complete "show" of its kind opened in Australia. It excels in mechanical attractions of the kind that American managers describe as "thrills." Perhaps one of the most imposing features of the park is the great entrance gate, through which the crowd streamed last night. Between two towers, about 80ft. in height, a huge silver moon face, lit by thousands of electric bulbs, opens its mouth in a horrifying smile, and rolls its eyes grimly, and beneath the teeth of the upper jaw the people go in, having taken tickets at the three Roman chariots outside. The diameter of the great moon is about 30ft. Right around the ground runs a fine switchback railway, very soundly and safely built. The track goes twice round the ground. Another of the great "travelling" devices is the "Rivers and Caves of the World." This has been done before in Australia,

but not so well. The visitor enters an upholstered boat, and this, driven upon a current of water circulated by a big water-wheel, carries him past a little pond, where black swans swim, into the mouth of a dark cavern in a papier-mache precipice. The tunnel opens out as the boat moves into various grottoes, representing the Polar regions, the grotto at Capri, in which is a 30ft. dragon, with gleaming eyes, and other scenes. Stretching all over this region are extensive elevated terraces, used as a tea and refreshment garden… [14]

The official opening declaration was performed by the Hon Josiah Thomas MP (Minister for External Affairs). Councillor Edward O'Donnell (Mayor of St Kilda) presided over the proceedings, Councillor David Valentino Hennessy (Lord Mayor of Melbourne) and Mr J D (James Dixon) Williams made speeches to the crowd. Following the triumph of the opening night and the one admission price of sixpence, which was inclusive of entry and all rides, Luna Park enjoyed a very successful first season.

1   Ford, S., Conversation with Louisa Scott, 11 November 2008.

2   Sands, R., *Luna Park Lower Esplanade St Kilda: Conservation Analysis*, 1992, p5.

3   Woo, C., *Luna Park*, City of St Kilda, 1993, p1.

4   McGlynn, J., *Luna Park Revisited: A Step Back In Time*, date unknown, p3.

5   *St Kilda By the Sea: 1913-1917* Prahran Telegraph Printing Co. 1913 - 1917, p23.

6   *St Kilda By the Sea: 1913-1917*, op.cit., p3.

7   'Common-Sense', *The Argus*, Saturday 7 August 1909, p16.

8   Sands, R., op.cit., p8.

9   McGlynn, op.cit., p4.

10   Friends of Luna Park, *Luna Park: Guidelines and Recommendations for the Re-Development*, 1994, p9.

11   *The Herald*, 7 December 1912, p12.

12   *Table Talk*, 19 December 1912, p7.

13   *Oh Boy! Luna Park in 1912* in *The Argus*, Saturday 23 January 1954, p7.

14   *The Argus*, Saturday 14 December 1912, p19.

The First Attractions

The Scenic Railway

The Scenic Railway defined the boundaries of the Park with a track almost a mile long that was divided into eight sections. The English-made cars comprised carriages originally upholstered in red leather and the weight of the whole train was 1.5 tonnes. Apart from the Face and the Towers, it is the only attraction that remains from the opening days. It is regarded as the world's oldest wooden roller coaster operating on its original site and has been classified by the National Trust.

The River Caves

Visitors journeyed in boats on water and in darkness, passing illuminated tableaux, including Fairyland, the Polar Region, the Blue Grotto of Capri, the Cotton Plantation, Beneath the Seas, the Aboriginals (a Maori setting) and Happy Japan. The caves, with their vaulted ceilings, lit recesses, grottoes and the dragons guarding the entrance were said to be the most picturesque sight in Luna Park.

The American Bowl Slide

The Slide was only the third of its kind in the world. A series of moving seats carried visitors to the top of a tower where they slid on mats down a steep slope into a giant bowl made of polished wood, 15ft in diameter.

The Pharoah's Daughter

Situated close to the exit of the River Caves, was a huge Egyptian-themed auditorium where people entered through a gateway of Egyptian architecture, flanked with sphinxes. In 1912 visitors were treated to performances of the ancient Egyptian courts. The plays were written, staged, and acted by Mr Eugene D'Arcy (in conjunction with a cast of eight) and ran for twenty minutes at a time to crowded houses.

The Palais de Folies

The Palais de Folies featured a dome of music where voices of famous singers, including Dame Nellie Melba and Caruso, could be heard. Under the management of Whitney Brothers, visitors could convert Australian silver into American dimes, drop these into various slots and see and hear surprising things. Also inside the Palais de Folies was the Whitney Brothers Electric Studio which was conceived as a 'while you wait' photographic system, where patrons could be photographed in a motor car, a motor boat, as a cowboy, Romeo and Juliet, or sitting on the moon. These photographs could also be purchased as postcards.

The Tea Gardens and Ferris Wheel

The Tea Gardens catered for up to 2,000 people and was furnished with wicker seats and couches. Perched above the River Caves, it provided stunning views of the Park on one side and Port Phillip Bay on the other. A Ferris Wheel revolved in the centre of the ground, lifting car-loads of people 50ft or 60ft in the air.

Luna Park, Scenic Railway c1950s

Luna Park at Night, River Caves in Background c1960s

Work Horses Moving a Crescent Moon Decorative Piece at Luna Park c1920s

Other side shows and acts that existed at Luna Park in the first season demonstrate the variety and extent of the Company's creative endeavour and financial commitment: Box Ball, Comedy Kids, Coney Island Stall, Coney Island Crispettes Stall, Curious Flea Circus, Ferris Wheel, Mimic Rink, Photo Sketcher, Post Card and Hat Pin Stall, Ring a Cane Stall, Ring a Duck Stall, Ring a Knife Stall, numerous slot machines, Pal Reading Machine, The American Refreshment Stall, The Carmen Cigar, Cigarettes and Lolly Stall, The Chocolate Dip, The Coney Island, The Crystal Triangle Mirror Maze, The Devil's Staircase, The Fun Factory, The Indian Dart Gallery and Wrigley's Pepsin Gum Stall.

The 1912 opening night acts at Luna Park included The Two Savolos (high wire performers), Henderson's Performing Dogs and Monkeys, The Leon Brothers (acrobats), Henry and May (trick cyclists), Ardo the Human Frog (a contortionist who contended with mermaids in the River Caves), The Amazing Grenodo (who walked the High Wire dressed as an elephant) and Marie Thelin, the daring Swedish diver.

In the first season the line-up was altered or expanded regularly to include weird and wonderful 'novelty' acts from around the world, some of which might be considered inappropriate according to contemporary thinking: Broken Home Theatre, Theatre Comique, The Staigs (an acrobatic troupe), the Globe of Death (Electro and Electra give electrical demonstrations), the World's Fattest Boy (a twelve year old called Baby Ben), Siamese twins Daisy and Violet Hilton (from England), Tiny Town (a 'troupe of midgets'), a juggling act called The Tossing Testros, and Louina and Franzy (who perform feats on the High Wire and the Slide for Life – suspended by their teeth they travel down a wire from the height of the entrance towers). Harley Davidson, famous for his motorcycle stunts, was a world champion roller skater and gave an open air performance at the 1913 season opening event.

From the outside Luna Park appears to have changed very little over time. Its enclosure is still intact and the original face, flanking towers and Scenic Railway have been retained. Over the past century, however, all other early attractions specifically designed for the site have been removed or demolished for safety reasons, due to vandalism or to make way for newer amusements in keeping with contemporary popular taste.

Entrance to the Big Dipper with Construction Workers 1923

Luna Park Strategy Plan, East, North and West Elevations 1992

The Amazing Grenodo, High Wire Performer Walking the Tight Rope Dressed as an Elephant c1912-1915

Ghost Train Ride at Luna Park 1937

Luna Park Time Line

1903

The world's first Luna Park opens in Coney Island, New York on 16 May. 43,000 visitors pass through the gates in the first two and a half hours.

1906

Dreamland, St Kilda's first amusement park, is opened by the Premier, Sir Thomas Bent, on 2 November, on five acres including the future Luna Park site.

1907

A 'Figure 8' rollercoaster opens on 9 January as part of Dreamland. It is later demolished by the Greater J D Williams Amusement Company in 1912 to make way for the Palais Picture Theatre.

1912

Luna Park Ltd is formed with Canadian James Dixon Williams as managing director and Herman Phillips as manager. Australia's first Luna Park is opened by the Hon Josiah Thomas, Minister for Foreign Affairs, on Friday 13 December. 22,319 visitors attended the opening night and approximately 80,000 electric lights were turned on to adorn the site.

1913

For the 1913 season, scenes are changed and added to the Caves, including a Japanese Garden, a Red Indian Settlement and a scene from the Burke and Wills' exploratory expedition. New scenes are added to the Whitney Brothers Electric Studio, including an aeroplane with a moving propeller over a scaled model of Luna Park, a Wild West Saloon and a real motor car with a typical bush scene.

The Fun Factory is renamed The Crazy House. The Scenic Railway track is re-laid and the American Bowl slide is removed. The Crystal Maze is moved and La Poupee Vivan (the Living Doll) is introduced. The Palais de Folies (later the Giggle Palace) is transformed into Merryland, with the Turkey Trot, the Inebriated Bridge, the Boston Dip and the 60ft Toboggan. Other new attractions include a HoopLa Bazaar featuring the Canadian Log Walk, Aunt Jemima's Washing Day, Egyptian Palace of Fortune, Poker Toss, Ping Pong Pitch, Association High Kick (where the height to which a ball could be kicked was registered), the Chocolate Derby and the Arabian Dart Game. Harley Davidson performs a roller skating act to 7,000 spectators on 24 January. Davidson held many motor cycling, roller and ice skating records and titles throughout the world.

1914

The advent of World War I significantly affects Luna Park's operations. The River Caves undergo several alterations with a patriotic theme. Scenes depict naval battles of Great Britain in historical order, including the invasions of the Danes, the coming of the Spanish Armada, the exploits of Sir Francis Drake, Nelson at Trafalgar, the Australian Fleet and the Naval Review at Spithead. Additions are made to the Palace of Illusions, including The World Upside Down and the Kaiser's Kitchen where patrons could hurl crockery at an effigy of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

1915-1916

Luna Park is partly closed as new rides and replacement parts are unobtainable due to shipping and manufacturing restrictions during World War I. The front buildings remain open and the Scenic Railway is operational. Carnivals are presented as a substitute for live acts, including the staging of the Carnival of Allies in February 1915.

1920

Shortages and restrictions after the war create difficulties for management and this is intensified by a dispute over the lease which leaves the Park closed until 23 October 1923.

1923

In August work begins to overhaul the Park with installation of The Big Dipper, The Whip, The Water Chute and Noah's Ark (which replaces the Spook Train). On 2 November the 'New Luna Park' opens and the Park enjoys record attendances for that year. The Carousel built in 1901 by the Philadelphia Toboggan Co is acquired at a cost of £15,000 and introduced to the Park. It consists of 68 horses, four abreast and two chariots, with a war and peace theme and is adorned with 6,000 lights. The River Caves undergo thematic changes to resemble the Tropics with coconut palms, monkeys and a huge dragon. Luna Park is at its peak in the 1920s with recorded attendance figures of approximately 1,400 people a day.

1925

Traditionally opened for the summer season only, the Park opens during the winter for the visiting American Fleet.

1926

In 1926 The Dodgem is purchased at a cost of £600 and is accommodated in a French Chateau style Dodgem Pavilion (above The Whip), consisting of a fleet of 18 cars, holding two persons each.

1928

The Dodgem is enlarged and new attractions include Jack and Jill (a long slide on a rattan mat), Goofy House and a new Mermaids Arcade, which houses fortune telling machines. The 1928 and 1929 seasons are adversely affected by wet weather and the Depression limits the public's spending power.

1930-31

The 1930-1931 season records an unprecedented loss. The Company goes into voluntary liquidation to be reconstructed as Luna Park Ltd Incorporated.

1934

The Park opens again during winter to accommodate the visiting American Fleet. The Pretzel ride makes its debut, along with The Caterpillar and The Bug.

1935

Luna Park experiences its first accidental death, occurring on the Big Dipper.

1936

Another accidental death occurs; Henry Maltby falls from a trolley car and can't be reached before being hit by another car.

1937

Luna Park celebrates its 25th anniversary. 5,000 balloons are released and the Carousel building is decorated as an oversized birthday cake with twenty-five huge coloured candles on its domed roof. Couples celebrating their silver wedding anniversary are invited to attend a dinner at the Palais de Danse. New attractions include The Ghost Train and the Marionettes.

1939-45

During World War II Luna Park's operations are again limited and 'brownout' restrictions require that camouflage lights are specially fitted in case of enemy attack. American soldiers arrive in Melbourne en masse. A large number of US servicemen are billeted in St Kilda and Luna Park is well patronised by soldiers on leave.

Post War

Industrial disputes, shortages and stoppages of the post war period cause further disruption to the supply of goods and services. The enormous decline in profit at Luna Park from £21,507 in the 1945-46 season to £1,266 in the 1946-47 season is attributed to transport strikes, lighting restrictions and industrial strife.

1950s

In 1951 Luna Park is revitalised. The Rotor is introduced consisting of a circular drum which revolves at such a speed that when the floor drops away the centrifugal force holds patrons fixed against the sides of the drum. The Carousel, Dodgem, Penny Arcade and The Whirl are all refurbished. New amusements imitate the latest military developments and in 1952 Bazooka or Atom Guns are introduced, which fire rubber balls. The Moon Rocket is also installed with cars set at a 45 degree angle on a circular track. In 1954 the Park, especially the entrance face, is adorned for the Royal Tour of Queen Elizabeth II. With the introduction of television in 1956 Luna Park is losing its appeal and does not attract the crowds it had previously.

1960s

Luna Park is used for promotions such as Coca Cola, Yo Yo competitions and Radio 3DB personality appearances. The Park remains popular throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s when some of the earlier attractions begin to be replaced by modern rides.

1970s

Changes in public taste, a series of mishaps and more stringent safety regulations have a dramatic effect on the operations and popularity of Luna Park and other similar amusements on the foreshore. The Little Luna Park funfair that was situated near Luna Park is demolished in 1973 when Marine Parade is widened. In 1977 The Rotor is removed and replaced with the UFO. In 1978 Noah's Ark is replaced by The Scat.

1980s

Following a fire in the Ghost Train of Sydney's Luna Park in 1979 which killed one man and five children, safety regulations for St Kilda's Luna Park are tightened. In 1981 the River Caves are closed for inspection; considered impossible to fireproof and demolished in 1981, making way for the Hurricane. In the same year the Shoot-'Em Up Gallery is destroyed by arson. The fire damages company offices, records and most of the Giggle Palace, which is subsequently demolished. At this time the Big Dipper and the Scenic Railway are also closed for fire safety assessments but are reopened in 1982.

The first St Kilda Festival is programmed, commencing an annual poster competition for local artists, some of whom feature Luna Park in their designs. In 1981 the National Trust classifies the Big Dipper, Scenic Railway, Carousel and the entrance face and towers. In 1982 Luna Park is placed on the Government Buildings Register (later the Historic Buildings Register). In January 1985 there is a derailment on the Scenic Railway and in October 1987 two trains collide, injuring 21 patrons. Also in 1987, the Park celebrated its 75th birthday with an invitation for visitors to dress up in 1912 costume. In 1989 The Big Dipper is considered unsafe and despite its heritage significance is demolished.

1990s

In 1992 the Historic Buildings Council (now Heritage Victoria) places the Scenic Railway, the Carousel and the entrance Face and Towers on the Historic Buildings Register. 1993 sees a new 50 year lease negotiated by the State Government, the City of St Kilda and the lessee, Dennis Marks with clauses that required restoration of historic features and a redevelopment plan. In 1995 The Ghost Train and the Dodgem buildings are classified by the National Trust. The lease is bought by BCR Asset Management in 1998. In the same year restoration of the Scenic Railway, the Carousel and the entrance face and towers begin. In 1999 the new Mr Moon face, as we know it today, is unveiled.

2000 onwards

In 2001 the newly restored Carousel is opened. In early 2005, a consortium headed by Melbourne transport magnate Lindsay Fox purchases Luna Park. Between December 2007 and June 2008 a main section of the Scenic Railway undergoes major repairs. On 13 December 2012 Luna Park celebrates its centenary.

Timeline compiled from the following texts:
A Souvenir of Luna Park St. Kilda: The Mecca of the Merrymaker, date unknown.
McGlynn, J., Luna Park Revisited: A Step Back In Time, date unknown.
Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Luna Park and the Art of Mass Delirium, exhibition catalogue, 1988.
St Kilda By the Sea, 1913 – 1917.
Prahran Telegraph Printing Co. 1913 – 1917.
Woo, C., Luna Park, City of St Kilda, 1993.

Selected Works

VISUAL ART COLLECTION

Danila Vassilieff
Serviceman and Girl 1941
watercolour
32 × 41cm
pp1983.10.41

Danila Vassilieff
Street Parade 1941
watercolour
31 × 24cm
pp1983.11.42

Charles Blackman
Luna Park c1953
charcoal on paper
38 × 50cm
pp1984.3.47

Brian Kewley
Luna Park Lover 1967
oil on board
184 × 138cm
pp1984.11.213

Robert Rooney
Luna Park, St Kilda
8 January 1975
51 × colour photographs
70 × 100cm
pp1980.5.5

Greg Irvine
Untitled (Luna Park) 1980
ink on paper
56 × 76cm
pp1980.2.2

Greg Irvine
Untitled (Luna Park Mouth) 1981
ink on paper
111 × 75cm
pp1981.2.8

Geoff Lowe
Saint Kilda 1982
acrylic on canvas
157 × 250cm
pp1981.3.9

Martin Munz
Untitled 1982
silver gelatin photograph
19 × 40cm
pp1982.8.21

Cam Knuckey
St Kilda Tribal Rug 1983
acrylic on cotton duck, liquitex
152 × 182cm
pp1997.141.402

Trevor Graham
Luna Park No 1 1983
photograph
18 × 24cm
pp1983.5.36

Jon Cattapan
St Kilda Festival Poster Design 1985
acrylic paint and pencil on paper
56 × 68cm
pp1985.5.74

Jon Cattapan
St Kilda Festival Poster Design 1985
acrylic paint and pencil on paper
55 × 65cm
pp1985.6.75

John Dunkley-Smith
Studies for Perspectives in Conscious Alterations in Everyday Life (Olympia) 1991
5 × acrylic on MDF boards
60 × 60cm each
pp1994.9.222

Douglas Holleley
Figure on Carousel 1992
photograph
41 × 51cm
pp1994.2.215

Sue Ford
The Big Dipper 2008
pegasus print
60 × 74cm
pp2008.1.507

Sue Ford
The Iron Lung: Praying For the Children 2008
pegasus print
100 × 62cm

Sue Ford
Dream of the Merry Go Round 2008
pegasus print
60 × 76cm
pp2008.2.508

Sue Ford
Two Naughty Things: Before You Go to Hell 2008
pegasus print
60 × 74cm
pp2008.2.508

PHOTOGRAPHS, POSTERS & PLANS

Figure 8, St Kilda (Dreamland)
c1906-1907
postcard
9 × 14cm
sk1218

Luna Park During Construction
12 August 2012
photograph: George Wall & Co (courtesy State Library of Victoria)
20.3 × 25cm
sk0273

Front Entrance to Luna Park
1912
photograph (courtesy of State Library of Victoria)
21 × 25cm
sk1076

The Amazing Grenodo, High Wire Performer Walking the Tight Rope Dressed as an Elephant c1912-1915
photograph
20 × 25.5cm
sk2889

Luna Park, St Kilda (Whitney Brothers Photographic Studio) 1913
Postcard
8.5cm × 13.5cm
sk0802

Luna Park During Construction
12 August 1912
photograph: George Wall & Co (courtesy State Library of Victoria)
20.3 × 25cm
sk0273

War Time Patriotic Carnival at Luna Park c1915-1919
photograph
18.3 × 25 cm
sk2973

War Time Patriotic Carnival at Luna Park c1915-1919
photograph
18.3 × 25cm
sk2974

War Time Patriotic Carnival at Luna Park c1915-1919
photograph
18.3 × 25 cm
sk2975

Aerial View Taken From Bay Looking East North East 1919
photograph
21 × 29.5cm
sk0162

Luna Park Gardens, St Kilda (The Rose Series) c1920s
postcard
8.5cm × 13.5cm
sk0805

Work Horses Moving a Crescent Moon Decorative Piece at Luna Park c1920s
photograph
20 × 25.5cm
sk2885

Noah's Ark Amusement Ride at Luna Park c1920s
photograph
20 × 25.5cm
sk2884

The River Caves at Luna Park
c1920s
photograph
20 × 25.5cm
sk2886

Luna Park Entrance c1923
sepia toned photograph (Kodak Velox Print)
11.5 × 7.5 cm
sk2174

Entrance to the Big Dipper with Construction Workers
c1923
photograph
20.3 × 25.5cm
sk2888

Construction of the Scenic Railway at Luna Park c1923
photograph
20.3 × 25.5cm
sk2887

Ferris Wheel and View Along St Kilda Esplanade, Little Luna Park c1930
photograph (courtesy State Library of Victoria)
20 × 25.5cm
sk0056

The Giggle Palace at Luna Park
c1930s
photograph
20 × 25.5cm
sk2883

Gee Whiz Amusement Ride
1935
photograph
5.8cm × 8.4cm
sk0055

Ghost Train Ride at Luna Park
1937
photograph
20 × 25cm
sk1176

Café at Luna Park c1940s
photograph
22 × 30.5cm
sk1178

Reginald William Boyd and Friends (Whitney Brothers Photographic Studio) 1945
photograph
20 × 25cm
sk1187

Luna Park Slot Machines
c1951
photograph
18 × 23.5cm
sk0905

Luna Park River Caves with Queen Elizabeth Royal Tour Decorations 1954
photograph
19.2 × 25.2cm
sk0911

Luna Park, St Kilda (The Rose Series) c1950s
postcard
8.7 × 13.8cm
sk0785

Luna Park, Scenic Railway
late 1950s
photograph
22.2 × 19.2cm
sk0913

Aerial View of Luna Park and the Palais Theatre c1960s
photograph
16.6 × 25.5cm
sk0912

Luna Park: View of Scenic Railway, The Whip, Bumper Cars and the Sea c1960s
photograph
17.4 × 25cm
sk0910

Luna Park Facade at Night
c1960s
photograph
18.8 × 25.4 cm
sk0907

Luna Park: Facade at Night
1960s
colour photograph
17 × 24cm
sk0908

Luna Park at Night, River Caves in Background c1960s
colour photograph
17 × 25cm
sk0909

Siobhan Ryan
St Kilda Festival 1990
poster
17 × 25cm
sk1021

Luna Park Strategy Plan: East, North and West Elevations
1992
design plan: coloured ink on paper
59.5cm × 84.5cm
sk2864

Judith Van Heeran
St Kilda Festival Poster 1992
poster
59.5cm × 42cm
sk1011

Luna Park During the St Kilda Festival 1994
colour photograph
30 × 39 cm
sk0638

View of Luna Park Showing Rotor and Bumper Cars
c1960s
photograph
17.4 × 25cm
sk0906

ARCHIVAL RECORDS

Dreamland: The Salambo Amusement Co
Letter to H O Allen Esq from E S Salambo,
Re: payment for rent
31 June 1907

Dreamland: The Salambo Amusement Co
Letter to H O Allen Esq from E S Salambo,
Re: tenders for a skating rink
31 June 1907

Hogan and Hogan Solicitors
Lease agreement document between E S Salambo and St Kilda Shore Trust
1907

Luna Park Ltd
Letter to St Kilda Shore Committee
Request for consent of current shows to remain at Luna Park with a list of shows and descriptions
12 March 1913

Luna Park Ltd
Letter to H O Allen from Secretary of Luna Park Ltd
Application for approval of new show – an exhibition of live insects
17 March 1913

Luna Park Ltd
Letter to the Secretary, St Kilda Shore Committee Notification of List of Shows exhibited in 1914
31 January 1914

St Kilda Carnival (Luna Park)
Souvenir Program
6-13 December 1919
Luna Park Ltd
Annual General Meeting Report
11 August 1931

Luna Park Ltd
Letter to Director, St Kilda Shore Committee
Notification of rent paid
31 July 1931

Luna Park Ltd
Letter to Secretary, St Kilda Shore Committee from G Curwen Secretary Luna Park Ltd
Notification of 'Laughing Clowns' installation
30 July 1941

Luna Park Ltd
Letter to St Kilda Shore Committee from G Curwen Secretary Luna Park Ltd
Notification of list of shows for Opening of 1942 summer season
15 September 1942

Luna Park Ltd
Letter to St Kilda Shore Committee from G Curwen Secretary Luna Park Ltd
RE: Potential fire hazard of Pine trees in Shakespeare Grove
7 February 1952

Diagrammatic Sketch of Proposed Joy Ride,
Date unknown