

The Australian National University
Institute of the Arts

Canberra School of Art

GRADUATE DIPLOMA OF ART

Setianingsih Purnomo

TRANSITION AND CHANGE

Research Paper
20 %

PRESENTED IN PART FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE
GRADUATE DIPLOMA OF ART

1994

ABSTRACT

TRANSITION AND CHANGE: research into western artists whose work has been influenced by non-western art. The research paper investigates the way modern artists establish their own visual language through Eastern traditional art forms. A study taking the form of an exhibition of computer generated prints exhibition at The A.N.U. Drill Hall Gallery from August 3 to 21, 1994 which comprises the outcome of the Studio Practice component (80%), together with a Research Paper (20%), and a Report which documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.

I am grateful to Dr. Gail Crosswell from Study Skills Centre - The A.N.U. for her encouragement and assistance in overcoming 'cultural' problems in this writing.

Thank you very much to other postgraduate students, in particular Liz Paterson and Stephen Holland for their friendship.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. David McNeill and Gordon Bull for their supervision and support.

Thank you very much to Nigel Lendon for his unpublished research on Margaret Preston.

Many thanks to Roger Butler for his time in discussing Margaret Preston with me.

I am grateful to Dr. Gail Craswell from Study Skill Centre - The A.N.U. for her encouragement and assistance in overcoming 'cultural' problems in this writing.

Thank you very much to other postgraduate students, in particular Liz Paterson and Stephen Holland for their friendship.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. MARGARET PRESTON	2
II. A. Biography	2
II. B. National Spirit	5
II. C. Aborigines' Spirit	8
III. WALTER SPIES	10
III. A. Biography	10
III. B. Balinese Spirit	13
III. C. Modern Balinese Art	15
IV. MARGARET PRESTON AND WALTER SPIES	18
V. CONCLUSION	20
BIBLIOGRAPHY	22

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Margaret Preston:
Aeroplane c. 1925, reworked 1936
woodblock print, 24.0 x 19.0 cm, collection : ANG 1976
2. Margaret Preston
Implement Blue 1927
oil on canvas, 55.4 x 46.8 cm, collection : ANG 1983
3. Walter Spies
Baschkirischer Hirte 1923
oil on canvas, 69.0 x 90.5 cm, collection : Hans Rhodius
4. Margaret Preston
Shoalhaven Gorge, NSW 1953
colour stencil, 55.4 x 46.8 cm, collection : ANG 1983
5. Walter Spies
Die Landschaft und ihre Kinder 1939
oil on board, 62.0 x 91.0 cm, collection : Hans Rhodius
6. Setianingsih Purnomo
My Borobudur 1994
bubble jet print 105.0 x 35.0 cm
7. Setianingsih Purnomo
Dancing in the Borobudur 1994
bubble jet print 105.0 x 35.0 cm
8. Setianingsih Purnomo
Borobudur in the Power 1994
bubble jet print 105.0 x 35.0 cm



Figure 1

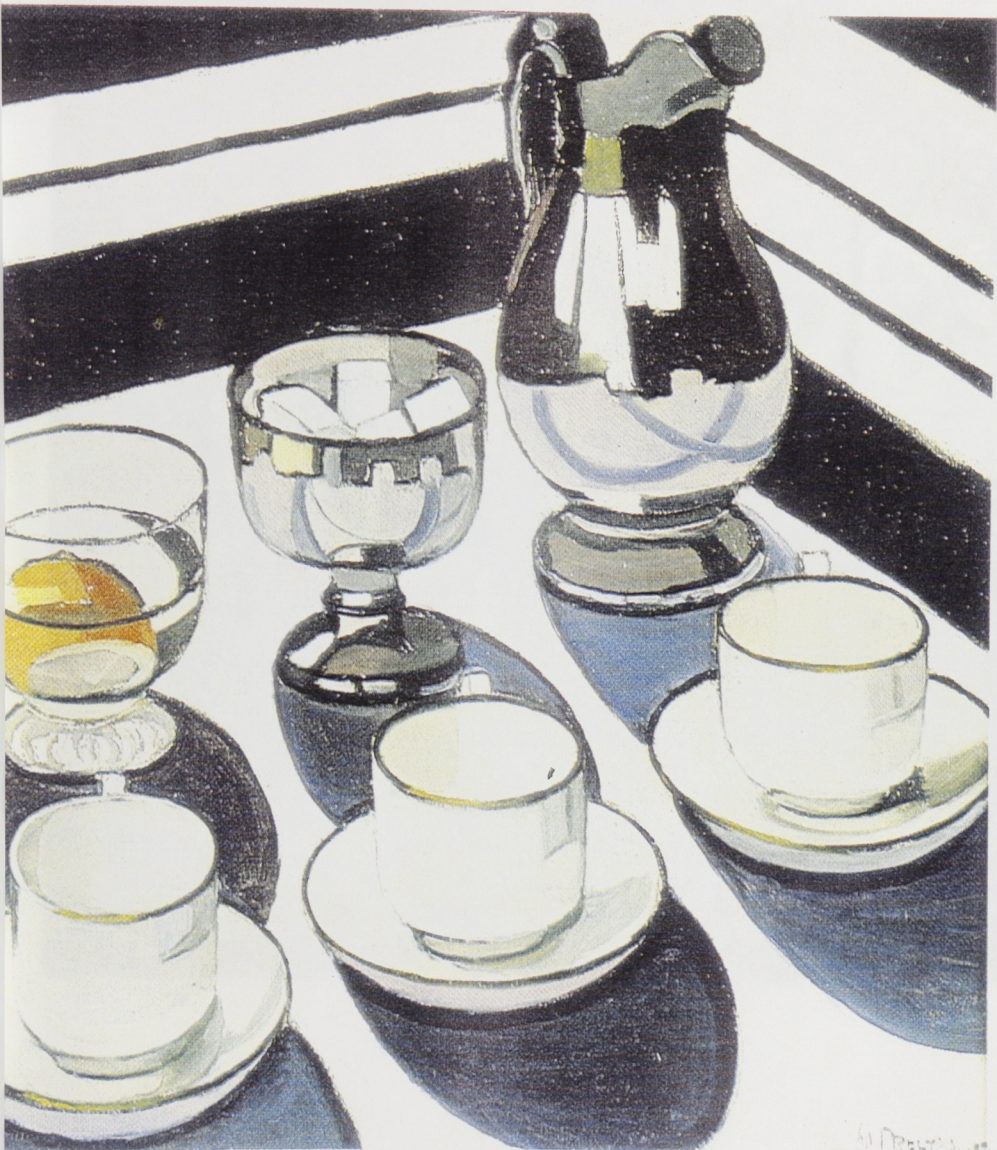


Figure 2



Figure 3

Baschkirischer Hirte (1923) – detail
Oil on Canvas, 69 x 90 $\frac{1}{2}$ cm.
Collection Hans Rhodius



Figure 4

Figure 5



INTRODUCTION

The subject of this book is the history of the art of the
which has been the subject of many studies.
The history of the art of the
Freedom and the West.

Margaret Preston's art, however,
has been the subject of many studies.
The history of the art of the
from the art of the
and can be seen in the
and can be seen in the



Figure 6

the art of the
the art of the
the art of the

the art of the
the art of the
the art of the

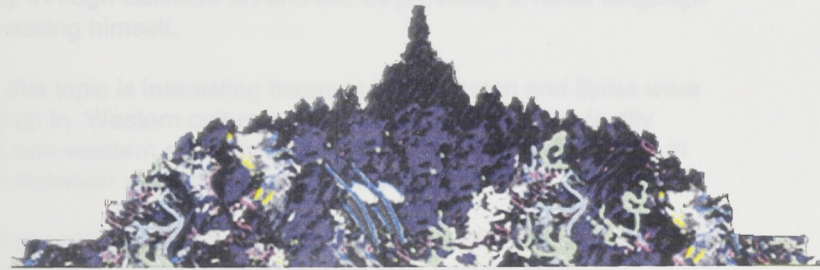


Figure 7

the art of the
the art of the
the art of the

the art of the
the art of the
the art of the

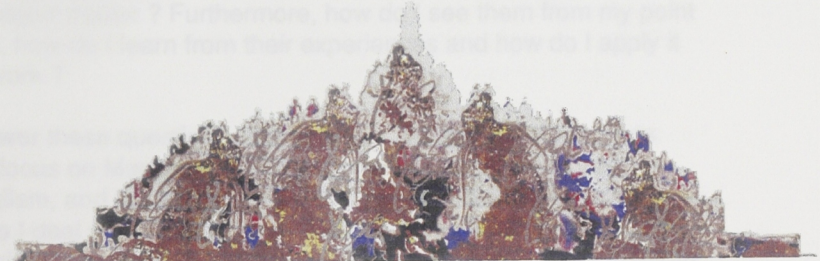


Figure 8

the art of the
the art of the
the art of the

Margaret Preston, *Painting in Anthen Land Art in Australia*, November 1945

The subject of this paper is an investigation of the ways western artists find their expression by using non-western art forms as their visual language. The artists chosen as case studies Margaret Preston and Walter Spies.

Margaret Preston (1875 - 1963) was the first Australian artist to raise the issue of Aboriginal art : " Australian art should be based on the indigenous art of Australia "1. Margaret Preston was inspired by Aboriginal design from the mid 1920s. More than 20 years later, she finally found her own style for expressing herself as a modern artist and carrying out the establishment of an explicit Australian art.

Walter Spies, a German artist (1895 - 1942), was the first European artist who worked with Balinese people to establish a modern Balinese art. Moreover, in his short life time, Spies found his own way through Balinese art and life, as providing a visual language for expressing himself.

To me, this topic is interesting because both Preston and Spies were brought up in Western cultures, but they found their own identity through non-western art forms : working with a marked difference in function between western and non-western art.

A set of questions motivate this writing : why were the two artists interested in non-western art ? How did they acquire their knowledge of those art forms ? what was the extent of their concern with non-western art and society ? and how those things influence their subject matter ? Furthermore, how do I see them from my point of view, how do I learn from their experiences and how do I apply it in my work ?

To answer these questions, this writing is divided into three parts. First, I focus on Margaret Preston : for two main reasons, her nationalism, and her achievement in Aboriginal design. Second, in part two I deal with Walter Spies : how he discovered Bali, how he established a relationship with the local people, how he was inspired by the local art and life and how he influenced the local art. Thirdly, I compare what Margaret Preston and Walter Spies did as individual artists searching for their own identities through Aboriginal design and Balinese art respectively.

¹Margaret Preston. 'Painting in Arnhem Land', *Art in Australia*. November 1940.

" The task she took for herself : the establishment of the forms necessary to an Australian national art " .

Humphrey McQueen.²

II. A. Biography.

Margaret Rose McPherson³ in her writing From Eggs to Electrolux says, she decided to be an artist at twelve years old when she was taken bay her mother to the New South Wales National Gallery. The reason was " ... how nice it must be to sit on a high stool with admiring people giving you ' looks "'⁴.

She started to learn painting with W. Lister Lister in Sydney and then studied in a formal school at Victoria's National Gallery Design School in 1893 - 1994. Moreover, from mid 1896 to the end of 1897 she studied at the Gallery School in Melbourne and studied in the Drawing School where she was awarded a prize of the year for " Drawing Hands From Cast "⁵. Then she continued her study at the Painting School under Bernard Hall - a painter who was trained in Germany. At that time she gained an award for " Still Life " in 1897⁶ . She continued at the School of Design, Painting and Technical Arts, Adelaide in 1898.

For educational reasons, Margaret McPherson went to Europe twice. On her first trip in 1904 - 1906, she was accompanied by her pupil Bessie Davidson (1879 - 1965). They went to Germany, and arrived in Munich in 1904. Her first contact with German art and life gave her a shocking impression : " Half German art is mad and vicious and a good deal of it is dull ".⁷ She also felt that " The German attitude

²Humphrey McQueen. The Black Swan of Trespass. 1979.p.145.

³ Roger Butler. The Prints of Margaret Preston. 1986 p.1.

⁴ibid.p.1

⁵ibid.p.2

⁶ibid.p.2

⁷ The Home. June 1923. p. 20

towards women is not progressive. Everything is for the men."⁸ For this reason they left Germany and went to Paris which was well known as the centre of early twentieth century art.

In Paris, they were fascinated by ' Le Fauves ' in particular by Henri Matisse - according to her ' the great colourist ', but also Albert Marquet, Andre Derain, Maurice de Vlaminck and Georges Roualt. For two years they travelled around Europe and some African countries. Finally at the end of 1906, they left Europe and went back to Australia, arriving in Adelaide in early 1907. In Adelaide they established their studio and started teaching. Moreover, Preston regularly exhibited her works at the South Australian Society Arts and Federal Art exhibition.

On her second trip to Europe (1912 - 1919), she was accompanied by Gladys Reynell (1881 - 1956) another pupil. They went to London and Paris.

During her stay in Paris she studied Japanese art at Guimet Muse⁹ where she would " ... learn slowly that there is more than ... eye realism. That there was such a thing as aesthetic feeling. That a picture that is meant to fill a certain space should decorate that space "¹⁰.

In 1914, they learnt pottery at the London Polytechnic. When the war broke out in August 1914, they helped rehabilitate the injured soldiers at Seale Hayne Hospital by teaching them to make pottery.

On the way back to Australia at the end of 1919, she met William Preston, a manager of Dalton Brothers Ltd and married him at the end of that year. After her marriage, she bravely changed her name to Margaret Preston, saying " I felt that if my art were not strong enough to survive under Margaret Preston, then Margaret McPherson had better be finished ".¹¹

After their marriage, Margaret Preston settle down in Sydney in the early 1920's and soon people recognised her as " the natural enemy of the dull "¹².

⁸ *ibid.*p.5

⁹Although Preston claimed that she learnt Japanese art on her first trip to Europe; according to Roger Butler in The Prints of Margaret Preston, there is no evidence to support her statement. Butler said, Preston's Japanese art book was inscribed in 1915 was the evidence that Preston's interest on Japanese art obviously seen on her second trip.

¹⁰*ibid.*p. 8

¹¹ Daily telegraph. 1 August 1929. p. 22

¹²Sydney Ure Smith' words, quoted by Butler in The Prints of Margaret Preston

Preston in the early period of her career was well known as a still life and flower painter, labelled as her "typically feminine" period¹³. Through her interest in Aboriginal design which started in the middle of 1920's, she expressed her concern about a national art form. Twenty years after, she reached her style in her Australian landscape period using a distinct 'language' to express herself as a modern artist.

¹³Janine Burke, Australian Women Artists : One Hundred Years. 1981.

" ... an art for Australia from Australians

Margaret Preston.¹⁴

In 1937, Margaret Preston said " Australia is crying out for a national culture ... "¹⁵. This was the first time she raised the issue of a national art form; and three years later, she wrote " ... there is a chance for Australia to have a national art - an art taken from its primitive peoples, the Australian Aborigines; an art for Australia from Australians"¹⁶.

These statements were challenging and highlight three different concerns : firstly, her concern for a national art; secondly, her interest in Aboriginal design; and thirdly her position as a modern artist coping with two different things, both nationalism and the indigenous forms of Australian art.

To understand better Preston's concern about a national art we need to look at Australian art from the end of the nineteenth until the early twentieth century. In this period, Australian art was dominated by landscape and portrait themes done by the new generation of the white settlement¹⁷. Where " Australian sky and nature awaits, and merits real artists to portray it ... there is a whole system of landscape painting of the most striking character, yet available for human art ... "¹⁸. Bernard Smith in Australian Painting 1788 - 1990, says that in 1885 - 1914, a ' Genesis ' era there were many art schools established in this country. These schools sprang up in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide which had their own style.

This period was represented at the Royal Academy in London, when a large exhibition was held in 1924. There were forty artists with more than two hundred images represented. " ... there is such a

¹⁴Margaret Preston., 'Painting in Arnhem Land', *Art in Australia*. November 1940

¹⁵Margaret Preston., American Art Under the New deal : Mural'. *Art in Australia*, November 1937.

¹⁶opcit. p.62

¹⁷P.G. Konody, 'The Australia Exhibition in London.' *Art in Australia*, March 1924

¹⁸J. Lnotsky, 'The State of Art in New South Wales and Tasmania', *The Art Union*. July 1839 (pp 99-100)

sameness, a kind of monotony, lack of experiment ... "19 was the review of P. G.. Konody. Moreover, he pointed out that the localities of the cities such as Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide did not come up well. He commented that " to us in England ... [as] ' the mother country ', localities should be represented for indication that each district had its own character "20. From this review it can be understood why Australian artist like Margaret Preston who participated in that exhibition wanted Australian art to have its own identity.

To find a model for a national art, Preston suggested that The United States set a good example, where a national art atmosphere was established by the collaboration between the government, private patronage and artists. She said, only with ' universal feeling ', can a national art be made : " ... it is only with the closest bond between the artist and the people that there can be a national art and culture : a culture which means part the community of ideas embodied in the concrete and lasting forms and symbols of the arts .21

Preston suggested that " an art taken from its primitive peoples, the Australian Aborigines "22, was the best way to form the national art. She said this when as a modernist she " had been influenced by the primitivism in the modern art in early twentieth century "23; such as Picasso's use of African mask forms in his works or Gauguin's journey to Tahiti. Along with the primitive came the machine. A symbol of modernity represented in geometrical forms.

According to Preston, Aboriginal design has a unique form where " the geometrical designs are balanced, but are never duplicated " and the colour is simple and flat where there is " no shadow nor vivid light ".24 Furthermore, for the design which was used as " purely formal elements "25 she said : " The student must be careful, ... not to be bother about what the myths the carver may have tried to illustrate. Mythology and religious symbolism do not matter to the artist, only to the anthropologist ".26

19Konody, p. 46

20ibid.

21 Margaret Preston, ' American Art under the new deal : Mural ', *Art in Australia*., November 1937

22 Margaret Preston, 'Painting in Arnhem Land' *Art in Australia*. November 1940

23 Ann Stephen, ' Margaret Preston's Second comin' *Art network* no. 2. 1981

24 opcit p. 15

25opcit p. 59

26 Preston's lecture at the National Art Gallery of NSW. 1939.

The two statements above were considered controversial ; firstly in 1937 she raised the cultural issue as a " bond " to establish a national art form; but then, three years, after she provocatively ignored the symbolic meaning of Aboriginal design. In terms of cultural understanding McQueen says , " culture is a living thing for an Aborigine, indeed it is the very core of his being. It is not something external to him like a book or a painting which he stores away or sells at a profit ".²⁷ How could Preston cope with the contrary points of view in her work ? Preston did change her mind after having a journey to the Aboriginal sites led by Frederick McCarthy²⁸ in 1940, which is obviously seen in her writing :

Aboriginal Art represents not the object alone from which it is drawn, but with the essential truth which may or may be not be visible to the human eye.²⁹

However, Ann Stephen points out that Preston's view of the ' essentials of nature and the spirit of the country ' through Aboriginal design was like that of other modernist forerunner's thought where ignorance of the meaning is " a positive value " for finding their own identity in a non-western art form.

²⁷ Humphey McQueen, Aborigines, Race and Racism. 1974.

²⁸ Butler, The Prints of Margaret Preston. 1987 p. 44

²⁹ Margaret Preston, ' New Developments in Australian Art ' , Australia National Journal [Sydney] 2 no. 6 (May 1941) p. 12

II. C. Aborigines' Spirit.

" ... could be used by anyone, it is so easy ... There are also many designs ... it could be applied to decorate furniture ... "

Margaret Preston.³⁰

Preston's early campaign for Aboriginal design was an " unpleasant clang "³¹; in the way she understood the design as just for "decorating utilitarian objects"³². In support of her statement, she said " why be scornful of our own heritage "³³, pointing out that many European artists were inspired by their own folk art.

Later on, her work in 1927 showed how she had changed her mind about Aboriginal design being used as ' purely elements ' of art. During this period, she had applied, adapted and transferred the designs into her art work in paintings and prints.

A big progression emerged in her work during the years of 1930s when she had synthesised the modernity which was symbolised in mechanical objects and the character of Aboriginal design such as geometrical lines, and flat colour. " Aeroplanes, like trains, were symbols of modernity. Preston took her early rather un-focused decorative design and printed it onto silver-painted paper, thus fusing Aboriginal forms and rhythms with the modern images ".³⁴ Aeroplane, (figure 1) c. 1925, re-worked 1936, was derived from cubism influenced through Aboriginal form with its un-repetitive lines. In this image, Preston used simple and flat colours, and also balanced lines to obtain modernity of impression.

During this period Preston also produced many still life images such as Implement Blue, which according to Ann Stephen was "... not considered worthy enough" for a national art. In the early 1940s, however, Preston started working on a series of landscape themes as

³⁰Margaret Preston ' The Indigenous Art of Australia '. *Art in Australia*, 3rd ser., no. 11 March 1925. p. 34

³¹Butel, E. Margaret Preston. The Art of Rearrangement.,1988. p.53

³²ibid

³³opcit p. 35

³⁴ Butler, The Prints of Margaret Preston. p. 183

a " symbol for national identification ". She said : " I am trying to find even one form that will suggest Australia in some way ... "35. This series of work showed how Preston developed her own ' language ' which was based on the Aboriginal spirit in colours, lines, dots and impression.

" I am trying to simplify my colour to my form ... "36 she said.

Ann Stephen points out that Preston's landscape theme had not " the sense of vast space and depth ". Moreover, she questions Preston's landscape theme as propaganda, and asks how that theme could provide a " national audience " and assumed a " significant " content and give a high " cultural capital "37.

Preston said : " Australia is a country that gives the impression of size and neutral colour ... I feel that Australia is not a golden-glow country but a country of harsh, cool light. In my effort to give a feeling of sharp flatness I force my compositions with as much solid light as possible. "38

I would say that in terms of understanding Australian character "as simply as to all appearances my country "39 and expressing it through Aboriginal design as " purely elements " in which flat colour, un-repetitive lines in a balanced geometrical design were transformed well, Preston's landscape theme was the best effort of Preston to achieve her national and Aboriginal spirit.

" The failure of modernism " is Ann Stephen's conclusion on what Margaret Preston had done to find an Australian national art form. This might be right, for how could modern Australian culture be built through the indigenous art culture without any interaction between the two different cultures and peoples ? However, it is a " Truism as it is to say that art, like everything else in human life, must change, that each new generation must create its own style of art in which to express its own ideas and sentiments ... "40 As a modern artist, Margaret Preston did succeed in terms of finding her own identity through a non-western art form.

35 Gavin Long, ' Some Recent Paintings by Margaret Preston ', *Art in Australia*, 3rd ser., no. 59 (May 1935). p. 18

36 *ibid*

37 Stephen, *Margaret Preston's Second Coming*. p.15

38 quoted from 'Some Recent Painting by Margaret Preston' p. 18

39 *ibid* p. 18

40 A. Radcliffe-Brown, Margaret Preston and Transition. *Art in Australia*, 3rd ser., no (December 1927) p.

III. WALTER SPIES

" ... my childhood was indoctrinated by theory, ... overstressing in technique and neglecting imagination..."

Spies letter to his father, May 1919⁴¹

III. A. Biography.

Walter Spies (1895 - 1942) was known as an artist, musician, musicologist, photographer and film maker. He was the son of the German honorary consul, born and brought up in Moscow for fifteen years. He remembered his childhood was formed by fine music and concert, where Mugssorgsky's Boris *Godunof* and Pavlova dancing *Giselle* were performed. " ... I grew up in the ' grandiose ' atmosphere of wealthy pre-war Russia ... "⁴². As a child he loved nature and animals so that " according to my mother, animals were the only things I drew ... [and] all the natural sciences has stayed with me all my life ... "⁴³. This is the clue to understand why nature is a dominant element in Spies' art works.

His first contact with German life came when he was sent for further education in Dresden in 1910. This was the first time he saw modern art when Cubism, Futurism and Expressionism took a great hold in Germany, and when Richard Strauss became well known in music.

A year after the first World War broke , when Spies reached military age, he was arrested by Russian soldier's because of his German blood. He was sent to the internment camp in Sterlitamak, a small village in the Ural mountains area where the nomadic tribes such as the Tatar, Bashkir and Kirgiz people grazed their herds.

Spies gradually built a good relationship with the locals by helping them with work, learning their languages, and playing their music. He

⁴¹ Hans Rhodius and John Darling, Walter Spies and Balinese Art. 1980. p. 13

⁴² *ibid* p. 9

⁴³*ibid* p. 9

also did drawings and paintings. He said : " Even towards the end of my time in internment things began to emerge with greater clarity and to assume more and more the forms of a simplified realism ... "44 By having a good understanding of the nomad's life, he learnt that there is another world, another culture where the arts and music are not only for expressing individual thought, but also as a communication among members of the tribes. He compared this experience to that of his childhood " ... I had always been taught about ' Taste and Beauty '..."45

When he was released in 1918, he went back to Moscow and passed through his hardest time in a bitter winter without any family around him. He worked as a set designer for Don Pasquale, the Grand Opera produced by Donizetti. By working in this company he got a chance to see Henri Rousseau's painting for the first time and said : " ... I was totally carried away. It was like a revelation and a confirmation ... "46. Later on, in his work, Spies was influenced by Rousseau's detail in vegetation and stylisation.

Baschkirischer Hirte (figure 3)(1923 - oil on canvas, 69 x 90.5 cm) is an example of Spies' earlier work. This painting was a product of his internment - camp time in Sterlitamak, where the nomadic tribes grazed their herds. Four cows are grazing in the forest as a foreground, whereas as in background sky light moves across into the top of the hills, and reaches the top of the painting. The forest is visualised in great detail. In Hans Rhodius' words " It expresses a pantheistic feeling of deep awe and love of nature in the whole multiplicity of its phenomena, ... "47 . This picture follows Henri Rousseau' style where vegetation is visualised with " meticulous attention to detail "48.

In 1919 Spies ran away to Germany by disguising himself as a peasant and met his family again. During this time he saw Marc Chagall and Paul Klee's works and was impressed by their " purity and naivety "49.

During this time, he did many paintings and worked for the silent film industry as a composer. He composed music which was based on

44)ibid p.10

45)ibid p. 13

46)ibid p. 13

47)ibid p. 17

48)ibid p. 13

49)ibid p. 15

a " simple Kirgiz tune "⁵⁰ for Friedrich Murnau - a famous film director from Ufa Studio. By working with Murnau, Spies came to a Dutch couple, the Schoonderbeeks family, who gave him a glimpse of information about a paradise in the South East which was called the Netherlands East Indies (now called Indonesia). In 1923 he sailed to the Netherlands East Indies, and arrived in Java. At the beginning he stayed in Bandung (West Java) and then moved to central Java, to Jogjakarta the centre of Javanese culture.

Music brought Spies into the Sultan of Jogjakarta's family where he was hired as the gamelan orchestra's director. For this job, he synchronised European piano to that of the gamelan and then produced music performances for the public.

⁵⁰ibid p. 15

III. B. Balinese Spirit.

" For a Balinese ..., life is glorious, ... and art is alive and is there to praise the holiness of life ... "

Spies' letter to his brother, Leo dated 1939⁵¹

Bali has strong outline with the Indian scripture - Budhist and Brahmanic -, and combined this influenced with their indigenous tradition⁵². This island has a strong spirit of cults and customs, a worship of nature, belief in gods and spirits, celebrating man's existence in nature, life and death with " the colours, shapes, sounds, and smells and the expressive forms into which its people cast their rituals and spectacles"⁵³. According to Stutterheim :

" The Balinese ... likes the more coarsely expressive in jest and earnest; he is lavish with gilt and bright colours; his music, though rich and melodious, is characteristically explosive; and sudden outbursts of rapid, jerky movements typify his vigorous dance rhythms "⁵⁴.

Spies visited Bali for the first time in 1925; he stayed at *Puri Ubud* as a guest of the head of the district, Tjokorde Gde Rake Sukawati. Soon he was attracted by the life style where

" ... art is not something standing outside life or belief... [where] music is not there to be listened to, but only to be - that which is alive - exist in the form of sound as well ... [and] dance is not there to be looked at, but there because movement is yet another possibility of proving the holy, living thing of dynamics and rhythmic ... "⁵⁵

Bali is different from Java where music is played in wild temperament with " trance dances " whilst in Java, the music and its dancers are " like ancient queens of Egypt restored to life," Spies said.

⁵¹ibid. p. 71

⁵² Claire Holt, Art in Indonesia. continuities and change. NY. 1967. p. 168

⁵³ibid p. 168

⁵⁴ W.F. Stutterheim, Indian Influences in Old-Balinese Art, London. 1935. p. 35

⁵⁵ letter to his brother Leo, quoted in Walter Spies and Balinese Art. p. 71

In 1927, Spies resigned his job as the gamelan orchestra's director at Jogjakarta Palace and moved to Ubud, Bali. Spies who adored nature, felt Bali was the right place to stay; the surrounding landscape, the myths and legends inspired Spies' paintings of the rice-fields, farmers and their faithful cows (the most important scene in Balinese agrarian life). He tried to catch the peaceful and radiating atmosphere from the volcanic mountains and lakes, and also from the *pura* (temple) with its ritual-ceremonial activities of everyday life. His realist-expressionist style which was influenced by Henri Rousseau's work progressed well in this new environment. Spies said " ... man and life has crystallised and concentrated itself in the way of art ... "56.

In Bali Spies developed his own identity through " spatial orientation "57 by saying " ... I am just being obedient to some set of rules which seem to me to occur quite naturally and which appear to control the play of the melodic, rhythmic and harmonic energies in a picture while these are being translated into the sphere of the spatially static "58. Moreover, he adopted Balinese traditional painting's style where the holy cosmology rules the composition as in many traditional paintings, " the top half is concerned with the realm of the sacred, while the bottom deals with the mundane tasks and the world of mankind ... "59. Spies' paintings always represent " the necessary balance" and " harmony". Like a Balinese, he obey the rule of the holy mountain positioned on canvas to show " in which direction stands the holy mountain, Gunung Agung, ... [signifies] North. The fact that the mountain rises in the centre of the island means that the sea is always South "60 . Spies accepted this orientation in his work although as he said " I am often myself not aware of various things ... "61.

Spies did capture the rhythmic treatment of nature of Bali and visualised, through his multiple perspectives which are blended into a unity, thick vegetation which is derived from tropical plants stylised in traditional Balinese painting. He reached the 'magic realist' style derived from the Balinese spirit which incorporates myths, legends, symbols and magic in daily-life, religion and ceremony.

⁵⁶ *ibid* p. 73

⁵⁷ G. Baterson. Steps to an ecology of mind, NY. 1974. p. 89

⁵⁸ letter to Kaspar Niehaus, art criticus, quoted in Walter Spies and Balinese art p. 73

⁵⁹ *ibid* p. 73

⁶⁰ *ibid* p. 73

⁶¹ *ibid* p. 73

III. C. Modern Balinese Art.

" Maybe you could try drawing something else for a change : for example, something you see around you everyday, ..."

Spies' word to Anak Agung Gde Soberat.⁶²

Walter Spies started his friendship with Anak Agung Gde Soberat when Soberat regularly watched Spies do his painting. Soberat was curious about Spies' painting style which was totally different that of traditional Balinese painting.

Traditional Balinese painting has its own characteristics such as flatness, the rendition of rich and luxuriant vegetation in a *horror vacui* composition. The themes are about the gods and heroes in the myths and legends which are derived from the Indian epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha*. The main function of painting is use in ceremonial events, where Balinese sit together in *pura*, and listen to the traditional rules being read by the leader. These rules are represented in the paintings.

The Balinese see themselves as ' a microcosm of society, the one cannot exist without the other, and because of this they are the same "⁶³. This is the reason why traditional Balinese painting is anonymous. Spies said about the Balinese

" For Balinese ... life is the glorious, holy fact... and art is alive and is there to praise the holiness of life ... That' s why almost every single Balinese can paint, almost everyone dances or plays gamelan, just as he works in the fields ... "⁶⁴

Spies' friendship with locals not only developed through painting, but also through music and dance. He composed music and choreographed a dance which is based on a traditional dance (called *Tari Kecak* or The Monkey Dance). Moreover, he collaborated with Andre Roosevelt Spies filmed Balinese's life in *The Kris*. or *Goon-Goon*. He said : " I' m doing the directing and most of the work; a certain Mr. Roosevelt

⁶²ibid .p. 35

⁶³ ibid p. 75

⁶⁴ ibid p. 71

turns the handle. "65

Soberat was the first local pupil of Spies who took Spies' work as a clue. Gradually many young Balinese people were following his path wanting to be Spies' pupils. They learnt how to draw new subjects (of landscapes and daily life), composed in different ways with a western perspective, used new materials and started to put their name on the pictures.

It seems that the Balinese accepted Spies just the way Spies accepted the Balinese. They built up a strong collaboration in art and life. Weekly, at Spies house in Campuan, they sat together and discussed what was on in the village, ceremonial and performance activities, and also shared opinions on visual art.

In 1936, together with Rudolf Bonnet (Dutch artist), Cokorda Gde Agung Sukawati - a leader of Ubud district - and I Nyoman Lempad - a well known art leader - Spies established *Pitamaha*. *Pitamaha* was an organisation which aimed to preserve Balinese art from the tourism boom in the 1930s. It had one hundred fifty members from all over central Bali. Under Spies' guidance, they controlled the quality of art works and their price.

The question is, did Spies find the Balinese or did the Balinese find Spies? Spies came to Bali and discovered Bali as the place that he had been seeking, where

" ... life is the thing you look forward to, the thing you can't enjoy enough, and through the prayer of art you try to stress the glory of life, to fix it spatially or temporally, almost to conjure it..."⁶⁶

Spies said to his brother Leo (in his letter dated September 1939) :

" I believe in life and live in my belief ... this belief is so strong and drowns out, swallows up all suffering, all egoistic feeling and all temporal, spatial and corporeal circumstances, so that all radiance flows from the great holiness of life ..."67.

Undoubtedly Spies was influenced by the place he lived. John Darling said that Spies works " gained in spiritual and symbolic depth."⁶⁸ The myths, the legends and daily life, ceremonies and arts were absorbed into his mind. He visualised through his simple-realistic forms and built " a deeply contemplative calm"⁶⁹. In Hans Rhodius' words

⁶⁵ibid p. 35

⁶⁶ibid p. 71

⁶⁷ quoted from Walter Spies and Balinese Art, p. 71

⁶⁸ibid p. 73

⁶⁹ibid p. 35

IV. "...[This] is his finest hymn of praise to Bali; to the immortal glory of its countryside, to its happy belief in reincarnation in the Beyond."⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Weston article are looking for their own design solutions and attempt to find them in traditional motifs even at the expense of inspiration.

⁷¹ Weston, *Spandau*, 1998, p. 75.

Preston and Spink are the greatest of modern designers who inspired by nature's art of making by making their own words language to express their thought. Preston, Spink and Weston are respectively. They used their words to make a meaning and to search out a "new language" of their own design solutions. Spink said, "I am a designer looking for things, searching for balance and harmony. Designing is what I do."⁷² Preston and Spink were also inspired by nature. Weston and Spink art forms to create their "modern language."⁷³

Preston had a great interest with the natural world and tried to establish a natural art work by using the subjects of art of nature. She therefore chose design of forms as "inspiration" according to her needs.⁷⁴ This means she chose exclusively what she wanted and used life in a creative way to express herself. As her starting point, she deliberately ignored the existing meaning of the designs because she did not want to be influenced by it. She also Aboriginal design form as a "form" and a new language for her work.

Spandau Design (Figure 4.20) is a good example of Weston's design in her work. The work appears to be inspired by nature.⁷⁵ where the language is still used as a form of nature.

⁷¹ Weston, *Spandau*, "Working in the Laboratory of the Mind," *Spandau*, 1998, p. 75.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 74.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 75.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 75.

⁷⁵ *ibid* p. 45.

IV. MARGARET PRESTON AND WALTER SPIES

" Western artists are looking for their own disrupted roots and attempt to find them in traditional non-western art as a source for inspiration "

Helena Spanjaard⁷¹

Preston and Spies are the examples of western artists who were inspired by non-western art searching for finding their own visual language to express their thought through Aboriginal and Balinese art respectively. They used their subject matter as a starting point to search out a " new stronghold "⁷² from non-western traditions. Spanjaard says " [they concentrated] on the natural elements, searching for balance and harmony, charming the chaos by rituals ... "⁷³. Preston and Spies were able to expand perception using Western and Eastern art forms to pursue their " creative horizons."⁷⁴

Preston had a great concern with the national identity and tried to establish a national art form by using the indigenous art of Australia. She therefore chose Aboriginal art forms as " an inspiration according to her needs."⁷⁵ This means she chose selectively what she wanted and used this in a suitable way to express herself. As her starting point, she deliberately ignored the symbolic meaning of the designs because she did not want to be bothered with this. She saw Aboriginal design from an analytical point of view and applied it in her work.

Shoalhaven Gorge. (figure 4)(NSW 1953 - colour stencil, 55.4 x 46.8 cm) is an example of Preston's analytical approach to Aboriginal design in her work. This work expresses " The spirit of the country "⁷⁶ where the landscape is considered as typical of Australia. It is

⁷¹Helena Spanjaard, ' Bandung, the Laboratory of the West ?' Modern Indonesian Art. 1990. p.75

⁷²ibid p. 74

⁷³ibid p. 75

⁷⁴ibid p. 75

⁷⁵ibid p. 70

⁷⁶Butel., p. 53

visualised through the flatness of the designs by using " red, brown and yellow ochre, charcoal and white "77 colours, and also through the balanced and un-repetitive geometrical lines. She visualises the landscape ... without regard for traditional Aboriginal meanings associated with these.

With her panoramic landscape theme, Preston achieved her own visual language through Aboriginal design and her national spiritual concern. Preston did travel to Aboriginal sites twice, in 1927 and 1947 but saw them through " [her] European eye "78. In Roger Butler's book, *The Prints of Margaret Preston*, it is said : 'Preston's understanding of Aboriginal culture had changed her ideas' through her writing 'Aboriginal Art' 1941, however, Preston did not provide any visual influences for Aboriginal people. It can be said that Preston's relationship to Aboriginal art was a one way relationship where she established ' her style ' through Aboriginal art forms whilst Aboriginal visual art gained nothing from her.

Conversely Spies did seek and build solid friendships with local, Balinese people. Spies and the Balinese encouraged and influenced each other in developing a different visual art.

Die Landschaft und ihre Kinder (figure 5)(1939, oil on board, 62 x 91 cm) is one of Spies' great achievement in his short life span. In this picture, multi-horizons are applied where on the upper right Gunung Agung - the holly mountain - appears repetitively. As the focus, a farmer with his faithful cow walks to the rice-field. The magic-realistic atmosphere is built by a thick-dense vegetation which is derived from traditional Balinese painting. The tranquility of the Balinese atmosphere emerges well in this painting. It represents how beautiful Balinese life is through Spies' eye. Spies catches the environment where he lived well, absorbing the Balinese orientation and belief in nature. As he said " I ... always just enjoy the present, whatever it is. The present always has something nice to offer ... "79. Spies visualised in his art the details of his surroundings, where nature was dominant in his life.

⁷⁷ibid p. 54

⁷⁸ibid p. 55

⁷⁹Rhodius, p. 43

V. CONCLUSION.

How do I learn from the work of Preston and Spies and apply their discoveries to my own visual work ? How have they influenced my work?

In Preston's case, I share her opinion of ignoring the symbolic meaning as a starting point. I have tried to see my own traditional background from a different point of view; where the calligraphy cannot be read but a still carries the impression of the original character. I have used calligraphy and dancing figures solely as visual forms without symbolic content. For these reasons, I have gained freedom by changing the calligraphy's characteristic form and dancing gestures in my work and removed the shackle of Javanese tradition which ruled my life for a long time. As a result, I am creating my own visual language which is based on my concerns about socio-political issues in a developing country. For example, My Borobudur, (figure 6)(Photoshop program, bubble jet printer, 1050 x 350 mm) is built from Javanese calligraphy forms. The calligraphy characteristic still can be noticed, but it became unreadable. Another example is Dancing in the Borobudur, (figure 7)(Photoshop program, bubble jet printer, 1050 x 350 mm) where dancing figures have been changed from the original to become meaningless postures. In traditional Javanese dance, every single gesture has a symbolic meaning to worship the spirit.

From Spies, I have learnt from his spirit to absorb " folk-tales, myths, ... *wayang kulit*... "80. Spies followed the Balinese orientation in saying " I am just being obedient to some set of rules which seem to me to occur quite naturally ... "81. From this point of view, I am using the *wayang*'s character and colour to visualise my thought, for example Borobudur in the Power, (figure 8)(Photoshop program, bubble jet printer, 1050 x 350 mm) I chose *Umayi* in her evil character to occupy the whole Borobudur form and make the form run down.

By investigating non-western influences in the work of Preston and Spies, I have gained a lot from their experiences in widening my

⁸⁰Rhodus H, p. 73

⁸¹ibid p. 73

perception and opening up my limited horizon " through a foreign point of view "⁸², with the result that I can creatively absorb western influences and develop my own visual language.

- Belton, G.
Shane and the Politics of Aboriginal Art
 Bell, C. *Challenging, London 1988*
 Bell, London, *Shane and the Politics of Aboriginal Art*
 Bell, E. *Maximalist Politics: Art and the Politics of Representation*
 Victoria, 1988 (unpublished)
 Bell, J. *Aboriginal Art: A History of the Art of Australia, 1980-1988*
 Canada, W.
Aboriginal Art, London 1988
 Ficker, J. (ed.)
Modern Indigenous Art: From Conquest to Now
 Bell, R. *Yield and Design* Penguin Books, 1988
 Ficker, S. *The Art of Australia* N.Y. 1987
 Ficker, C. *Art in Indonesia: Continuity and Change* N.Y. 1987
 Gellman, H.
Aboriginal, Race and Ethnicity 1988
The Black Box of Australia 1988
 Ficker, M. R. *The Art of Australia* 1987
 Kohn, W.
Primitivism in Art: A History of Ideas 1981
 MCMA, N.Y., 1984
 Kohn, B. and Smith, T.
Aboriginal Art: A History of the Art of Australia 1988
 Kohn, W. F.
Indian Ethnology in Queensland 1988
 Kohn, P.
Aboriginal Art: A History of the Art of Australia
 1988, 1988
 Kohn, W. F.
Aboriginal Art: A History of the Art of Australia
 1988, 1988
 Kohn, W. F.
Aboriginal Art: A History of the Art of Australia
 1988, 1988

⁸²Spanjaard, H. p. 75

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Batheson, G.
Steps to an Ecology of Mind N.Y. 1974
- Bell, C Civilisation. London 1928
- Burn, Lendon, Merewether, Stephen
The Necessity of Australian Art, Sydney. 1988
- Butel, E Margaret Preston. art of constant rearrangement
 Victoria. 1988 (reprinted)
- Burke, J Australian Women Artists : One Hundred Years 1840 - 1940
- Caruana, W
Aboriginal Art. London 1993
- Fischer, J (ed)
Modern Indonesian Art. three Generations. CA. 1990
- Fry, R Vision and Design, Penguin Books. 1961
- Hiller, S The myth of Primitivism. N.Y. 1967
- Holt, C Art in Indonesia. continuities and change. N.Y.. 1967
- McQueen, H
Aborigines. Race and Racism. Victoria. 1974
The Black Swan of Trespass. Sydney 1979
Preston. M. R. : The art of Margaret Preston. Melbourne
 1987.
- Rubin, W
Primitivism in twentieth century (vol. 1 & 2)
 MOMA. N.Y.. 1984
- Smith B and Smith, T
Australian Painting. 1788 - 1990. Melbourne. 1991
- Sutterheim, W. F.
Indian Influences in Old-Balinese Art. London. 1935
- Sutton, P
Dreamings. the art of Aboriginal Australia
 Victoria, 1988
- Rhodium, H and Darling, J
Walter Spies and Balinese Art. Terra. 1980
- Vickers, A. H
Bali. a paradise created. Victoria. 1980

Articles

- 'Australian Art and English critics, *Art in Australia* [Sydney] 3rd ser., no. 7 (March) 1924: 50-2
- Cholid, W. Wisata, P, Arcana, P. F.
'Ketika Lukisan adalah kisah para dewa'. *Tempo*. Januari 1994
- Long, G 'Some recent paintings by Margaret Preston'.
Art in Australia [Sydney], 3rd ser., no. 59 (May 1935): 18-23
- Konody, P. G
'The Australian exhibition in London, *Art in Australia* [Sydney], 3rd ser., no. 7 (March 1924): 45-9
- Preston, M
'The Indigenous Art of Australia', *Art in Australia*. [Sydney], 3rd ser., no. 11 (March 1925): 32-45
'Painting in Arnhem Land, *Art in Australia* [Sydney], 3rd ser., no. 81 (November 1927): 58-9, 61-3
'From Eggs to Electrolux', *Art in Australia* [Sydney], 3rd ser., no. 22 (Margaret Preston Number) (December 1927): 25-47
'Wood-blocking as a craft', *Art in Australia* [Sydney], 3rd ser., no. 34 (October-November 1930): 27-35
'American Art under the new ideal : murals'
Art in Australia [Sydney], 3rd ser., no. 69 (November 1937): 50-8
'Crafts that Aid', *Art in Australia* [Sydney], 3rd ser., no. 77 (November 1939): 48-52
'New Development in Australian Art', *National Journal*, [Sydney] 2, n0. 6 (May 1941): 12-3
- Radcliffe-Brown, A
'Margaret Preston and Transition', *Art in Australia* [Sydney] 3rd ser., n0. 22 (Margaret Preston Number)(December 1927): 5-7
- Stephen, A
'Margaret Preston' second coming', *Art network* no. 2 1981: 14-15