

Images, Institutions and Evolving Nation:
Transformations in Australian art, museums,
and the cultural imaginary in the 20th century

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University.

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Certification
(signed following this statement):

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The signature above is to certify that all work presented in the following thesis is original work by the author (of the legal name stated on the first page) and that the thesis is within the maximum word-length of 100,000 words.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis has undergone a long journey and numerous changes of concepts and structure over many years. The final form of the thesis is comprehensively different from the structure and key topics originally conceived (focused exclusively on art museums – and the role of Indigenous art within their developmental histories of the 20th century). As the topics of inquiry matured and shifted, the framework expanded to a more enveloping and interconnecting exploration of Australian art museums, institutional relations, and their informing art historical disciplines and histories.

In contrast to early expectations that the thesis would focus on later-20th century developments, the author was continually drawn towards a longer time-frame for the investigation, to set museum developments within a larger perspective of their historical development in Australia (and therefore a needed attention to address and provide analytical accounts of their older historical beginnings and earlier history). The reasons for such change in temporal focus always arose when the author became aware of the scarcity of studies that perceive and explore Australian museums within a larger historical framework (and social as well as cultural perspective); and a scarcity of published historical literature that links the performative markers of Australian art museums – mainly assessed through exhibitions and published catalogues, and historical material within such catalogues – with a broader institutional history. A wider view, however, also raised additional theoretical and conceptual issues about museums' development to analyse, in comparison with a tight focus scoped in first outlines for the project.

Daniel Thomas, a senior colleague of many years (former Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia), and one of our most distinguished curators nationally, deserves special mention for his insights. He generously provided interviews in an earlier period when the researcher imagined many such interviews with colleagues. The later shift in focus of the thesis turned the project away from a reliance on such interviews, as the thesis shifted its principal attentions to new areas, requiring more historical research. However, literature published by museum curators and colleagues has been drawn on extensively – and is detailed in chapter footnotes and the final Bibliography.

Two colleagues deserve mention for their generous access of material or information on specific queries: former Curator of Indigenous Art in the National Gallery of Victoria, Judith Ryan, was most helpful (as she has been to other researchers) in sharing her knowledge of some archival documents concerning Aboriginal works acquired by Daryl Lindsay during his NGV directorship. Robyn Sloggett is thanked for making records of Leonhard Adam's work at Melbourne University (connected with Aboriginal artworks collected in the 1940s and 1950s) available for consultation. Steven Miller, in charge of the Library and archives of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, is thanked for his various answers to email queries about Tony Tuckson's service to the Gallery and championship of Aboriginal art acquisitions. Irena Zdanowicz, who served with the National Gallery of Victoria for 33 years, eventually herself in charge of the remarkable Prints and Drawings collection, succeeding Dr Ursula Hoff, is acknowledged for occasional personal discussions about NGV institutional details over many years and historical insights on specific topics.

The late Andrew Crocker, one of the earliest Art Advisers working for Papunya Tula in Alice Springs, is acknowledged for much that he shared when the present author had prepared the first *Australian Perspecta* exhibition (AGNSW, Sydney, 1981), and in subsequent years, until Andrew was tragically killed in 1988 by a bomb-explosion in South Africa in the apartheid era. The late Geoffrey Bardon is also acknowledged for two generous conversations in 1981 (when he was unwell), which invaluable helped the author in including the 3 impressive Papunya works in the first *Perspecta* exhibition in 1981 (covered in thesis Chapter 6), and for providing primary information on the formation of Papunya Tula as a painting movement (which he had directly facilitated).

The late John Stringer (distinguished Australian curator of the legendary *The Field* exhibition for the NGV Melbourne opening in 1968, later for many years Assistant Director of the International Program at MoMA, New York, and in his later years at the AGWA, Perth) is acknowledged for research-experiences shared in 1977-78 in Bogotá, Colombia, when we both worked on producing large Exhibition Broadsheets on the *contemporary cultures of indigenous cultural groups in Colombia* (descendants of the 16th-century goldworkers), which were utilised in the public programs accompanying the major exhibition *El Dorado: Colombian Gold*, shown at three state galleries in Australia in 1978. This research work conducted together, and with curator/archaeologists at the Museo del Oro, Bogotá, led to crucial contextualising of Australian Indigenous issues in a larger comparison with the entire colonisation of Latin America and its effects on indigenous peoples in North America.

The present researcher later gained further invaluable insights on indigenous experiences of colonial history with Maori artists and museum colleagues in Aotearoa New Zealand in the years leading up to the 1992 exhibition, *Headlands: Thinking Through New Zealand Art*, the first 'international' exhibition presented by the MCA Sydney after its opening in November 1991 (of which the author was a co-curator with Robert Leonard, along with other colleagues Cheryll Sotheran, John McCormack and Maori artist and cultural leader Cliff Whiting). Cheryll Sotheran and Cliff Whiting later took key insights formed during the *Headlands* project into the close bicultural frameworks they framed in the subsequent development of Te Papa Tongarewa/The Museum of New Zealand (opened in 1998). René Boutin, a remarkable Kanak artist in Noumea, New Caledonia, is also acknowledged for his shared insights over many years into the indigenous cultures of his country and the Pacific region, including when the author visited Noumea in 1998 and 2002.

Dr Des Griffin, former Director of the Australian Museum, Sydney, is acknowledged for his having drawn the present author into close work concerning Indigenous collections with Australian natural history museum colleagues over many years (first in 1992-93). Through collaborative work with Des Griffin, many contacts with anthropologists and staff in the state science and natural history museums were nurtured (as well as with Aboriginal leaders in directing museums' change practices). The author is grateful for having been invited to join a bi-cultural process of natural history museum colleagues and Indigenous leaders in formulating the first national policy for Australian museums in respect of Indigenous peoples (*Previous Possessions: New Obligations*, 1993). This policy was world- leading in the 1990s in requiring the provenancing and return of *all* ancestral remains to rightful descendants of Indigenous peoples who had endured such practices, preparing for similarly careful provenancing and possible return of sacred objects subsequently). Such work formed another

kind of research background on Australian museums' history and the many values taken up in the present thesis, and formed important learning contexts alongside close-focused experiences with art, artists and art museums.

Supervisors perform invaluable roles over the course of a thesis journey as an investigative project. Professor Iain McCalman – a supervisor in the earliest days before he left the Australian University for other roles and posts elsewhere – is thanked for a first interview in which he provided particular insights about the role of personal agency in research that resonated through the years afterwards. Professor Paul Pickering is thanked for concept-changing insights about methods that helped historical structuring at critical points. While he was surprised at being approached originally, since visual art was not his field of research, it was precisely his deeply invested intellectual locations elsewhere – in British history and in Australian history – that enabled him to provide invaluable critiques as a supervisor that proved deeply helpful to the author (and assisted in refining exposition that occurs in a number of chapters). David Williams, former Professor and Head of the School of Art within ANU, is thanked for his instigating notion that the author might draw on some years of experience in museums, and turn to formulating a doctoral proposal to ANU. The final thesis answers his generous conjecture about such personal development, through his long experience in the visual arts and nurturing of so many people's creative lives.

The Oral Presentation of the thesis to a small group of senior colleagues in 2019 proved particularly valuable. Special thanks are due to historian Bill Gammage (for many years adjunct professor to the Humanities Research Centre at ANU, and always an insightful senior colleague to so many researchers); and to Professor Howard Morphy (whose distinctions in the field of Anthropology in Australia and internationally, including through years of service to ANU are too numerous to summarise). It was much appreciated that Professor Morphy offered crucially insightful criticisms, particularly as some of our professional work and theoretical positions over many years have often stood for somewhat different positions in relation to Indigenous art; yet ultimately, we share more in common than in division. Offering opinions about different vantage-points, and helping a colleague to consider better resolution of arguments with which one might not agree, is one of the most generous features of good scholarship and mentorship in a fine university (for which this author is deeply grateful to ANU). Many of Howard Morphy's published texts have also been important sources for reflection, acknowledged in the thesis development (especially in Chapters 2 and 6).

Special acknowledgments by the author are due to some senior Aboriginal people from whom crucially informing insights were gained across a wide range of subjects over a long period. Thanks are due to the late Thainakuith artist and elder, Thancoupie Gloria Fletcher AO (1937–2011), who grew up in Weipa, North Queensland, and with whom the author had the privilege to travel to the São Paulo Bienal in 1983 (when acting as curator for an Aboriginal art presentation drawn from Arnhem Land and the Central Deserts, while Thancoupie was Commissioner and spokesperson to represent Aboriginal art to visitors and colleagues attending the São Paulo Bienal in Brazil). Conversations with Thancoupie afterwards continued to impart insights about her particular cultural experiences in Queensland – for which she is acknowledged with profound gratitude.

In another part of Australia's majestic Aboriginal Country – the West Kimberley – the author gained invaluable experiences of Ngarinyin culture in company with the late elder David Mowaljarlai (1925-1997) and his kinsman Paddy Neowarra. To be conducted with just one other visitor to one of Mowaljarlai's most sacred Wandjina rock art sites in the Kimberley (in 1996) was a privileged experience that provided reflective insights for years afterwards. Similar acknowledgment is due to Mowaljarlai's kinsman, Paddy Neowarra, who has assumed more senior leadership responsibilities today. Being present when these Ngarinyin elders presented a beautiful exhibition of their culture at the venerable Museum National d'Histoire Naturel, in Paris in 1996, when a remarkable film on Ngarinyin culture by anthropologist Jeff Doring was launched – and being present in an associated UNESCO Forum that Mowaljarlai and Neowarra led in Paris – was another experience through which further invaluable insights into Kimberley culture historically were grounded.

A special and expansive acknowledgement is due to Bandjalung curator Djon Mundine, for a long course of mutual learning through many projects over some decades. All the experiences of Arnhem Land art that the author has gained over many years (especially from the people and Country around Ramingining) owe so much to Djon Mundine, and also to elders (especially David Malangi Daymirringu and his kinsman Paddy Dhatangu) who in 1983 generously shared their cultural experience during an unforgettable visit to Yathalamarra lagoon; and a subsequent boat journey, as a guest of Malangi Daymirringu and his wife and daughters, up the Goyder River, on either side of which Malangi's cultural and matrilineal Country responsibilities extended. The privilege of insights provided in the 1970s from the late Yirrkala elder Wandjuk Djuakan Marika (1927–1987) are also acknowledged.

Such contacts with leading figures from Arnhem Land and Yolngu Matha people were later heightened by contrasts experienced in Western Desert Country and communities in the centre of Australia. Visiting Papunya in 1983, with Anthony Wallis, Director of the Aboriginal Artists Agency, and Melbourne gallery owner Gabrielle Pizzi, opened up contact with then-manager of Alice Springs-based Papunya Tula, Daphne Wallace, who joined and guided us on a visit further west to Kintore/Walungurru, where respectful (therefore distanced) contact was afforded with Uta Uta Tjangala, Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi and other elders. Turkey Tolson Tjupurrula is also acknowledged for a memorable encounter and viewing of his work back at Papunya Tula headquarters in Alice Springs, facilitated by Daphne Wallace.

Tributes are due to Diane Moon for her work as Art Adviser in Maningrida over many years, and for the outstanding collection of some 600 Yolngu women's weavings and related objects in a collection she formed (all paid for through prior grants), which was later donated to the MCA Sydney in a time when the author was Chief Curator and Assistant Director, and able to receive this collection for the museum (while also formulating a new kind of Cultural Agreement in such receipt).

The work and projects intimated above all formed 'research contexts' for much material delivered in Chapter 6 of this thesis; and they in many ways influenced background experiences about cultural values that have shaped the entire thesis project. Tribute is also paid to Badtjala artist and curator, Fiona Foley, whose contribution as an artist to the thesis

background also appears in Chapter 6. Acknowledgement is also due to Peter Yanada McKenzie, Hetti Perkins and Brenda L. Croft, for insights shared in the 1990s and since.

A final tribute is reserved for Dr Caroline Turner (for many years a senior scholar and colleague within the Humanities Research centre at ANU), who has acted as principal supervisor through many years. Her steadfast faith in the candidate's often-elusive 'project', during years of changing concepts, reconsideration, and eventually a completely restructured outcome in this final form, are singularly responsible for this thesis's final delivery. No-one could ever ask for more committed support and guidance in a long journey of academic research and formulation. If the final outcome of this thesis investigation has value, it owes much to Dr Turner's reflexive faith in a project and colleague whose work she had observed in past contexts in different museum lives, especially through exhibition projects of the state and National galleries of Australia.

NOTE CONCERNING IMAGES

Images have been assembled in this version of the thesis to enable examiners' comfortable reading of the text. It is intended to remove all images after the examination process has been completed, as they have not been subjected to copyright-permission processes for this non-public viewing. Since many compilations of multiple images have been utilised throughout, it has not proved feasible to produce a separate list of images; all images are identified where they are inserted within the text.

***Images, Institutions, and Evolving Nation:
Transformations in Australian art, museums, and the cultural imaginary in the 20th century***

Abstract

The thesis argues that a series of crucial historical changes have impacted upon and within Australian art museums throughout the chronological scope of their development: through their separate colonial beginnings; through museums' formal interconnection after Federation, though they long remained disconnected in functional operation under parochial trustees; and through their subsequent transformation during the later-20th century that brought about more dynamic interaction for increased exhibition programs, sharper cultural reflection, and reformed collections engaging a broad public nationally.

In a larger historical framework, it is argued that an analysis of both the character of British social and political formations that shaped Australia's origins, and a grasp of wider networks of Empire that linked Australia's colonies to colonial subject-states elsewhere, are crucial to understanding Australia's social history as a nation. Attitudes formed especially in the 19th century, and the cultural self-image of a 'settler society' in control of a social and pastoral geography cleared of Aboriginal occupation or claims to Country, shaped a profoundly deformed *socius* and a disordered historical understanding of shared nation long into the 20th century. These factors moulded the character of Australia's art museums in the colonial era, with long legacies in the next century.

Crucial to the thesis framework, and explored in various narrative changes and gear-shifts of focus throughout successive Chapters' themes, is an informing position about the importance of visual art in historical understanding. It is argued that visual art, and visual records of many different kinds, provide crucial documents and resources shaping the *social imaginary* of a nation.

Numerous visual works are adduced throughout the thesis as *evidence* of cultural ideas and embodied concepts of historical experience. It is argued that the records provided by artworks, their interpretation, and their direct encounter accessed through museums, galleries, pictorial libraries, and especially public *exhibitions*, form important resources for understanding – and indeed *reimagining* – an evolving nation.

At the beginning of the period of the thesis inquiry, Indigenous art was scarcely present in Australia's art museums; by the end of the period, it had become a redefining presence in all, and a primary identifier of these museums' unique stance culturally in comparison with their peer institutions internationally. The thesis aims to explore and explain the processes that brought about such change, pointing to a transformed future for Australian cultural and social expression, and self-understanding of *national community* today.

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Images, Institutions and Evolving Nation: Transformations in Australian art, museums, and cultural development in the 20th century

0. Introduction to the thesis: Issues, methodologies, and chapters

First, an explanation of the title is due.

Images indicates the thesis concern with visual arts and aesthetic constructs shaped by historical experience (cultural images conveying social and historical meanings of people's self-understood history and collective relationships). *Institutions* indicates a focus on art museums and public galleries, but also natural history museums and universities, as important social, cultural and knowledge institutions. *Evolving nation* addresses the conflicted dynamics of a national community (when it excludes an Indigenous¹ population) – as historically emanating from the conquest of a mosaic of interconnected Aboriginal nations in Australia's colonial history. *Evolving nation* also signals the dynamic processes of social change that have been required – and steadily accomplished – in the cultural coordinates impacting within the consciousness, objectives and programs of Australia's public galleries and art museums in the later-20th century.

The topical concerns indicated above, and determinative processes entailed in their examination, are explored in an historical framework. Particular questions and themes are analysed to test accomplishment of a multi-faceted representation of *cultures* (in Australian museum programs, collections, publications and other activities). The informing thesis questions are structured through an examination of diverse social histories as having shaped cultural interaction and representation within an evolving *national community* – with first nations (especially Aboriginal peoples and cultures) recognised as having a primary and continuing role in securing the full scope of history and heritage that a positively shared and continually *reimagined national community* requires.

The thesis interconnects its investigation across different disciplinary domains of knowledge, and their contrasting institutional settings, representational forms and literatures (from natural science to art history), as structured historically in their different university settings. The thesis pursues linked investigations across both natural history museums and art museums/state galleries, which have long existed with 'hard', even mutually exclusive boundaries drawn by their informing disciplinary domains, methodologies, and modes of public engagement and knowledge presentation through collection displays and exhibitions). Meanwhile all these scenes, literatures and contexts have represented (or even radically excluded) Aboriginal art and cultural expression over very long time-scales, which require an interconnected analysis to yield new understandings of how such inclusions or exclusions were the result of interconnected concepts, and ideologically-invested values, which constitutively shaped their outcomes.

The thesis research-results are carefully structured, conscious throughout of the need to surmount the perils of a thinned-out investigation that might not produce significant new knowledge across such broadly-stretched time-frames – unless the thesis itself can show how these dangers are strategically surmounted in the full development of all chapters, their

¹ Throughout the thesis, analysis applies directly to *Aboriginal people*, their art and social forms, and questions of inclusion or exclusion from Australian society historically and in multiple forms. Therefore 'Aboriginal art, society and culture' forms the framing structure throughout. The term 'Indigenous' would in so many instances be inappropriate. However, the thesis inclines in all respects towards a desired inclusiveness of Torres Strait Islander and Pacific peoples in the values-framework employed throughout all chapters; and implicitly pitches towards a broader inclusiveness in respect of *all the further cultural and social diversities* that configure Australian art, culture and society today.

conclusions, and the *interconnected knowledge results* that accrue incrementally throughout the arguments and evidence produced in the thesis as a whole.

Mindful of the challenging scope of the thesis investigation, through the temporal length and topological breadth of its inquiry-frames, the topics focused upon – and the varying literatures, case studies, and scenes of academic and historical performance that are examined – involve a *varyingly knotted fabric of analysis* across two centuries surveyed. In each of the chapters, which set up and pursue very specific topics of analysis, focused upon particular knowledge-sites and literatures, detailed issues are highlighted, and investigations undertaken at close range, sometimes in tightest details (thick knots) of examination of historical records.

For example, in Chapter 5: *A Profession Stirs: Australian art museums 1948–1960s*, the role of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board in specifically regulating content (and exclusion of ‘modern art’) in governmental patronage of exhibitions of Australian art across six decades is investigated. In Chapter 6: *Transforming heritage*, the thesis intensively analyses specific archival evidence of Australian state gallery directors’ objectives in respect of Aboriginal art’s inclusion in exhibitions (and collecting) from 1948 until the 1970s is explored, and significant conclusions – challenging previous understanding of the state galleries presumed ignoring of Aboriginal art – are drawn about directors’ purposive efforts in this regard, based on the progressive evidence that emerges in this chapter.

In the indicative examples above, a detailed examination of *specific issues* is undertaken, with a *close-focus* on evidence tested and specific conclusions drawn – as required by an academic project at a doctoral level of research. However, somewhat less commonly for a doctoral project, the thesis also shifts its focus, and at times quite expansively, across the broad fabric of very different intellectual fields, literatures, and disciplinary concerns brought into the inquiry. Such shifts sometimes raise questions in a much more interconnecting perspective on shared topics across these different knowledge-domains (for example, from topics evident in anthropology linked to such topics in museology and art history’s development in Australia – e.g., how ‘Aboriginal art’ is understood differently in these domains). The inquiry then proceeds to tie such examination again into a more tightly knotted investigation of specific subjects or questions across these domains, but pursued at an appropriate depth of source-testing, literature-scrutiny, and inferential knowledge-gain, as can be derived through such cross-disciplinary examination.

Chapter 1: ‘A journey of Australian cultural analysis through a disordered *socius*’

Chapter 1 begins in establishing orientations (**1.1: Bearings**, p. 1 ff.) for the diverse types of inquiry, topics interconnected, and disciplinary literatures engaged, which will be explored in close-focus investigation in Chapters 2 to 7.

Introduced through the metaphor of a ‘*Journey*’ (unlike all chapters that follow), Chapter 1 has a somewhat *performative* character and even, in discrete measure, employs ‘literary’ devices (of delayed disclosure, deferred explanation, and conjuring of some figures (key ‘actors’ within the history explored) as ancestrally-interconnected personalities, across time and place, extending interrelationships across a whole century. For example, the Arrernte people studied by Lutheran missionary Carl Strehlow and natural scientist Walter Baldwin Spencer at the beginning of the 20th century (as examined later in Ch. 2) are the direct forebears of Albert Namatjira, who emerges in Australian consciousness in the 1930s (and in the thesis investigations of Chapters 2 and 6), while also foreshadowing the later appearance of the related Papunya painting art movement that emerged in the 1980s (through changing

conditions signalled towards the end of Ch.6). However, Chapter 1 highlights the methodological need, in theoretical work today, to bring a taut critical consciousness (and different literatures) to understanding cultural concepts as they both change over time and can be shown to disclose wider processes of societal change (**1.2: Historicising culture and creativity – elements shaping the social imaginary**, p. 5 ff.)

This section also establishes a contemporary connection between critical analysis in the field of *contemporary art's* representation of Aboriginal values, and progressively shifting concepts in advancing cultural analysis of Aboriginal communities today by a leading Australian *anthropologist* (Diane Austin-Broos, recently Professor of anthropology at the University of Sydney). Austin-Broos has focused on *women's culture*, as highlighted in Ch. 1's discussion (1:2, p.6), which provides strong contrasts to the extended archive of anthropological literature focused on male culture. Analysis of her work introduces the greatly changing social conditions of Arrernte communities today as they fight for economic improvements, land claims advancement, and related conditions of social change.

The ancient origins of the *museum* are examined early in Ch. 1 (**1.3: The concept of the museum: Greek and Roman models reconsidered**, p. 7 ff.). This section locates the Greek origins and subsequent Roman adaptations of the museum form, to analyse the very important changes that occurred in museum typology between the Greek and Roman periods of ancient history, and the determinative influence (on later museum histories) of Roman imperial accumulations of cultural objects as war-spoils of conquered peoples. This model is highlighted as leading to the British Museum, and its accumulation of cultural objects from conquered or colonised peoples at the summit of the British Empire – which is shown as a key model for the origins of museum collections later in the Australian colonies.

Chapter 1 then examines how the legacy of Australia's foundations in British conquest and Aboriginal dispossession (**1.4: A 'Settler society' configured by Empire**, p. 13 ff.) was not simply a process that occurred episodically or at the margins of Australian historical development. On the contrary, colonial dispossession shaped all social, cultural, and knowledge institutions from their beginnings, and at their core. Recent 'Empire' historians' analysis (by Angela Woollacott and Lisa Ford), of the structures of colonial affiliations to British power on a global scale in the 19th century, are highlighted to clarify how such links were established from the US and Canada to New Zealand and Australia in the 19th century. The thesis traces how such work crucially illuminates Aboriginal subjects' legal dispossession and strategic marginalisation in the period from the 1820s to the 1860s as a critical period of such exercise of power – rather than (as Woollacott has emphasised, in Australian terms) focusing on the early colonial period after 1788, which has often been taken as the prime marker of greatest dispossession (legally and in land occupancy) for Aboriginal people in colonial histories. The continuing effects of dispossession and repressed memory are identified in persistent forms in this chapter – and shown as enduring within a troubled *social imaginary* of nation that continued throughout the 20th century, with special impact upon museums.

The role of *evolutionary science* in shaping early scientific museum collections is brought into the thesis investigation (**1.5 Australian museums as laboratories of evolutionary science, colonialism and imperialism**, p. 16 ff.), to frame issues that are later examined further in thesis Chapter 2. The thesis 'journey' at this point sets the beginning of *museum collections* and *scientific studies* of Aboriginal material culture in a specific social context (for example, through analysing the interconnected English social backgrounds and Empire-

distributed networks of particular families (and early Australian collectors), as well as their connections to colonial Governors and land-contests in the early colonial histories of Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales, both of which involved deaths of Aboriginal people in forced disposessions of their lands and resources).

In the next section, concepts of 'civilisation' overcoming 'savage' Aboriginal people raised at times of *historical commemoration* are addressed (**1.6: A denial of Aboriginal history within a disordering of national memory**, p. 20 ff.). Examples are analysed in the *pictorial* and *documentary spheres* that were so often brought together on commemorative occasions (producing significant texts illustrated by images). The Victorian centennial jubilee of 1888 forms a test-case example of these processes (**1.7: Commemorative history and falsified memory: The Victorian centennial jubilee (1888)**, p. 22 ff.). This section analyses records (both visual and textual) of historical self-explanation of progress, which extolled 'conquest and domination' over a society 'without history' (**1.8: The order of 'civilisation' and public institutions replacing 'savage' nature**) and (**1.9: Empire's varying calendars of progress** - both p. 26 ff.). The investigation analyses how 'settler society' adopted self-affirming *patronage of artists* of the late-19th century (such as Eugene von Guerard), whose paintings of their homesteads and 'estates' depict a pastoral society that echoes an idyll of pre-industrial England (when Britain itself was by then radically changing through its own rapid industrialisation).

Meanwhile, it is argued, while Aboriginal subjects were present in these pastoral paintings only as folkloric 'accessory figures', there were already independent Aboriginal visualisations of changed realities (and Aboriginal continuities) in a remarkable group of artworks of this era (by Tommy McCrae (Yackaduna or Warra-euea people, c.1835–1901; and by William Barak (1823–1903), the last traditional *ngurungaeta* (clan leader) of the Wurundjeri-willam clan among the Woi wurung people of the lands around Melbourne). These works are shown to be immensely valued in art museum (and library) collections today, as important works of *Aboriginal art* of the 19th century – revealing Aboriginal continuities in cultural connections to Country and community. Introducing these 19th century artists, in the 'Journey' chapter, provides important background to prepare for Chapter 6 (reached much later in the thesis), where the rising interest in Aboriginal art in state galleries and art museums' collections and programs, from the 19th to the 20th century, will be examined in close detail.

In the last stages of Chapter 1's topological *Journey*, Bernard Smith's analysis of the background to 'settler Australian art history' is introduced (**1.10: Imperial vision, Antipodean resistance: Legacies of Bernard Smith**, p. 30 ff.). The important achievements of Smith's exposition of the impact of early maritime voyages and 19th century science on European thought and visual imagery are briefly cited (foreshadowing a more detailed examination of Bernard Smith's overarching role in the history and historiography of Australia art, to come later, in Ch. 7). Bernard Smith's *European Vision and the South Pacific* (published in 1960) is highlighted for its invaluable formulation of the scientific concerns and recording conditions that fostered naturalism in 19th century art – as shaped through new observations gained through maritime scientific exploration and natural history records. The chapter closes by introducing *history painting* in shaping national memory. An examination is provided of the role of visual art and artists in *picturing Australian history* (**1.11 Artists, visualised history, and reimagined nation**, p. 32 ff.) – an analysis that introduces the role of *history painting* as a genre, while investigating its entirely conjectural relationship to the historical records that it might utilise.

The category of *history painting* and its traditions – and how contemporary Aboriginal artists have found notable historical representations of Australian history as subjects ripe for reinterpretation – forms an important concluding topic in the Ch. 1 *Journey*. A brief analysis of *history painting* as a *public genre* within Australian art, of the tools it employs and of the qualitative variation in aesthetic results, establishes shafts of connection that are then shown to be accelerated through time when famous topical ‘scenes’, within a received national history, are subject to reinterpretation in another age (and by artists of a very different historical and cultural experience). This concluding topic of Chapter 1’s journey delivers contemporary cultural critique to the changed panorama of today’s contemporary art, where Australian history and culture is undergoing *indigenous reinterpretation* on such a broad scale, and progressively absorbed within *Australian contemporary art* today.

By the end of the thesis-*Journey* chapter, a sequenced presentation of key topics, and the methodological issues they entail, has been laid out. The *Journey* conceit has also been indicated as shaping the longer warp and weft structures that configure the thesis as an investigative project. The final section (**1.12: Conclusion**, p. 37 ff.) presents not a set of summative conclusions covering every section of the *journey* of the first chapter, which has a kaleidoscopic intention of foreshadowing investigative work to come in the subsequent chapters. However, it does adduce overviews of the assumptions and pitch of the thesis chapters to follow:

The thesis argues that a larger historical compass is needed to reconsider the elements required for an inclusive *socius*: one that could remodel the scope of museums in Australia today, while also embracing their many different histories, characters, core purposes and collections. ... In the interconnecting perspectives on museums and history taken up in the chapters that follow, Australia’s Indigenous peoples are recognised throughout in their historical priority, and in the fullness of their own long history of *inclusive social community* and resourceful management of *ancestral Country*.

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Chapter 2: ‘Aboriginal culture and society framed by natural history and anthropology’

The second thesis chapter turns from art to the field of science. The chapter opens (**2.1: Aboriginal peoples objectified by science and ‘primitivised’ culturally**, p. 41 ff.) by stepping back in time. It is established that the chapter will provide an investigation of the field of *anthropology* (and its origins); then analyse its role of recording and interpreting Aboriginal history and society through scientific investigations that can be traced in the collections of natural history museums.

Ch. 2 examines the emerging human sciences of anthropology and sociology at the beginning of the 20th century, with Australian fieldwork drawn upon by outstanding European scholars (such as Sigmund Freud and Émile Durkheim) in framing new concepts of the early development of human society and the human psyche itself. It is demonstrated how new theoretical structures and scientific concepts (formed in Europe and Britain) then impacted back upon deepening Australian colonial attitudes that ostracised Aboriginal peoples (**2.2 Australian colonialism and the rise of evolutionary science**, p. 45 ff.; and **2.3: Imperial unity, ‘white civilisation’, and primitive Otherness**, p. 46 ff). The work of sociologist and cultural historian Tony Bennett, in his 2004 historical study of museums, *Pasts Beyond Memory*, provides important evidence for insights advanced in these sections, which finally highlight ‘the structural reach of colonialism’s legacy – the torn fabric of *indigenous histories*, and the inescapable inequities framing all narratives of inclusion as subjects within other people’s cultural histories, while exiled from their own’ (p. 47).

The British formation of anthropology as a discipline is introduced, through anthropology's 'founding-father' Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917), located at Oxford University (**2.4: E.B. Tylor, the founding of anthropology ... and a 'hard primitivism'**, p. 47 ff.). The chapter highlights the founding development of British anthropology at Oxford University, and the formative training there of his most significant student, Walter Baldwin Spencer, who would later dominate the field of anthropology in Australia in the late-19th and early-20th centuries.

Tylor's influence on the field-setting frameworks for Baldwin Spencer's later investigations in Australia are then introduced (**2.5: The remarkable scientific career and impact of W.B. Spencer (1860–1929)**, p. 49 ff.). Tylor's 'civilised'/'savage' division of human societies, as laid out in *Primitive Culture*, is shown to have shaped the key value-clusters in Spencer's methodological mind-sets (**2.6: Oxford museological legacies in Spencer's development**, p. 51 ff.). This binary structure is highlighted as framing his eventual interpretations of Aboriginal society's doomed future (**2.7: Spencer's 'hard primitivism' and Aboriginal extinguishment framework**, p. 53 ff.) – despite the field-setting scope and diversity of his outstanding natural history investigations. The inaugural Pitt Rivers Museum displays at Oxford (on which Spencer worked) are analysed for their *typology display* influence on Spencer's later disposition of objects at Melbourne's National Museum of Victoria – in the museum's Spencer Hall of *ethnographic* groupings of Aboriginal objects collected.

Departing from the focus on Spencer (and Victoria) at the end of section 2.7, the chapter shifts its frame to consider Australian museums comparatively: to provide a picture of differences *among* Australia's colonially-developed museums in a national perspective. The analysis undertakes a comparative examination of the development of anthropology and related sciences within the varying institutional settings of colonial natural history museums (**2.8: Museum developments, natural history and anthropology in Australia** p. 55 ff.). The importance of a comparative review of the historical development of Australia's museums to build a more informed picture nationally is highlighted, and a brief survey of the development of these 'national' institutions (often in co-location with long-named 'national' state galleries) is provided in the thesis's survey of Australian museums' different colonial histories before Federation. This forms an important prelude to an ensuing analysis of how Aboriginal society and culture was represented in these institutions (**2.9 Aboriginal collections' disposition in natural history museums**, p. 61 ff.). The outstanding strengths of two state museums are emphasised (**2.10 Anthropology consolidated in Australia: Adelaide and Sydney**, p. 62 ff.)

Chapter 2 then turns to an analysis of the eventual founding of anthropology as a *university discipline* in Australia in the 20th century – under A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, at Sydney University, in 1925. The chapter examines the impact of his students in forming a generation of fieldworkers, in particular under the overarching influence of successor A.P. (Adolphus Peter) Elkin's leadership over a generation – in the latter part of section (2.10). The development of the first national institute for the discipline's consolidation (in Canberra), following strenuous efforts by Elkin, is analysed (**2.11: Founding of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS)**, p. 65 ff.) – and Elkin's conviction that there was an urgency to these studies 'Before it is too late', as a shaping framework for the Institute's agenda (pp. 65 – 66). It is established that Elkin's assumptions extended Spencer's earlier convictions that traditional culture would eventually be extinct, leaving only Aboriginal people who had 'lost their culture' surviving.

Finally, Baldwin Spencer's manifold impacts and wide influence across many scenes of art in Australia are analysed (**2.12: Spencer's role as a patron of art and artists in Australian society**, p. 67 ff.) – in particular highlighting his close friendships with and purchase of works by artists of the so-called 'Heidelberg school' era of Australian nationalist painting, which strengthened images of colonial self-approval of pastoral 'settlement' and takeover of Aboriginal lands in the national imaginary. The **Conclusion** to Chapter 2 (section **2.13**, p. 70 ff.) emphasises the *primitivising* frameworks demonstrated in this chapter through the advance of natural science and anthropology as 'restricting all interpretations of Aboriginal culture throughout the 19th century' (p. 70). The chapter's findings are reviewed as demonstrating how anthropology's expanding literature 'also projected Aboriginal peoples' threatened "extinction" in the face of inter-cultural contact and social change'; and that this viewpoint 'was still the case even when evolutionary science was abandoned after the 1920s' (p. 70).

The chapter draws towards its close (p. 72 ff.) with an analysis of the significance of a much-quoted Spencer anecdote, a note from his fieldwork records at Oenpelli/Gunbalanya in 1912: of his absorbed observing of a Gaagadju artist at Oenpelli, who painted a representation of a white ibis on bark carefully and skilfully, 'like a civilised artist'. The chapter-conclusion situates the enduring importance of this incident within later anthropological literature on Spencer's achievements – especially by Howard Morphy, who has written extensively in recent years on Baldwin Spencer. The chapter then provides re-interpretive commentary on the Gaagadju ibis-painting anecdote, an analysis turned quite differently from Howard Morphy's: an interpretation is suggested from the point of view of an art-oriented interpretation (and particularly based on the experience of the present author in a decades-long investigation of the nature of visual art and art's history). This end-passage points forward to the investigation taken up later in **Ch.6: Transforming heritage: Indigenous art and Australian art museums**.

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Chapter 3: 'Defensive nation: Australian cultural expression, art museums and exhibitions in the interwar period'

Chapter 3 examines social and cultural conditions in the interwar period under the theme of 'defensive nation'. The chapter examines 'the trauma...[and] huge pall of grief' that affected all aspects of culture, and traces the *social imaginary* of defensive isolation, arising from the toll of Australian war-losses in WW1 campaigns fought under distantly-headquartered British command (**3.1: The scars of World War and sacrifice for Empire**, p. 75 ff.).

The analysis introduces the unusually strong *artworks* resulting from the innovative Australian program of commissioning field-embedded 'war artists' (which resulted in George Lambert's outstanding, slightly later 1920 work, *A Sergeant of the Light Horse*). The national resonance of this work is underscored in its having immediately been acquired (in 1921) by the National Gallery of Victoria, where it remains a key work, still displayed regularly today). The Lambert painting is also highlighted to build on the analysis of *history painting* at the end of Chapter 1, because it again reinforces how profoundly social and historical experience of a period can be 'embedded' within an artwork, through its capture of psychological currents conveying a shared *social imaginary* – in this case with a distinctive colouration of recent 'national experience' of shared grief at the loss of so many young men's lives in an imperial war.

The next section (**3.2: Isolationism and support for cultural conformity**, p. 78 ff.), analyses the psychologically in-turning atmosphere in Australia after WW1, and the ‘particularly volatile constellation of contents in terms of the *social imaginary* in Australian public and political life’ (p. 78). The international study by Benedict Anderson of the constituent structures of national memory (1991) is highlighted for its relevance to this chapter, emphasised: ‘through his study of social communities and nationalism employing the construct of *imagined community* as binding a nation in shared experience’ (p. 78). Australian cultural historian John Rickard’s work is also brought into this chapter, to highlight multiple social changes in the 1920s, such as the re-division of the worlds of work of men and women (which had been joined in the war effort); and for Rickard’s study of the suspicions directed towards foreigners and minorities after WW 1, as aspects of Australia’s general withdrawal from the wider world and retreat into an oppressive-defensive social conformity.

The concerns for a white Australia’s social solidarity and corresponding apprehensions around racial admixture are then analysed (**3.3: Fears of racial dilution and miscegenation**), p. 79 ff.). The political policy effects of these fears visited upon Aboriginal communities living on reserves, especially in separating racially profiled ‘half-caste’ people, are highlighted in this section. The corresponding strengthening of a ‘White Australia’ political framework (since legislating this social policy was a first task of Federation after 1901) is emphasised; and the role of the self-styled Australian Natives Association is highlighted as an adjunct to fears of social dilution of a society made up desirably of ‘Australian-Britons’ (p. 80) – with a corresponding deepening of the social ostracism and physical segregation endured by Aboriginal people.

The impact of such attitudes in creating a fortress mentality against any cultural influence from foreign peoples is broadened (**3.4: Xenophobia and hostility to modern art**, p. 80 ff.). The defensive cultural attitudes of the period between the Wars, characterised by John Williams in his 1995 monograph, *The Quarantined Culture*, are brought to this section’s analysis. This is pursued by examining how a defensive nationalism fomented *distrust of modern art*, as reinforced by the returned Edwardian expatriate artists (Tom Roberts, Rupert Bunny and others), can also be linked directly to the restrictive patronage power of the state galleries’ trustees, especially in Sydney (**3.5: Parochial patronage in Sydney: The Art Gallery of New South Wales**, p. 82 ff.; and **3.6: Racism and nationalism in the arts**, p. 83 ff.) The latter section analyses the volatile cartoon-imagery of *The Bulletin* in the Period, highlighting also the magazine’s direct *patronage connections with the AGNSW artist-trustees* of the period.

Ch. 3 then re-weaves the connections between nationalist sentiments and the favoured artworks of a ‘pastoralist imaginary’, reinforcing political fealty to Britain, as typifying Australia’s most favoured genre in painting (**3.7: Settler society, bush nostalgia and the political character of Australian Impressionism**, p. 84 ff.). This is followed by examination of a new interest of the 1930s and 1940s in Australia’s huge interior stretches (**3.8: Rise of interest in the ‘outback’ and Aboriginal people in the Central Australian deserts**, p. 87 ff.), which is fanned in part by the rise of railway lines across the interior (e.g., to Alice Springs in 1929 – as examined further in Ch. 6); and a popular, magazine-fed interest in the ‘outback’, as also the home of Aboriginal peoples whose histories are associated with the huge scale of Australia’s inland deserts. A major exhibition of Australian art sent to Britain for showing in the Royal Academy Galleries, London, in 1923 (**3.9: Continuing deference to British art networks and Imperial values**, p. 88) is briefly analysed to emphasise AGNSW

trustee Lionel Lindsay's self-declared 'provincial' values and defence of traditions in his introduction to the poorly received exhibition. Analysis also highlights Lindsay's extreme self-separation 'from all the revolutionary manias of a rotted world' in Europe – as a prelude to his continuing attacks on modern art throughout the 1930s, culminating in his famous anti-semitic and xenophobic polemic, *Addled Art* (published in 1942), a position shared with J.S MacDonald, who was AGNSW Director before later being appointed to head the NGV in Melbourne (**3.10 Militant traditionalism: Lionel Lindsay and J.S. MacDonald**, p. 89 ff.).

Ch.3 then turns to analyse the remarkable nexus of opposing political leaders' contests of the day, and their diametric polarisation and vocal leadership of the social divisions over modern art's progress in Australia: (**3.11: Political leaders divided over Australian art's future (p. 92 ff)**); analysed more closely in the following two sections: '**R.G. Menzies and the founding of an Australian Academy of Art**' (p. 93 ff), and '**H.V. Evatt, the Contemporary Art Society, and the cause of modern art**', p. 94 ff.). The chapter's analysis comes to a climax (and ending) with section '**3.12: Australia's first 'blockbuster': The 1939 'Herald exhibition' arrives on the eve of War**', (p. 96 ff.). In the tight analysis of The Herald exhibition's impact (as a subject well covered in earlier literature), its significance as 'Australia's first blockbuster' exhibition – with its radical impacts curtailed through its arrival on the eve of WW2 – are important to draw out in the context of the whole thesis. An analysis of the exhibition's circumstances and impacts forms an important coda to this chapter, highlighting its *direct impact internally on subsequent museum histories*, and especially for its ongoing impacts, as later taken up in Ch. 5, ('**A profession stirs: Australian art museums 1948–1960s**').

The end of the third chapter (**3.13: Conclusion**, pp. 103–105) summarises the chapter's analysis of how the 'purposive isolationism' and exclusions pursued by cultural elites in the interwar years (as traced directly in the practices, standards and value-systems of state galleries in Sydney and Melbourne) have 'reveal[ed] many deep-running tensions of the period' – finally shown to be 'one of the most polarised periods of a 'divided national imaginary' agitating Australia's cultural development in the whole of the 20th century' (p. 104). The patronage battles and politico-cultural clashes of the period, and the prominent national figures involved in leading them (R.G Menzies, H.V. Evatt, Lionel Lindsay, J.S. MacDonald and Keith Murdoch as the country's leading newspaper proprietor and a major art patron) are finally emphasised as demonstrating the conditions that highlighted the need for a Chair in art history in Australia – which provides the focus for a detailed case-study in Chapter 4, while also pointing forward to the analysis of the rise of the Australian state galleries through professional co-operation (and throughout, a purposive place for Aboriginal art's inclusion), which will provide the framework for Ch. 5.

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Chapter 4: Intellectual training in art's history and criticism: The Herald Chair of Fine Arts (f. 1946)

Chapter 4 turns to the beginnings of academic art history in Australia. Although considerable literature on the beginnings of art history in Australia has been generated in recent years, this Chapter is important within the present thesis, and seeks to add further material to a growing corpus of historical articles recently published on the Melbourne Chair's foundations and the leading art historians who taught in the Fine Arts Department's founding years.

Some archivally-researched early background material on the 'case for a Chair' in Melbourne is added to previous publications (**4.2: The cause of art history in Melbourne:**

some background in the 1930s, p. 108 ff.), and an analysis is provided of the special character of interconnected art institutions in Melbourne (forming a contrast to conditions in all other states) – as especially highlighted in the third section (**4.3: Stephanie Taylor’s case-arguments for a Chair at Melbourne University**, p. 109ff.), and noting Taylor’s emphasis (as a trained artist) on needs for improved art education and training of professional artists as well a more informed art criticism (**4.4: Melbourne’s unique disposition of art schools and provisions for art education**, p. 111 ff.). The chapter then investigates the background of the founding of the Herald Chair in Fine Arts, but in this thesis analysing more closely *the connections with the National Gallery of Victoria* and the specific context into which *art history* was introduced in Melbourne: precisely to forge professional links and ongoing reinforcement of both the University’s and the Gallery’s subsequent harvesting of investments through *the disciplines of art history* being installed in Australia, in an academic and professional-training setting.

Following Daryl Lindsay’s successful appeal to newspaper baron and art patron Keith Murdoch, to endow a Chair in the Melbourne *Herald’s* name (**4.5: Murdoch endowment and establishment of the Herald Chair of Fine Arts (1946)**, p. 113 ff., and **4.6: The broad brief for the Herald Chair and National Gallery of Victoria connections**, 115 ff.), the international networks opened up by Melbourne University in the Chair search process are analysed (**4.7: International search process for the Herald chair, and US connections**, p. 117, and **4.8: Yale University Art Gallery and Theodore Sizer’s Melbourne connections**, p. 118). This analysis introduces important connections with the United States – specifically with Yale University Art Gallery and its Director, Theodore Sizer, highlighted for his continuing influences in the exhibition and recognition of Aboriginal art (Sizer’s influence on attitudes to Aboriginal art will later be emphasised for their important impacts in Chapter 6: **Transforming heritage: Indigenous art and Australian art museums**). Joseph Burke’s unusual British academic and immediate post-War background and the experiences he brought to Melbourne University are detailed (**4.9: Joseph T. Burke (an alumnus of both the Courtauld Institute and Yale)**, p. 119 ff.; and **4.10: Burke’s arrival: an orientation to the Australian landscape and its painters**, p. 121 ff.).

The chapter then analyses the important personalities Joseph Burke introduced to the new Fine Arts Department in his early years in the Herald Chair (**4.11: Specialist scholars enlisted locally: Ursula Hoff, Dale Trendall, Franz Philipp**, p. 124 ff.); and subsequently incorporating further distinguished European refugees from Nazism in guest-lecturing roles (**4.12: Further remarkable refugees from Nazism: Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack; Leonhard Adam**, p. 126 ff.). Special attention is given to the impact of Franz Philipp (**4.13: Franz Philipp as ‘architect’ of the Melbourne department’s teaching of art history**, p. 129 ff.). Philipp’s incalculable influence in shaping the Fine Arts Department through his own background in the ‘Vienna School’ of art history, and its resourceful disciplinary range, are analysed; and that school’s direct connection with collections in major art museums in Europe, are emphasised. These aspects are drawn out to accentuate how art historians of Philipp’s background and scholarly milieu in Europe developed their analytic skills through studying both *documentary sources* and the *expressive character of works of art experienced first-hand*, as part of their development as art historians. Some of the author’s own personal experience of the teaching methods of Franz Philipp are finally brought into the analyses and interconnecting arguments developed in this section.

The next outstanding scholar, who came to join the Department of Fine Arts a decade after its establishment, Bernard Smith, is considered in the chapter’s final section (**4.14: Bernard Smith’s arrival from ANU, and enlargement of the field of studies**, p. 136 ff.)

The important addition of Bernard Smith's scholarship, when he arrived in Melbourne (in 1956) as the last of the major 'foundational teachers' of the early years of the Herald Chair and Department of Fine Arts, shapes the ending of Chapter 4. Bernard Smith's contribution as the leading historian of *Australian art's* history is highlighted, for his singular importance in the thesis's field of investigation – foreshadowing his place as the subject of a single chapter devoted to his influence (Ch. 7), especially in respect of Aboriginal art's inclusion/exclusion within the conceptual and topographical field of 'Australian art'. The conclusion to this chapter (**4.15: Review of the Herald Chair's impact nationally over two generations**, pp. 137–139) analyses the remarkable *legacy impacts* of the Herald Chair and Fine Arts Department from the late 1940s, with direct evidence in alumni later becoming chair holders across two generations of scholarship in art history and curatorship in Australia, and immeasurably enriching the development of Australian art museums.

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Chapter 5: 'A profession stirs: Australian art museums 1948–1960s'²

This chapter examines the development of Australian art museums from the 1940s to the early 1960s. Building on the study of the 1920s and 1930s (in Chapter 3), Chapter 5 analyses how those pivotal debates about Australia's desired cultural development and modern art's role in the late 1930s (joined oppositionally, and at the front lines, by national political leaders R.G. Menzies and H.V. Evatt), had continuing agency and influence across the worlds of Australian art and cultural affairs long afterwards. In this chapter the value-contests and desired developmental frameworks for Australian art (including political patronage through Commonwealth government support) are shifted into an analysis of Australian *art museum developments* in the 1940s and 1950s – first taking up an overview of their early institutional conditions (**5.1: Australia's state galleries in the earlier 20th century**, p. 141 ff.) The chapter undertakes a brief study of the beleaguered conditions of the state galleries when they first resolved to collaborate at the end of the 1940s, followed by two more monographic, in-depth institutional profiles (**5.2: The National Gallery of Victoria in the 1940s**, p. 142 ff.; and **5.3: The National Art Gallery of New South Wales in the 1940s**, p. 144 ff.).

The chapter then turns to the topic of the *dearth of any systems of academic or practical induction for art museum work* in the early 20th century (**5.4: Training for art museums in the 1940s**, p. 146 ff.), and the limitations this imposed on their character, professional knowledge and performance abilities. Comparisons are made with the development of

² As explained at the beginning of Ch.5: The archival records of Conference of Interstate Directors/CID – later Australian Gallery Directors Conference (AGDC, 1948–1980) – are a significant set of resources for this chapter, as cited in footnotes where they are utilised specifically. These records are archived at the National Gallery of Australia (as mentioned in thesis Ch. 1, and cited in the Bibliography). The present author first researched these archives comprehensively in the late 1970s, when working as the Senior Exhibitions Co-ordinator (Overseas Exhibitions) for the highly-active Australian Gallery Directors Council Ltd. This resulted in a compressed history of the organisation's history, published as: Bernice Murphy, 'Historical Review of the AGDC: Australian Gallery Directors Council – thirty-one years of co-operative activity, 1948–1979', in *Australian Gallery Directors Council: Report and Review, 1979*, Australian Gallery Directors Council, Sydney, 1980, pp. 10–14. The AGDC archival records were consulted again during research for many aspects of the present thesis.

More recently the AGDC archives have formed a crucial resource for the invaluable monograph: Joanna Mendelsohn, Catherine De Lorenzo, Alison Inglis and Catherine Speck, *Australian Exhibitions: Opening our Eyes*, Thames & Hudson, Melbourne, 2018. The present author was an 'industry partner' for the ARC grants-supported academic project over a number of years, which resulted in this important study of the transformative, agency role of *exhibitions* in the state and national art galleries/museums, and their frontline impact on the formation of a sense of history nationally through the experience of Australian visual art in temporary and travelling exhibitions presented over a long period.

systematic post-graduate training for art museum work in the US at the time (establishment of the famous Harvard curatorial training course by Paul J. Sachs being the pivotal guiding model, although not known in Australia until Daryl Lindsay's international travel and comparative scrutiny of American training systems in the 1940s).

Daryl Lindsay's efforts to introduce in-Gallery placements at the NGV as a form of in-service training in the 1940s and early 1950s are documented (p. 147 ff.). The analysis then moves to the state directors' co-operative efforts to raise the performance capacities and shared resources of state galleries through their own collaborative efforts (**5.5: The state galleries shaping change after mid-century ('the AGDC years', p. 148 ff.; 5.6: Collaboration to improve expertise, practices and exhibitions (1950s–1960s), p. 148 ff.; and 5.7: Exhibitions, professional practices, training, p. 153 ff.)**

The archival records of the early annual meetings of the Australian Gallery Directors Council/AGDC (beginning at the NGV in Melbourne, in August 1948), provide primary evidence in this chapter of attitudes, objectives, values and desired outcomes for the state galleries' improved performance (**5.8: The Australian state gallery directors organise (AGDC meetings 1948 ff.), p. 154 ff.)**. Evidence culled and interconnected from successive AGDC meeting records is adduced to produce strikingly different perspectives on the directors' aims and concerns than have been presumed in many other studies of the period by art historians – who are often not familiar with the institutional practices or very different professional networks and work-contexts that shaped the state and National galleries' histories in the mid-20th century.

Specific concerns shaping the agendas of the AGDC conferences in the 1950s are documented: to demonstrate the galleries' physical conditions, staffing, resources, and changing practices in the period. The chapter analyses the purposive strength mustered by the directors through collaboration, as bulwarks against the interventionist power of their trustees on the one hand, and the constraints of the Commonwealth through its control of patronage resources for national, travelling exhibitions on the other – and (in particular) the decisive power of direct federal assistance needed (while open to political disfavour) for any venture of organising exhibitions of Australian art for travel abroad.

The mid-century exhibition, *French Painting Today* (1953), organised by AGNSW Director, Hal Missingham provides a case-study focus in this chapter (**5.9: French Painting Today (1953) – a new benchmark in exhibition organisation, p. 157 ff.)**. The French exhibition is contextualised as a direct follow-up to the interest in modern art aroused by the Herald loan exhibition of 1939 (which formed the climax and close of thesis Chapter 3's analysis of 'defensive nationalism' constraining any connections with European modernist art in the period between the Wars). *French Painting Today* is demonstrated to have been a new 'blockbuster'-scale project for its period in the 1950s, and especially in its institutional and public impacts, while – unlike the 1939 Herald exhibition – it was organised through the increasing professional capacities and networks possible through the *state galleries'* higher-striving efforts in a more self-determining professionalism (and not the power of a private patron). Additionally, unlike the *Herald* exhibition, the French exhibition is highlighted as designed for *national tour to all states*, diffusing impacts much wider than the prime south-eastern capitals of Sydney and Melbourne, which in the case of the *Herald* exhibition also included Adelaide).

The role of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (CAAB) has generally hovered in the background of historical interpretation of the development of Australian exhibitions, and especially of touring exhibitions nationally and internationally. The last part of Chapter 5

(5.10 **The role of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board/CAAB (1912–1972)**, p. 161 ff.) devotes a close-raking analysis to records of this powerful federal body's membership and history, because although its previous existence and patronage power are loosely acknowledged in collective state (and National) galleries' recall of earlier-20th century cultural affairs, the CAAB's precise history, functions and ideological influences have been less clearly recognised by many art historical and art critical studies generated outside museums. To highlight how crucial this body's role was in dispensing Commonwealth patronage for art (in its commissioning), and in supporting or constraining state art galleries' initiatives (through federal funding for exhibitions organisation), analysis is provided in the latter sections of Ch. 5 as to how instrumentally the Board used its power to administer values in art in a political perspective, and especially during the long period of R.G. Menzies' prime ministership.

A *case-study analysis* in this chapter is trained on two projects (5.11: **Two exhibitions of Australian art in London: at the Whitechapel Gallery (1961), and Tate Gallery (1963)**, p. 165 ff.), and the outcome of these two exhibitions provides the climax of the chapter. The eventual showing of these exhibitions in London is well-known (at least at a general level) in historical coverage. However, a forensic study of the long history of the 1963 Tate exhibition's gestation, utilising archival records of the AGDC meetings that first alluded to an exhibition of Australian art for the Tate Gallery as early as 1950, has yielded new knowledge and insights in the thesis. It enables a close-focus picture of constraining Commonwealth patronage and facilitation processes that form essential background knowledge in interpreting the history of Australian art exhibitions sent abroad in the 1950s and 1960s. The chapter analyses how the Whitechapel's exhibition's urgent organisation arose (through director Bryan Robertson's perception of the Tate exhibition's stalemate), leading to Robertson's own Australian visit and tour of artists' studios and galleries, and eventual exhibition launch in London's Whitechapel Gallery in 1961. The later Tate Gallery's exhibition (opened in January 1963) is shown to have taken more than a decade to realise, as a result of direct political and governmental interference from Australia (under Prime Minister Menzies) in the last years.

Significantly, for the larger framework of this thesis investigation, it is generally unknown that *Aboriginal art* was originally proposed by AGDC directors as worthy of inclusion in this, and almost all other survey exhibitions to be sent abroad through their involvement in the 1950s and 1960s. As this chapter reveals, Aboriginal art was also judged as worthy to be included in any representation of *contemporary Australian art* that might be included in the Biennale of Venice (recorded in AGDC minutes of the directors' annual meeting in Perth, 1951 (see thesis p. 166).

The aftermath of the Tate Gallery's exhibition of Australian art is summarised towards the end of the chapter, including the final ending of prime ministerial intervention over art values embodied in such exhibitions' selection. These conditions are reprised and reviewed to form the conclusion of the chapter, which has analysed the values and strengthened performance of the state galleries through their collaborative efforts, and AGDC facilitation of collaborative exhibitions representing Australian art in the later-20th century (which then continued until 1980, when the AGDC ceased operations).

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Chapter 6: Transforming heritage: Indigenous art and Australian art museums

This is one of the pivotal chapters in the thesis project. It opens up an investigation of the

extended and variegated processes of inclusion of Aboriginal art in Australian art museums across the early-20th century, until the threshold of the 1980s – and the corresponding shifts in a cultural, social and national imaginary these processes of Aboriginal cultural inclusion have entailed. The analysis pursued in Ch. 6 also backlights connections with issues that are prismatically rotated through all other thesis chapters' investigations.

While this chapter always had a pivotal place in the background to the thesis 'project' of historical analysis, it nevertheless needed to be situated *after* the preceding chapters, in order to shape all the strands that finally come together in this chapter's close-focus examination of Aboriginal art's inclusion in art museums, and its long-shadowing but finally determinative and renovating influences in the later-20th century (where the scope of the thesis closes chronologically). The analysis in Ch. 6 begins with a discussion of an extended time-scale of review needed to clarify historical processes concerning Aboriginal art's projection and framing, as taken up variously in this analytic exploration (**6.1: The *longue durée* of Aboriginal art's recognition in cultural awareness**, p. 176 ff.). The chapter then analyses two (differentiated) concepts of *Primitivism* that have impacted in western art since the early-20th century, and influenced Aboriginal art's appraisal in a specific historical setting in Australia (**6.2: Models of *Primitivism*, 1: Western antiquity to modern art**, p. 178 ff; **and 6.3: Models of *Primitivism*, 2: The Australian context**, p. 182 ff).

An analytic review is first provided of how the term 'primitive', and a more generalised notion of 'primitivism' – referring to art of a particular formal character – arose in Western art in classical antiquity. The notion of 'early-stage primitivism' applied to art that later underwent refinements in technique or style is first related to documentary evidence in ancient Greek art; 'primitive' as a broader term applied to an earlier stage of social and cultural development is also located within Greek textual sources. The later use of 'primitive' – admirably used – in describing early proto-naturalising changes in Italian art leading to the Renaissance, is added to the complex referentiality of 'primitive art' as a description – *before* the question of widening this term to apply to other cultures, outside Europe, emerges as a new construct; and a more complex referentiality arises in the early-16th century, when the newly 'discovered' cultures of the Americas come into historical consciousness.

Completing the analysis (and associated literatures developed) in ***Primitivism*, 1: Western antiquity to modern art**, the 20th century is then introduced, and the dramatic shift of attention to African arts (and the arts of Asia) highlighted. This shift is emphasised as bringing a *new agenda of attentions* to arts and cultures *beyond Europe*: as sources for formal revolutions in western, 'modern' art (as seen in the emergence of Cubism and Surrealism, with their energetic embrace of forms imported from source-cultures outside of western European traditions). ***Primitivism*, 2: The Australian context** is then introduced, and shown to provide such a different context locally for the absorption of non-Western influences: where Australian social conditions were so different from Europe, and there was little readiness to indulge ideas comparable to the sophisticated tastes of European elites seeking new formal inspirations (from African and Polynesian culture, for example). The lack of any 'primitive art market' in Australia is also stressed. However, the presence of Aboriginal culture, as extensively documented in the late-19th and early-20th century scientific expeditions of Spencer and Gillen, is shown to have exerted a *hugely influential impact* in new scientific and social disciplines in Europe. This is highlighted as ensuring a constant attention brought to Australian socio-cultural subjects (spurred by successive Spencer-Gillen publications), and spiking the world's interest in 'primitivised' Australian Aboriginal people and subjects, perceived from afar. This section brings a focus up to A.P. (Adolphus Peter) Elkin's position as professor of anthropology at Sydney University, and his by-then recurrent

characterisation of Aboriginal cultural decoration and ceremonial designs as ‘primitive art’ – a term he repeatedly used.

The impact of **19th century International Exhibitions** (section 6.4, p. 184 ff.) forms the next important analysis in this chapter – for a number of reasons. The *International Expositions* were a new world form of global displays (of cultures, technologies and new products from colonial territories) – and Australia was participating in this new internationalising format of cultural representation in its emergent period. The cultural material brought together for the Australian expositions of the late-19th century brought together material that later formed the contents of early museum collections; and – most important for this thesis – a wider public was manifestly interested in the culture of Aboriginal people. This expanding public was starting to consider Aboriginal cultural objects and imagery as expressive forms entering the domain of ‘art’ – a special case being the 36 drawings by residents and inmates of Palmerston/Darwin’s Fanny Bay Gaol, presented in 1880 in Melbourne under the group title, ‘The Dawn of Art’ (p. 187). The retention of such material for early collections formed by the University of Melbourne’s Prof. Frederick McCoy (founder of the National Museum of Victoria) is shown to precede the arrival of Walter Baldwin Spencer (from Oxford) in 1887.

The next section (**6.5: Growing interest in Aboriginal subjects, late-19th and early-20th century**, p. 188 ff.) shifts into a wider analysis of the rising interest in ‘Aboriginal subjects’ across many fields, including the interest of Australian artists of the period. In addition to Spencer, other scientists – who both studied Aboriginal material culture and were clearly embracing ideas of ‘Aboriginal art’ – are then introduced (most notably Herbert Basedow, based in Adelaide). The impact of more searching studies (such as those of Basedow) are traced as stimulating the rising interest of Australian artists in Aboriginal art. All these influences are gradually added to the picture presented of widening circles of networked interests in Aboriginal culture and society, as the chapter demonstrates.

By this stage in Ch. 6, sufficiently broad intellectual, scientific and socio-cultural interests in Aboriginal culture have been established to prepare for a shift in focus. The thesis turns to analysing a series of demonstrably important *art exhibitions* in the 20th century that included ‘Aboriginal art’: both as a key concept and significant content inclusion, in shaping exhibitions prepared for a broad public. The methodology of a focus on *exhibitions*, as public events in a *social* (and ultimately *national*) *imaginary*, and their realisation as evidence of such interest (traced through impacts of the *state art galleries’* exhibitions and collecting), proves a useful orientation for this chapter’s latter sections. Though audiences were not studied at the time, detailed archival attention (and some photographic documentation) enable an analysis of the galleries’ intentions in preparing or hosting successive exhibitions that included Aboriginal art (some prepared also for *international* tour, as a goal realised or successively renewed, as a long-restated goal in AGDC directors’ collaborative planning). The exhibitions analysis in this chapter are also an important means to test many generalisations that have been made, by numerous authors, about when, and how purposively, Aboriginal art was incorporated in the planning and programs of the nation’s art galleries (harking back to the two quotes that framed such questions at the beginning of this chapter).

Section **6.5(i), Australian Aboriginal Art, 1929**, p. 195 ff., introduces the first exhibition ever to carry such a title. Although long-known, this exhibition has also been long-misrepresented in certain crucial aspects of its origins and presentation. The analysis demonstrates that it was shown *not* in the Museum (as long-assumed) but in the Print Room

of the National Gallery of Victoria. Although co-located within a combined building, the context of presentation, and the artists involved in both its preparation and ultimate interpretation, make clear how prominently artist-circles were engaged in the public impact and attentions the exhibition drew – whereas it was long assumed to have been exclusively a production by natural science collectors associated with the Museum. The impact of this exhibition on local artists and on art education in Melbourne is traced through the lectures given by Frances Derham, and her own and other artists' interest in the sources and subjects of the exhibition. International artists' attentions at this time are highlighted by a 1917 Dada performance (in the Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich): a rendition by Tristan Tzara of Arrernte songs recorded by Carl Strehlow in the early years of the 20th century, and later passed into German. It is highlighted that this was some years before Margaret Preston's well-known 'announcement' of Aboriginal art as a source of creative inspiration (in her *Art in Australia* article of 1925).

The chapter's focus then turns to the 1930s and 1940s, and especially profiles the role of *art exhibitions*, and the state galleries' directions-setting as organisers. The investigation situates the progress of exhibitions of Aboriginal art within national understandings of Australian culture in the early-to-mid-20th century. The next section (**6.6(i): Art of Australia: 1788–1941 (1941) and its curatorial legacy**, p. 201 ff.) introduces a long-known exhibition, but subjects it to a much more searching analysis of its gestation, wartime context, and – in particular – the personalities involved, and the surrounding politics of the period in Melbourne.

Much new attention has recently been brought into focus about this exhibition – however the thesis weaves further links to other chapters and topics (for example its impact on Daryl Lindsay, and the ongoing effects this aroused through his patronage of Aboriginal art's significance when he soon became Director of the National Gallery of Victoria; and the connections this carried forward, of affirmative attention to Aboriginal art a few years later, when the Herald Chair of Fine Arts was established (in 1945), and Professor Joseph Burke grasped the importance of Aboriginal art – and commissioned German ethnologist Leonhard Adam (at the end of 1946) to give a first-year introduction to Fine Arts students on his expert-field, *Primitive Art*). Such impacts are connected to the next exhibition treated as a case-study in this chapter: **6.6(ii): the *Primitive Art Exhibition* (1943)**, and '**Leonhard Adam and Aboriginal art**', (p. 204 ff.) Adam's exceptional scholarly background in Berlin is analysed (before his refugee flight from Germany); and the special knowledge, skills, and international collegial contacts he brought to his tasks and lectures in Australia are highlighted. This includes analysis of Adam's progressive attitudes to Aboriginal art as a series of 'living arts' – highlighted in his 1944 essay (discussed in: **6.6(iii): Leonhard Adam, 'Has Australian Aboriginal Art a Future?'**, p. 207 ff.).

The next section (**6.7: Australian Gallery Directors Council/AGDC: support for Aboriginal art, 1948–60**, p. 209 ff.) turns to the sphere of the state galleries. The thesis here begins to utilise a broad range of archival resources, from within the galleries' institutional histories, to analyse significant evidence of objectives, program developments and themes that emerged in the period when they first joined in cooperative planning and collaboration nationally, following a first meeting at the NGV Melbourne, in 1948. Challenging many distortions in some decades of commentary about Aboriginal art's acceptance in art museums, the gallery records demonstrate clearly that there has to date been a weak understanding of the institutional cultures and timescales of museum practices. A concern for presenting Aboriginal art as part of any national overview of Australian art is strongly

evident in internal dialogues, exhibition planning and related activities that often extended over years in achieving their outcomes.

The decision (in 1950) to focus on Aboriginal art for a UNESCO sponsored publication is highlighted as an important demonstration of the AGDC directors' priorities, and the various personalities and resources dedicated to realisation of an outstanding publication are detailed **(6.7(ii): UNESCO publication on Australian art (1954)**, p. 212 ff.). This achievement is followed by evidence of the directors' continuing advocacy over some years for Australian pavilion to be built within the Biennale of Venice site in the city Gardens **(6.7(iii): Advocacy of Biennale of Venice pavilion for Australia (1951)**, p. 213 ff.) – and for Aboriginal art to be part of possible selections of Australian art to be shown in Venice – as *Australian contemporary art*. These objectives are revealed to have been part of AGDC directors' planning some decades before either of these outcomes was achieved.

The crucial agency of Daryl Lindsay, NGV Director, in consistently pursuing support for Aboriginal art in any national representation of Australian art, is traced through several projects highlighted in separate sections: **(6.7(iv), the Commonwealth Jubilee exhibition (1951)**, p. 214 ff.), and **(6.7(vii): Olympic Games Arts Festival exhibitions, Melbourne (Nov. 1956)**, p. 221 ff.) In between these two sections, Lindsay's instrumental negotiation with the Commonwealth government for distribution of the Mountford-collected Arnhem Land barks assembled during the AASEAL Expedition of 1948 is explored, and the outcomes shown to be decisively the result of Lindsay's federally-respected position and successful negotiation **(6.7(v): The 1948 'Mountford barks' distributed to galleries (1956)**, p. 215 ff.) 207 ff.).

Meanwhile new personalities arriving in Melbourne in 1956 are shown to bring new interests and shifts of values concerning Aboriginal art, which tilt the weighting of cultural emphases locally in new directions (analysed in **6.7(vi) Impact of Eric Westbrook and Bernard Smith arriving in Melbourne (Jan. 1956)**, p. 219 ff.). This section investigates the changes in values-setting that these two personalities brought to their leading positions in opinion-forming institutions (the National Gallery of Victoria, and the Department of Fine Arts within the University of Melbourne). The finally diminished influence of Leonhard Adam's remarkable collecting, teaching, writing, and advocacy for Aboriginal art's ongoing development (as part of his long-standing expertise in ethnological approaches and advocacy of Primitive Art) is shown to be a difficult outcome of his changed position within in the University at this time (pp. 220–221).

The survey of key exhibitions that included Aboriginal art reaches an intense focus with the major AGDC exhibition prepared for an all-states tour, led in the last years of its preparation by AGNSW Assistant Director, Tony Tuckson **(6.7(viii): Australian Aboriginal Art for national tour (1960)**, p. 224 ff.) The importance of this exhibition, its manner of preparation, objectives, quality of loans secured through research by Tuckson (including consultation with anthropologists as to culture-source origins) are shown to form crucial strands of the project's development over some years. The exhibition (opened on the eve of an AGDC Conference in Sydney in 1960) forms a climax of the values-shift towards Aboriginal art's national importance that the state gallery directors espoused over two decades, following their awareness of the 1941 Carnegie exhibition sent to the United States. The Tony Tuckson-Ronald Berndt rupture subsequently, during preparation of a monograph arising through the exhibition's importance and national tour, forms a significant final episode, analysed in the following section: **(6.7(ix): Australian Aboriginal Art publication (1964) and the Tuckson-Berndt fracture**, p. 226 ff.)

The following section widens its scope, to investigate disciplinary tensions arising between personalities shaped by the values they brought from very different professional backgrounds (section **6.8: Disciplinary divergences: <anthropology>—<art museums>—<art history>**, p. 228 ff.). The analysis in this section retrieves a longer time-scale, in a broader disciplinary framework, returning to the larger art historical perspectives explored at the beginning of this chapter. The section is directed to historicising the longstanding tensions between art museums and natural history museums (which still tended to be the domain of anthropological practice concerning material culture of varied peoples). To temporise the dynamics of academic dislocation occurring behind the Tuckson-Berndt fracture, a history is provided of the joined origins of both art and science collections historically (while their descendant disciplines are traced as later having divided material culture into multiple investigative units, disciplinary specialisms and directions, while human cultures themselves seek to remain ‘whole’). A penultimate section analyses the study of art, artworks, and their disciplinary histories as anchored in the collections and programs of art museums (**6.8(i): The art museum’s vantage-point**, p. 231 ff.), which leads to a final section.

7. Conclusion

From a background of International Expositions and their presentation of Aboriginal culture in 19th century, the exhibition projects analysed in this chapter, together with their documented contexts of planning, presentation, and the audiences they sought to engage, provide concerted evidence of the galleries’ long-standing commitment to promoting understanding of Aboriginal art as part of any broad presentation of Australian cultural history. Over successive decades, since the supportive involvement of the National Gallery of Victoria in the 1929 *Australian Aboriginal Art* exhibition, there was a series of important exhibitions profiling Aboriginal art as part of ‘Australian art’ in a national perspective – which culminated in the AGNSW, Tuckson-organised monographic exhibition of 1960 (again titled *Australian Aboriginal Art*, which toured nationally in 1960–61, by which time the state gallery in Sydney had committedly collecting Aboriginal art from Arnhem Land, forming a collection for ongoing ‘permanent’ display.

The concluding section does not further attempt the large task of summing up all the analytical turnings and topical rotations brought into focus in what precedes as a long investigative journey, in which the changes occurring in each stage of the analysis have been highlighted throughout. Instead, the last section takes a different turn, prompted by an analytical and cultural requirement to ‘see Aboriginal culture whole’. In view of the chapter’s investigation of museum and gallery activities in respect of Aboriginal art across a large portion of the 20th century, a comparative framing through some current work in the field of *Australian art history* enabled this chapter to take a broader view: to make some cross-disciplinary assessments.

One topical concern within art history in recent years has been a turning to a field-investigation of *Aboriginal rock art*. This is an important new development that positively aims to bring the methodologies of art history and archaeology into an interdisciplinary, collaborative-research framework of inquiry. However, identifying an apparent dislocation in knowledge fields currently, on questions of longstanding attention to rock art, a concern is framed at the end of the chapter. It is clear that, between the distinct spheres of *art museums* and *art history* in Australia, there have been very different levels of heritage-knowledge conserved about the direct relationship of portable forms of Aboriginal art

(especially bark paintings) with the ancient heritages of rock art from which they have descended. The study of rock art has generally been understood in recent decades to be exclusively pursued within the specialist domain of archaeology. It is a welcome development that a recent move within Australian art history has taken up inter-disciplinary work concerning rock art. What has been regrettably overlooked in setting this new work within an historical perspective, is that the long-documented attention of the *state galleries* to the living heritage of rock art sites has been forgotten.

A case is made for broader capture of disciplinary work, achievements and national heritage resources concerning Aboriginal cultural inclusion, as long represented within the work of art museums, which merits reconnection with academic art history of Australian art, as evolving in Australian universities.

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Chapter 7: Bernard Smith, art history, the art museum, and Aboriginal art

The last chapter of the thesis turns to an analysis of Australian art history, and in particular the role of Bernard Smith as the leading historian shaping this history. Some of the impacts of his conceptual exclusion of Aboriginal art from Australian art's history, criticism and historiography (until he reconsidered this position very late in his career) inevitably provide framing and interconnecting reference points in this chapter.

The chapter begins with a section (7.1: **The framing of Australian art's history**, p. 236 ff.) which sets up this framework broadly. The investigation examines the wide-ranging impacts both of Bernard Smith's publications and framing of a national tradition, and his influence (as a critic) in promoting its significant patterns of development. In particular, this analysis concentrates on Smith's exclusion of Aboriginal art from any place within his framework of national cultural history or the historiography of Australian art. The chapter traces how this arose both through Bernard Smith's theoretical concepts of art and art history, and his particular determination of what constituted a *national tradition* in Australian art. The analysis finally charts Smith's impact on others' interpretations of this history, built upon the foundations he set in place, and ends with a questioning of Australian art history's orientation today, in a greatly changed context.

The crystallisation of two of Bernard Smith's major and most influential publications – *European Vision and the South Pacific* (1960) and *Australian Painting, 1788–1960* (published in 1962) are shown to have crystallised Bernard Smith's decade at Melbourne University (1956–66) as giving him an overarching authority over the history of Australian art, in which his position was secured as the most authoritative and influential historian in this field – a position that continued over the remaining decades of his professional life. Because of the focus of this thesis, however, the absence of Aboriginal art in Bernard Smith's history (indeed its categorical exclusion for theoretical reasons of its alleged incompatibility within such a history) becomes a focus of this chapter – introducing the next thesis section (7.2: **The exclusion of Aboriginal art – and the absorption of Namatjira**, p. 236 ff.).

A significant topic for an understanding of Bernard Smith's historiography of Australian art, and his exclusion of any Aboriginal contribution to such history, is the next topic: the question of *how he understood Australian history* itself in matters of interrelations between 'settlers' and Aboriginal subjects (7.3: **The beginning of Australian history painting: Duterrau's 'The Conciliation', 1940**, p. 238 ff.). This question is explored through examining an important painting in Smith's historical schema (Benjamin Duterrau's *The*

Conciliation, painted in Hobart in 1840), which he highlights as beginning the significant typology of *history painting* as an elevated genre in the history of Australian art. Bernard Smith's surprisingly brief commentary on this painting is shown to raise important issues as to his interpretation of the fate of Aboriginal peoples within a broader understanding of such questions in Australian history itself. (The thesis analysis here turns to examining the events – and varying contemporary judgments by significant colonial figures of the period – of the outcome of the Black War in Tasmania. This analysis is significant, in the light of Bernard Smith's own returning to this theme later, in framing his 1980 Boyer Lectures.)

The next section turns to examining Bernard Smith's concepts of history and historical method, and the influences that shaped him as an historian, which then (in turn) conditioned his approaches to Australian art as the subject that shaped his main disciplinary field-interests for a lifetime (**7.4: Bernard Smith's idea of tradition framing Australian art's development**, p. 242 ff.). The boundaries Bernard Smith maintained about art's own special character – based on his distinction of 'art in the special sense' (derived from ancient Greek philosophy), and not to be confused with the more general meanings of 'arts' including craft or applied arts (derived from the Greek concept of *techne*, or skill – are highlighted as framing distinctions that he maintained throughout manifold publications. These publications provided a history of Australian art's development (and its European origins) since British colonisation, but were silent on Aboriginal cultural history over thousands of years prior to the beginnings of this 'Australian art' narrative; and even – through his theoretical schematisation – excluded Aboriginal culture from the category of 'art'.

Bernard Smith's personal development, political and social convictions, are briefly traversed to indicate their influence on the broad historical interests and *themes* shaping him as an historian, since he himself was forthright about the importance of these influences, in shaping both his historical interests and historiography. Bernard Smith's contact with Manning Clark (in the early 1950s in Canberra), their many similarities of interests, and a mutually shared desire to shape an influential 'voice' of national narrative of historical developments in their respective fields are analysed – along with the feature common to both as historians: that in their major works they excluded any place for Aboriginal peoples and their cultural history in 'the nation's story' of development.

The chapter then investigates how Bernard Smith conceived of *tradition* as shaping Australian art in a very particular way: with 'the local Australian tradition [as] itself a variant of the European tradition'; and both being installed through a dual process of cultural imagery and concepts transplanted from the northern hemisphere, while then naturalised in a new location.

An analysis of Bernard Smith's role as an *art critic* is important to broader reflections on significant episodes in his intellectual career – this aspect is taken up in a section focused both on his position as a critic, and his decades-long preoccupation with how Australian art was regarded in value-setting circles in Britain, especially in London (section **7.5: The 1961 Whitechapel exhibition critiqued (Smith's Macrossan Lectures, Brisbane)**, p. 248 ff.). This section also builds back-filling connections with a topic analysed in Chapter 5 – the reception of Australian contemporary art in London in the early 1960s, and especially through the impact of the Whitechapel Gallery's survey (presented in 1961). Bernard Smith's political antagonism to this exhibition's selection – and, in his view, misrepresentation of Australian artists' relation to 'the Renaissance tradition' (as he often characterised Australian art's connections to 'the European tradition' in his later years) – surfaces as a very forceful centre

of his critical attentions (and indignant critique) in this section, which is shown to have persisted in his subsequent writing over many years.

The next section (**7.6: The Power Institute's ambitious mandate in Sydney**, p. 252 ff.) introduces the period when Bernard Smith reached the summit of his institutional and formal positions in shaping art history in Australia – while his new post brought into his domain a suite of responsibilities – as an historian guiding disciplinary training in art history within a wider European-informed framework; as the nation's major historian of Australian art and its British sources; as an art critic and guide for the building of a collection of international contemporary art; and as the public representative face and head of the Power Institute of Contemporary Art. The J.W. Power Bequest and its background are briefly highlighted to frame the background to this new Chair in art history in Australia (only the second Chair and department to be created, after the Herald Chair's endowment in Melbourne in 1945). A following section (**7.7: Positioning art history within Sydney University's faculties, 1960s–1970s**, p. 253 ff.) provides a brief analysis of the context of Sydney University's disciplinary environment – with the University at that time being the only academic host to Anthropology in Australia. The lack of any connections taken up with Anthropology are noted, despite the importance of the Power Department's brief, decided by Bernard Smith to include Australian art, Asian arts, and 'Oceanic art'. The cost, again, of Bernard Smith's exclusion of Aboriginal art is analysed as particularly consequential in view of these categories for 'looking outward' across the Pacific and the region, but not inward towards the national heritage of Aboriginal Australian art.

The next section (**7.8: The 1980 Boyer Lectures – and 'The Spectre of Truganini'**, p. 256 ff.) brings a focus back to the subject of Tasmanian history, with the figure of Truganini chosen as the eponymous 'figurehead' for encapsulating Bernard Smith's choice of theme when he was invited to present the ABC Boyer Lectures on an Australian subject. A contextualising analysis is provided, highlighting how, in scoping the suite of five lectures, entitled *The Spectre of Truganini*, Bernard Smith had decided to build his Boyer lectures in the space opened a decade earlier by anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner's theme and Boyer lectures: *After the Dreaming: Black and White Australians—An Anthropologist's View*, delivered in 1968. However, he would also have been conscious of his lectures coming after the Boyer series by Manning Clark in 1966 (entitled *A Discovery of Australia*), and this would likely have summoned his thoughts towards an encompassing national overview of Australian cultural history, in a broader perspective than any 'art topic' would likely to provide.

Bernard Smith's decision that his own lectures would be an examination of Australian society's treaty-failure as 'haunted' by Truganini, and positioning her as an emblematic figure of Aboriginal dispossession and 'ending' of a people, are analysed for its misjudgments – both in casting Truganini in the role of a 'spectre' to her people; and in the indifference of the title to the previous protests of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community at the erasure of their identity and continuity with a long Palawa history, through the stereotype of Truganini as 'the last of the original Tasmanian Aborigines': '[I]t was a complete victory. None of the original Tasmanians survived' (p. 9 of the published lectures). The analysis of the Boyer Lectures at this point stresses that Bernard Smith's humanity and integrity are not being judged in this chapter: 'Bernard Smith's social justice conviction in selecting his theme for the Boyer Lectures is not under question.' More specifically, the chapter states:

He had sought to give recognition to Aboriginal people's abused treatment in the nation's history since the 1940s, when his first book, *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study of Australian Art since 1788* was published in 1945. His deep-seated socialism – at that time, enlisted communism, until he later left the ACP – genuinely urged attention to the fate of Aboriginal people under colonialism, and the need to 'arrest' what he had identified as 'the slow physical extermination of the aborigines by our own predatory culture'.

The analysis at this point of the chapter aims to direct its critique carefully. One of the key problems identified is Bernard Smith's surprising characterisation of his audience as an exclusively 'white' gathering of listeners (or later, readers) of the Boyer lectures. The 'bleached socius' concerns of the thesis investigation raise strong questions around this episode of Bernard Smith's ideas of Australian history, in a significant episode of 'public interpretation' of this history. The ordering structure of a monocultural voice, addressed to an exclusively white audience, is highlighted as striking in introducing a series on Aboriginal people's historical treatment delivered in 1980 – especially since the Aboriginal Arts Board, within the Australia Council, had been supporting exhibitions and delivering affirmative Indigenous cultural support programs, funding rural art advisers and substantial exhibitions since 1973. The section (**7.9: Divided socius, split subjects: a dichotomous cultural history**, p. 242 ff.) turns to an investigation of what has been identified by this stage as a series of deep-running, interconnected structural ideas and themes in Bernard's intellectual concerns – and art-critical concept in many currents of his historical writing – that have seemed to pursue deep-running dichotomies in his writing about Australian art's history, and the most important role and attentions of 'the Australian artist'.

The following section shifts this analysis into a broader register (**7.10: Resetting Australian art history's bearings in the 21st century**, p. 264 ff.). Following the thesis investigations of an integrated *social imaginary*, as an important framework for any people's imagining of a shared *national community*, it is inescapable at this point not to attempt to provide a more searching analysis of how Australian art history is cast into certain moulds by Bernard Smith's analysis. It becomes compelling to query how certain repeated figures of thought repeated since the 1950s (the Australian artist), and structures of analysis (the allegedly 'split personality of the Australian artist') has brought so many restraining concepts into a kind of armature, built into the structure of Bernard Smith's 'Antipodeanism', since his drafting of the *Antipodean Manifesto* anchoring his themes in 1959.

The final section of Ch. 7 turns to Bernard Smith's continuing impact on a succeeding generation of art historians – as evident in two large tributary volumes in recent years by fellow historians. This section questions the degree to which the questions he posed as central to Australian art's history have continuing traction, yet merit questioning of their continuing impacts in the 21st century.

The analysis concludes – drawing the implications of all previous chapter investigations together – in a final statement calling for some comprehensively reviewed frameworks for an Australian art history fit for new tasks in the 21st century (**7.11: Conclusion**, p. 267 ff.). The final analysis highlight a perceived need to bridge the gap that began to extend wider in the late-20th century between *Australian art history* and *Australian art museums*, and – most important of all – the historiographical critiques resurgent within Australian art, by both Indigenous artists and artists drawn from a variety of other cultural backgrounds in the social constituency of any Australian cultural and national imaginary today.

Ch.1: A journey of Australian cultural analysis through a disordered *socius*

- 1.1 Bearings
- 1.2 Historicising *culture* and *creativity* – elements shaping the *social imaginary*
- 1.3 The concept of the museum: Greek and Roman models reconsidered
- 1.4 A ‘Settler society’ configured by Empire
- 1.5 Australian museums as laboratories of evolutionary science, colonialism and imperialism
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- 1.7 Commemorative history and falsified memory: The Victorian centennial jubilee (1888)
- 1.8 The order of ‘civilisation’ and public institutions replacing ‘savage’ nature
- 1.9 Empire’s varying calendars of progress
- 1.10 Imperial vision, Antipodean resistance: Legacies of Bernard Smith
- 1.11 Correspondences between pictures and texts: ‘*Ut pictura poesis*’
- 1.12 Artists, visualised history, and reimagined nation
- 1.13 Conclusion

Chapter 1**A journey of Australian cultural analysis through a disordered *socius***

Across the broad spectrum of their differences in typology, museums¹ are significant public institutions for many reasons. One of the most important – as demonstrated throughout a variety of topical frames in the following chapters – is the role of museums in helping people to understand the world and society, and their place within both as historically formed entities: ‘It is through museums that societies represent their relationship to their own history and to that of other cultures and peoples.’²

1.1 Bearings

Museums are located within particular social contexts, human histories, and national settings. Meanwhile *art museums* have a special character and focus within the typology of museums, while being moulded by their specific history and context. In 1996, cultural theorist Mieke Bal highlighted how art museums can be a useful object of analysis for understanding wider developments in culture, human development and history. She provided three reasons for focusing on the art museum: because ‘it requires interdisciplinary analysis, it has the debate on aesthetics at its core, and it is essentially a social institution’.³ In this thesis, Australian art museums shape the contexts and topics analysed, since their social character and orientation to cultural creativity makes them significant institutions for exploring wider changes in the surrounding society that they image,

¹ Note on ‘museums’/‘galleries’ terminology in this thesis: The term *museum* is complicated by varying definitions and meanings (both nationally and internationally), and different traditions of naming collecting (and some non-collecting) institutions that fit within the conceptual schema of museums. Important for this thesis is to be sensitive to when it is sufficient and appropriate to use the generic term ‘museums’ as *including* art galleries (as is more usual internationally, especially in European and Asian countries, and the United States), and when it is clearer to distinguish *art galleries* (in British usage) as parallel but contrasting entities through the prime focus of their collections, knowledge-systems and exhibitions on *artworks*. Context should make clear whether a unifying or differentiating framework is employed.

² Robert Lumley (ed.), *The Museum Time Machine*, Routledge, London, 1988, p. iv.

³ Mieke Bal, ‘The Discourse of the Museum’, in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W Ferguson, Sandy Nairne (eds), *Thinking About Exhibitions*, Routledge, London, 1996, 201–15; p. 201.

reflect, articulate, and at times even reshape through their collection resources, exhibitions and public programs.

Objects held in museum collections have journeyed from many different pasts into an institutional present, bringing many histories and ‘voices’ of their makers and earlier meanings with them. Susan Pearce, writing from the Smithsonian Institution in 1992, remarked on this phenomenon of the collapsing of distance between past and present in a similar vein: ‘Objects ... have lives which, though finite, can be very much longer than our own. They have the power, in some sense, to carry the past into the present by virtue of their “real” relationship to past events.’⁴

* * * * *

Poetry, drama and songs also have the power to summon historic narratives from an ancient oral past and convey them into a performed present.

I am red like burning fire
I am covered with a glowing red down

*I am red like burning fire
Gleaming red, glistening with ochre*

*I am red like burning fire
Red is the hollow in which I am lying*

*A tjurunga is standing upon my head
Red is the hollow in which I am lying. ...*

*One above the other we are hovering in the air
Both of us are hovering in the air*

Off the edge of the mountain bluff we are hovering in the air
Near the jagged mountain edge we are hovering in the air.



(15) Francis (Frank) Gillet, *Rain Dance* of Charlotte Waters, c. 1865, Museum of Victoria (MV, M90884). The cellophane photo by Frank Gillet of a public 'Rain Dance' on Annerley country has strong echoes in (3). Long Jack *Pilbara Tjapananra's Rain Dance* (Chin Decemagay), 1970-2, NGNT, Darwin.
[Note: Image as it might be restricted from women's viewing. It is presented as an inference in the absence of evidence; but see the qualifications without comment below, paragraph 2.]

For these Arrernte verses⁵ to be sung in a ceremonial context, long preparations must be made before the epic couplets are brought to life by the lawmen, reliving the exaltation and force of religious authority (*tjukurrpa*) carried in the ancestral songs. The venerated red ochre, journeyed and exchanged by hands in bags as precious gift from distant sites,⁶ marks each singer's body. Powdered ochre is smeared across greased skin. Fingers pass over scarification ridges. Plant fibres (or in the eagle song, feather-down) in small clusters might be adhered to chests by chanters'

⁴ Susan Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington DC, 1992, p. 24.

⁵ T.G.H. Strehlow, *Songs of Central Australia*, Angus and Robertson Sydney, 1971. The source for these particular verses emerges below.

⁶ For interpretation of an historic document of early-20th century ochre exchange, see Philip Jones, 'That Special Property', in *Ochre and Rust: Artefacts and Encounters on Australian Frontiers*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, South Australia, 2007, pp. 337-378.

freshly drawn blood for the most sacred cycles of renewal.⁷ The ‘glowing red down’ of the song links the transformed performers, ‘*Gleaming red, glistening with ochre*’. Red is the russet colour of ochre, the colour of the red earth and its hollows for lying in. Red highlights moving forms in song with clapsticks drumming near the firelight, the blazing energy of sacred campfires under transiting stars summoning the ancestors of all life.

The compelling imagery in the verses quoted above derives from a mere fragment of a monumental work of intercultural offering (‘translated with great care and a Euro-Christian nuance’⁸) rendered by Arrernte elders to Lutheran Pastor Carl Strehlow (1871-1922) at the Finke River Mission at Hermannsburg⁹ in the first years of the 20th century.¹⁰ The songs were sung for his transcription in, first, Western Arrernte and then (in parallel columns) his *interlineal* transposition (in independent phrases) and finally full *translation* of the verses as they were gathered into German.¹¹ Carl Strehlow was already well-versed in textual cross-readings from classical Greek, Hebrew and Latin alongside his native German – such was the rich philological environment of German theology training in the late-19th century. He brought a fine linguist’s skill, now including Dieri (Diyari) and ‘Arunta and Loritja’ languages, to the tasks of his careful listening and recording. The full scope of Carl Strehlow’s monumental study of Arrernte and Luritja cosmology, social organisation and beliefs was eventually expatriated and published progressively in Frankfurt am Main, with local museums’ collaboration and editing, as a 7-volume work,¹² providing a huge legacy for Arrernte history, covering early contact with European peoples.



However, the verses quoted above are not from that first source. They have passed through another translation, brought back into the English of Carl’s son T.G.H. (Theodore/Ted) Strehlow (1908–1978), fluent in Arrernte from childhood when he grew up as the only white child among

⁷ The reference is generalised here. The clusters of white plant-down used in body- and sand-painting designs later form an ancient cultural substrate of the emergence of the so-called ‘dot painting’ style in portable paintings emanating from Papunya after 1971 – as covered in Chapter 6.

⁸ Diane Austin-Broos, *Arrernte Present, Arrernte Past: Invasion, Violence, and Imagination in Indigenous Central Australia*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 2009.

⁹ Hermannsburg/Ntaria, on the Finke River within the MacDonnell Ranges, is 125 km west southwest of Alice Springs/Mpwerte. The Hermannsburg Lutheran mission was established in 1877. Carl Strehlow first worked for missionary Pastor J.G. Reuther, of the Bethesda Mission at Killalpaninna among the Dieri (Diyari) Aboriginal people near Cooper’s Creek, SA, where ‘he helped Reuther to translate the New Testament into the Dieri language’. After this first posting, Strehlow moved north and became Pastor at Hermannsburg – see citation for Carl Strehlow’s entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (by Veit, below).

¹⁰ Carl Strehlow (with Moritz von Leonhardi & Städtisches Völkermuseum, Frankfurt am Main), *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien*, Joseph Baer & Co., Frankfurt am Main, 7 vols., 1907–1920.

¹¹ See the magnificent study of Carl Strehlow’s life and four-year missionary training in Germany, as background to the compilation of the Arrernte song-cycles, and also providing the story of the two generations of Strehlow efforts of translation, living (and in Carl Strehlow’s case, missionising, 1894–1922), among Western Arrernte, Arrernte, Luritja and other peoples at the Hermannsburg/Ntaria Lutheran settlement: in Barry Hill, *Broken Song: T.G.H. Strehlow and Aboriginal Possession*, Vintage Books, Random House, Sydney, 2012. The verses quoted above are (first) from the Angkota Song, and (the last two couplets) from the Eagle Song, ‘where the birds circling over the MacDonnell Ranges can be sensed’, as provided in Hill, *Broken Song*, 2012, pp. 13–14.

¹² See further on these publications and their scientific and linguistic scope in Walter F. Veit, ‘Strehlow, Carl Friedrich (1871–1922)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Vol. 12, 1990, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/strehlow-carl-friedrich-8698/text15221>.

Arrernte-speakers at Hermannsburg.¹³ The younger Strehlow has added his own later literary training, including in Latin and Greek, to the task of a new rendition (though no less monumentally achieved work): as *Songs of Central Australia*, ‘a huge, marvellous, astonishing gift of a book’,¹⁴ that was finally published in 1971.¹⁵ Ted Strehlow’s version from the next generation, the life’s work of a sophisticated linguist now carrying sacred song-cycles from Arrernte through German and brought back into English, was a work of Orphic accomplishment – ‘one of the earliest and among the greatest breakthroughs in Australian ethnography’.¹⁶ Australian writer and poet Barry Hill, in an exhaustive and sensitive study published years later, projects the cultural scope as well as a fine literary understanding of what had been achieved:

Strehlow designed his book to sing and elucidate the soul of the first inhabitants and it does so with the lyricism of the *Song of Songs* and the gravity of the *Torah*. ... [N]o other book has been as embracing as Strehlow’s, or more honorifically committed to placing the ‘first songs’ of the ‘first people’ in the context of world poetry. In *Songs*, Aboriginal life breathes in the company of Greek and Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Hebraic utterance. ... Culturally speaking, *Songs* is Australia’s book of Genesis.¹⁷

* * * * *

Drawing such ideas towards a broader Australian context:¹⁸ while this thesis is principally an analysis of Australian art museums, their informing ideas and disciplines, and some aspects of their collecting and programs in the 20th century, the investigation also perceives museums and galleries as *socially situated* and as bearers of broader inscriptions of a host community’s or nation’s history. This inquiry aims to illuminate interconnections *among* museums and *across* time and political geographies. It examines the multiple, interdisciplinary pathways that museums and public galleries delineate within Australia’s history, tracing movements towards *an inclusive social polity* as a framework for an interactively constructed history and mutually shared nationhood. These tasks remain ongoing.

1.2 Historicising culture and creativity – elements shaping the social imaginary

Before leaving the Arrernte in the ‘Strehlow era’ – but they will return in Chapter 6 (when one of their later sons, Albert Namitjira, appears; and some decades later again, when the remarkable emergence of the ‘Papunya movement’ is acknowledged) – there is a little more attention merited to the extraordinarily long and continuing prominence these Western Desert compatriot peoples have occupied in both scientific and cultural studies and understanding at a national (and indeed international) level since the 19th century. It merits stressing that this thesis seeks an historical

¹³ See T.G.H. Strehlow, *Journey to Horseshoe Bend*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1978; republished by Giramondo Publishing, 2015. See also Philip Jones, ‘Strehlow, Theodor George (Ted) (1908–1978)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 16, MUP, Melbourne, 2002, available online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/strehlow-theodor-george-ted-11792/text21095>; and Hill, *Broken Song*, 2012, which covers the Strehlow lives across two generations.

¹⁴ Hill, *Broken Song*, 2012, p. 6.

¹⁵ T.G.H. Strehlow, *Songs of Central Australia*, Angus and Robertson Sydney, 1971.

¹⁶ Austin-Broos, *Arrernte Present, Arrernte Past*, 2009, p. 20.

¹⁷ Hill, *Broken Song*, 2012, p. 6.

¹⁸ Australian institutional source-documents remains a small field in museums literature, apart from usually incidental appearance in publications for other purposes. The two outstanding exceptions are provided by publications from the National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne), and the Australian National Gallery (Canberra). In general, references to such literature in a national perspective, and with some evaluative review of these sources, is mostly handled in footnotes throughout the thesis chapters that follow.

understanding and recognition of the changing realities for Indigenous peoples throughout all chapters. It does not intend to avoid the harsh realities of struggle or suffering through mythification, or a focus on the enthralling creativities of cultural expression. Neither does it support sharp separations between different kinds of historical experience in diverse settings across the country, from outback Australia to rural towns and urban contexts in cities, all of which are multivalent realities for first nations people. Although the thesis orientation towards art and cultural imagery draws its focus towards the most uplifting aspects of performative creativity of Aboriginal and other kindred peoples, there is an important recognition of continually changing aspects of Indigenous adjustment to violence, loss and deprivation as part of all collective indigenous memory. Meanwhile *indigeneity* is never asserted as a strictly enclosed or bounded entity, without interactions with other strands of Australian society, as is an interweaving dynamic in social development historically – and ongoing today.

Academic research in various areas in recent decades has shown a steadily strengthening language and harder edge to mainstream analysis of what occurred for Aboriginal peoples in a myriad of situations after British conquest of a huge new territory and natural resources; and subjugation of a long-evolved free population of contiguously differentiated peoples. While the term ‘conquest’ has steadily gained currency, displacing the falsification of ‘settlement’, ‘invasion’ is also taking some hold in wider consciousness. It forms a framing term for many analyses within Australian anthropology and related studies of changing Indigenous experience.

A particularly interesting case for this thesis is the work of Diane Austin-Broos (Professor Emeritus of anthropology at the University of Sydney), whose fieldwork in the 1990s with Western Arrernte people west of Alice Springs/Mparntwe resulted in an impressive, multi-viewpointed and historical analysis (in 2009), *Arrernte Present, Arrernte Past: Invasion, Violence, and Imagination in Indigenous Central Australia*.¹⁹ This moving work examines changing impacts upon Arrernte communities who extended westward from the lands of the Central Arrernte, the latter being the subject of Spencer and Gillen’s ‘celebrated classic of early ethnography’,²⁰ *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, in 1899.

Austin-Broos’s work concerning Western Arrernte was guided over many years in language acquisition and attention to multiple subjects by a senior Lutheran woman with Southern Arrernte roots, the late Joyce Malbunka. The ‘guided’ experience shaping the final publication therefore provides invaluable perspectives on Arrernte history across two centuries through an anchorage in the social and cultural experience of women. Austin-Broos’s work forms an invaluable counterpart to the huge corpus of scientific studies with Arrernte people conducted by male scientists, expeditioners, government officials, missionaries and other recorders of various kinds. Her research was also conducted during a period when a number of major land claims were in process affecting Arrernte and neighbouring communities, all involving exclusive and private depositions by males. Austin-Broos’s focus on being female-guided in her larger community-focused research, while developing some new methodologies in historical/cultural analysis, has produced an

¹⁹ Diane Austin-Broos, *Arrernte Present, Arrernte Past: Invasion, Violence, and Imagination in Indigenous Central Australia*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 2009.

²⁰ Austin-Broos, *Arrernte Present, Arrernte Past*, 2009, p. 19.

abundantly rich work that arcs back across the history of anthropological studies that form the focus of thesis Chapter 2.

A final important aspect of Austin-Broos's Arrernte-focused work that is relevant to the present thesis is her favouring of the term *imagination* as an analytic term, in preference to *culture*, since 'culture' in the field of anthropology has such a specific connotation of a bounded and enclosed entity. In contrast to early anthropology's voice of atemporal repetition (in historical ethnographies), the impacts of interaction with a modern world within even the most strongly continuing traditions of Aboriginal society today impose constant fractures and adjustments within Aboriginal 'culture' itself – as richly articulated in Austin-Broos's interpersonal ethnography.²¹ The present thesis-investigation is in accord with these important observations, while noting the always more open and diverse connotations of *culture* when mobilised as a term concerning *visual arts* fields and their relationships with other arts, such as performance and music. Culture is never a bounded-entity concept within the complex interactions that maintain more open and variable relationships across visual arts fields. Austin-Broos meanwhile states her support for the concept of *social imaginaries* (which she pluralises) – and again this brings strong connections that are taken up in the thesis that follows, in which the *social imaginary*²² is a concept active throughout the whole project, also invoking at times the adjacent terms *national imaginary* and *cultural imaginary* in certain contexts.

1.3 The concept of the museum: Greek and Roman models reconsidered

Museums have a longer, and in their earliest emergence, significantly different history from their accumulated collections and authority-asserting values so often associated with their various forms today. In many respects this thesis appeals to an expanded understanding of museums' originating history as exemplary for reinvention, as suggestive of a wider horizon for contemporary development interculturally. Art historian (and theorist of art history) Donald Preziosi has noted the ambiguity of our sense of the relationship between art of the contemporary world, or even of recent centuries, and the art of very distant places or times – while he also notes a possibility of reconsideration harboured within such recessionary uncertainty:

The farther away from our own historical and social circumstances we travel, the more our own sense of art seems to dissolve. In one sense, however, this evanescence is all to the good, if it is understood as an opportunity rather than as a barrier to understanding, and if it sensitizes us to the parochialisms of some of our original assumptions and definitions.²³

When considering the multiple possibilities of understanding *aesthetic objects* and the diverse strands of meaning surrounding the power of *art* within a country such as Australia (with foundational Aboriginal as well as European and other later cultural traditions), some conceptual

²¹ See Austin-Broos, *Arrernte Present, Arrernte Past*, 2009, fn. 7, p. 281.

²² The 'social imaginary' has been conceived sociologically as 'the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective life' (John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, Univ. of California Press, 1984, p. 6).

²³ Donald Preziosi, in *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1989, Ch. 5, 'Reckoning with the World', 122–155, p. 146.

expansiveness and audacity is merited, rather than clinging to orthodox concepts and long-established pathways within established traditions and literature. One possibility for reconsideration of the western museum form is to propel it far back along the trajectories of its own history, to reimagine its development in forms very different from the present or even recent past.

Developed from the ancient Greek concept of a *mouseion* (*μουσεῖον*), or a temple for the nine Muses of the arts²⁴ serving the cult of Apollo – and originally without accumulated objects²⁵ – the museum only later assumed its collections character, by which it is most known today. Plato's 4th-century BCE Academy in the city-state of Athens (a centre for the combined study of literature, philosophy, nature and scientific knowledge) was a nascent museum, with members 'organised as a *thíasos* [*θίασος*], a sacred band, dedicated to the service of the Muses'.²⁶ The later Lyceum created in 335 BCE, by Aristotle, who had been a tutor to Alexander the Great,²⁷ was an institute of research in topics ranging from poetry to philosophy, natural history, medicine, and mathematics,²⁸ and modelled on Plato's earlier Academy. The Lyceum formed a second museum prototype distinguished by the parallel study of literature, poetry, philosophy and natural science.

In the early-16th century fresco by Raphael in the Vatican, the Renaissance-revived interest in the discursive and speculative character of these ancient academies is synthesised in a singular 'School of Athens', centralised by the figures of Plato pointing 'heaven'-wards to the world of his idealised 'Forms', while Aristotle's outstretched hand (in remarkable foreshortening) is turned towards the earth of more worldly empirical enquiry. A single image here projects the Renaissance excitement around a recaptured spirit of philosophical and rhetorical debate as the basis of knowledge, including empirical study of the natural world, in contrast to mediaeval dogmatism anchored in Christian theology. Images of art in Raphael's fresco are marked by flanking statues of Apollo and Minerva in this recovery of a classical vision of citizen-shared knowledge in a demonstratively *public space* of common cultural patrimony. The barrel-vaulted architecture, with illusionistic vistas of the heavens, suggests a Roman rotunda adaptation of a classical Greek *stoa* – a place of civic passage and exchange, rather than an enclosed private palace. (No small irony in the actual location of this fresco in the library of Pope Julius II in the Vatican's exclusive domain!)

²⁴ A now-older but still usefully succinct account of the origins and development of the museum as a public institution remains a small monograph by Dillon Ripley (a former Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington): Dillon Ripley, *The Sacred Grove: Museums and Their Evolution*, Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1970.

²⁵ The classical Greek typology included a Pinakotheka (πινακοθήκη), a gathering of pictures on 'planks' or wooden supports, and well known as naming the structure forming the left wing of the Propylaea (gateway building) on the classical Akropolis/Acropolis in Athens. However, these were locally produced art images, not items collected from other cultures. The Romans adapted the Pinakotheka to become a picture gallery in private houses. See concerning the Periklean building program for the Athenian Akropolis, begun in mid-5thC BCE, Donald Preziosi, 'The End(s) of Art History', in *Rethinking Art History*, 1989, pp. 168–179; and see also his summary of the key literature on the classical Athenian Akropolis, in fn. 56, pp. 240–41.

²⁶ Ripley, *The Sacred Grove*, 1970, p. 24.

²⁷ The Lyceum was founded in Athens when the city-state came under Macedonian rule, and Aristotle returned from Asia to teach in the Athenian capital. Alexander the Great later endowed the Lyceum with both natural history collections and other material gathered in his conquests, as well as through extensive financial patronage. See 'Lyceum' entry, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

²⁸ See David C. Lindberg, 'Hellenistic Natural Philosophy', Ch. 4 in *The Beginnings of Western Science* [1992], 2nd ed., University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2007.



Raphael's *The School of Athens* (1509-1511), fresco, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City, Rome; C: detail: Plato and Aristotle walking and disputing; R: excavated site of Aristotle's Lyceum, in Athens' heart, but originally east of the old city wall.

A more recognisable development in the later typology of the museum arose when a *mouseion* (with first, accumulated scrolls providing key texts, supplemented later by objects) was attached to the great Library of Alexandria (founded c. 285 BCE in Egypt under Macedonian Greek rule, built to honour Alexander the Great).²⁹ The Alexandrian library and museum was the most celebrated centre of scholarship of the ancient world, where 'for centuries the librarians and other scholars there were the most important Greek scholars' of the period.³⁰

The profound interconnections of Greek, Hebrew and Islamic heritage and scholarship in the ancient world make such a revisiting fruitful. The texture of inter-cultural translation practiced stands in contrast to a general tendency in recent postcolonial critique to render the idea of the Mediterranean and Middle-Eastern 'world' as a monolithic 'Western' heritage. However, its cultural



Library of Alexandria, imagined reconstruction (Biblioteca Alessandrina); Temple of Apollo, Delphi, Greece; a Muse (perhaps Clio) reading a scroll, (Attic red-figure lekythos, Boeotia, c. 430 BCE); detail of the 9 Muses on a Hellenistic sarcophagus, 2nd CE (Louvre Mus.).

links actually extended in all directions intellectually, linguistically and spatially, including across north Africa and throughout the northern hemisphere, while also spreading further through translations and trading routes radiating eastwards.

The Alexandrian Library thrived in the early Ptolemaic dynasty,³¹ later dwindling in the Roman period of Ptolemaic Egypt's decline, especially after the 2nd century BCE, while by then the model of a *mouseion* adjoining a library had migrated elsewhere in the ancient Graeco-Roman world.³² The intellectual, cultural and philological texture of the later period, with its systematic harvest of all significant Greek scholarship based in ancient manuscripts, is finely outlined in a recent monograph by Eleanor Dickey. Her exposition makes clear how ancient Greek scholarship, in the Roman and late-classical world of the Mediterranean region, was foundational to all subsequent developments of western knowledge and institutions (including the museum). This accumulated *intercultural* socialisation of knowledge – transported by travelling scholars, scrolls and papyri – thereafter spread classical learning in circuits via Latin, Arabic and other Semitic literatures and temple sites throughout the Middle East to India, and thence across North Asia to the 'Eastern hemisphere' of the ancient world. Meanwhile the comprehensive translation, annotation and

²⁹ Eleanor Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship: A Guide to Finding, Reading, and Understanding Scholia, Commentaries, Lexica, and Grammatical Treatises, from Their Beginnings to the Byzantine Period*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 5. See also Roy M. MacLeod (ed.), *The Library of Alexandria: Centre of Learning in the Ancient World* [2000], rev. edn., I. B. Tauris & Co., 2004.

³⁰ Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship*, 2007, p. 3.

³¹ The Ptolemaic dynasty was a Macedonian Greek dynasty installed (by Ptolemy 1's rule beginning in 303 BCE) as the governing rulers in Egypt, and eventually accepted as the successors to the Pharaohs. Cleopatra became the last royal leader in the Roman period, and the Ptolemaic line ceased with her death. See J. G. Manning, *The Last Pharaohs: Egypt Under the Ptolemies, 305-30 BC*, Princeton, NJ, 2009.

³² Lionel Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 2001, p. 47.

exegesis of the full range of ancient Greek texts had been accomplished long before the later breakup of the Western Roman Empire and transition into the Middle Ages of monastic learning:

By [the last two centuries BCE], all major classical poetic texts had finally been standardized and extensive commentaries had already been produced on the writings of all the major literary authors of the Greek Classical Era.³³

Greek texts providing the first conceptual structures of western historiography can also yield important reflections that contrast with the later, seemingly inexorable move in ancient history towards colonial domination and imperialism. Historian John Docker, who has researched genocide in relation to both the Enlightenment and settler colonialism, some years ago placed Herodotus and Thucydides in opposition to the Roman Tacitus, on the hither side of this historical tendency in antiquity. In a 2007 paper at ANU, arguing that:

Herodotus and Thucydides establish history as a mode of ethical reflection that all future thinking about colonization, conquest, and empire in the European classical and neo-classical tradition had to engage with: no easy task, given the moral weight of their reflections is opposed to colonization and empire.³⁴

Before leaving the ancient world, the Roman period deserves brief consideration to highlight the crucial changes that had occurred prior to the Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity in the early 4th century (312 CE). In the Roman Republican and Imperial periods, the Temple of the Muses (*mouseion*) became associated for the first time with the two most distinctive features by which we know the museum institution in its later form, and which persist to the present. The first was the mentality of *historicism* (reflecting on the achievements of earlier eras). The second was the *building of syncretistic collections* gathered from afar, and often in conquest (with the beginnings of attribution to sources and authors, especially the names of creators or original locations of artworks – the first tentative signs of what would later become *connoisseurship*). Commissioned *copies* of the most valued originals also entered the framework of art collecting in this era. When the Roman General Fulvius returned in 189 BCE from conquest in Epirus (northwestern Greece) 'with over a thousand bronze and marble statues as well as a quantity of gold and silver', and he afterwards built a temple to display this 'treasure hoard',³⁵ such consolidation of a spoliated collection in the public domain highlighted a threshold-crossing that was occurring in museological history.

Fulvius's temple was dedicated to both the Muses and Hercules. However, with his aggrandising action celebrating *conquest*, a change can be marked in the transition from Greek to Roman culture. The Roman god Hercules (the Greek Heracles, typified by physical strength as well as astonishing physical feats or 'Labours') was by far the superior figure in the Fulvian dedication. This episode also marks the rise of the *donor*. The donor now entered history as a figure who gains honour through recognition of the creation of cultural wealth via the conscious act of patrimonial

³³ Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship*, 2007, p. 6.

³⁴ Seminar abstract, circulated for John Docker's paper, 'The Honourable Colonizer: Herodotus and Thucydides versus Tacitus' delivered in Ancient World Seminar, A.D. Hope Building, ANU, 17 May 2007. See Docker's later rereading of Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian Wars* 'against the grain' of conventional understanding – especially perceiving the latter's interpretation of Pericles' 431 BCE Funeral Oration as an attempt to establish history 'as a mode of ethical reflection' about the miseries of war, and especially civil war, arising through imperial expansion and conquest: John Docker, *The Origins of Violence: Religion, History and Genocide*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008.

³⁵ Ripley, *The Sacred Grove*, 1970, p. 24.

donation (especially of art objects), and often as the spoils of war. Art had now moved far from the Muses' 'sacred grove' of religious veneration, poetry, natural history and philosophy. It had become embodied in specific objects, and entered the world of spectacle and collecting by acts of violent dispossession of conquered peoples' heritage. A premonitory echo surfaces here of Walter Benjamin's famous assertion in his last complete theoretical work (of 1940), *Theses on the Philosophy of History*.³⁶ Benjamin's *Theses* are fundamentally a critique of historicism, 'universal history', and the present-privileging vantage-point towards the past as a narratology of progress – which elicited Benjamin's mordant reminder that 'There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.'³⁷

An example of the Roman taste for acquisition of Greek sculpture, Egyptian temple forms and other cultural gatherings can be found today in the remains of the 2nd-century Villa of the Emperor Hadrian³⁸ outside Rome at Tibur/Tivoli (including acquisition of copies when such famous sculptures as the four Caryatids supporting the Erechtheum Temple's peristyle on the Athenian Acropolis could not be had in the original).



The Villa Adriana, 2nd-century (CE) villa complex built by Emperor Hadrian at Tivoli (Tivoli), detail of the Therapeum and pool, dedicate to the Greco-Egyptian deity Serapis, showing Apollo and copies of the 4 classical Caryatids from the Erechtheum, on the Acropolis in Athens.

By this period the element of plunder and political power, along with the detailed historical knowledge needed to identify the results of pillage, has become enfolded within the ‘thickening’ typology of the museum. This lineage provides trace-lines leading to Napoleon’s cultivation of modern museography, conservation standards and connoisseurship, to provide secure identification of what he had looted from other cultures during two decades of military campaigns in the early 19th century.³⁹ Put another way, Hadrian’s Villa demonstrates a journey begun in Imperial Roman culture that leads eventually to the British Museum being custodian of the ‘Parthenon marbles’ – sawn and removed by Lord Elgin from the Acropolis hilltop complex in Athens at the beginning of the 19th century.⁴⁰

³⁶ Benjamin's short but immensely provocative *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (*Über Den Begriff Der Geschichte* [On the Concept of History], 1940) was a text published posthumously in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, transl. Harry Zorn, ed. Hannah Arendt, preface by Leon Wieseltier, Schocken Books, NY, 1969. Benjamin's hugely influential essay for 20th century art, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter Seiner Technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* [1935; rev. 1939], or *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, appeared in the same volume in English, and has been a framework-shifting text for art museums in reconsidering the ambiguous status of artworks in the image-replicating world of modernity.

³⁷ The quote is from Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, 1940 – in thesis VII. See Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'*, Verso, New York, 2005.

³⁸ Photographs of sculpture shown are from the author's visits to the Villa Adriana site, near Rome, in 1969 and 1972.

³⁹ For the development of modern museology and conservation under Louis XVI, the Revolutionary Republic, and later Napoleon's imperial conquests, see Andrew McLennan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 1994.

⁴⁰ See Bernice L Murphy, 'Reconsidering Universality, Reviewing Ownership, Renewing Culture' (one of four commissioned responses to Constantine Sandis: 'Two Tales of One City: Cultural Understanding and the Parthenon Sculptures'); all texts published in *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol. 23 (1), Taylor & Francis, March 2008, pp. 5–21. (For historical context of the looted marbles, see the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry at www.britannica.com/topic/Elgin-Marbles).

However, all political structures and genres of authoritative knowledge are subject to further change over time. In recent years, Aboriginal artists have been enabled to work within the British Museum and Museum of Natural History in London: reinterpreting their collections, and especially reviewing the gathering (in the latter institution) of ancestral human remains.⁴¹ Such changes in museum engagements with ‘source communities’⁴² have opened up radical reinterpretations of collecting histories – as examined towards the end of this chapter in the case of artist Daniel Boyd (and the late Gordon Bennett), and raised again in Chapter 6 (focused on Australian art museums and the growth of Indigenous collections).

Moving forward from the beginnings of cultural despoliation underpinning a triumphalist historicism that originated in ancient Roman history: the museum later developed as a ‘public-sphere’⁴³ institution within modern European history since the late-18th century (especially after the post-Revolutionary *Conservatoire* took over the Louvre’s royal collections in Paris after 1789, reopening the now-Republican collection displays as the Musée du Louvre in 1793, the first of the national museums established in the late-18th century).⁴⁴ The literature on the greatest European museums that emerged from aristocratic collections and came into the public domain from the late-18th century onwards is too large to survey succinctly. However, the framework required for understanding Australian museum developments is predominantly that of British heritage, and earliest institutional modelling was anchored in London. The rise of large museums in northern British cities through industrial wealth (such as in Manchester⁴⁵ and Liverpool⁴⁶) emerged with a growing middle class in the 19th century. But the Australian colonial capitals always looked first to the major institutions in London.⁴⁷

⁴¹ The *UK Human tissue Act 2004* (to ‘regulate activities concerning the removal, storage, use and disposal of human tissue’) enabled first moves to consider repatriation claims from other countries, including Australia – which enabled the successful return of a Tasmanian (Palawa) ash bundle and other items in 2006, followed by many other returns since negotiated in an ongoing process today. (See <www.hta.gov.uk/policies/human-tissue-act-2004>.)

⁴² See *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* [2004], Principle 6 (pp. 9–10): ‘Museums work in close collaboration with the communities from which their collections originate as well as those they serve.’ (International Council of Museums, Paris, 2006.)

⁴³ Habermas’s articulation of democratic institutions, grounded in his *communicative-action* principles of debated ideas in a free public space of opinion-testing (‘the public sphere’), has been influential in this thesis. See *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* [1962, German orig.], transl. Thomas Burger, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989. See anthology of English-speaking authors’ discussion of Habermas’s conception of the ‘open realm’ (Öffentlichkeit) of democratic debate in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1992. See also Habermas’s later *The Theory of Communicative Action* [1981, German edition]; *Between Facts and Norms* [1992], and *The Inclusion of the Other* [1996] – all variously published in English translations.

⁴⁴ See McLennan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 1994, p. 125; Chantal Georget, ‘The Museum as Metaphor in Nineteenth-Century France’, in Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (eds), *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1994; Carol Duncan, ‘From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum; The Louvre Museum And The National Gallery, London’, in Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, Routledge, UK, 1995, 21–47; and Gabriel P. Weisberg, ‘Using Art History: The Louvre and its Public Persona, 1848–52’, in Elizabeth Mansfield (ed.) *Art History and its Institutions: Foundations of a Discipline*, Routledge, London & New York, 2002, 178–190.

⁴⁵ The Manchester Art Gallery, designed by Sir Charles Barry (designer of the British Houses of Parliament), was first established as premises for a ‘learned society’, in 1823, and later built up a major art collection.

⁴⁶ Notably the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, established by Andrew Barclay Walker in 1877 – the period when the AGNSW, Sydney (f. 1771), was first coming into existence through efforts of the NSW art society to form a collection.

⁴⁷ Most relevant for understanding the institutional precedents that provided British models in shaping of museums and public galleries in the Australian colonies is an acquaintance with key documents that provide primary records of the

As British public museums developed in the 19th century, growing from a ‘mere handful ... on the British Isles’ in 1820 to ‘more than 400 by the beginning of WWII’,⁴⁸ they increasingly took on the character of not only conserving the collections they housed but forming a network of institutions validating civic progress. They also modelled desired social behavior for a populous, rising working-class. As Tony Bennett’s *The Birth of the Museum*⁴⁹ incisively demonstrates, there was an ever-strengthening sense that British society, its museums and galleries were not only arising *in consequence* of historical circumstances, and new sources of wealth, but actually acted as bearers of ruling knowledge and British imperial authority in the world. Bennett’s texts form an important resource in the thesis discussion of the development of evolutionary science and anthropology shaping emergent Australian museum collections in the 19th century (as analysed in Chapter 2).

1.4 A ‘Settler society’ configured by Empire

In the composition of narratives about Australian history since the 19th century, the widespread currency of the term ‘settler society’ installed a conception of a naturalised social process that evaded the realities and responsibilities of conquest. Recognition of Aboriginal people as long-present owners, guardians and managers of their lands, rather than merely peripatetic, vagrant occupants, would have entailed recognition of existing history, ordered social relationships, legal proprietorship and purposive land-management – guided, as recent scholarship by Bill Gammage and Bruce Pascoe has shown, by continent-wide practices of Indigenous ‘farming’ of the varied ranges, waters and creature-resources encompassed by Country.⁵⁰ It might have prompted the potential for a form of treaty – as evidentially guided concepts of the British Crown (under Queen Victoria) in its settlement of long-standing Maori wars and resistance in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi.⁵¹

formation of leading British institutions – principally, the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Museum of Natural History and the National Gallery in London. These formative documents are all now conveniently collated in one publication, and enable greater clarity about the British background to Australian colonial modelling of institutions. (See Jonah Siegel (ed.) *The Emergence of the Modern Museum: An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Sources*, Oxford University Press, 2008.)

⁴⁸ Siegel, *The Emergence of the Modern Museum*, 2008, p. vi.

⁴⁹ The theoretical-critical literature on museums, scrutinising their history, practices and values, continues to develop independently of institutional histories. A crucial study of the *ideological* character and social investment of museums as knowledge-shaping institutions, providing counter-balance to institutional sources cited in this chapter, continues to be provided in Tony Bennett’s two key monographs, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (of 1995), and his later *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (of 2004), both utilised in Chapter 2. For related analysis to Bennett’s but focused on art museums, see Carol Duncan, ‘The Art Museum as Ritual’, in Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, 1995, 7–20.

⁵⁰ See Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Crow’s Nest, NSW, 2011, and Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu: Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident*, Magabala Books, Broome, WA, 2014.

⁵¹ The bi-lingual Treaty of Waitangi is a formal document of agreement, in Māori and English, made between the British Crown and some 40 Māori *rangatira* (chiefs), representing approximately 540 Māori *rangatira* in total. The Treaty was concluded at the Bay of Islands on 6 February 1840. The Waitangi treaty provides a continuing legal framework for Māori-Pakeha relations and underpins continuing rights-settling claims that continue today. See further online at: <www.nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/treaty/the-treaty-in-brief>.

Colonialism, ‘a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another’,⁵² historically arose through extending spatial and physical control over distant Others for the harvesting and expropriation of their resources. Colonialism was always shaped first in the imagination and values of a dominant society before it was carried out in practice. While imagined by Joseph Banks, and later recommended by him to the British House of Commons in 1779,⁵³ the eventual occupation of Gadigal country began decisively with the arrival in January 1788 on Eora lands at Sydney Cove/Warrane of the First Fleet⁵⁴ of 11 ships, guided by a framework document from King George III. Evidence of the British Crown’s intentions survives only in a draft form (but clearly), in the *Instructions for ... Arthur Phillip Esq. Our Captain General and Governor in Chief, in and over ... Our Territory of New South Wales and its Dependencies*.⁵⁵ The *Draft Instructions* to Governor Phillip (dated 25 April 1787) represent the only surviving autograph document framing key elements of the planned British occupation and colonisation of Australia. The *Instructions* authorised Phillip to establish the first British garrisoned settlement of New South Wales as a place of banishment for transported convicts, and – crucially – ‘to make grants of land and issue regulations for the Colony’ that he was to govern.⁵⁶ All the volatile contradictions of Australian colonisation can be traced from this document and its rupturing, haphazardly implemented system of *land grants* authorised under a succession of colonial governors:

[Although] Aboriginal peoples’ lives and livelihoods were to be protected and friendly relations with them encouraged ... the Instructions make no mention of protecting or even recognising their lands. It was assumed that Australia was ‘terra nullius’, that is, land belonging to no one. This assumption shaped land, law and occupation for more than 200 years.⁵⁷

Research in recent years on the social connections configuring ‘settler colonies’ within the British Empire has significantly illuminated the ongoing and close links across the dispersed network of British territories around the world in the 19th century. It has also highlighted the ideological substructure of values so strongly connecting individuals across successive generations and often vast spatial geography. Historian Angela Woollacott’s monograph, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture* (2015) valuably illuminates the importance of this shifted awareness in understanding Australian history:

⁵² See Margaret Kohn and Kavita Reddy, ‘Colonialism’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), at <www.plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/colonialism/>, viewed 5 Nov. 2017.

⁵³ Banks’ testimony before the House of Commons: see *Journals of the House of Commons*, 19 Geo. III, 1779, Vol. 37, p. 311.

⁵⁴ The First Fleet carrying 1,530 people, 759 of them convicts, was a complement of 11 ships (9 hired plus two naval vessels, the flagship ‘HMS Sirius’ and ‘HMS Supply’). The Fleet left Plymouth on 13 May 1787, reaching Botany Bay on 18 January 1788; after eight days it relocated under Captain Arthur Phillip some kilometres north to Port Jackson, where the first settlement was established at Sydney Cove/Warrane on Gadigal lands. See <www.australianhistoryresearch.info/the-first-fleet/>.

⁵⁵ The only surviving draft copy of the lost original, entitled *Draught Instructions for Governor Phillip*, 25 April 1787, from King George III (composed by Lord Sydney), is held in the collection of the British Public Records Office, London. This is ‘the only known physical remnant of the original document which set out the constitutional foundation of the Colony under Captain Arthur Phillip’; see

<www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/objectsthroughtime/draughtinstructions/index.html>, composed 2006, updated 2011; viewed 1 July 2012.

⁵⁶ *Draught Instructions for Governor Phillip*, 25 April 1787.

⁵⁷ Stephen Thompson, interpretation composed 2006 for NSW’s online-only Migration Heritage Centre, as above, viewed 1 July 2012. See also <www.foundingdocs.gov.au/item-did-35.html>, bearing a similar para., viewed 1 July 2012.

Recent work in imperial and world history has refocused attention on the category ‘settlers’, a term that has been reinvigorated through the imperative to better understand historical processes of colonialism.⁵⁸

There is now much clearer understanding and evidence of how extensively the framework of ‘settler colonies’ formed a ‘settler society network’ of British-occupied territories that became transnational in its global reach. This network entailed overlapping values of racism, white supremacy, and a generally unquestioned drive to dominate pre-existing indigenous peoples in lands taken for the imposition of British authority, military power, and exploitation of resources. Drawing on extensive research and evidence, Woollacott has emphasised the interwoven links among the early British colonies in Australia, including conceptions of ‘what it meant to be a free “white” settler in an empire based on racial hierarchies’:⁵⁹

[I]t is important to see these fledgling colonies not only as a connected continental network, but as part of the globally expanding British Empire. ... [S]ettlers in Australia understood that their own prosperity and security were linked to the fortunes of the British Empire in other colonies, and directly identified as Britons when imperial interests were attacked.⁶⁰

Successive British colonies established in the 17th, 18th and early-19th centuries imposed the character of a society transplanted from the other side of the world. Recent research on Australian *colonial art* has also highlighted the links that operated across an imperially networked structure of values. Art historian Alison Inglis has emphasised ‘the extent to which [Australia’s] colonial cultural infrastructure was dominated by a larger imperial system, centred in Victorian Britain.’⁶¹ Meanwhile, the 19th century Intercolonial and International Exhibitions held in Australia’s main colonial capitals (in Sydney and Melbourne) were significant civic and educational instruments solidifying the bonds of Empire:

[V]isitors from the colonies were invited to imagine themselves [as] part of a family, trans-imperial Anglo-Saxon subjects who, notwithstanding their differences, were racial kin connected through an imperial network.⁶²

Important insights into this interconnected framework have been disclosed in some exhibitions of the last two decades. For example, a significant exhibition presented at the National Gallery of Victoria in 2005, *Exiles and Immigrants*, ‘incorporated ideas of Empire and the connectedness of Australian culture by drawing on ... scholars from Australia, the UK and the USA to ensure that art and ideas crossed both national and disciplinary boundaries.’⁶³ A further significant exhibition,

⁵⁸ Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015, p. 4.

⁵⁹ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 4.

⁶¹ Alison Inglis, ‘Imperial Perspectives on Art in Nineteenth-Century Australia’, in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2011, Ch. 5, 55–70; p. 55.

⁶² Penelope Edmonds, ‘“We think that this subject of the native races should be thoroughly gone into at the forthcoming Exhibition”: The 1866–67 Intercolonial Exhibition’. *Seize the Day: Exhibitions, Australia and the World*, Kate Darian-Smith, Richard Gillespie, Caroline Jordan and Elizabeth Willis (eds), Monash University ePress, Melbourne, 2008, pp. 4.1–4.21.

⁶³ Catherine De Lorenzo, Joanna Mendelssohn, Catherine Speck, ‘1968–2008: Curated exhibitions and Australian art history’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, No. 4, June 2011; published online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/de-lorenzo-et-al_paper-ed.pdf>, 1–15; pp. 9–10 (citing Patricia Tryon MacDonald, *Exiles & Emigrants: Epic Journeys to Australia in the Victorian Era*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2005).

more recently mounted by the NGV in Melbourne – *Colony: Australia 1770–1861/Frontier Wars*⁶⁴ – was based on sustained research and a strategic approach of contrasting two contrary historical subjectivities: the instrumental positivism of the colonisers contrasted with dispossession and devastation of Aboriginal people, deprived of their natural resources and country while also subject to frontier violence. This exhibition employed a two-part division to encompass the process of colonisation (in the first part), as witnessed in the advance of visual art records and scientific collecting in the colonial period; meanwhile the second part was then presented semi-autonomously on an upper floor, incorporating works of contemporary Indigenous artists providing current responses to themes of frontier violence and massacres in Victorian history.

Such ventures represent a new kind of conceptualisation of cultural history emergent in art museums: presenting ‘settler’ and multiple local Aboriginal experiences of history (through contemporary review) as radically contrasting while interacting and juxtaposed.⁶⁵ As will be explored further in Chapter 6 (dealing with Indigenous cultures’ incorporation in art museum collections) and Chapter 7 (analysing Bernard Smith’s historical stratification of Australian art in a dichotomous schema) the thesis at many points highlights a disjunction, throughout much of the later-20th century. Differing attitudes are evident between Australian art museums and Australian art history on fundamental questions of the cultural linkage of their two distinct histories within an interconnecting framework of a common nation.

Meanwhile Angela Woollacott’s research on the concerted impetus of social values, race-frameworks, and shared political objectives among British colonies has disclosed interrelated biographies traceable through particular *family histories* in the early-19th century Australian colonies. The evidence of these links has substantiated her view that, ‘The decades from the 1820s to the 1860s constitute a foundational period in Australian history, arguably at least as important as Federation.’⁶⁶ The work of another historian, Lisa Ford, has been enjoined in Woollacott’s analysis, with particular reference to indigenous violence in settler colonies, based on comparison of records from the US and Canada with similar evidence from New Zealand and Australia:

Ford argues that between the specific years of 1822 and 1847, settler colonies in the Anglophone world articulated their own sovereignty by asserting their jurisdiction over indigenous peoples ... [Meanwhile] settler courts defined indigenous violence as crime and asserted their right to punish it; in so doing, they conflated sovereignty, territory and jurisdiction.⁶⁷

1.5 Australian museums as laboratories of evolutionary science, colonialism and imperialism

Historical patterns of deference to Empire, and an axial view tilted towards Great Britain for framing values in Australia, can be traced through the development of museums and public

⁶⁴ See the sumptuously illustrated publication, *Colony: Australia 1770–1861/Frontier Wars*, catalogue and historical essays by multiple authors (and contributing artists), Cathy Leahy and Judith Ryan (eds), National Gallery of Victoria, 2018, published for the twinned exhibitions presented at the NGV, Melbourne, both opening on 15 March 2018.

⁶⁵ See especially the monographic study of Australian exhibitions in the later-20th century: Joanna Mendelsohn, Catherine De Lorenzo, Alison Inglis and Catherine Speck, *Australian Exhibitions: Opening Our Eyes*, Thames & Hudson, Melbourne, 2018.

⁶⁶ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 2.

⁶⁷ Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2010, pp. 1–3, quoted in Woollacott, p. 5.

galleries as institutions serving a dominant *socius*⁶⁸ but radically restricted *polity*. Within the knowledge systems naturalised by museums, a series of prejudicial frameworks contouring indigenous peoples steadily hardened: variously from legal exclusion, material dispossession, physical confinement, abuse and – in documented instances – group-murder. It is important to understand the structural background to these events, which can lead along many different pathways, from accommodation and misreading to successive killings and outright massacre.⁶⁹

Angela Woollacott's examination of archives of correspondence held in the Mitchell Library, NSW, and the State Library of Tasmania can illuminate important *museum histories* connected to imperial racism and dispossession in Australia's founding colonies. In particular, Woollacott's research has disclosed 'the interconnected network of the Macleay, Darling, and Dumaresq families' (with prior personal connections in England in the early 19th century), and their pervasive influence on colonial affairs in New South Wales. These links even extended to Tasmania in the case of the Dumaresq family:

From the 1820s to the 1850s, this intermarried British clan not only ranged from the colonial elite to middle-ranking settlers, and spanned New South Wales and Van Diemen's land, but had connections to India, Mauritius, Canada, and the Caribbean.⁷⁰



Governor (and General) Sir Ralph Darling (1772–1858),⁷¹ whose wife Eliza was of the Dumaresq family,⁷² provided an 'initial lynchpin'⁷³ for this network in Sydney when he arrived in 1824. Darling's position was reinforced when his 'powerful colonial secretary',⁷⁴ Alexander Macleay, arrived from England the next year, in 1825, to act as the civilian leader in a population of some 10,000 in a colony not forty years old.⁷⁵ Alexander Macleay also became connected to the Dumaresq family through two of his daughters' marriages in Sydney. One daughter, Susan Macleay, married William Dumaresq and lived at Rose Bay;⁷⁶ another daughter moved with her Dumaresq husband to India for the rest of her life, finding a place within the social ramifications of the British Raj on that subcontinent, while still returning occasionally for family visits to Sydney.⁷⁷

⁶⁸ The Latinate term *socius* (denoting a theoretical concept of social connections within a human gathering) is deliberately preferred here, in contrast to *society* – the more familiar term that naturalises a sense of these relationships as being both functional and sustaining live interpersonal connections. Indigenous people in Australia were long relegated to a *socius* status, without real inclusion within Australian *society* – though always present as dispossessed 'wards of the state' in reality.

⁶⁹ For details of the Myall Creek Massacre, and the eventual legal prosecution and conviction of some of the guilty, see further (below) in this chapter.

⁷⁰ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 17.

⁷¹ See 'Darling, Sir Ralph (1772–1858)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, MUP, Melbourne, 1966; online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/darling-sir-ralph-1956/text2353>.

⁷² 'Darling [Ralph]', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1966.

⁷³ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 17.

⁷⁴ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 17.

⁷⁵ Peter Stanbury and Julian Holland (eds), *Mr Macleay's Celebrated Cabinet: The History of the Macleays and their Museum*, The Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, 1988, p. 24.

⁷⁶ Stanbury and Holland, *Mr Macleay's Celebrated Cabinet*, 1988.

⁷⁷ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 17.

The avid collecting of natural history specimens by Alexander Macleay was expanded later in Sydney when his similarly-inclined son, William, arrived from the Caribbean, after a long period in Cuba. The Macleays' extensive natural history acquisitions, including *type specimens* from diverse source-countries, later provided the basis for 'the oldest natural history collection in Australia',⁷⁸ today held within the University of Sydney. The Macleay Museum's collection meanwhile 'originate[d] in the cabinets of Alexander Macleay', and 'expand[ed] through the collecting networks of the Macleay family from Darwin to Raffles, from Cuba to Wagga Wagga'.⁷⁹

Alexander Macleay's grand home, Elizabeth Bay House, designed by the most distinguished colonial architect of the period, John Verge, was begun in 1835⁸⁰ on an extensive land-grant secured for himself by Macleay at Elizabeth Bay (under questionable circumstances of self-preferment at the time, to which Governor Darling had turned a blind eye). Macleay's ambition achieved an impressive, landscaped garden of numerous paths, harbour views and carefully acquired plantings. Its expansive scale, as Sydney colonial historian Grace Karskens has noted, was also 'used to justify the second dispossession of Aboriginal people there, for it had transformed "stunted and unsightly bushes" into "a spacious garden ... tributary to the taste and advantage of civilised man"'.⁸¹ The commanding hill-site of Elizabeth Bay House and its estate-views encompassing the harbour to the distant Port Jackson Heads enabled it to become 'the finest house in the colony'.⁸² The project almost bankrupted Macleay senior, requiring William to defray his father's debts and take over. The still-remarkable house survives (restored) today as a public museum in Onslow Avenue, Elizabeth Bay, maintained in fine condition as a *house museum* within the NSW government portfolio of 'Sydney Living Museums'.

However, domination of indigenous peoples and even toleration (by some) of slavery were linked within the Darling-Macleay-Dumaresq families' histories and political values – and here again Angela Woollacott's detailed research is crucially illuminating about the attitudes and networks of some of the leaders of Sydney's colonial society in the period when they formed centres of power and influenced the most notable early museum collections formed in New South Wales. The eldest daughter of Alexander Macleay, Fanny (Frances Leonora), wrote deprecatingly of the black slaves she observed during a stop-over at Rio de Janeiro when first travelling from England to Sydney with her parents. Her Rio experience included seeing a newly-arrived slave ship and auctioning of African men in chains at the port. Fanny commented in a letter from Brazil to her brother William Macleay (then in Cuba):

[T]he Slaves here [in Rio] seem as idle, as thoughtlessly happy, and as well fed as one could [*sic*] to see any persons.⁸³

⁷⁸ See details on the Macleay Museum's history at: <www.sydney.edu.au/museums/collections/macleay.shtml>, viewed 1 August 2018.

⁷⁹ Macleay Museum's history, *ibid*.

⁸⁰ Stanbury and Holland, *Mr Macleay's Celebrated Cabinet*, 1988, p. 24.

⁸¹ Grace Karskens, *The Colony: A History of Early Sydney* [2009], Allen & Unwin, Sydney 2010, p. 545; the contemporary description quoted is from the *Sydney Gazette*, 28 May, 1831.

⁸² See further on scale and quality of Elizabeth Bay House, Sydney Living Museums, at <www.sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/finest-house>.

⁸³ Letter from Fanny to William [Macleay] 12 June 1826. Earnshaw and Hughes (eds), *Fanny to William*, p. 57, quoted in Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 18.

Yet in her social accomplishments Fanny had trained as an artist and exhibited in the Royal Academy in London, was skilled in drawing natural history specimens, and was a well-informed conversationalist in Sydney when two French naturalists⁸⁴ visited her father's home and famous collections 'cabinet'.⁸⁵

Meanwhile Henry Dumaresq, who was private secretary to Governor Darling in the 1820s in Sydney,⁸⁶ had earlier served in the colony of Mauritius under Darling.⁸⁷ According to Woollacott's research, Henry and his brother Edward were involved in frontier violence in the Armidale region of New South Wales, where they had pastoral interests. Meanwhile family records revealed a longer history of violence in which both brothers were engaged 'across multiple imperial sites' – such experience included 'wars, exposure to the dispossession of indigenous people in North America, and in Henry's case, his administration of enslaved people in Mauritius'.⁸⁸ After the earliest penal settlement of Van Diemen's land (established first as a military outpost in 1803 against any French incursion), the island became the primary destination for transported convicts. Meanwhile the ravaging hunger for land by new 'settlers' attracted to the colony was at the heart of colonial affairs: '[B]y the early 1830s most of the island's land suited to agriculture and pastoralism had been granted or sold'.⁸⁹ John Batman's unlawful move from northern Van Diemen's Land in 1835,⁹⁰ to take over Kulin country and expand pastoral ranges in the Yarra hinterlands of the Port Philip settlement, was a direct consequence of this situation.

A letter of 4 December 1830 from Henry Dumaresq to his brother Edward was quite explicit about the Black War in Van Diemen's land – in which Edward had participated.⁹¹ Henry gave brotherly counsel about the efforts of Governor George Arthur and the failed venture of the Black Line, in November 1830,⁹² organised 'to lay hold of [the] Hostile Tribes' in Tasmania:

I am quite sorry to learn that your operations against the Black Natives have been ineffectual. It has been right however, to have made the efforts which have been made. ... Having done his best [ie. Governor Arthur], and who can do more, I would now endeavour to Extirpate the Enemy, or I do not see how people are to be found who will venture into the country.⁹³

In her magnificently searching, and – where Aboriginal-related historical sources survive – subtly *cross-cultural* history of colonial Sydney, historian Grace Karskens ends her *Epilogue* chapter with some observations about Elizabeth Bay House and Alexander Macleay's ambitious estate-scaping, which elicited a *Sydney Gazette* judgment of 12 May 1831, that Macleay 'deserved the boon

⁸⁴ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 28.

⁸⁵ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 28.

⁸⁶ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 28.

⁸⁷ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 28.

⁸⁸ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, pp. 23–24.

⁸⁹ Woollacott, *Settler Society in The Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 8.

⁹⁰ See James Boyce, *1835: The Founding of Melbourne and the Conquest of Australia*, Black Ink, Melbourne, 2013.

⁹¹ Woollacott, 2015, pp. 23–24. The Black War ended only after the Robinson-deceived capitulation of Aboriginal bands, when the Big River Mob and other remnant groups finally entered Hobart with their leaders to 'treat' with Governor Arthur in 1832.

⁹² A.G.L. Shaw, 'Arthur, Sir George (1784–1854)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/arthur-sir-george-1721/text1883>, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 27 July 2017.

⁹³ Woollacott, 2015, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 29.

[of his large land grant], and has well repaid it'. Grace Karskens concludes her entire monograph on Australia's first Colony with the following final sentence:

This, after all, is the oldest fiction about land in European Australia: the belief that the way people used land, the kind of labour they invested in it, underpins claims to rightful possession and who really belongs.⁹⁴

1.6 A denial of Aboriginal history within a disordering of national memory

Over time – in fact more than two centuries – national awareness of Australia's British origins, at least in settler-society terms, has forgotten the horizontal links *across* early colonial social and cultural histories under Empire. History-telling has narrowed to more linear narratives of the evolution of the separate colonies coming together eventually as a nation, often highlighting their individual interrelations with the British Crown and institutions more than the networked connections of their joint evolution historically. There has been a consequential fading of perception of the spatially extended alliances in social history that once secured the radial spread of British dominion across vast areas of the globe.

However, as this chapter highlights, Australia's British occupation and the advance of 'settler society', dissembling the raw facts of conquest, proceeded with a profound disordering of a common *socius* through colonialism. The present thesis takes the view that, in addition to conquest, displacement, frontier violence, and 'dispersal' of Aboriginal people from the main cities to the fringes, hinterlands and 'outback', the prolonged denial of Aboriginal history in Australia's assembling of a national history shaped a profound deformation of political institutions, commemorative symbolism and collective consciousness. The suppression of the realities of Aboriginal history – both before and after British conquest – guaranteed an enduring 'haunting' and dystopic disordering of narratives about the progress of society in Australia's earliest colonial formations.

Museums and galleries, as much as libraries and archives, are crucial sites for tracing any changing understandings of national history. In many respects, European museums, in their late-18th and 19th-century emergence, or reconstitution as public institutions, were both incubators of universalising Enlightenment knowledge and nurseries of new nationalist narratives. In the case of museums established within the frameworks of Britannia's *Imperium* – such as all the museums founded in the Australian colonies, but also impacting in reversed presumptions of many museums that emerged at the same time in Victorian England – the Imperial/nationalist conjunction was postponed in colonies not yet joined. Empire and British prototypes at first provided the co-ordinating structure of social stratification, commercial enterprise and cultural unity that Australia's early museums upheld, while evolutionary science purveyed the domination of nature they proselytised. Alison English has well highlighted the analogous structures conveyed through frameworks of both art and science in Australian museums of the Victorian period:

The importation and subsequent transformation of British artistic templates in Australia can, in part, be understood as cultural parallels to the botanical and biological imperialism of the early acclimatisation

⁹⁴ Karskens, *The Colony*, 2009, p. 545.

societies, which promoted the ideal of a colonised land intensively shaped by ‘disciplined human activity’ into a new, improved version of the Old World.⁹⁵

The parallels between natural science and social ordering are significantly suggestive of the interrelating concepts and parallel activities shaping Australian museums of the Victorian period.

The structural deformations of history-telling in the Australian colonies, ignoring Aboriginal dispossession, introduced diseases and resource-deprivations that depleted populations in the early years, similarly failed to analyse Aboriginal reprisals against the new pastoralists or the reasons for conflict. Despite the presence throughout Australian history of individuals who did not approve, or even fiercely protested Aboriginal abuse, a veil of silence was generally drawn over frontier conflict, food poisoning and massacres.⁹⁶ A remarkable exception was the 1838 Myall Creek massacre of up to 28 Wirrayaraay men, women and children in the New England region, NSW, and the subsequent trial and execution of 7 white men involved.⁹⁷ It was considered noteworthy at the time simply because there *had* been legal prosecution and punishment for what was repeated and unregulated persecution of Aboriginal people across blood-soaked frontiers and vast reaches of conquered lands and disposed peoples of the period. A principal effect was closer settler silence afterwards about any comparable events.



The annual commemoration of the Myall Creek Massacre today, and its recent translation into contemporary art projects by some of the nation’s leading Indigenous artists (in an 180th-year commemorative exhibition at the New England Regional Art Museum in 2018),⁹⁸ marks a significant change through which art museums are participating in a re-writing of history more inclusively – through the resources of *art and cultural creativity* today.

However, in addition to acts of abuse or deliberate killings, similarly absent from public consciousness in the 19th century was the continuing suppression of Aboriginal people’s culture and social structures on *missions* (under churches and missionaries), or confinement on widely dispersed *reserves* ‘to which Aboriginal people were forcibly relocated’ under successive government administrators or Protectors, while others were removed entirely and families forever separated and sundered.⁹⁹ The Hermannsburg mission, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter would become the setting for the remarkable emergence of Arrernte artist Albert Namatjira in the

⁹⁵ Inglis, ‘Imperial Perspectives on Art in Nineteenth-Century Australia’, 2011, p. 55 – Inglis cites P. Fox, *Clearings: Six Colonial Gardeners and Their Landscapes*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2004, p. xvii.

⁹⁶ See Henry Reynolds’ compilation of historical documents of racism in his, *Dispossession: Black Australians and White Invaders*, Allen & Unwin, 1989. See also Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998.

⁹⁷ See Mark Tedeschi, ‘The Myall Creek massacre re-examined’, *Inside History Magazine*, 4 June 2014, at <www.tracesmagazine.com.au/2014/06/the-myall-creek-massacre-re-examined/>.

⁹⁸ See Rachael Parsons and Bianca Beetson, ‘Myall Creek and beyond’, *AMaGA Magazine*, Vol. 27(2), Australian Museums and Galleries Association, Canberra, Winter 2019, pp. 46–51. (Artists invited by NERAM responded to an invitation to build an exhibition that also supported contemporary reconciliation of descendants of the three parties involved – those who committed the massacre; those massacred; and those who prosecuted the crime.) The small images-panel here is indicative of images and artworks (for research support only). Requests for reproduction-quality images should be referred to the Director, New England Regional Art Museum (NERAM), Armidale, NSW.

⁹⁹ See ‘Mission and reserve records’, and guides to their location around Australia, maintained on the website of AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies), accessible at <www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/finding-your-family/family-history-sources/mission-and-reserve-records>.

1920s. And his personal history, becoming the first nationally famous Aboriginal artist after he began exhibiting in 1928, arose through a reflexive negotiation of ideas across two different worlds of contrary belief systems and adjustments to modernity – as taken up in Chapter 6.

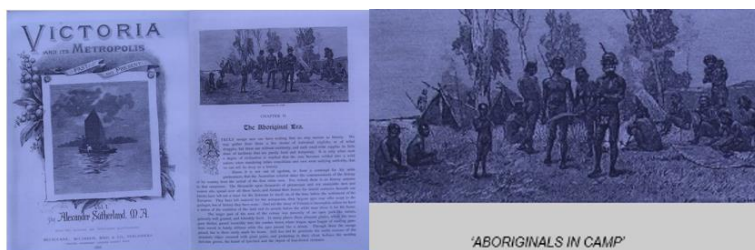
Across more than two centuries, in so many different contexts, visual imagery vicariously accompanied, and in diverse ways interpreted and advanced the colonial repression of Aboriginal people in Australia. Such processes also directly engaged the formation of the various colonial museums, libraries and galleries in the 19th century in manifold ways. Yet the continued existence of Aboriginal people was always brought to mind at times of historical commemoration of events marking settlers' progress.

1.7 Commemorative history and falsified memory: The Victorian centennial jubilee (1888)

Historian Tom Griffiths has emphasised how social Darwinism was gaining currency in settler history interpretation concomitantly with 'the first rash of Australian centennial and jubilee celebrations'.¹⁰⁰ In response to prolonged settler anxiety about a landscape that 'seemed to resist or elude emotional possession'¹⁰¹ or any construction of past association for Europeans, deterministic ideas were crafted to fill a void of troubling disconnection:

[M]ost historical writings of this [first centennial] period reflect the belief that Aboriginal decline was inevitable and necessary. Although Darwinist theories allowed more open discussion of death on the frontier, the reasons and responsibilities for the death were further veiled.¹⁰²

An example from an 1888 commemorative publication by an early historian, Alexander Sutherland, produced for the Melbourne centenary of establishment of the NSW colony (which had originally included Victoria), is suggestive of the disordering of history that is explored in various chapters of this thesis. The psychological force of commemorative imagery produced by an illustrator for a colonial centenary is no less powerful for appearing in a book rather than a museum. An illustration below is taken from the 1888 volume, *Victoria and its Metropolis: Past and Present*. After a first chapter celebrating the achievements of settlement, 'Chapter II: The Aboriginal Era', opens under an illustration imagining 'Aboriginals in camp':



L., C., and R: Illustrations from Robert LJ Ellery and Alexander Sutherland, *Victoria and its metropolis: Past and present*, McCarron, Bird, Melbourne, 1888; Ch. 2, opening page.

The text begins with a singularly framing paragraph:

A truly savage race can have nothing that we may narrate as history. We may gather from them a few stories of individual exploits, or of tribal struggles, but these are without continuity ... [T]he Australian colonist dates the commencement of the history of this country from the arrival of the first white men. For, indeed, there is no

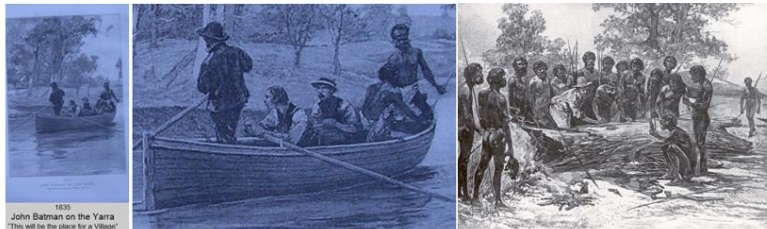
¹⁰⁰ Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p. 107. See esp. Ch. 5, 'Past Silences', pp. 103–120.

¹⁰¹ Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, 1996, p. 103.

¹⁰² Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, 1996, p. 107.

history anterior to that occurrence.¹⁰³

As an example of the power – and intentional collusion – of visual imagery in purveying ‘false history’, an illustration followed which radically misrepresents the Kulin nations’ purported agreement in Batman’s takeover of their lands around Port Phillip and the Yarra river and wetlands, near the present site of Melbourne. Two Wurundjeri men are placed in Batman’s boat as if willing parties to the specious 1835 ‘treaty’,¹⁰⁴ by which the Kulin people lost control of their lands and ancestral country, the coordinates of their human history, society and culture.¹⁰⁵ The visual invention of the relationships depicted is purposive in its historical deception.



L & C: Illustration from Robert LJ Ellery and Alexander Sutherland, *Victoria and its metropolis: Past and present*, McCarron, Bird, Melbourne, 1888; Ch. 2, opening page [“”]; R: ‘An artist’s impression of Batman’s treaty with Port Phillip, Australia aborigines in 1835 for the purchase of 600,000 acres of land’, 1886, unknown artist, published in the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*, Picturesque Atlas Publishing Company, Sydney, 1886, 2 vols; vol. 1. p. 161.]

The 1888 Jubilee occasion in Victoria caused a more exaggerated fancy than a slightly earlier version imagining the ‘Batman treaty’ scene, by an unknown artist, which was published in the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia* in 1886. The Jubilee publication two years later conveys the power of picturing in an extreme sleight-of-mind. It shows how ideological investment in scenographic renditions of a *performative history* can shape a purposive misconception in the *social imaginary* of a colonial society. It also demonstrates the agency of visual images in forming iconographic components of an ideological gathering of false narrative within national memory.

The challenge of subjecting a huge variety of records to the questing obligations of history is especially sharp in reconsidering the prolonged extolling of Batman’s illicit actions in founding the city of Melbourne, and the sustained colonial fancy around the nature of the ‘contract’ involved. Again, various works by visual artists were early enlisted to conjure an imagined historical scenario whereby Batman and his Port Phillip Association party offered blankets, mirrors, shirts and knives to Wurundjeri men for a takeover of ‘240,000 hectares of prime farming terrain – almost all of the Kulin nation’s ancestral land’.¹⁰⁶



John Wodder Bagg, *Batman's treaty with the aborigines at Merri Creek, 6th June 1835 (oil on canvas, c. 1885)*, State Library of Victoria, pictures collection.

¹⁰³ Robert L.J. Ellery and Alexander Sutherland, *Victoria and its Metropolis: Past and Present*, McCarron, Bird, Melbourne, 1888; Ch. 2, opening page.

¹⁰⁴ See Bain Attwood, *Batman's treaty and the matter of history*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Details from Victorian state archives website, at <www.ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/explore-history/colonial-melbourne/pioneers/batmans-treaty>, accessed 9 September 2018.

¹⁰⁶ State Library of Victoria, details on the Burt painting of Batman’s treaty at Merri Creek and its subject matter (including lands seized) are recorded at URL <www.ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/node/852>.

John Wesley Burt's rendition of Batman's Treaty (also produced to mark the 1888 British centenary in Victoria) provides a case of a poor-quality painting that is nevertheless an absorbing study of false history and fraudulent ethnography – despite spears, shields and *mia-mia* details furnished to suggest authenticity. In numerous details, gestures, and sub-arrangements of figures, the proliferation of Kulin men 'hanging around' and freely making eye contact with Batman and his intruding men, this is more like a provincial English market scene than a social encounter between two completely different cultures at the borders of empire. A Kulin elder's shoulder-clasping interaction and full-face contact with Batman at the centre of the composition is a fantasy. Such spuriously pictured first-encounters, while never likely to gain a place in a public institution as 'art' are nevertheless significant resources for study of the pictographic inventions that once passed as public versions of 'history'. The John Wesley Burt painting belongs to the State Library of Victoria, which is the most suitable institution for its display – where it merits study as a document of expansively falsified social history.

Historical interpretation in the 20th century has continued to produce fanciful constructs about Batman's actions and their significance. Even the national academic project of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* produced remarkably deceptive commentary in the entry on John Batman (1801–1839) published in 1966. Summing up Batman's incursion into Kulin lands of the Port Phillip district ('illegal' under even British colonial authority at the time), the following assessment of Batman's character and actions was committed to authoritative record:

[Batman] grasped a chance that many may have seen, but no other seized, and initiated a free colony on a basis consistent with the welfare of its Aborigines. ... Cursed by common failings, he yet had a grand intention and perseverance to back it, was brave and considerate, capable of bluff, but fundamentally honest.¹⁰⁷

A later historian, Bain Attwood, probed further into the contradictions of Batman's conduct, noting that he 'was not someone of delicate conscience, yet he was disturbed by what had happened on that [Van Diemen's Land] frontier and what he himself had done there'.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, Batman indubitably tried to 'legitimise' his and other Van Diemen's Land pastoralists' knowingly illicit reach for control of Kulin lands on the continental mainland, through the contrivance of his spurious treaty.



In sharper personal testimony, Batman's former neighbour in northern Tasmania, the distinguished colonial artist John Glover (1767–1849) who emigrated from England late in life, had more pointed views. Glover had various close-range dealings with Batman, including in the company of Aboriginal men Batman had brought from the Sydney region as go-betweens in local matters in northern Tasmania. Glover's own art carried considerable effort to imagine recent history as a co-cultural scenography of a shared landscape, despite the facts of the Black War and the constraints of his background as an immigrant English pastoralist with a fondness for Arcadian pictorial constructs. Art historian Ian McLean has commented: 'A beneficiary and critic of Tasmania's genocide that shamed an Empire, [Glover's] paintings reverberate with stories of

¹⁰⁷ P.L. Brown, 'Batman, John (1801–1839)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/batman-john-1752/text1947>, published first in hardcopy 1966.

¹⁰⁸ Bain Attwood with Helen Doyle, *Possession: Batman's Treaty and the Matter of History*, Melbourne, 2009, p. 39.

frontier wars if we have the ears to listen.’¹⁰⁹ Glover himself had extensively drawn Palawa people ‘from life’ as studies for paintings,¹¹⁰ but also – remarkably for the time – introduced them to his studio¹¹¹ to view his allegorical landscapes and see how they appeared in his works. The art historical literature, however, records an autograph inscription by Glover on a now-lost painting that described Batman as ‘a rogue, thief, cheat and liar, a murderer of blacks and the vilest man I have ever known’.¹¹²

1.8 The order of ‘civilisation’ and public institutions replacing ‘savage’ nature

The notion of supplanting Aboriginal people as ‘savages’ had numerous trajectories throughout Australian records in the 19th century. It was a repeated reference-point in recitations of colonial progress, and it even persisted as a projection well into the 20th century. Judge Redmond Barry, when he laid the foundation stone for the National Library of Victoria on 3 July 1854, having earlier assisted in a similar role at the founding of the University of Melbourne, was explicit in his sense of history:

Seventeen years have scarcely elapsed since the foundation of the colony which was then inhabited by savages. Probably in the world's history no country has attempted to found both a University and a Public Library within a score years of its first settlement.¹¹³

These ideas are striking enough as employed in the 1850s. However, more startling is the fact that more than a century later, Eric Westbrook, Director of the National Gallery of Victoria when it opened at its new St Kilda Road site in 1968, saw fit to quote Barry’s remarks – without any contextualising comment – in the ‘Introduction’ to the NGV’s new monograph on its history and collections, published for the opening.¹¹⁴ Further analysis in this thesis on ‘primitivism’ in art, and other delimiting concepts projected onto Aboriginal culture and history, is taken up in Chapters 2 and 6 – each dealing in different ways with Indigenous arts and culture, and their impact on both museums and an evolving nation. It is of interest to note that Redmond Barry in fact acted in his legal capacity (without expected recompense) as ‘unofficial standing counsel for the Aboriginals’¹¹⁵ in defending Aboriginal people charged under Victorian law.¹¹⁶ According to a 1969 biographical account by Peter Ryan:

¹⁰⁹ Ian McLean, ‘Colony, NGV’, review in *Artlink*, 13 April 2018, accessible at <www.artlink.com.au/articles/4669/colony/>.

¹¹⁰ Ian McLean, ‘Figuring Nature: Painting the Indigenous Landscape’, in David Hansen et al, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and Art Exhibitions Australia Limited, TMAG, Hobart, 2003, 122–131, passim, but esp. p. 131.

¹¹¹ McLean, ‘Figuring Nature: Painting the Indigenous Landscape’, 2003, p. 131.

¹¹² Curator John McPhee, quoted within catalogue entry on John Glover’s painting, *Ben Lomond from Mr Batman’s Ground*, c. 1834, in Hansen et al, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*, 2003, p. 209; also cited by *National Museum of Australia*: <www.nma.gov.au/engage-learn/schools/classroom-resources/multimedia/interactives/batmania_html_version/whos_who> (viewed 9 September 2014).

¹¹³ Eric Westbrook, ‘Introduction’, *The National Gallery of Victoria*, Thames and Hudson, Melbourne, 1968, pp. 7–17, p. 8.

¹¹⁴ Westbrook, 1968, *ibid*.

¹¹⁵ Peter Ryan, ‘Barry, Sir Redmond (1813–1880)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 3, MUP, Melbourne, 1969; <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/barry-sir-redmond-2946/text4271>, accessed 12 February 2018.

¹¹⁶ Barry’s views were certainly not Darwinian, and his interest in Aboriginal people was genuine and complex – see Edmonds, ‘“We think that this subject of the native races should be thoroughly gone into at the forthcoming Exhibition”...’, 2008.

[Barry's] interest in the Aboriginals was general and lasted all his life. Though he accomplished for them little of practical value, his open-minded and unprejudiced approach was in advance of that of many even of the most liberal of his contemporaries.¹¹⁷

Such judgments cannot dispel discomfort today about Barry's remarks when speechifying. However, the fact that he would conjure a prehistory of *savagery* when referring to Aboriginal people is not so much a comment on his personal character as simply proof of how routinely such concepts were employed as *leitmotifs* to accompany civic occasions of celebratory colonial advance.

1.9 Empire's varying calendars of progress

In Australia's founding colonial formation, the early expunging of Aboriginal people from human *history* through repeatedly-employed tropes of ascribed *savagery*, *nomadism* and *barbarism* mobilised an encompassing distortion of chronological reality. The sources of these 'types' created through evolutionary natural science is explored in detail in Chapter 2. An additional burden accrued, however, through Australia's conflicted colonial sense of progress as a distant outpost of Empire. The result was the drastic reduction in the sense of human presence that 'settler' history itself projected through an historical calculus marked by the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. Such an *emptying out* of history's operations on *terra Australis* shaped the variously grandiose or self-deprecating notions of human progress conjectured for more than two centuries after the first British officers' tents were pitched in high summer near Governor Phillip's 'canvas house' erected on the eastern shore of Sydney Cove.¹¹⁸

Years later, in the early 20th century, outstanding art publisher, patron, and AGNSW trustee Sydney Ure Smith's career was, in the view of art historian Nancy Underhill, caught up with the period's 'obsession' with the shaping of Australian history and 'the search for a sense of place'. This was, in Underhill's view, 'premised on the hope that once Australia possessed a past, somehow the present would make sense and the future could be structured'.¹¹⁹ Australia's perceived youth maintained an obsessive hold in all ideas about nationhood, which was sharpened by the First World War. The Australian War Memorial's conceptualiser, Charles Bean, had judged that '[W]hereas all other countries are made, Australia is a country still to make.'¹²⁰ However, there were other frameworks in play since the 19th century that marked Australia's wealth and pastoral growth as distinctly different from Britain, despite continuing filial desires for linked identity within Empire.

¹¹⁷ Ryan, 'Barry [Redmond]', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1969. See also, for a balanced understanding of Redmond Barry, Anne Galbally, 'The Development of Public Museums, Libraries and Art Galleries in Colonial Australia', in A. Galbally and A. Inglis (eds), *The First Collections: The Public Library and the National Gallery of Victoria in the 1850s and 1860s*, exh. cat., University Gallery, University of Melbourne Museum of Art, 14 May–15 July 1992, 8–29; and Ann Galbally, 'Patron of the Arts at the Antipodes', *The La Trobe Journal* (Redmond Barry Number), Vol. 73, Autumn 2004, 5–18.

¹¹⁸ See Paul Ashton, 'East Circular Quay', *Dictionary of Sydney*, 2008, online at <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/east_circular_quay>, viewed 26 July 2015.

¹¹⁹ Nancy DH Underhill, *Making Australian Art 1916–49: Sydney Ure Smith, patron and publisher*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 7.

¹²⁰ CEW Bean, *In Your Hands, Australians*, Cassell, London, 1918, p. 13 – quoted in Humphrey McQueen, *The Black Swan of Trespass: The Emergence of Modernist painting in Australia to 1944*, Alternative publishing Cooperative Limited, Sydney, 1979; Ch. 1: 'A Country Still to Make', p. 2.

The four decades from the 1820s to the 1860s, a ‘foundational period in Australian history’ in Angela Woollacott’s analysis, were in many ways driven by an artificial recreation of England’s past, a hemisphere away from its much-changed parental source:

Industrialization was transforming Britain, but the southern colonies were in a pre-industrial state, with economies driven by pastoralism, agriculture, mining, mercantilism ... and the construction trades, as well as imperial government expenditure.¹²¹

Austrian-born Eugene von Guerard’s painting of a large property near Mt Keilor, Victoria, in 1867 was one of many such accomplished pictures Von Guerard painted as pastoralist commissions. It provides ample testimony to the extent of private landholders’ consolidation of their holdings within a mere few decades in the southern colonies under a system that arose initially through convict banishment. Aboriginal figures also appear in some of Von Guerard’s paintings.



However, they are invariably pictured as small-scale accessory figures, either hunting or with modest fires still burning near *mia-mia* shelters, seeming passive-witnesses to ‘settlement’ and expansion, rather than shown resisting or dispossessed by the loss of their lands, communities and sustaining ways of life.

Revisiting 19th-century history for *Aboriginal versions* of expansionist pastoralism, the visual archive of the colonial process includes a small but invaluable corpus of alternative experience recorded by contemporary artists of the era. For example, the folders of drawings compiled by Tommy McCrae (Yackaduna or Warra-euea people, c.1835–1901)¹²² are remarkable for their varied depictions of a colonial process when Aboriginal cultural continuity still adjusted with some communal force to the incursions of land clearing and disruptions of traditional culture and a hunting economy. McCrae’s diverse and finely detailed drawings are today highly valued and cared for in our major libraries and art museums.



A tribally educated man, McCrae ‘witnessed confrontations between his relatives, the traditional owners of the land and settlers’ who by the 1830s had ‘occupied Kwatkwat territory and introduced large herds of livestock’¹²³ in the Murray Valley area near Corowa, disrupting the long history of traditional practices and Aboriginal uses of local resources in the region. Curator and historian Daniel Thomas recently highlighted these drawings ‘made ... for sale, to a market of local squatters and travellers’, as the ‘first masterpieces of cross-cultural art’.¹²⁴ A culturally sensitised reading, meanwhile, can restore their Yackaduna voice and historical witness to disruption and change under the early Victorian colony.

¹²¹ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 2.

¹²² Andrew Sayers, *Aboriginal artists of the nineteenth century*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, in association with the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 1994.

¹²³ Both these works are today held by the University of Melbourne. See information in the University of Melbourne archives, at <www.blogs.unimelb.edu.au/archives/the-story-of-how-corroboree-by-indigenous-artist-tommy-mcrae-came-to-the-university-of-melbourne-archives/>.

¹²⁴ Daniel Thomas, ‘Aboriginal Art - Who was interested’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, No. 5, 2011, 1–8; p. 2; published online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/daniel-thomas-document.pdf>.

William Barak (1823–1903), the last traditional *ngurungaeta* (clan leader) of the Wurundjeri-willam clan among the Woi wurung people of the lands around Melbourne, similarly produced a remarkable corpus of paintings recording his ancestral kinship lines and once-spacious Country spanning lands alienated through Batman's infamous 'treaty' of 1835 (in which Barak's father had been enlisted in the fraudulent transaction).¹²⁵



Barak's now-prized drawings were produced when he remained a leader of remarkable force of character while confined with his community at the Corranderk Reserve near Healesville, east of Melbourne.¹²⁶ These works are also 'masterpieces of cross-cultural art' (and they are contemporary with McCrae's work). However, it is important to recognise also that they speak with a special and unique force to the descendants of Barak, and they do so in a voice of cultural authority and continuity, with their 'inside' song undiminished, while they may also be bearers of invaluable cross-cultural voice to the wider society. Barak's own remarkable life carried his address to both sets of relationships.

Throughout 19th century colonial history, the spread of freed former convicts, land-granted settlers, large-scale pastoralists with vast holdings, and small-scale squatters occupying remaining land up and down the east coast of Australia, was collectively shaping the idea of a pastoral society that emulated an earlier period of English history. This framework looked back beyond the actual blighting effects of industrialisation in contemporary England. Australia's idealised pastoralism was freed of belching smoke-stacks, grim factories or William Blake's 'dark Satanic mills' that exploited new labour for growing industries in Britain's overcrowded large cities of the north.

In Australia, by contrast, a differentiating pattern of history was gaining form. Angela Woollacott, again, has examined primary settler-document sources that have highlighted this process, as 'the weight of British population shifted from unfree to free ... [and] colonies dramatically expanded their territorial control ... [while] settlers and officials alike had grand plans for colonial possibilities'.¹²⁷ The social imaginary prevailing in the young colonies, for those who had gained vast tracts of land and other forms of wealth in a short period, was often of a clean-slate pastoralism and expansive mercantilism within ever-expanding imperial frontiers. Notable features of land-occupation in the early-19th century were in fact 'settlers' dependence ... on intertwined categories of unfree labour, including that of poorly compensated Aborigines, and indentured Indian and Chinese labourers, alongside that of convicts.'¹²⁸ Interactions with Aboriginal clans and communities varied: 'Knowledge, both tacit and articulated of frontier violence ... shaped the settlers' lives; as also, for many, did more peaceful interactions with Aboriginal people.'¹²⁹

¹²⁵ See <www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/william-barak/william-barak-king-of-the-yarra/>, accessed 28 July 2018.

¹²⁶ See 2018 source on Barak's life, (above).

¹²⁷ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 2.

¹²⁸ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 2.

¹²⁹ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 2015, p. 2.

1.10 Imperial vision, Antipodean resistance: Legacies of Bernard Smith

The British conquest of the peoples and lands later federated in 1901 to form an Australian nation was always accompanied by streams of visual imagery emanating in the European imagination, and challenged by the new realities afforded by the observational practices of scientific record. One of the most significant expositions of these processes remains art historian Bernard Smith's (1960) *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768–1850*, subtitled *A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*,¹³⁰ and developed from his field-defining investigation of original sources in London in 1949–50.¹³¹

Bernard Smith produced a comprehensive analysis of how visual art changed in both its character and contents through Europe's 'discovery' of the Pacific, through Cook's three great voyages and the tantalising array of new knowledge these voyages harvested in multiple branches of natural history and new social sciences, while also impacting throughout literature, drama and other cultural fields. Smith's study of visual images, as primary records generated in an Enlightenment context of expanding empirical knowledge, disclosed 'the practice of art as an informational activity'.¹³² Structuring the *evidence* of newly recorded phenomena, and thereby shaping both *information* and *interpretation*, was a new role for art developed in the 18th century. Bernard Smith later reviewed a key outcome of his research in a 1979 lecture to the Australian Academy of Humanities – revisiting his first archival work in London three decades earlier:

The history of the visual arts in Europe between 1750 and 1890 ... can best be understood, I would argue, as the steady, relentless and continuing triumph of empirical naturalism over classical naturalism.¹³³

As Smith demonstrated – often linking original journal-records and works of art not previously connected – a new naturalism (based on carefully recording things seen) displaced earlier traditions of classical naturalism (imagining an idealised Graeco-Roman past), as the need for accurate records of empirical data required increased observation of new phenomena in unfamiliar contexts. Meanwhile, in focusing on visual records, *European Vision and the South Pacific* traced how science impacted in reverse upon *stylistic developments in art*, forming (as Smith later recapitulated) a 'kind of vision which seeks an aesthetic reality in a sequence of impressions'.¹³⁴ Bernard Smith even argued that this impression-recording activity long preceded the *plein-air* atmospheric notations of French Impressionism in the history of art – one of his many original, concept-shifting perceptions.

¹³⁰ Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768–1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1960.

¹³¹ The background concerns and research for *European Vision* are well covered in Bernard Smith's autobiographical work, *Pavane for Another Time*, Macmillan Art Publishing, Melbourne, 2002, and his later commissioned biography by Sheridan Palmer, *Hegel's Owl: The Life of Bernard Smith*, Power Publications, Sydney, 2016.

¹³² Bernard Smith, 'On the Art of Cook's Voyages' [1979], introduced by Ian Donaldson as 'Art as information: Reflections on the art from Captain Cook's voyages', in Rex Butler and Sheridan Palmer (eds), *Antipodean Perspective: Selected Writings of Bernard Smith*, Monash University Publishing, 2018, Ch. 13, 175–188; p. 187.

¹³³ Smith, 'On the Art of Cook's Voyages' [1979], in *Antipodean Perspective: Selected Writings of Bernard Smith*, 2018.

¹³⁴ Smith, 'On the Art of Cook's Voyages' [1979], in *Antipodean Perspective: Selected Writings of Bernard Smith*, 2018, p. 187.

Above all, and of great consequence for many disciplinary fields within the humanities and the history of science, *art* in the period examined by Bernard Smith was producing the raw materials of new historical constructs about human subjects – especially concerning the peoples and societies first encountered by the British during the early Pacific voyages. This included first observations of coastal Aboriginal peoples of mainland Australia. Finally, a crucial aspect of Bernard Smith's work for the present investigation was his theorisation of European-based visual traditions as the basis for the later development of *Australian art* after 1788 – a theme taken up particularly in the last chapter of the thesis (Chapter 7), which also examines the reasons for Smith's regrettable, and seriously deforming, exclusion of Aboriginal art in his historical exposition of Australian art throughout most of his life.

1.11 Correspondences between pictures and texts: '*Ut pictura poesis*'

Any longitudinal awareness of cultural traditions within Western art must include the rich resources of visual/verbal analogies arising (especially following Renaissance humanism's revival of classical sources) from Horace's '*Ut pictura poesis*' – or, 'as with painting, so with poetry', framing a direct correspondence of visual and verbal meanings.¹³⁵ Similarly, the resonant concept of *ekphrasis* (a description of a work of art as a rhetorical literary device), is often an active element in the cross-over between visual arts and literature. Throughout the historical scope of the present analysis, the thesis emphasises two very different traditions configuring Australian cultural history in the 20th century. Two contrasting histories are delineated within a long-partitioned social imaginary.

However, an aim of the thesis is to find links that might shift perceptions, to suggest some frameworks that enable parallels while not eliding difference. In this vein, it is possible to bring comparisons that might highlight Aboriginal culture's intense intertwining of verbal and visual experience as concentrated in the ancestral songlines. In their poetic invocation of history and memory they form a kind of *Indigenous poesis* and *Aboriginal ekphrasis*: as the images and narratives traverse country and communities through visual and performed elements renewed in the transmission of ceremonies historically, and as signalled in all performative occasions today of a Welcome to Country.¹³⁶

1.12 Artists, visualised history, and reimagined nation

Visual images, and in the absence of images, *visualising* past events, play an important role in historical imagination. Images are similarly powerful vehicles for the composition of memory.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ The classic text for mobilising analysis of this tradition in Western art remains Rensselaer W. Lee, '*Ut Pictura Poesis*': The Humanistic Theory of Painting, *Art Bulletin*, College Art Association, USA, Vol. 22 (4), 1940, available online at <www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00043079.1940.11409319>.

¹³⁶ One of the most arresting evocations of the performative power and inflection of ancestral song cycles is to be found in Theodore (Ted) Strehlow's transcription of Arrernte chanted narratives – Strehlow, *Songs of Central Australia*, 1971; and for Strehlow's complex history see the compendious and subtle study by Barry Hill, *Broken Song*, 2012. See also Paul Carter, for the tragic-poetic framework of Strehlow-related events mobilised in his study, *The Lie of the Land*, Faber, London, 1996.

¹³⁷ See the important work associated with the French *annalistes* school of history, and the immense project of memory-gathering guided by Pierre Nora, published progressively in volumes (1984 to 1992) as *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Gallimard éditions, France); abridged translations successively published by Columbia University Press as *Realms of Memory*:



L: Sydney Cove, Port Jackson in the County of Cumberland - F. F. de la Roche, 1789, National Library of Australia, Canberra (Sydney Cove, Port Jackson in the County of Cumberland - from a drawing made by Francis Egge in 1788); Francis Wheatley, [Governor Arthur Phillip], 1786, National Portrait Gallery, London; Fountain commemorating Governor Arthur Phillip, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.

Visual images, and in the absence of images, *visualising* past events, play an important role in historical imagination. Images are similarly powerful vehicles for the composition of memory,¹³⁸ and shape important contents within the social imaginary of a particular community or nation. Images also provide special resources for condensing particular *moments* within a larger narrative structure, highlighting significant details, and thereby forming values and shaping meanings within a particular scenography of recalled action historically. In subtle ways thereafter, visual images may repeatedly leverage the mnemonics of re-imagined history through their renewed picturing of events that occurred in the past. The faculty of visualisation continues to play a strong role in this process, which also signals the power of art images to anchor episodes of historical interpretation when they enter a collective imagination; and when there, they engage larger historical concepts that shape a sense of shared heritage when transmitted inter-generationally.

Despite the abundance of early topographical and other records of Sydney Cove and related colonial sites since the late 18th century, large-scale commemorative paintings of the first British landings were not generally produced until after Federation, and in some ways responding to the new 'national' polity after 1901. Such paintings were fanciful compositions, based on conjectured versions of events depicted, and constructed long after their factual occurrence. Many details had long lapsed from shared memory. For example, over the two centuries after the First Fleet's anchorage it was quite forgotten where the first flag was actually raised in Sydney Cove – such that detailed search of records was necessary recently to re-establish the original location (which was not at the south-western end of Circular Quay, named First Fleet Park today, but further north near The Rocks, towards Campbell's Cove).¹³⁹

Rethinking the French Past, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996–1998. Nora's valorisation of orally conserved memory in communities, as a counter-force to the reliance on written documents and selective histories published by historians, is a strong body of work lending support to the importance of oral history within Aboriginal cultural histories. See also Bernice Murphy, 'Memory, History and Museums', in *Museum International*, vol. 57, no. 3, [Cultural Diversity and Heritage thematic issue], UNESCO, Paris & Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, September 2005, 70–77. More recently, see Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'The Future of the Past: History, Memory and the Ethical Imperatives of Writing History', in *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, vol. 8, 2014, 149–179.

¹³⁸ See the important work associated with the French *annalistes* school of history, and the immense project of memory-gathering guided by Pierre Nora, published progressively in volumes (1984 to 1992) as *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Gallimard éditions, France); abridged translations successively published by Columbia University Press as *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996–1998. Nora's valorisation of orally conserved memory in communities, as a counter-force to the reliance on written documents and selective histories published by historians, is a strong body of work lending support to the importance of oral history within Aboriginal cultural histories. See also Bernice Murphy, 'Memory, History and Museums', in *Museum International*, vol. 57, no. 3, [Cultural Diversity and Heritage thematic issue], UNESCO, Paris & Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, September 2005, 70–77. More recently, see Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'The Future of the Past: History, Memory and the Ethical Imperatives of Writing History', in *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, vol. 8, 2014, 149–179.

¹³⁹ See argument and evidence for locating the event on the west side of Circular Quay, near Campbell's Cove, in Rod Davis, 'The landing Place and Flag Raising Ceremony', online posting at <www.fffsouthernhighlands.org.au/?page_id=628>, viewed 20 Sept. 2018.



L. E. Phillips Fox, *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770* (1902), National Gallery of Victoria. R. Algernon Talmadge RA, *The Founding of Australia. By Captain Arthur Phillip R.N. Sydney Cove, January 26th 1788*, oil on canvas (1937; one of two versions); on display in Parliament House, Sydney.

The two versions presented here of historic ‘claiming moments’ – E Phillips Fox’s (1902) Federation-commemorating portrayal of Captain Cook stepping ashore in 1770 at Botany Bay; and Algernon Talmadge’s 1937 conjecture of the inaugural flag-raising at Sydney Cove in 1788 – are both imagined scenarios of authoritative British landings.

It is the work of *history* to test the details of any representation against surviving evidence in historical records. And both paintings cited here are on an equivalent level of extravagant fancy in composing the scenes they depict – long distant from the events that provide their subject matter. However, Phillips Fox recalls Cook’s decision, noted in Banks’ journal entry of 28 April 1770,¹⁴⁰ for several musket-shots to be fired when the two Gweagal warriors challenged the first British ‘landing’ on Dh’arawal coastal country. One was wounded ‘on the legs but he minded it little’, according to Banks. An understanding of political history affords crucial tools to highlight the ideological investment in imperial imagery and sovereignty figured in the premonitory land-claiming of Cook’s commanding arm-gesture. Yet the pictorial devices in play reach beyond textual accounts or other primary evidence.

Visual art employs visual techniques and repertoires of representation, including psychological, social, and cultural constructs that shape perception. And perception is ultimately a complex intellectual operation shaped by prior concepts, not a random optical event. It is the work of *art history* to consider the models and conventions of visual representation that each of the paintings above employs – especially their gestures, figure composition, and narrative details. Art history also appraises how each is a bearer of conventions of ‘heroic style’ within a tradition of history painting. However, still more is at stake in determining the quality of outcomes.

Art historian Ian McLean has analysed the structure of the Phillips Fox *Landing*, to argue that ‘in a most didactic manner, [it] puts Aborigines in the firing line’, while ‘opposite the Aborigines, symbolically waiting to take their place, is the Endeavour anchored in the bay’.¹⁴¹ Another art historian, Leigh Astbury, had earlier noticed the narrative framework as unusual for the Federation period in its reimagining of the confrontation in such direct terms, while popular suppression of the facts of invasion by then preferred a more fanciful construct. This is evident in a disapproving comment in a 1902 review of the Phillips Fox painting in the Melbourne *Herald*: ‘It is not well for

¹⁴⁰ Joseph Banks, HM Bark Endeavour Journal (*The Endeavour Journal of Sir Joseph Banks, 1768–1771*, Mitchell Library, NSW), entry dated 28 April 1770 – University of Sydney Library, Scholarly Electronic Text and Image Service, Sydney, 1997.

¹⁴¹ Ian McLean, in *White Aborigines: Identity Politics in Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p. 60. See also Ruth Zubans, ‘The Captain Cook picture’, *Emanuel Phillips Fox His Life and Art*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 1995, 97–100.

young Australians to look upon Cook's landing as a shooting down of helpless Aboriginals'.¹⁴² Fox's interpretation had gone too far into the historical records for settler society composure. There has been closer attention recently of such a revisionary process as a collective tendency of the period:

[M]any of Australia's contemporary historians have been at pains to show how much of early twentieth century historiography was devoted to the silencing of historical truths that might cast the newly emergent nation in a negative light.¹⁴³

However, it is the work of *art criticism* (an informed response to the particular characteristics and achievement *within* works of art) and (an older term) *connoisseurship*, associated with appraising the relative aesthetic character and comparative lineages of cultural objects,¹⁴⁴ to make judgements about differing *results* between artworks. Here the radical divergence between the skills of these two paintings becomes significant.

Phillips Fox's painting choreographs a dramatic scenario, carefully grouping Cook, Joseph Banks, and slightly in the rear, botanist Daniel Solander as the history-defining protagonists:¹⁴⁵ The figures are richly painted in solid forms, dynamically contrasted within a gripping tableau. The three 'subsidiary' figures closest to the viewer turn inwards, mobilising action and funnelling attention towards the Gweagal challenge in the distance – with the Gweagal warriors visualised after some study of historical archives.



Phillips Fox's narrative employs an astute choreography of staged encounter. His paint-handling fills the picture with subtle details and varied touch. His composition repays close scrutiny: of Solander steadying his gait with raised elbow on the uncertain terrain of a foreign land; of the anxious tension in the averted profiles of the two mariners gulping air in readiness for conflict. The second painting, however, is from a journeyman academician (Algernon Talmadge RA), and weakly

¹⁴² A remark in the *Melbourne Herald*, 4 December 1902, quoted in Leigh Astbury, *Sunlight and Shadow: Australian Impressionist Painters, 1880-1900*, Bay Books, Sydney, 1989, p. 209; see further discussion of Fox's composition and its depiction of Aboriginal defeat in Ian McLean, *White Aborigines*, 1998, pp. 59–60.

¹⁴³ Sheila Collingwood-Whittick, 'Disremembering the colonial past, appropriating Indigenous attachment to place: problems of memory and identity in settler Australia', Catherine Delmas & André Dodeman (eds), *Remembering Place*, Peter Lang, 2013, 161–179. Online at <www.academia.edu/39661613/Disremembering_the_colonial_past> (5 Feb.2019)

¹⁴⁴ 'Connoisseur' (from [Fr.] *connaître* – to know, or be acquainted with). A classic early-20th century text was Max J Friedländer, *On Art and Connoisseurship*, trans. Tancred Borenius, B. Cassierer, London, 1942; later Erwin Panofsky's *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, New York, Doubleday, 1955, was a pivotal publication contrasting art history and connoisseurship. See later again, Svetlana Alpers, *The Concept of Style*, ed. Berel Lang, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1987; Richard Wollheim's *Painting as an Art*, 1987, and Simon Schama, *Really Old Masters: Age, Infirmary, and Reinvention*, 2006 – the last two both A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts [series], National Gallery of Art, Washington. The subject of connoisseurship remains important, especially for art museums. Meanwhile art history's theoretical attentions have shifted elsewhere in recent decades, focusing variously on ideological investments in perception (including cultural and gendered view-points); and a socialised subjectivity structuring aesthetic encounters and 'the gaze' (whether of artist-creator or interpreting audience).

¹⁴⁵ Zubans, 'The Captain Cook picture', 1995, 97–100.

performed throughout. The assembly of middle-ground figure-groups is repetitive, the gestures bombastic, the interactions clichéd. The entire historical scene is mawkishly imagined, the paint-handling and details stolidly pedestrian.



Much later in the 20th century, Queensland artist Gordon Bennett (1955–2014) brought a very different analysis and new resources to another scenario of first encounter involving Cook. Bennett's technical devices produce a collision of Aboriginal western desert dot-screens with pixillated image technology and the scattered layering of Jackson Pollock's 1952 (NGA-owned) *Blue Poles*. Bennett asserted an Indigenous fracturing of representational codes and cultural values¹⁴⁶ in his 1991 reordering of James Cook's northern coastline landing at *Possession Island* in 1770. In Gordon Bennett's rendition, a black figure is isolated, centrally presenting 'the toasting glasses'. Indigenous witness and agency are centrally asserted in a counter-interpretation of Cook's possession-taking of the Australian continent in the name of the British Crown – as portrayed in a source-engraving published in 1865 in the *Illustrated Melbourne Post*.

Daniel Boyd, another historically-scrutinising artist of Aboriginal heritage, spent three months at the Natural History Museum in London in 2012¹⁴⁷ researching the Empire's relationship to colonised peoples, and in particular the collecting of human remains. Like Bennett, but with different tools and painting methods, Boyd has also dismantled the signifying systems of western visual art and reinterpreted historical tropes that projected a triumphalist vision of British colonisation. In his 2006 work, Boyd overturns relationships of conquest and vassalage projected in Phillips Fox's 1902 imagining of Botany Bay in 1788 – with the Gweagal warriors now replaced by *Xanthorrhoea* grass trees (the colloquially-known 'black boys') in this disordering adjustment of values and details (Cook's eye-patch added below a raider's skull), and the addition of a text that furnishes the defiant title: '*We Call Them Pirates Out Here*'.



These two 'history paintings' reveal how visual languages and embedded social codes of representation can be dynamically reconjugated by artists – effectively producing new counter-

¹⁴⁶ In the incorporation of image-structures from Jackson Pollock's iconic painting, *Blue Poles*, Bennett of course alludes to a more recent ecology of imported cultural values (overlying British colonial foundations) as signalled in the National Gallery's turning to acquire highest-price American artworks acquired for Australia's *national* art collection in the Whitlam era – while Aboriginal culture's foundational claims continued to be denied. Gough Whitlam's government paid \$A1.3 million for Jackson Pollock's *Blue poles* in 1973 (c.\$A12.6 million in 2020 values) – although the estimate for the work's market value today would be c.\$A175 million. Such inflationary 'monetisation' of intangible cultural values is also alluded to acerbically in Bennett's schema.

¹⁴⁷ Daniel Boyd, of Kudjira/Gangalu heritage, was born in Cairns, 1982; he was notably included in *Culture Warriors*, the first *National Indigenous Art Triennial*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2007, curated by Brenda L Croft.

historical narratives, performed in the *scopic* and *specular* domains¹⁴⁸ of historical interpretation. In other words, how we picture historical events *performatively* forms just as powerful a force in social imagination as historical interpretation moulded by documents and textual narrative.

In a linked framework, these few comparisons about differences in *quality*, *codes*, and *ideas* employed in visual art, are introduced to acknowledge the variety of resources and conventions in play – and ultimately, their varying accomplishment – when human experience is portrayed by artists. These comparisons also highlight how diversely *invested* are the multiple and often competing ideas of the world conveyed in visual forms; and how actively the agency of vision, shaped by both artists and circumstances of patronage (when existing), merit recognition as bringing social values, imaginative invention, and also ideological agency as shaping factors in all forms of visual art representing historical experience.

However, in a second and much more important framework – one that rotates in this thesis through successive chapters yet at crucial points returning to interconnect its three themes – both Gordon Bennet’s and Daniel Boyd’s works speak to further issues. They are evidence of far-reaching changes in the re-interpretive work of Australian history, social development and cultural repertoires developed over more than two centuries. And they demonstrate the power of *visual art* to activate intellectual resources that arouse complex ‘re-castings’ of history, enabling a reimagination of historical relationships within a changed choreography of nationhood today.

The new intellectual resources that contemporary artists bring to their work are sharply demonstrated in the paintings just described. It is not simply that the last two paintings have been produced from vantage-points of Aboriginal heritage as well as a reflexive understanding of western traditions of art. They are also incisively critical and resourcefully intercultural. Inventing new frameworks and rhetorical devices *against the grain* of received history, they assertively contest and reorder narratives of *evolving nation* that have serviced official histories over some 230 years.

1.13 Conclusion

A new generation of younger Australian historians (though this is yet to be achieved comparably in Australian art history) is today able to embrace three constituent streams of Australia’s history, while perceiving their often-precarious balance in an ideal polity. ‘Of the three strands of our national story’, Billy Griffiths has stated in *Deep Time Dreaming* in 2018 – strands that he now unhesitatingly declares as ‘the indigenous, settler and multicultural pasts’ – the task of successful interconnection of these strands is noted as still a work in progress: ‘[I]t is the first that we most struggle to comprehend and accommodate’.¹⁴⁹ Griffiths here echoes Bagaarmugu and Guggu Yalanji leader Noel Pearson’s articulation for some years of a three-stranded heritage requiring political leadership nationally. Pearson has outlined the need to achieve ‘an Australia that

¹⁴⁸ The *scopic* domain is employed here to indicate the realm of visualised actions that accrue in the pictorial imagining or actual experience of occurrences in the external world; *specular* adds the notation of *mirroring* that may be conveyed in visual imagery, through reflection of concepts and images from the society that has produced them.

¹⁴⁹ Billy Griffiths, *Deep Time Dreaming: Uncovering Ancient Australia*, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2018, p. 2.

recognises and honours this country's indigenous heritage, affirms its British institutions and history, and celebrates our commitment to multicultural diversity within unity'.¹⁵⁰

Such a vision is explored in many themes structuring this thesis project. However, there is a need highlighted throughout to take a more thoughtfully critical view of how the 'British institutions and history' strand so strongly precluded the 'Indigenous' strand from recognition or rightful inclusion on terms of its priority of possession of Country and continuing right to resources, as well as its own aspirations for ongoing development and maintenance of communities and culture. The 'multicultural diversity' strand is not investigated in this thesis, although its potentiality is implicitly affirmed throughout. The various chapters of the present project analyse a history that in so many ways precluded Aboriginal recognition or fair treatment of first peoples when a British convict colony at Botany Bay was first advocated to Parliament in London by Joseph Banks in 1779,¹⁵¹ following his earlier presence at Cook's first moment of Australian shore-stepping in 1770, on Dh'arawal/Gweagal lands at Botany Bay.

The thesis investigates the heritage of European knowledge-forming concepts and historical processes, signalled above, while projecting its conclusions towards an analysis of museum developments in Australia in the 20th century, with *art museums* as the hub of the institutions examined. Since historical processes form reverberant currents in museum histories, the project also includes some recursions at critical points to museums' background in the 19th century. It occasionally also backlights connections from the 18th century that were crucial influences shaping Australia's colonial history. However, the thesis is geared principally towards a study of significant cultural changes in the 20th century, in which visual art, museum collections, and the many contingent aspects of the life of our *art museums* have represented Australia's history of evolving social development, creativity and possible cultural futures.

In the reordered and inclusive polity projected throughout this thesis investigation, diverse immigrants who have arrived over the last two centuries since the First Fleet's anchorage would gain their own unique entry-points temporally within the warp and weft of a complex Australian cultural history. A longer time-frame would also reach to earlier Indigenous contacts with foreign peoples centuries ago, if the inter-cultural contribution of Macassans¹⁵² and other visitors, including Afghan cameleers and their marital and other relations with Aboriginal clans, is added to a larger perspective – for Afghan religious worship certainly has a small foothold very early in the history of Australian architecture (in which one of the first mosques created in galvanised iron in outback Australia still survives).

For Australian museums and public galleries to be reshaped today towards a more unifying role that our knowledge institutions might perform, incorporating a full integration of Indigenous heritage, an innovative task could be a reconsideration of the museum concept in its ancient classical-era Greek forms, based in poetry, philosophy, art, and study of the natural world – while

¹⁵⁰ Noel Pearson, 'It's time for another true visionary', *The Australian*, 23 December 2017.

¹⁵¹ Banks' testimony before the House of Commons, *Journals of the House of Commons*, 19 Geo. III, 1779, Vol. 37, p. 311.

¹⁵² See Marshall Clark and Sally K. May (eds), *Macassan History and Heritage: Journeys, Encounters and Influences*, ANU ePress, Australia National University, Canberra, 2013, online at www.press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p241301/html/imprint.xhtml.

also revisiting the political anchorage of a democratically constituted *polis* as an ideal museum setting.¹⁵³ For all its faults and exclusions, there was a remarkable sense of mutuality and public accountability of all parties making up the Athenian *polis*: ‘Athenian leaders were called to account more than any other such group in history.’¹⁵⁴ Such reorientation of a museum’s roles and responsibilities would also include critical review of the Roman forms that extended but then fundamentally changed and distorted the Greek heritage, redirecting museums along new paths shaped by imperialism, and often invested in concentrated resources amassed under colonialism and dispossession of Othered peoples and cultures. The Greek perspective, on the other hand, strongly weaves together tangible and intangible heritage,¹⁵⁵ opening possibilities for the reinvention of the museum in multiple cultural forms,¹⁵⁶ and for museums to be understood through a more *performative sociality* in their many incarnations and reflexive roles as varying knowledge-centres within contemporary society.¹⁵⁷

The thesis argues that a larger historical compass is needed to reconsider the elements required for an inclusive *socius*: one that could remodel the scope of museums in Australia today, while also embracing their many different histories, characters, core purposes and collections (with some institutions – such as public galleries focused exclusively on exhibition programs – not distinguished by collecting at all).

In the interconnecting perspectives on museums and history taken up in the chapters that follow, Australia’s Indigenous peoples are recognised throughout in their historical priority, and in the fullness of their own long history of *inclusive social community* and resourceful management of *ancestral Country*. This is understood as a country known in ancient ways as *terra nota* for millennia before the Roman language enunciated a jurisdictional concept such as *terra nullius*. The thesis argues that it is compelling ethically that first peoples be enabled to shape their intellectual,

¹⁵³ The Greek invention of the Athenian political form of *shared autonomy* of a democratically elected state power, as a unique episode in human history, is important in this context, which has received intensive renewed attention in recent decades by Greek social theorist, Cornelius Castoriadis. Castoriadis has emphasised the ‘uniqueness’ of the Athenian political form, contrasting it to the neighbouring Phoenicians’ retention of an autocratic kingship model of political power, though having a similar set of political circumstances and possibilities in the same period. See Gillian Robinson, ‘The Greek Polis and the Democratic Imaginary’, *Thesis Eleven*, February 1995, 40(1): 25–43.

¹⁵⁴ Mogens Herman Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*, transl. J. A. Crook, Blackwell, Oxford, 1991.

¹⁵⁵ See the *UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972); the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003) – available from the UNESCO website.

¹⁵⁶ See the *UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, 2005 (UNESCO website); and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007) available from the UN website.

¹⁵⁷ The various volumes of the 14-vols. *Cambridge Ancient History* series (Cambridge University Press) provide researched guidance to any period of ancient Greek history. It is not overlooked here that Greek society depended on the labour of slaves supporting the democratic political state; that Greek city-states were sustained by war among neighbouring states and foreign powers for resources; that Greeks established settlements (but not colonies) in Mediterranean territories (notably in southern Italy and Sicily); or that the most senior roles in intellectual, cultural and political life were predominantly performed by men – yet there is much to retrieve of the role of leading women (especially in literature, drama and philosophy). The deficiencies of the Greek city-state model and its legacy do not preclude study of the remarkable achievements of its shared cultural and intellectual endeavour to be revisited today (as argued in the writings of Cornelius Castoriadis, cited above, and further, below). See also Pierre Lévêque and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Cleisthenes the Athenian: An Essay on the Representation of Space and of Time in Greek Political Thought from the End of the Sixth Century to the Death of Plato*, Open Humanities Press, 1996.

social, cultural and environmental contributions to Australia's present and future, while securing the continued development of their own evolving contributions to cultural history.

Finally, the Arrernte songs quoted in the opening passages of this chapter stand symbolically for *all* ancient songlines, in their long-evolving mapping of Country,¹⁵⁸ while proposing their transformative presence in museums within a newly apprehended *cultural imaginary* – a term mobilised throughout this inquiry as a partner and sometimes component of the *social imaginary*.¹⁵⁹ Such a transformation in awareness in museums today, if resourcefully extended, would link all peoples¹⁶⁰ who have brought their own songs and experience from distant places to join the ancient songlines. It would interweave all ancestral stories that call up a long-past as configuring multiple, contemporary connections within a culturally diverse modern nation.

* * * * *

End of Chapter 1

¹⁵⁸ See the United Nations *Declaration on the World's Indigenous Peoples*, 2007.

¹⁵⁹ In addition to his analysis of the Greek city state, noted above, Cornelius Castoriadis has been among the most important theorists of *the social imaginary*. Castoriadis has repeatedly described the sense of common bonds that form the social imaginary, asserting that 'the central imaginary significations of a society ... are the laces which tie a society together and the forms which define what, for a given society, is "real"'. (Quoted in John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* [1984], Polity Press, Oxford, 1991, p. 24.) Among his extensive publications, see especially Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* [Fr. 1975], Blackwell, UK, 1987.

¹⁶⁰ See the UN *Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948 – with one of these fundamental rights being the right to participate fully in cultural life, although cultural rights prove to be among the hardest of all rights to define in a juridical framework.

Ch.2: Aboriginal culture and society framed by natural history and anthropology

- 2.1 Aboriginal peoples as subjects of natural history and 'primitivised' culturally
- 2.2 Australian colonialism and the rise of evolutionary science
- 2.3 Imperial unity, 'white civilisation', and primitive Otherness
- 2.4 E.B. Tylor, the founding of anthropology at Oxford, and a 'hard primitivism'
- 2.5 The remarkable scientific career and impact of W.B. Spencer (1860–1929)
- 2.6 Oxford museological legacies in Spencer's development
- 2.7 Spencer's 'hard primitivism' and Aboriginal extinguishment framework
- 2.8 Museum developments, natural history and anthropology in Australia
- 2.9 Aboriginal collections' disposition in natural history museums
- 2.10 Anthropology consolidated in Australia: Adelaide and Sydney
- 2.11 Founding of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS)
- 2.12 Spencer's role as a patron of art and artists in Australian society
- 2.13 Conclusion

Chapter 2

Aboriginal culture and society framed by natural history and anthropology

This chapter steps back in time. It interconnects and contrasts different literatures, academic enterprises and methodologies shaping museums¹ and their visual representation of knowledge concerning Aboriginal society and art. The chapter introduces the field of anthropology and its early role in natural history museums, moving beyond a primary focus on art institutions alone as the main field of the thesis inquiry. In the process it draws a longer historical bow to highlight formative frameworks in place *prior* to the 20th century – which otherwise forms the main period of close-focus analysis in the thesis inquiry. In Chapter 6, the institutions of art will provide the framework for analysis of how attitudes to 'Aboriginal art' were formed, and then progressively changed in the sphere of art museums, throughout the 20th century.

Aboriginal culture and society are explored in this chapter as viewed through frameworks of natural history, ethnology, and early anthropology, highlighting the work of particular anthropologists in the 19th- and early-20th centuries. The analysis below explores the impacts of these disciplines on museum collections and displays that lasted far into the 20th century, with direct implications for art museums and their capacities – or even their institutional permission – to present similar subjects involving Indigenous cultures, especially material that might be framed as 'Aboriginal art'. More broadly, the chapter explores the intellectual interests articulated in museums' representation of knowledge of the natural and human worlds, and the attitudes these institutions shaped in Australia's interpretation of its wider history, its social and cultural development, and its self-interpretation as a nation.

¹ See Ch. 1, fn. 1: Note on 'museums'/'galleries' terminology in this thesis. The final sentence is crucial concerning the present chapter: 'Sometimes the generic term *museums* is sufficient (and includes art galleries alongside science-based museums); at other times both terms are needed, to distinguish contrasts between very different types of institutions. Context should make clear whether a unifying or differentiating framework is employed.'



[L & R] John Watt Beattie, *The Tasmanian Room*, 1900, albumen prints, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, acquired 1989.
 [R] Installation view (in TMAG, Hobart) of three John Glover works: L-R: *Mills' Plains*, *Ben Lomond*, *Ben Lomond & Ben Nevis in the Distance* (1836); TMAG, Hobart; *The Bath of Diana*, *Van Diemen's Land* (1837); NGA Canberra; *Mount Wellington and Hobart Town from Kangaroo Point* (1838); TMAG Hobart and NGA Canberra; exhibition view (at TMAG) of *'The National Picture'*, *The Art of Tasmania's Black War*, Curated Tim Bonyhady and Greg Lehman, NGA, Canberra, 2008.

Anthropologist Howard Morphy's challenging article, 'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery', published in 2001,² provides a useful framework for orienting this chapter. In an academic journal issue, from ANU's Humanities Research Centre, this article produced a significant scoping of the historical evolution of Aboriginal art's representation in Australia's state and national galleries from the point of view of one of the most distinguished anthropologists nationally, with a highly influential position internationally. Compressing many wide-ranging issues of interpretation of Aboriginal art within the scope of one article, the text provides a useful springboard for a more longitudinal review of key arguments raised – including reference to Morphy's further development of his position in later publications.³

'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery' reviewed the historical role of art museums (or public *galleries* in British nomenclature) in the representation of Australia's Indigenous cultures. Some positions were declarative and challenging about disciplinary responsibilities. After calling Australian art museums to account for their alleged exclusion of Aboriginal art until the later-20th century, Howard Morphy's essay early raised the issue of 'primitivism' concepts within modern art's development and took a strong stand that distanced anthropology from any role in the creation of the concept of 'primitive art':

The myth concerning the role of the anthropologists in the creation of [the] otherness of primitive art has no historical basis. Indeed in the Australian case anthropologists have played a major role in the process of including Aboriginal art within the same generic category as other people's art, and there is evidence that anthropologists have played a similar role elsewhere.⁴

In a concern to test these and related historical claims, the analysis that follows in this chapter explores the development of scientific studies focused on Aboriginal society and culture in the 19th and early-20th centuries, with particular attention to an emergent anthropology and its framing of attitudes to Aboriginal art. A particular case-study emphasis is pursued below in examining the remarkable career of natural scientist Walter Baldwin Spencer, whom Howard Morphy has highlighted in multiple publications as a pioneer in the study and reception of Aboriginal culture – accentuating an anecdote from Spencer's note-records of his enthralled observation of an Aboriginal man painting on bark at Oenpelli in 1912 ('as a Japanese or Chinese artist doing his most beautiful wash-work with his brush').⁵ This incident has been emphasised repeatedly by Howard Morphy, in different publications,

² Howard Morphy, 'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery', *Humanities Research*, Australian National University, Canberra, Vol. 8(1), 2001, pp. 37–50.

³ See esp. Howard Morphy, *Becoming Art: Exploring Cross-Cultural Categories*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2008; Howard Morphy, 'Not Just Images But Art: Pragmatic Issues in the Movement towards a More Inclusive Art History', in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence; Proceedings of the 32nd International Congress of the History of Art*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2009, 60–62; Howard Morphy, 'Coming to Terms with Aboriginal Art in the 1960s', in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2011, Ch. 12, 153–167.

⁴ Morphy, 'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery', 2001, p. 38; this is more or less repeated verbatim in Morphy's later *Becoming Art*, 2008, p. 175.

⁵ Spencer's 1912 fieldnotes from Oenpelli, quoted in Morphy, *Becoming Art*, 2008, p. 184 – see Walter Baldwin Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1914.

as evidence of Spencer's supportive stance in recognition of Aboriginal art. The anecdotal scene, and Spencer's disposition towards Aboriginal art more broadly, will be re-examined towards the end of this chapter.

2.1 Aboriginal peoples objectified by science and 'primitivised' culturally

An historical legacy of scientific objectification is evident in streams of literature from the 19th and early-20th centuries conveying knowledge about Aboriginal people, with continuing effects in the later-20th century. Without doubt, Walter Baldwin Spencer's remarkable expeditions, research records and publications about Aboriginal society had a decisive effect in European scientific consciousness from their first appearance after 1896.⁶ Spencer's later co-publication (with Frank Gillen) of field studies with Arrernte and many other Aboriginal communities in central Australia, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (in 1899) and *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (in 1904),⁷ had immediate impact on scientific thought then shaping both natural history and new human sciences in Europe. Most notably this occurred through use of Spencer's field-study findings in the two emergent disciplines of sociology (through Émile Durkheim's 1912 publication, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*)⁸ and psychoanalysis (through Sigmund Freud's 1913 *Totem and Taboo*)⁹ – both of which utilised the exciting new fieldwork and theorisations of Spencer (and other early interpreters of his work, such as English classicist and folklorist, James Frazer),¹⁰ based on scientific study of Australian Aboriginal clans among central Australian desert communities.¹¹

In any searching review of the history of recording and interpreting Aboriginal culture and society since the early-19th century,¹² it is clear that there was a co-ordinated imposition of values across *all* branches of the natural sciences in the long period of western colonialism¹³ politically, and its sustained legacies intellectually. For those people, even

⁶ Walter Baldwin Spencer, *Through Larapinta Land: A Narrative of the Horn Expedition to Central Australia*, in W B Spencer (ed.), *Report on the work of the Horn Scientific Expedition to central Australia*, 4 vols., Dulau and Co., London, and Melville, Mullen and Slade, Melbourne, 1896.

⁷ W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1899; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1904.

⁸ Émile Durkheim, *Les Formes Élémentaires de la Vie Religieuse* [1912]; *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: A Study in Religious Sociology*, translated by Joseph Ward Swain, Allen and Unwin, London [1915], 1954.

⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Totem und Tabu: Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker*, Hugo Heler, Leipzig, 1913; 1st English ed., *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, Moffatt, Yard and Co., NY, 1919. In Ch. 1 (The Savage's Dread of Incest) in his influential 1913 study, *Totem and Taboo*, Freud utilised Spencer's fieldwork with Aboriginal clans to theorise central Australian totemism as functionally securing the incest taboo in a primitive stage of social organisation. Freud cites Spencer's *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, London, 1899 – but also draws heavily on James Frazer's absorption of Spencer's work; Freud quotes Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, vol. 1, p. 53: 'The totem bond is stronger than the bond of blood or family in the modern sense.'

¹⁰ J.G. (James) Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy: A Treatise on Early Forms of Superstition and Society*, 2 vols., Macmillan, London, 1910.

¹¹ See Howard Morphy's interpretation of Durkheim's use of Spencer's ethnography: Howard Morphy, 'Spencer and Gillen in Durkheim: The Theoretical Constructions of Ethnography', in N.J. Allen, W.S.F. Pickering, and W. Watts Miller (eds), *On Durkheim's Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Taylor and Francis, London, 1998, 13–28.

¹² See the recently published, exhaustive survey of accounts in various kinds of literature (up to 1929), by Susan Lowish, in *Rethinking Australia's art history: The challenge of Aboriginal art*, Routledge, New York & Abingdon, Oxon, 2018.

¹³ Colonialism here (from the Stanford Dictionary of philosophy, in an entry updated 29 Aug. 2017) is taken to mean 'a practice of domination ...[involving] the subjugation of one people to another', while it also entails exploitation of resources of subject groups of peoples; see <www.plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/>.

whole societies, situated beyond western encounter or historiography until recent centuries, all were Other and distant to the various colonising knowledge-systems that sought to describe, picture, or otherwise explain their existence. Anthropology may not claim any interpretative privilege nor more innocent effect in historical impact on its human subjects without evading the general impact on Aboriginal peoples of their becoming the subject of a branch of natural history, with the development of the science of anthropology as a deeply intertwined enterprise. There is no doubt about the influence of early scientific records of Aboriginal peoples compiled in Australia, in their broad impacts across human sciences internationally (especially sociology and anthropology), while further impacts spread out across changing social and historical conceptions of human origins in all directions.¹⁴

Sociologist and cultural historian Tony Bennett, in his 2004 study of museums, *Pasts Beyond Memory*¹⁵ – a comprehensive expansion of ideas first laid out in a 1988 essay, 'The Exhibitionary Complex'¹⁶ – has cogently explored the great shifts that occurred in archaeology and natural science in the 19th century, and their particular advance through collecting for museums. Bennett has traced the impact of archaeology's expansion through the introduction of systematic fieldwork in new areas such as prehistoric Britain in the 19th century. His analysis highlights the historical invention of a vastly extended 'deep time' of the past, and the ways this temporal expansion infected neighbouring disciplines of natural history and the new social sciences. In particular, so-called 'primitive peoples' were retrojected through this 'deep time' temporalisation into an evolutionary pre-history, from which more modern European societies were construed to have evolved:

[S]uch ['primitive peoples'] ... were typically represented as the still-living examples of *the* earliest stage in human development, the point of transition between nature and culture, between ape and man, the missing link necessary to account for the transition between animal and human history.¹⁷

Bennett further argues that Australia, along with other European colonies, was not simply an outpost or reception-point for such ideas. It was a prime site for their field-study and codification:

Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, Australia played a key role in the development of evolutionary thought and, especially in Britain, its colonial inflection. ... Located at the furthest possible distance from London, it boasted the oldest rock formations, and, in its flora, fauna and Aboriginal inhabitants, what were interpreted as the most primitive life forms and culture.¹⁸

¹⁴ Michel Foucault's theorisation over many decades of museums as 'knowledge machines', purveying authorising discourses of state power in the form of ideological histories framing human subjects in all domains of knowledge (and political control), remains resonant across the scope of this chapter's enquiries. See Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une des sciences humaines archéologie*; *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, [Gallimard, Fr. 1966; Pantheon, NY 1970]; Vintage Press, New York, 1973; and: Michel Foucault, *The Discourse on Language*, in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1966], Vintage Press, New York, 215–37. See also the crystallising publication on disciplinary knowledge as operational power over human subjects: Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1980.

¹⁵ Tony Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004.

¹⁶ Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', *New Formations*, Vol. 4, Spring 1988, 73–102; republished in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (eds), *Thinking About Exhibitions*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, 81–112, and included in Bennett's later monographic study (largely an anthology of earlier writings): Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995. Quotes here are from 'The Exhibitionary Complex' version republished in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, 1996.

¹⁷ Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex' [1988], 1996, 81–112; p. 100.

¹⁸ Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*, 2004, pp. 8–9.

Others who have studied museum developments in Britain in the 19th century have found similar patterns of use of ethnographic material derived through objects collected from non-European peoples. Below is an example, framing ethnography's development, from the Pitt Rivers Museum (Oxford) website recently – a museum that had a profound influence in the late-19th century (through its training of the young Walter Baldwin Spencer, as analysed in Chapter 2) on the field-research and presentation of Aboriginal material culture in Australia:

[I]n the nineteenth century the contemporary material culture of the non-European world was employed to substantiate the material finds of pre-historic Europe. These were then organised in the social evolutionary schemes of the 1860s.¹⁹

2.2 Australian colonialism and the rise of evolutionary science

Concerning the extent of Australia's disciplinary complicity in colonialism's contribution to evolutionary science, a crucial indication may be taken again from Tony Bennett's extensive exploration of developments in 19th-century natural science, and their impact on the representation of knowledge about human history in Australian museums. Bennett's analysis draws out an important change that occurred in museums' collecting interests 'in the early years of settlement', whereas initially 'the colony's museums had displayed little or no interest in Aboriginal remains'.²⁰ Such indifference was changed dramatically – with severe implications for Australian Aboriginal peoples – with the rise of evolutionary science:

The triumph of evolutionary theory transformed this situation, leading to a systematic rape of Aboriginal sacred sites – by the representatives of British, European, and American, as well as Australian Museums – for materials to provide a representational foundation for the story of evolution within, tellingly enough, *natural-history displays*.²¹ [author's emphasis]

Tony Bennett goes on to situate the technologies of arrangement of collections and representation of knowledge employed by museums within his larger, Foucauldian²² exposition of what he identifies as 'the exhibitionary complex' of museums, especially as they evolved in the 19th century: their disposition towards comprehensive ordering and *physical representation of knowledge* through shared *practices of display*. Bennett's exposition highlights the situation whereby museums acted not simply as receivers but as *vehicles* of co-ordinated knowledge-gathering, as field-instruments of research and colonial dispossession of peoples studied at the peripheries of Empire, while feeding theoretical expansion at its core. This pattern is explored below in the case of the Oxford intellectual formations and subsequent Australian career of Walter Baldwin Spencer in Melbourne (at both the principal museum and university recently founded in the Victorian capital).

2.3 Imperial unity, 'white civilisation', and primitive Otherness

Museums emerging as significant knowledge institutions in the 19th century became vehicles of constructing and conveying social order under the conditions of Empire. They 'organized the implied public – the white citizenries of the imperialist powers – into a unity';²³

¹⁹ From 'Henry Christy (1810-1865)', in JCH King, 'Franks and Ethnography', in M Caygill & J Cherry (eds), *A.W. Franks*, British Museum Press, London, 1997, from Pitt Rivers Museum website, online at <www.web.prm.ox.ac.uk/Kent/misc/biblia/p.html> (accessed 16 September 2018).

²⁰ Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex' [1988], 1996, p. 101.

²¹ Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex' [1988], 1996, p. 101.

²² See esp. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, 1973.

²³ Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex' [1988], 1996, p. 101.

meanwhile they shaped a collectivised audience, 'constructing a "we" conceived as the realisation, and therefore just beneficiaries, of the processes of evolution'.²⁴ Most critically in Bennett's analysis, for all Others distanced and divorced from a society self-construed as *civilised*, museums represented knowledge and its beneficiaries in terms of 'a unity in opposition to the primitive otherness of conquered peoples'.²⁵ Bennett is explicit about the comprehensive impact of these ordering systems in museums:

The space of representation constituted in the relations between the disciplinary knowledges deployed within the exhibitionary complex thus permitted the construction of a temporally organized order of things and peoples. Moreover, that order was a totalizing one, metonymically encompassing all things and all peoples in their interactions through time.²⁶

With such a perspective – as Bennett's later book, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (2004),²⁷ developed further in analysing evidence of the connections between scientific advance and museums – it is impossible to ignore the interconnected disciplinary formations established across *all* departments of natural history and the new social sciences (including ethnology and anthropology). These advancing and emergent disciplines pursued energetic investigation of the Others whom Empire first projected within a territorial imagination, and colonialism then variously displaced or locally dominated (as in India),²⁸ forcibly subjugated to opium dependency and chattel trading (as in China),²⁹ sometimes enslaved in a new plantation economy (as in the Caribbean),³⁰ and in many other ways exploited, dispossessed, and steadily overwhelmed existing populations where Empire took control.

Within the structures of the dominant culture (the inexorable ordering³¹ of Western science and philosophy),³² *all* representations of others' sociality, subjectivity and creativity were compiled through excerpts. Inescapably this involved a process of fragmentation, objectification and incorporation within foreign narratives, mostly in European languages, over which the originating or 'source-subjects' had little control. Understanding the structural reach of colonialism's legacy – the torn fabric of *indigenous histories*, and the inescapable inequities framing all narratives of inclusion as subjects within other people's cultural histories, while exiled from their own – *indigenous subjectivities* have recently become themselves the object of historical address, and theoretical analysis 'from the other side' of historical experience.³³

²⁴ Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', *ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁵ Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', *ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁶ Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', *ibid.*, p. 101.

²⁷ This monograph of 2004, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* – like *The Birth of the Museum* earlier – arose from an earlier article by Tony Bennett, 'Pasts Beyond Memories: The Evolutionary Museum Liberal Government and the Politics of Prehistory', *Folk: Journal of the Danish Ethnographic Society*, Vol. 43 (Autumn), 2001: 49-76.

²⁸ James Olson, *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996, p. 7.

²⁹ For the British East India Company's export of opium and colonial expansion into China, see Jack Beeching, *The Chinese Opium Wars*, Hutchinson, 1975, Harcourt, 1976.

³⁰ See thesis Ch. 1 for the connections between early settler families and previous periods in the Caribbean where captured African slaves provided labour for these new colonies.

³¹ Foucault, *The Order of Things* [1966], 1973.

³² Michel Foucault, *The Discourse on Language*, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Harper and Row, New York, 1976, 215-37; 'Truth and Power', in *Power/Knowledge*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1980.

³³ Alison Ravenscroft, *The Postcolonial Eye: White Australian Desire and the Visual Field of Race*, Routledge UK, 2016.

2.4 E.B. Tylor, the founding of anthropology at Oxford, and a 'hard primitivism'



[L-R] E.B. Tylor (1832–1917); typological displays of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford (opened 1887); General Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers (donor of c. 20,000 items forming the museum's collection)

The disciplinary formation of social anthropology at Oxford in the 1880s, under anthropology's 'founding-father' Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917), was to have a direct and profound effect on the study of Aboriginal peoples in Australia, as analysed below in the background and career of one of Tylor's most outstanding students, Walter Baldwin Spencer. With Tylor's scientific ideas already anchored in evolutionary theory, when he delivered his inaugural lectures at Oxford in 1883 'on primitive culture and technology', '[h]e thereby became the first lecturer in anthropology in Britain';³⁴ and a decade later he was appointed 'the first Professor of Anthropology at Oxford', in 1895.³⁵

Tylor's own 'hard primitivism' was already strongly defined at Oxford before Spencer studied with him. In Tylor, '[t]he archaeological structure of evolutionary thought received its most influential theoretical elaboration',³⁶ and for him, 'the institutions of man [were] as stratified as the earth on which he lives'.³⁷ Tylor's evolutionary framework on human social evolution continued to shape the intellectual structures through which all of Baldwin Spencer's later interpretations of Aboriginal people in Australia would be filtered, locating their society as in an arrested state of human development, in a past without history. The polarity of 'civilised mind' and 'savages', as Tylor asserted in his 1871 two-volume publication, *Primitive Culture*,³⁸ would recur throughout Spencer's own later writings about his experiences with Aboriginal people in the Australian deserts. In fact, 'howling savages' would be a stark image appearing in Spencer's first major publication nearly three decades later (with Frank Gillen), in *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899),³⁹ as a result of their important early fieldwork, collaborative recording and collecting.⁴⁰

However, looking back over patterns of collection and interpretation that linked museums in the 19th and 20th centuries in Australia, Aboriginal society's projection within the framework of a 'hard primitivism'⁴¹ (with its prescriptive projection – following Tylor –

³⁴ D.J. Mulvaney and J.H. Calaby, 'So Much That Is New': Baldwin Spencer, 1860–1929, *A Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1985, pp. 59, 60.

³⁵ Alison Petch, 'Edward Burnett Tylor', August 2005, Pitt Rivers Museum website, <www.history.prm.ox.ac.uk/collector_tylor.html>, accessed 30 Dec. 2017.

³⁶ Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*, 2004, p. 63

³⁷ Bernard McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1989, cited in Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*, 2004, p. 63.

³⁸ Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, 2 vols., John Murray, London, 1871. This work, along with Tylor's later *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization* (Macmillan, London, 1881), became foundational texts in the development of British anthropology.

³⁹ W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1899.

⁴⁰ Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, 1899.

⁴¹ The concept of a 'hard primitivism' was directly associated with E.B. Tylor following the 1871 publication of his *Primitive Culture*, cited above. See further treatment of 'primitivist' concepts in Ch. 6, dealing with historical attitudes to Aboriginal culture in the realm of art museums.

of recently 'discovered' peoples as belonging to an earlier and 'lower' stage of human evolution) had later solidified precisely *because of* the growth of Australian ethnographic field-data gathered in the colonial era, which afterwards was eagerly absorbed to support universalist tropes of *primitive social development* already elaborated in scientific literature in Europe and Britain.

A notorious example of projective disbelief – the inability in 1837 of Sir George Grey (later placed 'among the founders of Australian ethnography')⁴² to ascribe the spectacular Wandjina and related Kimberley rock art he had 'discovered' to Aboriginal authorship – was a direct consequence of this 'hard primitivism', shaping restrictive attitudes to Aboriginal material culture's level of development. A striking legacy (with continuing effects even today in the deceptive 'Bradshaws' terminology in play concerning *Gwion gwion*⁴³ images within Kimberley rock art) was launched through George Grey's 1842 dismissal of the Kimberley's remarkable figural image-galleries. To Grey, it was 'scarcely probable that they could have been executed by a self-taught savage'.⁴⁴

Meanwhile Tylor had already absorbed dismissive judgments from afar about Aboriginal expression (referring to 'rude frescos on the cavern-walls of kangaroos and emus and natives dancing'⁴⁵) shaped through early Australian accounts of rock art. Aboriginal culture would later be elaborated further by one of his most distinguished students, when he moved to Australia, Walter Baldwin Spencer.⁴⁶ Yet Tylor's 'hard primitivism' was already strongly articulated in his publications well before Spencer studied with him. 'The civilised mind', Tylor formulated in his 1871 *Primitive Culture*, 'still bears vestiges neither few nor slight, of a past condition from which savages represent the least and civilised man the greatest advance'.⁴⁷

2.5 The remarkable scientific career and impact of W.B. Spencer (1860–1929)



L-R: Group of academics at Oxford (ca. 1870); George Lambert (1873–1919); Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer, 1884; Canberra, WA Museum (1889–1929); Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer (1889–1929). Oxford College House 1, 1890; of Oxford, Spencer donated from Oxford photo.

Walter Baldwin Spencer's natural science training, and his transfer role as bearer of the seminal ideas of E.B. Tylor from Oxford into an Australian context and new fields of research, merit attention in the light of Spencer's decisive influence on both anthropology and museology in Melbourne (and Australian awareness of Aboriginal people generally) in the late-19th and early-20th centuries.

⁴² Philip Jones, 'Perceptions of Aboriginal Art: A History, in Peter Sutton (ed.), *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, Asia Society Galleries, New York, 1988, Ch. 5, 143–179; p. 146.

⁴³ See the remarkable trilingual publication achieved through years of committed work with Ngarinyin elders by Jeff Doring, *Gwion gwion: Ngarjno, Ungudman, Banggal, Nyawarra: dulwan maaaa = secret and sacred pathways = geheime und heilige Pfade = chemins secrets et sacrés*, Könnemann, Cologne, 2000.

⁴⁴ Jones, 'Perceptions of Aboriginal Art', 1988, p. 146.

⁴⁵ Tylor, *Anthropology*. [1881] 1892, 301, quoted in Jones, 'Perceptions of Aboriginal Art', 1988, p. 146.

⁴⁶ Mulvaney and Calaby, 'So Much That Is New', 1985, p. 187; D.J. Mulvaney, 'Spencer, Sir Walter Baldwin (1860–1929)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 12, Melbourne University Press, 1990, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/spencer-sir-walter-baldwin-8606/text15031>.

⁴⁷ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 1871; the influence of Tylor's 'hard primitivism' is also stressed in Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*, 2004, p. 94.

Although Baldwin Spencer recognised and supported the work of other early recorders of Aboriginal society and technology before he came to Melbourne (such as R. Brough Smyth,⁴⁸ Lorimer Fison and Alfred William Howitt),⁴⁹ Spencer himself is a crucial figure to explore in this chapter for a number of reasons. First, Spencer spanned broad fields of science, natural history, ethnology and an emergent anthropology in his career; second, he had a direct influence during multiple decades over the co-located National Museum, Public Library, and National Gallery of Victoria, serving as a trustee (spanning all three institutions, from 1895);⁵⁰ third, he acted for more than two decades as honorary Director of the National Museum in Melbourne from 1899,⁵¹ while continuing in his Biology (including zoology) Chair at Melbourne University); fourth, Spencer developed close personal friendships and interaction with distinguished artists and art patronage circles of his era in Melbourne – such that he was considered a *connoisseur* of art;⁵² fifth, he was the first person in Australia to form an extensive *collection* of the work of leading Australian artists – repeatedly acquiring works by contemporaries such as Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts, George Lambert, William McInnes, Hans Heysen, Lionel Lindsay and others whom he knew closely;⁵³ and sixth – unlike other natural scientists of his era – Spencer had himself first undertaken post-schooling study for a year in *art*, at the Manchester School of Art,⁵⁴ prior to his Oxford studies in science; and his skills in drawing were extensively used in his later scientific work and field-records made during his various expeditions among Aboriginal communities. As his biographer John Mulvaney has highlighted, making Spencer unusual among his natural science peers:

[Spencer's] interest in art and sketching was lifelong and would reveal itself in his competence as a scientific draftsman and illustrator.⁵⁵

Spencer's extensive personal history as a natural scientist and eventual trustee of both the National Museum and National Gallery in Melbourne, continuing even after his retirement from Melbourne University in 1919,⁵⁶ presents a compelling story of the diverse activities, physical energies and influence of – by any accounting – a remarkable man who cut a large figure across his era. The influential publications⁵⁷ and networks encompassed in

⁴⁸ R. Brough Smyth's work, *The Aborigines of Victoria: With notes relating to the habits of the natives of other parts of Australia and Tasmania compiled from various sources for the Government of Victoria*, John Currey, O'Neil, Melbourne, 1878, provided an important example and precedent for Spencer's work in Australia.

⁴⁹ On Spencer's introduction to the work of Brough Smyth, Fison and Howitt, see Mulvaney and Calaby, '*So Much That Is New*', p. 95; and on his later personal support for Fison and Howitt when they were ageing, see p. 240.

⁵⁰ Mulvaney and Calaby, '*So Much That Is New*', 1985, Ch. 13, 'Museum Autocrat', 243–263; p. 243.

⁵¹ Mulvaney and Calaby, '*So Much That Is New*', 1985, p. 243.

⁵² Mulvaney and Calaby, '*So Much That Is New*', 1985, Ch. 17, 'Connoisseur', 335–359.

⁵³ Spencer's relationships with specific artists over many years (especially, for example, with Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Hans Heysen, Daryl Lindsay and others), and his huge influence on cultural patronage of Australian art, are well laid out in Mulvaney and Calaby, '*So Much That Is New*', 1985, Ch. 17, 'Connoisseur', 335–359.

⁵⁴ Mulvaney and Calaby, '*So Much That Is New*', 1985, p. 28.

⁵⁵ Mulvaney, 'Spencer, Sir Walter Baldwin...', *ADB*, 1990; online via NCB, ANU, Canberra.

⁵⁶ Mulvaney and Calaby, '*So Much That Is New*', 1985, Ch. 18, 'Retirement', 360–73.

⁵⁷ W.B. Spencer (ed.), *Report on the work of the Horn Scientific Expedition to central Australia*, 4 vols., Dulau and Co., London, and Melville, Mullen and Slade, Melbourne, 1896; B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1899; B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1904; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *Across Australia*, 2 vols. Macmillan, London, 1912; Walter Baldwin Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1914; B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *The Arunta: A Study of a Stone Age People*, 2 Vols, Macmillan, London, 1927; Sir Baldwin Spencer, *Wanderings in Wild Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1928.

Spencer's life and work are surveyed in the comprehensive study by archaeologist Mulvaney and zoologist and ecologist John Calaby, *'So Much That Is New': Baldwin Spencer, 1860-1929, A Biography*,⁵⁸ published in 1985. Mulvaney's overview of Spencer was compressed a few years later into his entry for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*,⁵⁹ published in 1990, while a further reflection on Spencer as a collector was published in 2008.⁶⁰

After an initial period studying, first art, followed by science, at Manchester, it was Spencer's Oxford training as a scientist at Exeter College (graduating with a BA in natural science in 1884)⁶¹ that laid the groundwork for him to be appointed within a few years to the founding Biology chair at the University of Melbourne in 1887, while still in his late-twenties.⁶² However, it would be Spencer's work with Aboriginal people over three decades, and the remarkable collected objects and records they assisted him (and Frank Gillen) to compile and describe in benchmarking publications, that would form his enduring legacy and most widespread influence. Mulvaney has pointedly assessed the intellectual redirection of Spencer's career through his relocation to Australia:

Ironically, perhaps, while Spencer's quite considerable contributions to biology may merit a footnote in the Book of Evolution, his fame rests more with data which he assembled amongst Aboriginal society.⁶³

2.6. Oxford museological legacies in Spencer's development

Two major developments were occurring while Spencer was at Oxford, both connected to the acceptance and planned presentation of the remarkable collections of General Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers,⁶⁴ which (as a corpus of some 20,000 items)⁶⁵ had been donated to the University to be housed in what would become the purpose-built Pitt Rivers Museum, opened in 1887.⁶⁶ There was a second requirement of the Pitt-Rivers gift: that *anthropology* be introduced to the university to stimulate interpretation of the remarkable ethnographic collections destined by Pitt-Rivers for his eponymously endowed museum. This condition involved E.B. (Edward Burnett) Tylor, although Tylor did not control the Pitt-Rivers museum or collection.

The impact on Baldwin Spencer in 1884 of Tylor's second year of lectures, and their strong evolutionary frameworks,⁶⁷ was profound:

[Tylor] was at the peak of his prestige as the interpreter of primitive society for an evolutionary-conscious public and attracted large audiences to the museum.⁶⁸

⁵⁸ Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much That Is New'*, 1985.

⁵⁹ Mulvaney, 'Spencer, Sir Walter Baldwin (1860-1929)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1990.

⁶⁰ John Mulvaney, 'Annexing All I Can Lay Hands On': Baldwin Spencer as Ethnographic Collector', Ch. 5 in Nicolas Peterson, Lindy Allen and Louise Hamby (eds), *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*, Melbourne University Publishing, Melbourne, 2008, 141-62.

⁶¹ See Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much that is New'*, 1985, Ch. 2, 'Manchester Education (22-35) and Ch. 3, 'Exeter Undergraduate' (36-53), and p. 48.

⁶² Mulvaney 'Spencer, Sir Walter Baldwin...', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1990.

⁶³ Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much That Is New'*, 1985, pp. 58-59.

⁶⁴ See the Pitt Rivers Museum/Oxford University biography of General Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers online at www.web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/pitt-rivers-life/10-biography-of-general-pitt-rivers/ accessed 12 May 2015.

⁶⁵ Originally numbered at some 15,000 items, the Pitt Rivers Museum today considers the donation more likely was of some 20,000 items; see www.web.prm.ox.ac.uk/Kent/musantob/prmhst.html.

⁶⁶ See an outline of the Pitt Rivers Museum history online at www.prm.ox.ac.uk/history-museum.

⁶⁷ Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much That Is New'*, 1985, p. 45, 51.

⁶⁸ Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much That Is New'*, 1985, p. 59.

Spencer was directly enlisted as an assistant in 1885,⁶⁹ at Tylor's and comparative anatomy professor Henry Moseley's behest,⁷⁰ in the transfer of the Pitt-Rivers collections into the new Museum building before its opening in stages from 1887 onwards. This experience of working directly with a variety of collected objects proved especially significant in shaping Spencer's transition across related but very different activities. While Tylor himself remained in charge of the separate Museum of Natural History at Oxford (as Keeper since 1882),⁷¹ the Pitt Rivers collections transfer process enabled Spencer to expand crucial knowledge and acquire new skills. His experience now moved from intellectual study of natural history to understanding of research fieldwork and collecting of natural and cultural objects; and finally, to a grasp of the complex forms of knowledge-construction that determined museum displays representing the social and cultural histories of non-Western peoples.

Yet *anthropology* was still in its infancy in the 1880s. And the nomenclature active in Pitt Rivers Museum records still favoured the older and more broadly comparative orientation of *ethnology* (spanning different peoples and regions), especially in forming the unusual display system adopted for the collections at Oxford.⁷² The remarkable (and today still-maintained) character of the Pitt Rivers Museum's collection cabinets – the famous *typological displays* grouping objects from vastly different and geographically separated societies according to *types* and *usage* – supported the coordinating framework of ethnology's broadly comparative, and historical, study of peoples and cultures. This framework favoured not only comparison of objects from disparate source-cultures but an underlying structure of cultural evolution across time, which was viewed as linking all material objects within a common interpretive system. Mulvaney and Calaby have highlighted both this structural character and its socially determinist configuration pointing back to a prehistoric past:

Since 1852, Pitt-Rivers had selected items 'which appeared to show connection in form' and arranged them in series. This scheme pre-supposed a hierarchical, evaluative approach to the objects selected and to the stages into which they were fitted.⁷³

Mulvaney further incorporates a crucial quote from General Pitt-Rivers, making clear the evolutionary frameworks he applied to his growing collection in the 1850s:

'What the study of zoology does towards explaining the structures of extinct species', [Pitt-Rivers] affirmed, 'the study of existing savages does towards enabling us to realise the condition of primeval man'.⁷⁴

While publications were a discursive form of projecting new ideas, they reached a specific audience of contemporary scholars. However, museums were evolving rapidly to encompass new technologies of display, in which complex ideas could be conveyed directly and to a broad public through the power of selection, arrangement and visual sequencing of objects. Here, the typological method, evolved by Pitt-Rivers in his collecting and organising of object-relations, provided a new and powerfully constitutive role for museums as prime

⁶⁹ Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much That Is New'*, 1985, p. 60.

⁷⁰ Mulvaney, 'Spencer...', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 12, 1990.

⁷¹ Alison Petch, 'Edward Burnett Tylor', August 2005, Pitt Rivers Museum website, <www.history.prm.ox.ac.uk/collector_tylor.html>, accessed 30 Dec. 2017.

⁷² See Pitt Rivers Museum's information on early staff at: <www.web.prm.ox.ac.uk/Kent/musantob/prmhst.html#anchor2658819>.

⁷³ Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much That Is New'*, 1985, pp. 60-61.

⁷⁴ Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much That Is New'*, 1985, p. 61.

vehicles of 'the public pedagogy of the evolutionary museum', which presented current knowledge in 'new configurations'.⁷⁵ In this general movement within museology, Oxford was a key centre – through Tylor's 'hard primitivism', pursued theoretically, and through General Pitt-Rivers' ostensive translation of these ideas into a new intellectual economy of knowledge-display. An early-20th museum account of the consequences of the Pitt-Rivers typological innovation in display is an eloquent testimony of its impact:

It was Pitt Rivers who demonstrated how reliable human history could be built up, bit by bit, in the shelves and show-cases of a museum; it was he who made the spade an instrument of exact history in the hands of a trained observer; it was he who pressed home the study of living primitive peoples as a clue to the customs, myths and beliefs of our long dead ancestors.⁷⁶

The Pitt Rivers Museum's disposition of objects would directly influence the approach adopted by Baldwin Spencer a half-century later in Melbourne, when he published his *Guide to the Australian Ethnological Collection Exhibited in the National Museum of Victoria* in 1901,⁷⁷ shortly after assuming honorary directorship of the National Museum of Victoria. In this disciplinary knowledge-gathering Spencer also produced a publication, as Mulvaney has stressed, that General Pitt Rivers 'would have acknowledged as his intellectual lineage'.⁷⁸ Such were the close links between the intellectual forcing house of Oxford scholarship and its translation and extension 'under other stars' (as exhorted in the Latin motto on the crest of the University of Sydney)⁷⁹ for decades afterwards in Australia.



L: Combined State Library of Victoria, National Museums and National Gallery (located behind the Library's grand Reading Room), 1910; C: Walter Baldwin Spencer, 'General view of the Australian Ethnological Gallery', black-and-white photographic reproduction, Source: Spencer 1902 – from Lowish 2018, Ch. 7; Figure 7.3; R: detail.

Oxford museological frameworks therefore had continuing implications for the way the Spencer-collected objects would be utilised in Melbourne, even long after his original fieldwork of collecting and forming accompanying documentary records, as compiled with the aid of Frank Gillen. This explains why disciplinary boundaries persisted over decades as to how Spencer himself thought of the remarkable collections he had gathered, which he finally donated to the Museum of Victoria in perpetuity. Foremost trained as a biologist (after his year of art studies in Manchester), when Spencer first published his 1901 museum *Guide to the Australian Ethnological Collection*, its framing was significant. The title still favoured the broader comparative framework of *ethnology*, rather than *anthropology*. This was despite the remarkable quality, documentation and culture-specific character of the Melbourne collections, which – in addition to their uniqueness and variety – were ultimately enhanced by their documentation and long-term *ethnographic* significance as the material evidence associated with an emergent anthropology.

⁷⁵ Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*, 2004, p. 64.

⁷⁶ Sir Arthur Keith, 'What should museums do for us?' reprinted in the 1927 edition of *The Wellcome Historical Medical Museum Handbook*, Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, London, 1913, quoted in Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*, 2004, p. 65.

⁷⁷ W Baldwin Spencer, *Guide to the Australian Ethnological Collection Exhibited in the National Museum of Victoria*, National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne [1901], 3rd ed., 1922.

⁷⁸ Mulvaney and Calaby, 'So Much That Is New', *ibid.*, p. 61.

⁷⁹ *Sidere mens eadem mutato* (The stars change, the mind remains the same); the motto of the University of Sydney, formally granted in 1857 after the University's 1852 foundation, captures the aspirations and imperial filiations of the first Australian university to be founded in the colonial era.

2.7 Spencer's 'hard primitivism' and Aboriginal extinguishment framework

There was a further and profoundly political dimension to the denial of any history to Aboriginal society and culture – a denial required to enforce its new connections to the ramified temporality of the British Empire, in which all subject peoples now had serried slots according to their relative progression towards an informing ideal (no matter how artificial) of *civilisation*. As noted by Tony Bennett:

In ... emptying out Aboriginal culture of any temporal dynamic of its own, this [also] served as an adjunct to the legal doctrine of *terra nullius* in constructing Australia as a territory that was unmarked by time prior to its European discovery and, just as important, only subsequently marked by time to the degree that it was connected to European time.⁸⁰

In an exhaustive recent study by art historian Susan Lowish of the writings of Spencer and his evolutionary science-formed peers in Australia,⁸¹ Spencer's successive publications are analysed to show some greater interest surfacing in his later writings about the capacities of particular 'natives' for invention. Yet in the Preface to one of his last works, after Gillen's death, the *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia* (1914),⁸² the durability of Spencer's Tylor-inherited concepts remained strong.



1. Walter Baldwin Spencer and F.J. Gillen in Alice Springs, 1911 (1911). (Madd.) 2. F.J. Gillen in Alice Springs, 1911 (1911). (Madd.) 3. Spencer, Gillen and other members of the 1911-12 expedition, outside Gillen's house, Alice Springs, 1911 (1911). (Madd.)

In *Native Tribes*, covering new fieldwork in Arnhem Land, including the collection of 38 remarkable bark-paintings at Oenpelli (commissioned through locally-based Paddy Cahill),⁸³ – and 'the first time [Spencer] writes about 'bark drawing''⁸⁴ – Aboriginal people studied are still described as 'a primitive and fast-disappearing race'.⁸⁵ The imagery of *primitivism* attached to 'Aboriginal art' has by this stage persisted throughout Spencer's whole life as an anthropologist and museum interpreter. As Lowish judged the record throughout his writings:

It is evident from [*Native Tribes*...] that throughout his career, Spencer's experience of and contact with Indigenous Australians increased; but his adherence to the theory of a 'dying race' never abated.⁸⁶

What Mulvaney and Calaby identify gently as the 'flaws in Spencer's invisible field equipment' were deeply lodged, and were predisposed to shape his observations, arising through the 'framework of his familiar evolutionist model' that conditioned all his research. Hence Spencer's firm opinions about extinguishment after revisiting Central Australia in

⁸⁰ Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*, 2004, p. 137. See also Bernice Murphy, 'Memory, History and Museums', in (guest-edited section, 'Museum and Time-Frames'), *Museum International: Cultural Diversity and Heritage* thematic issue, Vol. 57 (3), UNESCO, Paris & Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2005, 44–77.

⁸¹ Susan Lowish, *Rethinking Australia's Art History: The Challenge of Aboriginal Art*, Routledge, New York & Abingdon, Oxon, 2018; see especially Ch. 6, "'Aboriginal Art' in the Writings of Baldwin Spencer"; available online through National Library of Australia at <www.search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1752803>.

⁸² B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, 1899.

⁸³ Lowish, *Rethinking Australia's Art History*, 2018, Ch. 6.

⁸⁴ Susan Lowish ably analyses the 'new research' in Spencer's published analysis in 2013, even after Gillen's death (in Lowish, *Rethinking Australia's Art History* ..., 2018, Ch. 6).

⁸⁵ Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory*, 1914. Preface, xi (the phrase is highlighted by Lowish).

⁸⁶ Lowish, *Rethinking Australia's Art History* ..., 2018, Ch. 6, 'Aboriginal Art' in the Writings of Baldwin Spencer'.

1926 (thirty years after his visit with Gillen in 1896). His experiences on Arunta (Arrernte) lands sealed his judgment of evolutionary implosion:

It was with conviction that he told a reporter upon his return that the Aborigines were 'doomed, and nothing could be done to save them from extinction'.⁸⁷

It should be acknowledged, however briefly, that Spencer invested much energy in trying to influence governmental social policy towards more humane treatment of Aboriginal people in Central Australia – as can be traced abundantly in the detailed biographical study by Mulvaney and Calaby. There should be no simplistic disregard of the exceptional energy and commitment Spencer applied in his journeys through outback Australia: the vigorous field-observation of country he undertook, the assiduous collecting, the influential interpretive work and publications that emanated from these expeditions. Meanwhile Spencer's outstanding expeditions and publications already placed him in a position to shape an emergent museology across multiple fields of natural history in Australia: while still Professor of Biology at Melbourne University, he had been appointed honorary director of the Museum of Victoria in 1899 – a position he relinquished only *after* he had retired from the University three decades later (in 1919).

By this time, and when Spencer's own life entered a bleak period for a few years for personal reasons, including the fact that he had not for some time published any new research-based work, a change of direction was occurring in the fields he bestrode. The early 1920s marked a period which John Mulvaney has described as 'the anthropological doldrums'.⁸⁸ While Spencer's 'faith in the evolutionary biological concepts of cultural origins remained unshaken', new concepts and field-shaping figures – such as Bronisław Malinowski, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and Gordon Childe – were about to '[sweep] aside the complacent world-view of the first generation of social Darwinists', asserting new and 'diverse models of pattern and purpose'.⁸⁹

2.8 Museum developments, natural history and anthropology in Australia

One of the most important divisions that arose through the 19th century advance of museums' scientific collections (as distinct from the *Wunderkammer* 'cabinets' of interconnected evidence of both peoples and the world in Renaissance Europe) was the increasing separation of scientific and humanist knowledge (although evolutionary science impacted latterly across all domains). Concerning knowledge divisions in museums: one of France's foremost museum curators and theorists of museological natural history, Michel van Praët, has stressed the role of museums and their collecting activities in both the advancement of 19th-century science and an increasing separation of domains that had formerly been linked within a more unified field of knowledge:

While these [natural history] museums contributed to the development of new disciplines such as palaeontology, anthropology, ethnology, and others, they also encouraged the division between the

⁸⁷ Mulvaney and Calaby, '*So Much That Is New*', 1985, p. 384.

⁸⁸ Mulvaney and Calaby, '*So Much That Is New*', 1985, p. 369.

⁸⁹ All quotes from Mulvaney and Calaby, '*So Much That Is New*', 1985, p. 369.

natural and human sciences.⁹⁰

Some detailed knowledge of the institutional history of Australia's museums is needed to inform any grasp of historical processes, or museum stances intellectually in respect of particular *collections* – especially relating to Aboriginal people – or the guiding disciplines that framed *interpretation* of any collections formed or acquired. In Australian museums' early histories, there was no doubt invited about where responsibility should lie for collections of the material culture of indigenous peoples. It was definitely assumed to be the preserve of natural history museums alone. Meanwhile intellectual presentations of knowledge, as far as Aboriginal cultures were concerned, ossified early after an array of stereotyping images of indigenous material culture and society were put in place by evolutionary science in the late-19th century.

Many of what are now encountered as separate museum institutions in Australia were once joined, but with firm disciplinary boundaries maintained internally. These divisions were for decades reinforced by museums' operational structures: through their directors' and staff's backgrounds, collections-focus, and governance (under lay boards of trustees), as well as by the disciplinary field-divisions set in place by the intellectual conditions that radically divorced science from art in the 19th century.



L: Postcard of 'Public Library, Museum and National Gallery, Melbourne', early 20C; C-R: National Gallery of Victoria (1968), des. Roy Grounds, view towards St Kilda Road entrance; archival images of NGV from 1968 opening period.

The National Gallery of Victoria traces its history from combined institutional origins in 1861, and more particularly from a Commission on the Fine Arts formed in 1863.⁹¹ It remained under a joint trust with the Public Library and National Museum in Melbourne until parliamentary legislation effected a separation in 1944⁹² – although the directors of the (two) Museums and the Gallery were still placed under the overarching authority of the Chief Librarian, and under a single board of trustees, until well into the 1950s. As covered in Chapters 3 and 4, it would require the resolute personality and stature of a figure such as Keith Murdoch to force the Victorian government to unravel the combined trusts of the three institutions constellated under the authority of the Library in Swanston Street for most of a century. Keith Murdoch also secured the Wirth Park site for a new Gallery to be built eventually by the state government on St Kilda Road (to designs by Roy Grounds and accomplished in 1968, long after Murdoch's death).⁹³

In the oldest colonial capital of Sydney, the NSW state gallery had subsisted awkwardly since the late-19th century in a half-complete home, within the public parklands of the Domain. There had been an earlier design scheme to join the Gallery with a Library and the Australian Museum in one complex, with a joint entry from William Street, but this combined

⁹⁰ Michel Van-Praët, 'Reversing the De-Realization of Natural and Social Phenomena: Ethical issues for museums in a multidisciplinary context', in Bernice L Murphy (ed.), *Museums, Ethics and Cultural Heritage*, Routledge, UK, 2016, 61–70; p. 62.

⁹¹ Leonard B. Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria, 1861–1968: A Search for a Collection*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1970, p. 11.

⁹² Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria*, 1970, p. 176.

⁹³ Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria*, 1970, p. 176.

scheme was never realised. Some early architectural drawings for the Gallery also included studio spaces for art training (echoing the model adopted in Melbourne), but this idea was also abandoned.



L: Northern facade of incomplete ACTGHS. Scheme, showing surviving components of Hunt's late 1890s 'barn' and temporary brick buildings. Finally demolished in 1910, when work began on the new wing and extensions designed by Andrew Anderson, shown (C) after completion of Captain Cook wing in 1972. R: Australian Museum. The Barker Wing facing College St (then Colonial Architect James Barnett, 1861) completed 1888, viewed across Hyde Park with Captain Cook monument erected.

Architecturally, the park-sited NSW Gallery was handsomely conceived on the Domain by Colonial Architect, W.L. Vernon, enclosing the earlier brick 'barn' structure erected to John Horbury Hunt's designs as a temporary building in the 1890s. Vernon's handsome design-scheme had been realised on almost three sides of its plan: including the fine vestibule, solid Beaux-arts classical porch and sandstone façade addressing the Domain. However, World War 1 and the Depression had intervened in the Gallery's life, and there would be no state government interest in completing the building for four decades, until the Bicentenary of Cook's 1770 east coast navigation loomed in 1968 as a national commemorative event. The Cook extensions began late, but were finally opened (to architectural and public admiration) in 1972.⁹⁴



L: South Australian Museum, in the Institute Building, Adelaide; R: Art Gallery of South Australia, entrance portico of 1901.

In South Australia, an establishing Act of 1856 inaugurated a combined-history institution initially: the Act 'provide[d] for an institution that would incorporate a public library and museum', for 'the general study and cultivation of all or any of the branches or departments of art, science, literature, and philosophy'.⁹⁵ A gallery was also incorporated within the first 'Institute building' alongside the museum and library.⁹⁶ The Gallery in Adelaide gained its own first building nearby in the late-19th century, and the impressive Elder Wing, which opened in 1900 (enabled in part through the remarkable 1897 Elder Bequest), survives today behind the Gallery's Roman temple façade and portico in sandstone. The South Australian Museum was separated as an independent body with its own board in 1940.⁹⁷

In Perth in Western Australia, the gallery, library and museum also had an originally-combined history. The Museum, dating from 1892,⁹⁸ had an art gallery space added within its building only in the later 1890s,⁹⁹ although art had to make its way slowly as a minor

⁹⁴ Research on state gallery and museum buildings in this section are covered (and sources detailed) in Bernice L Murphy and Leon Paroissien, *Andrew Andersons: Architecture and the Public Real*, NewSouth Press, Sydney, 2020 (forthcoming).

⁹⁵ South Australian Museum, website information provided at <www.sahistoryhub.com.au/places/art-gallery-of-south-australia> and <www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/Upload/files-about/a-potted-history.pdf>.

⁹⁶ SA Museum website.

⁹⁷ SA Museum website.

⁹⁸ Ross Chadwick and Mance Lofgren, 'Western Australian Art Museum, Perth', in Susan Cochrane (ed.), *Aboriginal Art Collections: Highlights from Australia's Public Museums and Galleries*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 2001, 96–101; p. 96.

⁹⁹ Chadwick and Lofgren 2001, p. 96; see also Alan McCulloch & Susan McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 3rd ed., revised & updated, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994: 'Art Gallery of Western Australia' entry, p. 802.

companion among the scientific collections. As collections of objects were made to serve the advance of scientific interests and domination of first-peoples' social and subsistence domains within geology, botany and natural history, a pioneer image of bushland battlers as accessory-figures of pastoral progress was favoured in colonial cities. Frederick McCubbin's pioneering-subject painting of an 'itinerant swagman or unlucky digger', *Down on His Luck* (1889) was a perfect settler-society purchase for an incipient art collection in Perth in 1896, and 'appealed to colonists far and wide'.¹⁰⁰

It was acquired for the Perth Museum in Western Australia, which opened on 9 September 1891 in the old gaol building and it hung there among the collection of rocks, minerals and native weapons from 1896.¹⁰¹



Frederick McCubbin, *Down on his Luck* 1889, oil on canvas, State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Purchased, 1896.

The Gallery in Western Australia remained joined under the Museum and Library administrative structure over seven decades, still sharing facilities with the museum until 1959.¹⁰² In the early years, there was a prolonged, parlous situation of severely limited resources provided by the state for both the museum's and gallery's development. Yet the interests of natural history and science took precedence. The state's art collection in Perth had no more than a single designated Curator in charge for the first half of the 20th century, without any trained support staff. Some years no works of art were acquired at all, then perhaps only works on paper, with Carnegie Corporation assistance funds. The Gallery did not gain a position entitled Director within this structure until 1952.¹⁰³ However, even the science and natural history provisions by the state in Western Australia continued to be grossly inadequate, as indicated in a published account by two of the Museum's staff about the long-serving and beleaguered curator, eventually director, Ludwig Glauert, who retired in 1957:

During his forty-seven years with the Western Australian Museum, Glauert spent eleven years curating the Geology and Ethnology collections, and a further thirty-six years curating all collections.¹⁰⁴

In Brisbane, the Queensland Museum's collection began in a room of the Philosophical Society in 1862,¹⁰⁵ but it was almost a decade before the colonial government accepted responsibility for a museum (in 1871), with the first purpose-built premises provided in 1879.¹⁰⁶ The Queensland Museum moved to the Exhibition building in 1899, and remained there for 86 years, until the present expanded premises were provided in the cultural centre complex on Southbank, co-located next to the Queensland Art Gallery and opened in 2006.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Ann Galbally, 'National Life and Landscape: The Heidelberg School as Mythmaker 1880-1905', in Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, 2011, Ch. 6, 71-83; p. 82.

¹⁰¹ Galbally, 'National Life and Landscape', 2011, p. 82.

¹⁰² Chadwick and Lofgren 2001, p. 97

¹⁰³ McCulloch, *EAA*, 'AGWA' entry, 1994, p. 802.

¹⁰⁴ Ross Chadwick and Mance Lofgren, 'Western Australian Art Museum, Perth', 2001, p. 97

¹⁰⁵ www.qm.qld.gov.au/Collections#.XE_JwUzYdU

¹⁰⁶ QLD Museum information provided at <www.qm.qld.gov.au/About+Us/History#.XCyUapU8SB8> (viewed 18 Sept. 2018).

¹⁰⁷ QLD Museum information provided at <www.qm.qld.gov.au/About+Us/History#.XCyUapU8SB8>. (viewed 18 Sept. 2018).

At the northern and southern extremities of Australia, the natural history museum structure to this day still overarches the principal art gallery functions: in the continuing combined institutions for natural history, science and art located in both Darwin (the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, legislatively launched in 1964) and Hobart (the much older Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, opened at the present site in 1863).¹⁰⁸ TMAG has a venerable history (after Sydney's Australian Museum) as 'Australia's second-oldest museum', having originated directly through 'the collections of Australia's oldest scientific society, the Royal Society of Tasmania, established in 1843'.¹⁰⁹

Supplementing the picture above, of constrained early institutional histories from the colonial era, it is important to realise that appropriate staffing for Australia's museums was long-delayed across *all* states, despite the important field-disciplines and scientific literature in play and directly shaping interpretation of collections exhibited. In the field of anthropology, as John Mulvaney recalled (in 1989) from his earlier survey work for the 1975 Pigott Report to the Commonwealth government: 'In 1933 only two museums had staff curators or assistant curators designated "ethnology" or "anthropology"'.¹¹⁰ By 1956, in Mulvaney's survey, the situation had 'altered little'. When he aggregated staff numbers across museums in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, 'staff at [equivalent] status ... to that of curator, or above (including director, librarian, education officer)' still numbered only 34 positions across the four states around mid-century.¹¹¹ This was a dauntingly small number of dedicated positions, given the continental size of Australia, the disparately-sourced collections and extensive interpretive work needed by museums to inform historians, scientists, educators and a broad public via educational curricula.

In contrast to this beleaguered situation nationally, the South Australian Museum and Australian Museum featured throughout this long period as key museums that maintained 'curators with anthropological designations'.¹¹² However, Mulvaney's survey also elicited that – notwithstanding Baldwin Spencer's outstanding fieldwork and international profile as honorary Director of the Museum of Victoria (while simultaneously Melbourne University's professor of Biology) – there followed a gap of more than two decades after Spencer's retirement when the Museum of Victoria had no designated staff position in anthropology, until the first on-staff appointment in the field was made in 1949.¹¹³ This meant that, despite the importance and enormously rich resources of Spencer's 'ethnology' collections, the Museum of Victoria did not have a single on-staff member with an anthropology training adequate to interpreting those collections until the mid-20th century.

The short survey above demonstrates how precise institutional knowledge is often required, and modulated to specific local conditions, to interpret museums or galleries'

¹⁰⁸ See information on the collections and on the historic complex of early public buildings within TMAG's site, at <www.tmag.tas.gov.au/about_us>, accessed 30 Sept. 2018.

¹⁰⁹ TMAG, Hobart – website information as above.

¹¹⁰ John Mulvaney, 'Museums, Anthropologists and Indigenous Peoples', *Bulletin of the Conference of Museum Anthropologists*, No.23, April 1990; *Proceedings of the Conference held at The National Centre for Cultural Heritage Science Studies*, University of Canberra, Nov.–Dec, 1989, 1–11; p. 1.

¹¹¹ Mulvaney, 'Museums, Anthropologists and Indigenous Peoples' [1989], 1990, p. 1.

¹¹² Mulvaney, 'Museums, Anthropologists and Indigenous Peoples' [1989], 1990, p. 1.

¹¹³ Mulvaney, 'Museums, Anthropologists and Indigenous Peoples' [1989], 1990, p. 2.

operations at particular times, and across such varied and long-changing histories of their development and resources as public institutions in Australia. Such institutional history knowledge is also often requisite background for interpreting their *collecting histories*, and *displays* of such collections.

Against such a background of institutional contingencies, attitudes to Aboriginal people and culture varied markedly across the national horizon of museums – varying among directors, and at various times between institutions. Meanwhile museum collecting of Indigenous objects and human subjects (ancestral remains collected to advance the science of physical anthropology) proceeded against a background of widespread violence against Indigenous peoples. Britain's extension of dominion over Australia, combining convictism, pastoralism, and the most audacious and swift land grab in the history of Empire,¹¹⁴ produced in its worst combinations a stark record of massacres¹¹⁵ and other local murders of Aboriginal people along moving frontiers of 'settlement'.

The records of frontier violence persisted longest in Queensland, and the museum's connection to such violence was clearly discernible in colonial records. Queensland historian Raymond Evans has pictured the frontier experience in Queensland as both 'epic' and 'gothic',¹¹⁶ citing the research of two younger historians: Dirk Moses, who viewed Queensland as 'the purest incarnation of the colonisation project'; and Alison Palmer who, in *Colonial Genocide*,¹¹⁷ insisted that 'the role of the Queensland government was crucial' to the war's progress and that it 'actively condoned the ongoing slaughter'.¹¹⁸ This situation may in part explain why the Queensland Museum, as a government institution, remained in a state of intellectual passivity and distance from its Aboriginal population's fate – though passivity may also be seen as an ideological expression of hostility.

In contrast to the avid 'gatherer' collectors in early Victoria and New South Wales, Queensland Museum seemed indifferent to fieldwork and unable to present views other than those of the Royal Society of Queensland and the race-judgments of evolutionary science. Even in the 20th century, the Queensland Museum was led over decades by the severe character of Heber Longman (Director, 1918–45, a natural scientist, and twice-president of the Royal Society of Queensland). Longman 'had little interest in general anthropology',¹¹⁹ with the lowest record of the museum's collecting in this area in the long period when he was deputy and finally Director of the Museum. With a scientific view of Aboriginal people, Longman was mostly interested in physical anthropology, with his activities earning deservedly harsh judgment by his successors today: 'He actively collected human remains,

¹¹⁴ See James Boyce, *1835: The Founding of Melbourne & the Conquest of Australia*, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2013.

¹¹⁵ 'By the 1830s, Frontier violence around NSW had become so widespread that the murder of Aboriginal people by British colonial stockmen, settlers and convicts was generally accepted, despite British law clearly articulating that it was a crime punishable by death.' National Museum of Australia website, at <www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/myall-creek-massacre>, viewed 28 September 2018.

¹¹⁶ Raymond Evans, 'Across the Queensland Frontier', in Bain Attwood & SG Foster (eds) *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2003, 63–75; p. 68.

¹¹⁷ Alison Palmer, *Colonial Genocide*, Crawford publications, Canberra, 2000.

¹¹⁸ Evans, 'Across the Queensland Frontier', 2003, p. 68.

¹¹⁹ Richard Robins, 'Reflections in a Cracked Mirror: What Collections Representing 'Them' Can Say about 'Us' and the Role of Museum Collections', Ch. 2 in Peterson, Allen & Hamby (eds.), *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*, 2008, 61–75; p. 67.

and published papers and gave public lectures of little scientific merit on aspects of physical anthropology.¹²⁰ Not surprisingly, Longman disparaged any idea of Aboriginal creativity, insisting in an apparently well-received public lecture, in Brisbane in 1925, that: 'The Australian Aboriginals are devoid of art except for rough carvings on wood and stencilling on walls.'¹²¹

2.9 Aboriginal collections' disposition in natural history museums

Turning to *interpretation* and *exhibiting* of Indigenous collections: it is incontestably the case that natural history, science and anthropology asserted intellectual frameworks and field domains for the gathering and organisation of Aboriginal material in all of Australia's natural history museums. Highlighting these connections (and field-study interactions in the southern states), historian Tom Griffiths provides the reminder that: 'Australian Aborigines and native fauna were mentioned in the one breath by scientists and conservationists of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s'.¹²² This situation, while arising through frameworks of evolutionary science forged in the 1860s in Britain, had prolonged legacies in the 20th century in Australia. Griffiths again notes how sustained effects of deeply entrenched ways of organising knowledge continued to resist self-examination while instead producing prolonged, dehumanising objectification:

In museums the language of natural history continued to apply to Aborigines even into the 1950s when the National Museum of Victoria planned an exhibition on 'the life story of the Australian Aboriginal'.¹²³

Notwithstanding museums' struggles for adequate resources and staffing until well into the 20th century, disciplinary divisions were nevertheless asserted with proprietorial rigidity in their displays. The important early Aboriginal material culture collections brought together in Melbourne's principal museum were situated within institutional structures as *exclusively* the responsibility of the National Museum of Victoria. This was the framework for most of its first century, despite the natural history Museum's co-location in grouped buildings with Victoria's National Gallery and headed by the impressive and finely housed Public Library. As will be contextualised in Chapter 6, a modest move by NGV Director Daryl Lindsay from the late 1940s of acquiring some Aboriginal artworks (2 Hermannsburg watercolours by Edwin Pareroultja in 1946; and later, in 1952, seven Arnhem Land bark paintings, with 'the artists and region ... carefully recorded')¹²⁴ earned a territorial rebuke from his colleague Museum director. Lindsay received a letter asserting that such material

¹²⁰ Robins, 'Reflections in a Cracked Mirror', p. 67.

¹²¹ Brisbane *Courier*, 16 July 1925, cited by Deborah Edwards, 'Transitions 1920s: The National', in Deborah Edwards and Rose Peel with Denise Mimmocchi, *Margaret Preston*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2005, p. 107 [text] and [fn.133], p. 292; see also 'Longman, Albert Heber (1880–1954)', entry in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986.

¹²² Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian imagination in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p. 180.

¹²³ Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, 1996, p. 180, citing (fn. 32, p. 334): RTM Prescott, Director, to J Williams, Head Teacher, State School, Lake Tyers, 18 May 1956, in Museum of Victoria file entitled 'Ethnology—Lake Tyers Aboriginal Reserve' [Aboriginal Studies].

¹²⁴ Ron Radford, 'Acquiring and Presenting Aboriginal Art in Art Museums: My First 30 years', from *Sharing Our Common Wealth: Cultural Institutions, 41st Annual Symposium of the Australian Academy of The Humanities*, Adelaide, 19 November 2010, 1–11, pp. 2–3; online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/radford-document1.pdf>.

was exclusively the collecting domain of the National Museum of Victoria.¹²⁵ Unravelling such a situation and the enormity of what had occurred in the colonisation of Australia, especially the consequences for Indigenous peoples and their representation in museums, would require radical revolutions of historical insight, ethics, and social consciousness. Such changes did not gain traction in Victoria until more than a century after the museum, art and library institutions were originally founded (in the 1860s).

Turning to the character of *collection displays*: while the natural history museums maintained the authority of science in their collection building and public interpretation of material concerning Aboriginal people, there was a static character to their presented collections. Displays persisted unchanged for decades – or even across multiple generations, in the case of Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales:

Aboriginal displays were scarcely changed for 75 years in the Queensland Museum (1911–1986); 68 years in the South Australian Museum (1914–1982); and more or less 56 years in the Australian Museum (1906–1956), despite a rearrangement by culture areas in the 1930s in Sydney.¹²⁶

2.10 Anthropology consolidated in Australia: Adelaide and Sydney

While Melbourne University remained sadly without a chair in anthropology, despite the pre-eminence of Baldwin Spencer's fieldwork (as Professor of Zoology) since the 1890s, Spencer's work and publications garnered great international interest in Australia as a site for anthropological research. Meanwhile, much research activity was gathering also in South Australia, where 'fieldworkers and physical anthropologists based in Adelaide were active from the late 1920s'.¹²⁷ This upsurge in fieldwork also yielded rising interest in Aboriginal art, as anthropologist and historian Philip Jones has well documented:

The Board for Anthropological Research expeditions, undertaken annually in Central Australia from 1926 until World War II, yielded a significant corpus of Aboriginal art in the form of crayon drawings made by Aborigines who had previously made only ground, rock, or body paintings.¹²⁸

The work of Norman Tindale, who 'represented the public face of anthropology in South Australia for almost half a century'¹²⁹ through the South Australian Museum (as entomologist, ethnologist, archaeologist, and eventually anthropologist), had begun to gather outstanding fieldwork records and reports from 'outback Aboriginal Australia' in the 1920s. Tindale's careful fieldnote methods (advised to him during a guidance-meeting with Baldwin Spencer¹³⁰ before making his first northern field trip in 1921, to Groote Eylandt) provided the basis for an outstanding flow of publications, which would come to distinguish his

¹²⁵ NGV Curator Judith Ryan recalls sighting such a letter rebuking Daryl Lindsay in 1952, and making notes from its contents, although the letter later became mislaid in subsequent reorganisation of NGV records on Indigenous art internally – report of Judith Ryan to the present author c. 2006, and (variously) to several other colleagues interested in these matters professionally. Ryan again praised Daryl Lindsay's far-sighted 1952 decision favouring acquisition of Aboriginal art, on the eve of the *Landmarks* exhibition from the NGV's Indigenous collection in 2006 (Robin Usher, 'Circles Round a Culture', *The Age*, Wed., 8 February 2006, p. 19.)

¹²⁶ Peterson, Allen & Hamby (eds.), *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*, 2008, 'Introduction', 1–26, pp. 3–4.

¹²⁷ Jones, 'Perceptions of Aboriginal Art: A History', 1988, 143–179; p. 159.

¹²⁸ Jones, 'Perceptions of Aboriginal Art', 1988, p. 159.

¹²⁹ Philip G. Jones, 'Norman B. Tindale, 12 October, 1900– 19 November, 1993, An Obituary', in *Records of the South Australian Museum*, vol. 28, no. 2, December 1995, 159–176; online at <www.anu.edu.au/linguistics/nash/aust/nbt/obituary.html>.

¹³⁰ Jones, 'Norman B. Tindale', 1995.

professional life and remarkable legacy in many fields of indigenous knowledge. As his fieldwork progressed on expeditions during the 1930s, 'Tindale began to correlate his data in ways which few anthropologists had previously done'.¹³¹ While beginning from a base in natural science, Tindale had acquired a keen and imaginative interest in Aboriginal peoples and their art. Philip Jones has noted the significance of this direction in his work, after Tindale had obtained for the SAM 'the first significant collection of Groote Eylandt bark paintings in 1921–22 and the first well-documented crayon drawings at Hermannsburg in 1929':¹³²

Tindale's 1932 paper on 'Primitive Art of the Australian Aborigines'¹³³ (based on his observations of the crayon-drawing artists) was one of the first to discuss the interpretations that tradition-oriented Aboriginal artists placed on their own work.¹³⁴

Despite the preponderance of fieldwork with Aboriginal communities that had been predominantly associated with various figures in Victoria and South Australia, Sydney University was the first institution to establish a Chair in Anthropology, partly funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.¹³⁵ The Chair was filled by a distinguished British figure in 1925 with the appointment of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, who arrived in Australia to begin teaching in 1926.¹³⁶ Radcliffe-Brown had previously visited the north-west of Western Australia in 1910, while again visiting four years later for the Spencer-organised program in Melbourne for a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1914.¹³⁷

Radcliffe-Brown – like Spencer before him, but having started out at Cambridge – brought to the social sciences in Australia a figure with a distinguished British pedigree. He was often paralleled to his Polish-born contemporary in anthropology, B.K. Malinowski.¹³⁸ However, despite his own earlier field experience in Western Australia, Radcliffe-Brown was more interested in systematising his ideas – heightening his association with such figures as sociologist Émile Durkheim, and to a much lesser extent, anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (both outstanding social scientists in France). Radcliffe-Brown focused intellectual energy on his development of systematic concepts associated with *functional anthropology* – and this was also inflected with a distinctive *structural* emphasis. Systems, more than situated knowledge, preoccupied his thinking.

With strong interests in methodology and theory, and not himself an exemplar of fieldwork during his professorial period in Australia, Radcliffe-Brown instigated a generation

¹³¹ Jones, 'Norman B. Tindale', 1995.

¹³² Jones, 'Perceptions of Aboriginal Art', 1988, p. 159.

¹³³ Norman B. Tindale, 'Primitive art of the Australian Aborigines', *Manuscripts*, no. 3, November 1932, 38–42, cited in bibliography of Tindale's publications, Jones, 'Norman B. Tindale', 1995.

¹³⁴ Jones, 'Perceptions of Aboriginal Art', 1988, p. 159.

¹³⁵ Ian Hogbin, 'Radcliffe-Brown, Alfred Reginald (1881–1955)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 11, Melbourne University Press, 1988; online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/radcliffe-brown-alfred-reginald-8146/text14233>. The ADB entry notes that Rockefeller funding was crucial in the establishment of the Sydney Chair of Anthropology in 1925.

¹³⁶ Hogbin, 'Radcliffe-Brown, Alfred Reginald', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 11, 1988; online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/radcliffe-brown-alfred-reginald-8146/text14233>.

¹³⁷ Hogbin, 'Radcliffe-Brown...', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1988.

¹³⁸ Hogbin, 'Radcliffe-Brown...', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1988.

of fieldworkers – W.E.H. 'Bill' Stanner¹³⁹ and Ursula McConnel¹⁴⁰ among those who later gained distinctive careers, with their work having an impact in the 1930s. McConnel's significant work among the Wik people in far north Queensland (in 1927) was among the earliest work supervised by Radcliffe-Brown. Meanwhile Stanner's fieldwork in the Daly River area (in 1934) and Port Keats (in 1935) was to have a profound impact on his own thinking and subsequent development of concepts of *adaptive change* as well as *continuity* of traditional culture in his varied posts and advocacy for Aboriginally-sensitive government policies subsequently.¹⁴¹

It is instructive to note how the disciplinary tasks of anthropology were framed by Professor A.P. Elkin (second holder of the Anthropology Chair at Sydney University, 1933–1956),¹⁴² having succeeded Radcliffe-Brown. Elkin presided as the national representative of the discipline for two decades, and was still influential long after his retirement.¹⁴³ The later, even more influential, Ronald and Catherine Berndt (who began their decades of joint fieldwork in 1941)¹⁴⁴ were trained under Elkin's leadership – thus carrying forward a third generation of anthropologists emanating from Sydney. A further important figure from this fold was the Australian Museum's Frederick McCarthy, curator of the Anthropology department from 1941–1964,¹⁴⁵ 'the first museum curator in Australia to be trained in social anthropology'¹⁴⁶ – and whose friendship with artist Margaret Preston would prove so important in her interaction with the Australian Museum's collections¹⁴⁷ covering Aboriginal culture in the 1940s. Donald Thomson also studied under Elkin.

However, Thomson's empathetic and 'humanist' anthropological recording of the tribal groups and individuals he contacted (notably in Cape York and Arnhem Land), while not sitting easily within governmental frameworks, was regarded poorly – even vindictively – in

¹³⁹ D.J. Mulvaney, 'Stanner, William Edward (Bill) (1905–1981)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 18, Melbourne University Press, 2012; available online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/stanner-william-edward-bill-15541/text26753>.

¹⁴⁰ Anne O'Gorman Perusco, 'McConnel, Ursula Hope (1888–1957)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, vol. 15, 2000, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcconnel-ursula-hope-10917/text19393>.

¹⁴¹ See W.E.H. Stanner, *White Man Got No Dreaming: Essays 1938–1973*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1979; Melinda Hinkson, Jeremy Beckett, Jon Altman & Barry Dexter, *An Appreciation of Difference: WEH Stanner, Aboriginal Australia and Anthropology*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Acton, ACT, 2008; Diane Barwick, Jeremy Beckett and Marie Reay, *Metaphors of Interpretation: Essays in Honour of W.E.H. Stanner*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1985, ISBN 0-08-029875-3, viewed 11 March 2017.

¹⁴² Ronald M. Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Art*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1964, p. xi; see Tigger Wise, 'Elkin, Adolphus Peter (1891–1979)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 14, 1996, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/elkin-adolphus-peter-10109/text17845>.

¹⁴³ For AP Elkin's continuing influence after his retirement in 1956, and his effect on anthropological study, see Ronald Berndt, 'Introduction', in Ronald M. Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology: Modern Studies in the Social Anthropology of the Australian Aborigines* (University of Western Australia Press, Perth, for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1970) 1–7; 1956 date is from p. 7.

¹⁴⁴ Robert Tonkinson, 'Berndt, Ronald Murray (1916–1990)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 17, Melbourne University Press, 2007, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/berndt-ronald-murray-12202/text21879>.

¹⁴⁵ Fred McCarthy worked at the Australian Museum for more than four decades and had a profound knowledge of the museum's collections – see <www.australianmuseum.net.au/about/history/people/fred-mccarthy/>

¹⁴⁶ Jones, 'Perceptions of Aboriginal Art', in *Dreamings*, New York, 1988, p. 159.

¹⁴⁷ See Val Attenbrow, 'Ethnographic and Archaeological Collections by FD McCarthy in the Australian Museum', in Nicolas Peterson, Lindy Allen and Louise Hamby (eds), *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2008, 472–507.

disciplinary terms by Elkin. This led to Thomson's regrettable disparagement by some in official positions, and eventual isolation of both his activities and outstanding records and collection, confined within his own domain in outer suburban Melbourne in the last decades of his life.¹⁴⁸ Despite an honorary professorial status at the University of Melbourne in his last years, the outstanding resources of his collections and journals were only evident after his death. Rolf de Heer's film, *Ten Canoes*, released 2006 (and largely filmed near Ramingining), is one of the finest tributes to the records Thomson made of Yolngu life in the 1940s.¹⁴⁹

2.11 Founding of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS)

Elkin's conception of anthropology's endeavours through the nascent Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in the 1960s was distinctive of many attitudes he upheld throughout his career. The Institute, founded as a host institution for Euro-Australian anthropological advance in 1964,¹⁵⁰ but without any involvement of Aboriginal people or consultation with primary knowledge-holders, was imprinted in Elkin's mind with motifs of rugged engineering and geological exploration. The enterprise of anthropology, for Elkin, startlingly pictured raw human material (indigenous peoples), continuing to be judged through now long-established anthropological pathways of objectifying study and publications as irrevocably in decline, yet arousing scientific interest to gather records in a salvage mentality of documentation while surrendering any hope of their human subjects' survival.

'Before It Is Too Late' was the title of Elkin's paper delivered to the pivotal anthropological conference, in 1961, that forged the emergence of the Institute of Aboriginal Studies three years later.¹⁵¹ To Elkin, the stark quest for scientific and cultural information – '[f]aced by the sure and certain dying out of the tribes and by the even quicker breakdown of their culture' – could be advanced only with resolute effort. A sense of applying geo-engineering concepts to human societies configured his startling constellation of metaphors for anthropology's tasks in 1968:

As with search in the mineral and oil fields, so, too, the Institute is observing, surveying, probing, sounding, drilling and extracting. The dividends will be high, though probably not in every project. Some fields are poor. Some individuals are just not good fieldworkers. Moreover, many are apprentices, usually with no master nearby – a situation which the Institute recognizes.¹⁵²

Regrettably, it would be years before anthropologists of this era recognised the bearers of Aboriginal knowledge providing the primary information for academic description of their complex society, natural history, memory-systems and technologies. Elkin's viewpoint was

¹⁴⁸ See Howard Morphy, 'Thomson, Donald Finlay Fergusson (1901–1970)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 16, Melbourne University Press, 2001, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/thomson-donald-finlay-fergusson-11851/text21213>.

¹⁴⁹ Rolf De Heer, *Ten canoes: a film by Rolf De Heer and the people of Ramingining*, Fandango films, Australia, [S.L.], 2006; <www.trove.nla.gov.au/version/41955198>.

¹⁵⁰ 'Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (1964 - 1990)', *Encyclopedia of Australian Science*, online at <www.eoas.info/biogs/A001868b.htm>, accessed 20 September 2016.

¹⁵¹ 'Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (1964–1990)', *Encyclopedia of Australian Science*, online at <www.eoas.info/biogs/A001868b.htm>.

¹⁵² A.P. Elkin, 'Before It is Too Late: A Recurrent Challenge', in Ronald M. Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology: Modern Studies in the Social Anthropology of the Australian Aborigines* [Papers presented at Social Anthropology symposium during A.I.A.S. General Meeting, Canberra, May 1968] (University of Western Australia Press, Perth, for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1970) 19–28; p. 21.

determinedly assimilationist,¹⁵³ still exemplifying what Tony Bennett has highlighted as 'the archaeological gaze' formed by natural science's 'deep time' perspective on Aboriginal society as caught in an arrested form of early human development that could not survive encounter with a modern world:

In the context of colonial relations, the effects of the archaeological gaze of the historical sciences were literally petrifying: for A. P. Elkin, writing in the 1930s, the legacy of evolutionary anthropology in relation to Australia's Aborigines was 'to think of that people archaeologically, as though they were as their stones'.¹⁵⁴

The 1964 enabling Act for the new Institute's foundation – 'the first Commonwealth statutory body to concentrate research efforts on and about Australian Indigenous cultures'¹⁵⁵ – remained in place for a generation. It was finally wound up in 1989 to make way for today's replacement body, AIATSIS (Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies). The enabling new Act (of 1990) ensured AIATSIS would have structural provision for Indigenous peoples' involvement thereafter, and governance by an Indigenous-strong board. This change opened the way to regained Indigenous control of intellectual property rights and cultural authority, together with the Institute's ongoing regulation as a federal body through incorporation within the Commonwealth Public Service.¹⁵⁶

The *salvage mentality* – as so sharply expressed by Elkin in 1968 – had by this time a long tradition in anthropological literature. However, the framework of rescue had undergone a slow transformation from the cavernous cultural gulf that characterised the explorer-expeditionary contacts first made by pioneer collectors and recorders such as Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen. Donald Thomson's deeply moving commitment to the Yolngu people he contacted in Cape York and Arnhem Land in 1935–1943, aiming to 'pave the way for a new approach to the Aborigines and the recognition of their rights as human beings',¹⁵⁷ was also accompanied by shuddering apprehension at history closing in upon them, with complete separation from Europeans, in his view, the only possibility of prolonging their existence while 'already on the road to extinction'.¹⁵⁸ The humanism of Donald Thomson's concern for his Aboriginal subjects, as personally known individuals, was abundantly in evidence throughout his life – but like Spencer before him, he could not envisage their continuing future.

2.12 Spencer's role as a patron of art and artists in Australian society

Howard Morphy has pointed to Baldwin Spencer's highly profiled association with the Australian art world of his era, and his friendship with many distinguished artists whose

¹⁵³ A.P. Elkin, *Citizenship for the Aborigines: A National Aboriginal Policy*, Australasian Publishing, Sydney, 1944; A.P. Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney [1970], rev. ed., 1979.

¹⁵⁴ Tony Bennett, 'The archaeological gaze of the historical sciences', Ch. 2 in *Pasts Beyond Memory*, 2004, 36–63, p. 63; the Elkin quote is cited from Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880–1939*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1997, p. 214.

¹⁵⁵ Grace Koch, entry on AIATSIS, in Sylvia Kleinert & Margo Neale, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, p. 530.

¹⁵⁶ Koch, entry on AIATSIS in *Oxford Companion*, 2004, p. 530.

¹⁵⁷ *Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land*, by Donald Thomson, Compiled and Introduced by Nicolas Peterson, Melbourne University publishing, Melbourne, 2003, p. 31.

¹⁵⁸ *Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land*, 2003, p. 114.

works he purchased generously, as assumed evidence of links with Aboriginal cultural works' validation as 'art'.¹⁵⁹ However it is an unwarranted leap to conclude that Spenser was a proselytiser for recognition of Aboriginal art through his contemporary artist-friendships and patronage impacts as a supporter of Australia art's acquisition and promotion. In reality, the facts of Spenser's Euro-Australian art patronage and artist-associations tend to point up more sharply the divisions in his thinking, and the lines he never crossed on behalf of 'Aboriginal art'. While artist-friends such as Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton and Hans Heysen seem to have had their interest in Aboriginal culture aroused through Spenser's enthusiastic descriptions of his expeditions (as covered in Chapter 6), and some sought examples of Aboriginal art, Spenser clearly did not assimilate Aboriginal creators' works to the extensive *art collection* he managed to build privately (in two separate phases of his collecting, when one was sold and he began another).¹⁶⁰

There is no evidence that Spenser displayed Aboriginal works in his home or on any walls where his works purchased from Streeton, Roberts, Lambert and a host of other artists he knew and acquired were displayed. Although he was a trustee for the combined Museum(s), Library and National Gallery of Victoria (and later a trustee for the hugely endowed Felton Bequest), Spenser never proposed that Aboriginal works he had acquired for the Museum of Victoria (which he published as an 'ethnological collection' in 1901, 1915 and 1922)¹⁶¹ should be displayed in the Gallery as 'art', nor that the Gallery should acquire such works alongside other art.

Spencer's personal art collection in 1917 included '[p]ossibly sixty Australian artists ... all except eight of whom were living, and most of the others were recently deceased',¹⁶² making it one of the first collections of contemporary Australian artists made privately on such a scale. When an exhibition from his collection was shown at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1916, this 'was one of the largest showings of a private collection in the history of Australian art, with fifty-eight artists represented among the 218 works', while 'Streeton and Norman Lindsay numbered around forty works each'.¹⁶³ No works of Aboriginal art were included. Meanwhile, although Spenser gathered 'the largest corpus of Aboriginal art [ever assembled]' before the middle of the 20th century,¹⁶⁴ he nevertheless 'never staged a formal Aboriginal art exhibition in the museum', which happened only in 1929,¹⁶⁵ after Spenser had left Australia in 1928 (and following a heart attack, never returned).

The demarcations Spenser drew between the art of Aboriginal peoples he encountered and studied on their Country, and the 'fine art' collecting and artist-circles that were such an important part of his elevated social life in Melbourne, are explicit in his guide to

¹⁵⁹ Howard Morphy's comments on Spenser during paper by the author, 7 July 2019.

¹⁶⁰ See Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much That Is New'*, 1985, Ch. 17, 'Connoisseur', for close description of the two phases of Spenser's collecting – as well as his exhibition of works on two occasions at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (though not including Aboriginal works).

¹⁶¹ Spenser, *Guide to the Australian Ethnological Collection...*, Melbourne, op. cit., 3rd ed., 1922.

¹⁶² Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much that is New'*, 1985, p. 344.

¹⁶³ Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much that is New'*, 1985, p. 345.

¹⁶⁴ Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much That Is New'*, 1985, p. 359.

¹⁶⁵ *Australian Aboriginal Art* was shown at the National Museum, Melbourne, in 1929; nevertheless, the catalogue included an essay entitled 'The primitive artist'. This will be discussed in Ch. 7, when the construction of 'primitive art' will be explored in more detail in the context of art museums.

Melbourne's National Museum collection that he interpreted through the framework of ethnology. Although the energy, intelligence and commitment of Spencer in so many innovative scientific and cultural activities of his age make him a very engaging figure, his position on Aboriginal society's terminal future cannot be evaded. His opinions read starkly:

The Australian aborigines are regarded as belonging to one of the most primitive of existing races. They are true savages, living by fishing and hunting, never cultivating the land over which they roam, nor domesticating any animal.¹⁶⁶ ... They were, in fact, living representatives of Palaeolithic man, lower in the scale of culture than any human beings now upon the earth. It is a matter of the deepest regret that they were allowed to become extinct without our gaining anything but the most meagre information with regard to their customs and organization.¹⁶⁷

In view of the historical conditions shaping disciplinary formations of the social sciences in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, and the indisputable impact of evolutionary theory across the horizon of natural science, from geology to ethnology and an emergent sociology, it is impossible not to challenge Howard Morphy's claim in his 2001 essay¹⁶⁸ – later repeated in a larger book-length study, *Becoming Art: Exploring Cross-Cultural Categories* in 2008¹⁶⁹ – that 'The myth concerning the role of the anthropologists in the creation of [the] otherness of primitive art has no historical basis.'¹⁷⁰ On the occasions when Professor Morphy has made this argument, a single anecdote¹⁷¹ is cited, from Baldwin Spencer's 1912 self-recorded description of observing the evident relish of a Gaagudju man, painting a white ibis on bark at Oenpelli, as he held his brush: 'like a civilised artist ... [and] did the line work, often very fine and regular, with much the same freedom and precision as a Japanese or Chinese artist doing his most beautiful wash-work with his brush'.¹⁷² Here Spencer's own early training in visual art for a year in Manchester returns, as he recognises the Gaagudju man's evident skills in fine drawing.

However, this singular anecdote has been detached repeatedly by Howard Morphy (in serial publications) to make a larger claim about Spencer's purported recognition of 'Aboriginal art', and to absolve his anthropological writings of any association with 'the otherness of primitive art'. Following the analysis undertaken in this chapter, it is impossible to maintain such views as 'historical' in the face of so much evidence to the contrary. In the preface to *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* – published in 1914, the year after his observing of the fine ibis-drawing of the Gaagudju man at Oenpelli – Spencer still reminded readers of his ethnographical accounts that 'it must be remembered that these ceremonies are performed by naked, howling savages'.¹⁷³ Indeed Spencer's originally proposed title for the book, *Australian Savages*, was only changed – at James Frazer's behest from the UK – at

¹⁶⁶ Baldwin Spencer, *Guide to the Australian Ethnological Collection exhibited in the National Museum of Victoria* [1901]; 3rd edition' [National Museum], Melbourne, 1922; archived online at <www.archive.org/details/guidetoaustraliao00muserich> (viewed 23 Sept., 2017); 'Introduction', p. 9.

¹⁶⁷ Spencer, *Guide to the Australian Ethnological Collection...* [1901], 1922, p. 10. Spencer was still designated on the cover as 'Sir Baldwin Spencer, Hon. Director of the Museum' in 1922, though he had left his museum role at this stage.

¹⁶⁸ Morphy, 'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery', 2001, p. 38.

¹⁶⁹ Morphy, *Becoming Art*, 2008, 175.

¹⁷⁰ Morphy, 'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery', p. 38.

¹⁷¹ The first occasion when Howard Morphy highlighted this singular anecdote from Spencer was in his *Aboriginal Art* monograph, Phaidon, London, 1998, p. 13.

¹⁷² Morphy, *Becoming Art*, p. 176 – citing Spencer's *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, 1928, p. 793.

¹⁷³ Mulvaney and Calaby, *So Much that is New*, 1985, p. 214.

proof stage before publication.¹⁷⁴ Spencer's anthropological framework remained resolutely evolutionist, with 'primitive' societies relegated to natural history.

Baldwin Spencer was a remarkable man, of uncommon intellectual and physical stamina, and distinguished by a range of interests animating his whole life. A multi-sided estimation of his achievements is required. Yet despite all he learned from Aboriginal people, the *extinguishment* convictions Spencer maintained throughout his career ensured limits to his understanding of Aboriginal social adaptation or cultural creativity, and ultimately circumscribed his science. Considering the multiple enterprises spanned by his personal influence, and the combined Melbourne institutions of learning in which he played a decisive role over decades, Spencer's scientific study of Aboriginal people, and the extensive documentation and collected objects with which he furnished Victoria's National Museum, can be appraised as both advancing and also fundamentally constraining the representation of Aboriginal culture, both in Australian museums and wider national awareness.

It would be many years after his departure from the Museum before some of the remarkable bark paintings Spencer collected at Oenpelli, along with other objects, would be reframed substantially by an initiative of the National Gallery of Victoria, in a comprehensive 1943 venture, entitled *Primitive Art Exhibition*, guest-curated by German-trained ethnologist Dr Leonhard Adam (as analysed in Chapter 6). In John Mulvaney's generally admiring biography of a remarkable man, scientist, collector, art patron and shaper of museum affairs he astutely noted that Spencer failed to perceive that 'Australian art is wider than its latter-day landscapes' (that is, the vaunted Heidelberg school's paintings of his era). In a final scales-balancing assessment, Mulvaney asserted:

A true history of art in this country must include forty millennia of Aboriginal creativity, and [yet] for his work in documenting some of the responses of Aboriginal artists at the moment of fatal impact, Baldwin Spencer's name will be honoured.¹⁷⁵

2.13 Conclusion

There are some important insights to be drawn from the larger analysis in this chapter.

First to emphasise was the historical rise of anthropological study in the later-19th century within evolutionary frameworks of advancing natural science, in which contemporary 'primitive' societies were retrojected back into a developmental 'past', as the most primordial form of social community. This primitivising framework, restricting all interpretations of Aboriginal culture throughout the 19th century, was directly influenced by the literature of an emergent archaeology and anthropology in Australia (stimulated through early explorer-reports, field-gathered collections, and the beginnings of local expeditionary ethnographies of Aboriginal society in central and northern Australia). The primitivising framework projected onto Aboriginal society throughout the 19th century also established the formative structures for the later emergence of the concept of 'primitive art'.

¹⁷⁴ Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much that is New'*, 1985, p. 214.

¹⁷⁵ Mulvaney and Calaby, *'So Much That Is New'*, 1985, p. 359.

It has been demonstrated that the legacies of 19th-century practices (and their inescapable connections with colonialism) affected all academic studies concerning Indigenous people. The mode of nameless object-classification and history-less description of functions of disparate peoples' material culture – installed through the 'ethnographic present'¹⁷⁶ of classic anthropological narrative ('the use of the present tense to depict social life as a set of shared routines')¹⁷⁷ – had profound effects throughout all domains of learning. The projected backwardness and stasis of Aboriginal society also pervaded popular social commentary that extolled Australia's 'settler society' progress in occupying the lands of Aboriginal people while annexing all their life-sustaining resources.

Anthropology's expanding literature also projected Aboriginal peoples' threatened 'extinction' in the face of inter-cultural contact and social change. This was still the case even when evolutionary science was abandoned after the 1920s, displaced by the new Sydney University Chair's impact and move towards functional anthropology, with its emphases for a period on documenting patterns and structures of particular communities. However, a distinctive 'gatekeeper' tone of intellectual archiving of a culture-in-decline (up to and including the emergence of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and especially led by A.P. Elkin) was clear in even the most affirmative anthropological literature – until insurgently challenged by reformist anthropological interpretation (for example, in the writings and lectures of William Stanner), and by Indigenous voices asserting their own authority and agency in the late-20th twentieth century.

Second to stress is the parallel development of different types of museum institutions in Australia, and the disciplinary separation by which anthropology was at first a partner to archaeology and natural history, being divorced (in all early museum configurations)¹⁷⁸ from art – and with art's deeper connections to 'culture' originally repressed. It has been shown that natural history and art museums, even when conjoined in the same institutional architecture, had little to do with each other, and that such division was enforced in the governance and disciplinary divisions maintained in their institutional arrangement. Meanwhile each institutional typology drew on very different informing disciplines for the values on which its collections were formed.

It is at the *structural* rather than *personal* level that the present study has sought to emphasise the discontinuities of relations and extreme dissymmetry of resources and knowledge-sharing concerning Indigenous cultures and society. This structural situation kept in place a fundamental imbalance in expertise, intellectual authority and processes of

¹⁷⁶ Renato Rosaldo locates the classic period of anthropology's evolution of ethnographic practices as the half-century, 1921–1971 – see Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* [1989], Routledge, London, 1993, p. 48.

¹⁷⁷ Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth*, 1993, p. 49. See also Mary Louise Pratt, 'Fieldwork in Common Places', in James Clifford and George Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1986), 27–50; p. 33.

¹⁷⁸ An exception to this observation could be raised in the case of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, which gained its first home on its present site in Hobart in 1863. However, the TMAG collections have their origins in the collections of the Royal Society of Tasmania (established in 1843, after the devastating conclusion of the Black War and surrender of Palawa people. The Royal Society's activities included infamous practices of grave robbing and collection and expatriation abroad of Aboriginal remains for scientific activities. The 'Art' concerns of TMAG came later into the museum's activities and formal name.)

knowledge-acquisition that restricted to varying degrees the whole 'scholarly enterprise' of anthropology. Despite good intentions, it undercut social justice and indeed different intellectual and cultural possibilities through its own root-system and feeder-lines to rewards, recognition and activities quite beyond Aboriginal peoples' reach. It perpetuated a sustained cultural dominance shaping interpretation, publications, and accrual of authority through objectification of Others studied. Such structural imbalance even overcast many good-effect recommendations emanating from such work with Aboriginal communities at the conclusion of fieldwork, and other forms of positively intended interaction.

It remains important to keep revisiting questions as to how frameworks of dilution and threatened extinction of Aboriginal culture and society itself were reinforced for so long, through the content of anthropological ethnographies and fieldwork interpretations amidst a political atmosphere that maintained racial constructs of 'purity' and 'loss' of culture, and projected a terminal future for Australia's first peoples. Most natural history museums had changed by the later-20th century, steadily transforming their frameworks and practice through the impact of a widening critique of colonial political legacies and recognition of the need to develop a postcolonial anthropology.¹⁷⁹

It must be affirmed that anthropology is a comprehensively restructured enterprise and set of new knowledges in Australia today, and important new styles of co-cultural and inter-cultural interpretation are being advanced. These are producing new kinds of literature and valuable knowledge for a broader mainstream community. Yet it is still relevant to review how some earlier anthropologists interpreted Aboriginal society and culture through constraining frameworks, while they committedly advocated humane treatment of Aboriginal people – and such positive advocacy is on record in the case of various individuals, from Baldwin Spencer in the late-19th century, through Donald Thomson, A.P. Elkin, Ronald and Catherine Berndt in the 20th century, while never leaving out of account the remarkable field-work, reports, committed vision and resonant humanity of W.E. (Bill) Stanner.

Meanwhile the Arnhem-Land bark-painting anecdote cited repeatedly by Howard Morphy – of Baldwin Spencer's 1912 field-notes recording his fascination with a Gaagudju man's delicate white ibis painting 'like a civilised artist' – merits further reflection, though in somewhat different directions from Howard Morphy's conclusion. In the present author's judgment, the Gagadju ibis-painting anecdote foreshadows three important changes concerning the dynamics of Aboriginal art's journeys of self-presentation and wider cultural impact over the course of the 20th century. These three changes have directly to do with the recognition of *an art-making process* occurring in the scene Spencer observed, rather than a collective ethnographical signature determining the outcome.

¹⁷⁹ Early milestone texts arising through French critique spurred by colonial implosion in Vietnam and Algeria are noted here, especially Michel Leiris, 'L'Ethnographie devant le colonialisme', *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 58, 1950; repr. *Brisées*, Mercure de France, Paris, 1966, and Jacques Maquet, 'Objectivity in Anthropology', *Current Anthropology*, Vol.5, 1964, pp 47–55. See also the seminal writings of Frantz Fanon on racial subjugation and its psychological effects on colonised subjects, especially *Black Skin, White Masks* [*Peau noire, Masques blancs*, 1952], transl. Charles Lam Markmann, MacGibbon & Kee, London, 1968. Later, for reflexive Anglo-American critique, see George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986; and George E. Marcus, with Fred Myers, *The Traffic in Culture: the Refiguration of Art and Anthropology*, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1995.

First, it can be judged that Baldwin Spencer *did* indeed experience a change of attention and fine skills-recognition at Oenpelli as he watched the Gaagudju bark painter's subtle execution of the white ibis design in 1912, and that it is entirely possible that he was in this situation experiencing a new kind of recognition of *aesthetic intent* and subtlety underlying the visual languages employed within Aboriginal art. We know the context of the incident: '[Cahill] was visited ... [at Oenpelli/Gunbalanya] by (Sir) W. Baldwin Spencer in 1912'; and 'Cahill supplied the National Museum of Victoria with zoological specimens and a very important collection of bark-paintings'.¹⁸⁰

We also know that the barks Spencer commissioned in 1912, with Cahill's help, resulted in a remarkable group of works, both in size and formal expressive qualities, when they were dispatched. Curator Ron Radford has noted that Spencer was so excited by the quality of the Oenpelli works when they reached Melbourne that he organised a showing at the Victorian Artists Society. And he also promoted them enthusiastically in the Society's journal with a banner headline: 'PATRONISE AUSTRALIAN ART'.¹⁸¹

However, this was a late-life experience for Spencer, and it cannot singly be used to reframe all the severely delimiting judgments locked within the complete corpus of his earlier publications on Aboriginal technologies, society and culture. Even the Oenpelli experience of senior men's creativity did not mitigate the starkness of Spencer's later judgment, after his final visit to Alice Springs in 1926. Back in Melbourne, Spencer declared to a journalist that the Aboriginal people he had so long studied in the central deserts and far north were 'doomed, and nothing could be done to save them from extinction'.¹⁸² Reading this statement, after Spencer's decades of scientific work studying Aboriginal peoples and their culture, there remains a strong affiliation to his Oxford teacher, Edward B. Tylor, whose influential two-volume work, *Primitive Culture* (1871), ended with a paragraph summarising the 'burden' accepted by the new sociologically-oriented science of anthropology:

It is a harsher, and at times even painful, office of ethnography to expose the remains of crude old culture which have passed into harmful superstition, and to mark these out for destruction. Yet this work, if less genial, is not less urgently needful for the good of mankind. Thus, active at once in aiding progress and in removing hindrance, the science of culture is essentially a reformer's science.¹⁸³

A second observation. The Gaagudju ibis-painting anecdote of Spencer's Oenpelli/Gunbalanya visit points to the capacity of an Aboriginal cultural decoration applied on a relatively flat surface – rendered by a chewed twig or stylus (of whatever origin, whether from human-hair or an introduced sable brush) – to produce exponentially

¹⁸⁰ M.A. Clinch, 'Cahill, Patrick (Paddy) (1863–1923)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 7, Melbourne University Press, 1979; online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cahill-patrick-paddy-5461/text9277>.

¹⁸¹ Ron Radford, 'Acquiring and presenting Aboriginal art in art museums: my first 30 years', *Sharing Our Common Wealth: Cultural Institutions, 41st Annual Symposium of the Australian Academy of The Humanities*, Adelaide, 19 November 2010, p. 2; online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/radford-document1.pdf>.

¹⁸² *The Argus*, Melbourne, 23 August 1926, p. 12 – quoted in Mulvaney and Calaby, 'So Much That Is New', 1985, p. 384.

¹⁸³ Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, art and custom*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1874, vol. II, p. 43. This is also quoted in Ruth B. Phillips, 'Aesthetic primitivism revisited: The global diaspora of 'primitive art' and the rise of Indigenous modernisms', *Journal of Art Historiography*, No. 12, June 2015, pp. 1–25; p. 7.

accelerated refinements (works of carefully achieved *visual art*) in a specific situation of intensified attention. An important recognition here is that Spencer was witnessing and affirming an *act of painting*. And painting, when pursued purposively by an artist with a repertoire of skills and complex ideas already developed, entails a highly conceptual process of human cognition. The broader suggestion touched upon here concerns the repeatedly demonstrated occasions, since the Spencer-Oenpelli bark acquisitions of 1912, whereby Aboriginal artists in different parts of the continent have displayed (for outsiders) an outstandingly-accelerated conceptual advance in aesthetic constructs – while still working from a wholly tradition-informed cultural base.

Finally, a third and important idea on the dynamic nature of Aboriginal art. It is that the Gaagudju painter's careful skills-demonstration needs to be contextualised not to a single abiding position on Aboriginal aesthetics in Spencer's ethnography (which it does not suggest), but to the circumstances of *commissioning of artworks* from Aboriginal artists directly – as was the case with the scene Spencer witnessed. Moreover, the ibis-painting episode involved the direct agency of Paddy Cahill, resident at Oenpelli and with good local regard by Yolngu clans he knew. And it was Cahill who had brought about the concentrated bark drawing situation for Spencer's benefit. The anecdote clearly suggests the *agency effect of commissioning* of Aboriginal art (with *locally-based support* providing an important facilitating role).

A conjunction of critical factors is evident in the Gaagudju painter's performative demonstration of his cultural concepts, animated by Yolngu desire for affirmative impact on outsiders, which would subsequently strengthen dramatically throughout the later 20th century, as museum practices increasingly involved Aboriginal agency and self-representation. This would be especially evident in the emergence of Aboriginal art and artists' presence in art exhibitions, a generally rising impact of Aboriginal culture in national awareness, and wider mainstream impact through such support, as analysed later in this thesis. The Spencer-commissioning scenario in fact points forward more than a half-century to the critical support-impact of local art advisers – as eventually located in 'outstation' communities in the 1970s, with the stimulus of the Aboriginal Arts Board programs established through the Whitlam Government's Australia Council and Aboriginal Arts Board's field-changing support-programs for outstation-based artists working 'on Country' in the 1970s.

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End of Chapter 2

Ch. 3: Defensive nation: Australian cultural expression, art museums and exhibitions in the interwar period

- 3.1 The scars of World War and sacrifice for Empire
- 3.2 Isolationism and pressures for cultural conformity
- 3.3 Fears of racial dilution and miscegenation
- 3.4 Xenophobia and hostility to modern art
- 3.5 Parochial patronage in Sydney: The Art Gallery of New South Wales
- 3.6 Racism and nationalism in the arts
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- 3.13 Conclusion

Chapter 3:**Defensive nation: Australian cultural expression, art museums and exhibitions in the interwar period****3.1 The scars of World War and sacrifice for Empire**

After the trauma of World War 1, and the huge pall of grief following some 60,000 deaths and 155,000 wounded,¹ there were varied reactions to the scars left through Australia's sacrifices for Empire. As a study made by historian Ken Inglis² movingly revealed: with human remains unrepatriated to family members (because of distance), the exceptional building of war memorials in Australia's cities and rural towns became substitute places of collective and personal commemoration in the absence of graves. Only two bodies from WW1 were ever repatriated, to be entombed in the nation's capital: one in 1915, known and named (Major-Gen. W.T. Bridges); the other, unknown but exhumed and returned in 1993 to be placed in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Australian War Memorial).³

Most families were touched through deaths or injuries sustained in a host of campaigns across ravaged landscapes of slaughter, from Palestine to Rabaul, on land as well as at sea. Through the cruellest of circumstances many ordinary Australians' lives were opened to experiences of distant countries, cultures and places not previously discussed around dinner-tables. Post-War Australian society carried other recent wounds. Some arose from bitter divisions during the long campaigns and recruitment drives (which had begun five days after war was declared),⁴ and still impacted on many who survived in the aftermath:

Social division also grew [during the War], reaching a climax in the bitterly contested (and unsuccessful) conscription referendums of 1916 and 1917. When the war ended, thousands of ex-servicemen and servicewomen, many disabled with physical or emotional wounds, had to be re-integrated into a society keen to

¹ Statistics from <www.encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/war_losses_australia>, viewed 5 September 2018.

² See Ken Inglis (assisted by Jan Brazier), *Sacred places: war memorials in the Australian landscape*, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton, Vic, 2008.

³ Bart Ziino, 'Mourning and commemoration in Australia: The case of Sir W. T. Bridges and the Unknown Australian Soldier', in *History Australia*, Vol. 4 (2), Monash University E-Press, 2007, 40.1 – 40.17; p. 40.1.

⁴ See recruitment details on AWM website, Canberra, at <www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/anzac-voices/recruitment>

consign the war to the past and resume normal life.⁵

Under a new War Artists program, ten Australian artists had been commissioned (at the instigation of historian and journalist, CEW (Charles) Bean, Bathurst-born yet of 'an Imperial family').⁶ The artists (all then England-resident and co-ordinated through the High Commission in London) were to make up to 25 drawings, on attachments of usually no more than three months in theatres of combat.⁷



L: H. Septimus Power, *Bringing up the guns*, Australian War Memorial (ART03134); C: George Lambert, *A sergeant of the Light Horse* (1920) National Gallery of Victoria; CR: Private Richard Martin, Australian War Memorial, photograph, n.d., possibly 1917; D: Stradbroke Island Q&A, joined the AIF 1914; served Gallipoli, Egypt, France; d. Belgium 1918; Far R: Arthur Streeton, *Abbeville, near Amiens, 1918* (depicting tents of the 2nd Australian General Hospital, Australian War Memorial, ART03139).

Among these artists were George Bell, Will Dyson, George Lambert, John Longstaff, H. Septimus Power, and Arthur Streeton;⁸ and five artists already serving with the Australian Imperial Force formed in 1915 were also selected by Bean for their abilities to create visual interpretations and records of the war (a group that included John Longstaff and Louis McCubbin).⁹ The list above were all painters. However, three sculptors (including Web Gilbert) were employed elsewhere to make topographical models – all assisting Bean's ambition to provide enduring records of sites of Australian sacrifice.¹⁰

The war artists scheme would prove an innovative and important program for Australian art, with a strong impact nationally in the Australian War Memorial's collection to the present day. Lambert's *A sergeant of the Light Horse* (1920) occupied a significant place in the collection of the NGV, Melbourne, when acquired in 1921 by director Bernard Hall, a year after it was painted. War commissioning and travel brought some mature distillation of fresh influences and disparate ideas to Australian painting – in Lambert's case bringing a light-filled landscape, high-keyed colour and the refined line of Italian quattrocento religious painting (studied in the National Gallery, London) to a delicately silhouetted digger cradling his ostrich-feathered hat like a desert-saint in Palestine.

Records are also building, belatedly, of Indigenous war-losses, despite the notoriously unjust status of being non-citizens before and after return to homeland and Country. Indigenous war history of the early-20th century is being gathered through photographic documents and family records (including oral history), since this was scarcely given attention in 'the fine arts'. AIF service for some men attached them to the 'first equal-opportunity employer'¹¹ for Aboriginal Australians: 1,000–1,300 Indigenous soldiers serving in the AIF during the First World War, of whom between

⁵ Interpretative web-released article by the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. See the researched information on all Australian forces' actions, and losses of life in WWI, maintained by the Australian War Memorial, <www.awm.gov.au/articles/atwar/first-world-war>.

⁶ K.S. Inglis, 'Bean, Charles Edwin (1879–1968)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 7, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1979, <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bean-charles-edwin-5166/text8677>, accessed online 2 Sept. 2018.

⁷ See records of the Australian official war artists scheme, and those included in WWI, on the website of the Australian War Memorial at www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/war_artists/ww1, accessed 4 Sept. 2018.

⁸ See AWM website records of the War Artists scheme, above.

⁹ AWM website records, *ibid*.

¹⁰ AWM website records, *ibid*.

¹¹ AWM website records at: www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/aboriginal-presence-on-gallipoli-grows

250 to 300 would prove their courage but lose their lives;¹² 13 (of 70 who served) are also believed to have died at Gallipoli.¹³

The human loss sustained across the macrocosm of Australian society after WW1 would form the centrepiece of national commemoration, with World War II losses incorporated into the national fabric that first unwound from the loom of Gallipoli. Meanwhile '[t]he creation of the Australian soldier and the Australian War Memorial in Canberra became Bean's life's work'.¹⁴ However, larger losses in battles defending Country on Australian homelands continued to remain unacknowledged. By the time of Federation, according to historian Henry Reynolds' estimate, some 'twenty thousand blacks had been killed' – such that '[t]heir burial mound stands out as a landmark of awesome size on the peaceful plains of colonial history'.¹⁵ Reynolds emphasises, however, that 'since at least 1990, Australia's professional war historians have both accepted and promoted the idea that frontier conflict must be considered alongside Australia's overseas wars'.¹⁶

One aspect of the peacetime social withdrawal from world affairs in the 1920s, to rebuild normal life at home, was that so much had changed from the pre-War confident reliance on Britain. In 1919, Bean had urged Australians to seize the future 'of a country still to make' – 'whereas', he counterpointed, 'all the other countries are [already] made'.¹⁷ At its most extreme, such sentiments projected Australian society as forged by war: 'The Anzac legend would have us believe that the Australian nation is a war-baby'.¹⁸ New cleavages in political and social attitudes were clearly created during the conduct and results of the war, which inevitably impacted across the nation's cultural affairs over the following two decades: 'The playing out of the experiences of the First World War, and Gallipoli in particular, preoccupied Australians throughout the 1920s and the early 1930s'.¹⁹ This was a period marked by a contraction from internationalist attitudes and the rise in many quarters of a sharp, jingoistic nationalism.

Yet there was also a rise in a certain kind of victim imagery associated with mainstream sacrifice that could be construed as masking the averted realities of Indigenous displacement and loss. Historian Ann Curthoys has observed that:

Australian popular historical mythology stresses struggle, courage, and survival, amidst pain, tragedy, and loss. There is a special charge associated with the status of victim in Australian historical consciousness, and it is notable how good non-Aboriginal Australians are at memorialising their own sufferings.²⁰

3.2 Isolationism and support for cultural conformity

¹² AWM website records, *ibid*.

¹³ AWM website records, *ibid*.

¹⁴ Margaret Plant, *Love and Lament: An essay on the arts in Australia in the twentieth century*, Thames and Hudson, Melbourne, 2017, p. 66.

¹⁵ Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1982, pp. 200–2.

¹⁶ Henry Reynolds, 'It's time for a new museum dedicated to the fighters of the frontier wars', Friday essay for The Conversation, published online at <www.theconversation.com/friday-essay-its-time-for-a-new-museum-dedicated-to-the-fighters-of-the-frontier-wars-155299>, 19 February 2021>. See Reynolds' monograph on this subject of the frontier wars across Australia: Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten War*, NewSouth Press, Sydney, 2013.

¹⁷ C.E.W. Bean, *In Your Hands, Australians*, Cassell, London, 1919, p. 13; cited in Humphrey McQueen, *The Black Swan of Trespass: The Emergence of Modernist Painting in Australia to 1944*, Alternative Publishing Cooperative Limited, Sydney, 1979, p. 2.

¹⁸ Peter Stanley, 'War and Australia's museums', in Des Griffin and Leon Paroissien (eds), *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology*, National Museum of Australia, 2011, published online at <nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/PStanley_2011.html ISBN 978- 1-876944-92-6>, viewed 20 Aug. 2018.

¹⁹ Plant, *Love and Lament*, 2017, pp. 65–66.

²⁰ Ann, Curthoys, 'History and Identity', in Wayne Hudson & Geoffrey Bolton (ed.), *Creating Australia: Changing Australian History*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1997, 23–38, p. 23.

Historian Humphrey McQueen in *A New Britannia*²¹ – a trenchant study of early Australian socialism (and its repeated failures) first published in 1970 – produced a series of vigorously-waged and well documented arguments set against the background of the scarring campaigns and losses in WW1. McQueen's work is still current in its insights, and useful for its compression of complex issues into a tight structure of exposition. He well highlighted (along with other historians – such as Manning Clark) how Australian losses of life and resources during WW1 were often sustained in service to divided-loyalty British command that afterwards unsettled Australia's blind faith in Empire. This view deepened as an historical analysis through to end-century – for example, by Deborah Gare in 2000: 'Faith in the might and wisdom of the British Empire [...] could not survive Gallipoli.'²² Support for British interests persisted, but would never obliterate the blood-price of blind sacrifice in national memory.

Afterwards, in McQueen's estimation, 'Australians wanted the Empire to be strong so that it could protect them, but they did not always trust Britain to put Australia's interests first.'²³ Many Australians after World War I turned inwards and 'developed a siege mentality':²⁴ especially about the nation's vulnerability to external threats (focused on Asia), such that the '[t]hreat from the north made Australian nationalism essentially racist'.²⁵ Henry Reynolds echoes this judgment recently, emphasising a change that had occurred by the time of Federation: 'An early enthusiasm for trade with the [Asian] region gave way to a fear of invasion in the late nineteenth century.'²⁶ The stance towards Pacific Island communities was less hostile, but racially condescending. To McQueen: 'In their attitudes towards the indigenes of Oceania, Australians all too readily took up the racial chauvinism of European imperialism'.²⁷

The post-WW1 period also presents a particularly volatile constellation of contents in terms of the *social imaginary* in Australian public and political life, as introduced in Ch. 1 of this thesis. In the present context Benedict Anderson's work remains pertinent, through his study of social communities and nationalism employing the construct of *imagined community* as binding a nation in shared experience.²⁸ Anderson's exposition is relevant to the formation of *Australia's imagined community* as a nation, with its war-colouration of the 1920s and 1930s, for several features of his analysis. First, an imagined community, to Benedict Anderson, is maintained through mental images of affinity forging a sense of collective experience and providing a common binding as a nation; second, such a community consolidates a strongly-shared social experience on *commemorative occasions*, forging bonds and linking members who may never know each other in real life; third, an imagined community sustains deeply felt and strong *horizontal comradeship*, despite actual inequalities economically and socially – witness Australia's *mateship* mythology honouring above all the willing surrender of life in defence of comrades, while not too concerned

²¹ Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia: An argument concerning the social origins of Australian radicalism and nationalism*, Penguin, Victoria, 1970; rev. (3rd) ed., 1986.

²² Deborah Gare, 'Britishness in Recent Australian Historiography', *The Historical Journal*, 43(4), 2000, 1145–1155; p. 1150.

²³ McQueen, *A New Britannia*, 1986.

²⁴ McQueen, *A New Britannia*, 1986, p. 4

²⁵ McQueen, *A New Britannia*, 1986, p. 4.

²⁶ Henry Reynolds, 'North of Capricorn' (review of two books), *Inside Story*, 11 June 2019, online at <www.insidestory.org.au/north-of-capricorn/>

²⁷ McQueen, *A New Britannia*, 1986, p. 4.

²⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* [1991], rev. and extended. ed., Verso, London, 2010.

with dissymmetries of class and other aspects of privilege in the social order; and finally, Anderson provides illuminating reflections on Unknown Soldier tombs – containing unidentified remains yet providing a powerful focus for symbolic identification, shared experience of loss, and the sustaining of *imagined community* within a national polity.²⁹

Despite the final peace treaties after WW1, a resurgent nationalism in the 1920s, intensifying the desire to secure a ‘white’ Australia, fomented both a ‘democratic militarism’ keen to maintain strong armed forces, and a ‘navalism’ that required a fleet of ships to defend Australia’s coastlines. Both these inclinations became deeply interwoven – in McQueen’s evaluation – with the Australian post-War nationalism that dominated politics.³⁰ Cultural historian John Rickard has analysed the boundaries around ‘Relationships and Pursuits’, as viewed by the new (much smaller) families of the interwar period. With strong divisions now separating the worlds of men and women (in contrast to the War period of active service across gender-divisions), and a general apprehension around diversity: ‘Australians assumed a need for cultural conformity’ – particularly as ‘reflected in attitudes to minorities’.³¹ Meanwhile immigrants often found acceptance difficult when ‘their “foreignness” guaranteed that they were treated with suspicion’.³²

3.3 Fears of racial dilution and miscegenation

Historian Tom Griffiths has illuminated Australian apprehensions around race in the interwar period, when the White Australia policy secured racial borders externally but Australians ‘feared a “half-caste” culture’ as a continuing spectre of Aboriginal dispossession internally.³³ Yet far from the capital cities, Aboriginal communities’ dismal forced movement, or continued confinement to reservations, were perpetuated under policies of pitiless family-partitioning and segregation. Griffiths especially noted the dismembering effects on communities of racialised legislation in Victoria since the late-19th century:

[T]he Aborigines Protection Law Amendment Act [of 1886] declined Aboriginality to exclude people with some white ancestry. ‘Half-castes’, as they were called, were forced off the reserves and were expected to integrate with the European community, and to be ‘bred white’.³⁴

Following Federation in January 1901, the young Commonwealth parliament had turned attention to legislating a White Australia policy ‘aimed at excluding all non-European immigrants’, which was on the statute books before the new nation celebrated its second Christmas.³⁵ Australia’s *white* status had thereby been declared as the framework for social development as an immediate consequence of the political decision installing a shared nationhood. Within the same decade race supremacy was translated into a national song, championing *White*

²⁹ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2010, pp. 6–7.

³⁰ All quotes, McQueen, *A New Britannia*, 1986, p. 4.

³¹ John Rickard, *Australia: A Cultural History* [1988], 3rd edn., Monash University Publishing, 2017, p. 178.

³² Rickard, *Australia: A Cultural History*, 2017, p. 178.

³³ Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p. 151.

³⁴ Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, 1996, p. 151

³⁵ See Commonwealth Immigration Act, 1901, at

<www.foundingdocs.gov.au/resources/transcripts/cth4ii_doc_1901a.pdf>, viewed 30 August 2018; National Archives of Australia reproduction of the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, and comments, at

<www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/objectsthroughtime/immigration-restriction-act/index.html>, viewed 1 Feb. 2019.

Australia and performed (from published sheet music)³⁶ at the ill-named Australian Natives Association's fete in January 1910. The ANA was a mutual society founded in Melbourne in 1871, for exclusively white Australian-born male members.



L: Sheet music for 'White Australia' ('The Great National Policy Song') composed by W.E. Naunton with words by H.J.W. Gyles, performed at the Australian Natives Association's National Fete, 31 January 1910; C: 1910 badge produced by the ANA for Australian-born whites; R: An ANA banquet to honour Prime Minister Edmund Barton (a member) following his return from the UK in 1901.

Certainly, these 'natives' had nothing whatever to do with Australia's first peoples. As C.M.H. (Manning) Clark highlighted in the fifth volume of his *History of Australia* (in 1981), 'members of the Australian Natives Association were Australian-Britons';³⁷ and Clark characterised them as a newly self-conscious class, the presumptively titled 'native born'. The Association's identity was now upheld as championing a bleached socius, without any discomfort about Aboriginal dispossession. The national song of the Association heroised 'Australia The White Man's Land'. This was a time, as Tom Griffiths has highlighted, of developing new 'European rituals of place or "land rites"' that 'aimed to secure the land emotionally and spiritually for the settler society'.³⁸

[These new rituals] played out in space a larger cultural negotiation between the imported and the indigenous, between European intellectual 'modernism' and Australian environmental 'primitivism'. Australians feared a 'half-caste' culture.³⁹

Like Alfred Deakin, Australian-Britons believed their future still entailed integration *within* the British Empire, while 'Federation would give Australians a more effective voice in the management of the affairs of that Empire'.⁴⁰ Meanwhile they remained 'passionately committed to the domination of the white man over all other people'.⁴¹

3.4 Xenophobia and hostility to modern art

A study by John Williams of Australia's reactions to *modernist art* in the period between the two World Wars, entitled *The Quarantined Culture*, is useful in extending the ideas outlined by McQueen mostly in their political impacts. Williams' study highlights the reflection of newly-sharpened political anxieties about the need to contain external threats, leading to new borders of internal confinement both socially and culturally:

By about 1921 ... an improvised, unstated but de facto cultural quarantine existed in Australia. It was propagated by an inchoate grouping of racial supremacists, anti-Semites, anti-bolsheviks, protectionists, anti-industrialisers and the leaders of an élitist and conservative art-world Establishment – men, mostly, who as individuals often manifested many or all of the foregoing traits.⁴²

³⁶ The sheet music, dedicated to 'The Australian Nation' and bearing a banner extolling 'Australia the White Man's Land', was published by A.M. Dinsdale in 1901, with music by WE Naunton and words by the composer and H.J.W. Gyles.

³⁷ C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia*, Vol. 5, 'The People Make Laws, 1888–1915', Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981, p. 130.

³⁸ Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, 1996, p. 151.

³⁹ Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, 1996, p. 151.

⁴⁰ Clark, *A History of Australia*, Vol. 5, 1981, p. 130.

⁴¹ Clark, *A History of Australia*, Vol. 5, 1981, p. 131.

⁴² John F. Williams, *The Quarantined Culture: Australian Reactions to Modernism, 1913–1939*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 5.

Williams' judgments are vigorously compressed. However, there is corroboration of his views among other historians who have studied this period's cultural character in detail.⁴³ Art historian Bernard Smith, for example, regularly referred to the interwar years as one of the narrowest periods in Australia's cultural development, and decried a 'crippling xenophobia which stultified the growth of Australian art during the 1920s and early 1930s'.⁴⁴ Smith traced the impact of influential Australian artists who had studied and lived abroad in the Edwardian period, mainly in London and Paris. Many had maintained Australian-English networks of contacts socially, Anglicised values culturally and conservative affinities politically, despite their seeking international experience and the stimulus of strong centres of art activity in northern capitals. In Smith's analysis (formulated in two lectures in 1961 and reprinted in 1976), the restrictive values championed by returning expatriates was a severe deterrent to innovative impulses in Australian art:⁴⁵ 'After the First World War the Edwardian expatriates all came back; howling reactionaries almost to a man.'⁴⁶

Bernard Smith's analysis is over-dramatised in this depiction of the Edwardians, and certainly fails to address the variety and thematic differences among the principal artists of this era, as analysed in a recent article by Margaret Plant.⁴⁷ However, putting aside the 'howling' epithet, he had researched records of these artists' lives in the period and traced evidence of their explicitly conservative attitudes to recent art, despite Tom Roberts, George Lambert and others having seen Roger Fry's benchmarking 1910 exhibition in London, *Manet and the Post-Impressionists*,⁴⁸ which brought European modernist changes in art to audiences in England. British art historian Kenneth Clark, in an introduction to Roger Fry's *Last Lectures* (published in 1939), emphasised the revolution in aesthetic values that Fry's exhibition had carried, and what was at stake critically:

All [Fry's] energy and enthusiasm, all his prestige as a scholar and his skill as a dialectician were thrown into a struggle with academic prejudice and bourgeois apathy.⁴⁹

Yet Tom Roberts later mocked this watershed exhibition in a letter to Alfred Deakin as 'a real gag',⁵⁰ while Rupert Bunny in 1911 regretted that he could not 'consider Matisse anything but a humbug'.⁵¹ Bernard Smith insisted the Edwardian expatriate artists – with the sole exception of George Bell, who finally grasped the revolutionary pictorial structure of Cézanne and became a leading (though unreflexive) proponent of modernist art in Melbourne in the 1930s – were all exposed to, but deliberately rejected, the stylistic revolutions occurring in the most advanced art they experienced abroad:

⁴³ See Russell McGregor, 'The Necessity of Britishness: Ethno-Cultural Roots of Australian Nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism*, 12, 3, 2006, 493–511; Alison Inglis, 'Imperial Perspectives on Art in Nineteenth-Century Australia', in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2011, Ch. 5, 55–70; Anne Gray, 'Australian Artists within a Wider World 1900–1930', in Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, 2011, Ch. 7, 84–96.

⁴⁴ Bernard Smith, 'Sir Herbert Read and the Power Bequest', *Meanjin Quarterly*, March 1964; reprinted in *The Antipodean Manifesto: Essays in Art and History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1976, 70–83; p. 76.

⁴⁵ Bernard Smith, 'The myth of isolation' [1961], reprinted in *The Antipodean Manifesto*, 1976, 57–69.

⁴⁶ Smith, 'The myth of isolation' [1961], 1976, p. 65.

⁴⁷ Margaret Plant, 'The lost art of Federation: Australia's quest for modernism', *Art Journal*, Vol 28, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 19 June 2014; online at <www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/the-lost-art-of-federation-australias-quest-for-modernism/>.

⁴⁸ Smith, 'The myth of isolation', [1961], 1976, p. 65.

⁴⁹ Kenneth Clark, Introduction to Roger Fry, *Last Lectures*, Cambridge University Press, 1939, ix–xxix, p. xiii.

⁵⁰ Smith, 'The myth of isolation', [1961], 1976, p. 65, fn. 7.

⁵¹ Smith, 'The myth of isolation', [1961], 1976, p. 65, fn. 8.

It has been claimed that they had little knowledge of the Ecole de Paris. But in the case of the Edwardian expatriates it was not isolation but a wholesale rejection of the modern movement that occurred. ... Indeed, they saw the modern movement as an attack upon ... tradition.⁵²

3.5 Parochial patronage in Sydney: The Art Gallery of New South Wales

The impact of returned expatriates spread out into all areas of the art world and its patronage systems, determining public values in the often-stultifying interwar years. Bernard Smith, when researching records for some years in the Art Gallery of New South Wales on secondment from the NSW education department in the late 1940s, had encountered these lingering influences directly in the careers of artists and trustees, as 'the Edwardian expatriates dominated art and art criticism in Australia'.⁵³ His analysis is particularly relevant to understanding their conservative power:

The expatriates became patriots, became trustees, became trustee directors of galleries, art critics, and received official honours; became, in short, the Establishment in painting.⁵⁴

Research by Heather Johnson, who later made a detailed study of 'the Sydney art patronage system' during the half-century preceding 1940, also gathered clear evidence of a 'complex, interacting, parochial art network in Sydney' within a small population, producing 'a situation which did not change until after the Second World War':⁵⁵

Post-war nationalism and an economic boom in the 1920s consolidated an overwhelming preference for Australian art in Sydney in the 1920s and 30s, but an Australian art that reflected the ideology of the time, Australia as a land of rural peace and plenty, removed from and unaffected by the evils of the modern world.⁵⁶

In the broader compass of his study of social tensions impacting on art, John Williams also argued the direct connections prevailing between ideas on economic and cultural development, and the urge for barriers against foreign threats in both areas:

By 1929 economic protectionism and cultural isolationism were part of the national psyche. Australia was barricaded behind an economic and cultural quarantine.⁵⁷

Williams emphasised that many supporters of Australian art in the inter-War period vigorously pursued an attitude of nationalist isolation against the 'contagion' of ideas from abroad, conjuring protection from a host of evils: 'from decadence, from modernism, from almost anything that was unfamiliar – implying ... almost all that was not British, and some things that were British as well'.⁵⁸ Meanwhile Smith had added a further perspective, noting a broad intellectual recoil in the 1920s from *European continental* sources as far as art was concerned: 'During this period Australia was indeed isolated ... from contemporary art and thought in Europe.'⁵⁹

Exhibitions from Europe virtually ceased. Indeed between 1923 and 1932 I do not know of any significant exhibition, academic or modern, to reach Australia, whereas during the 1880s and 1890s they had been fairly frequent.⁶⁰

3.5 Racism and nationalism in the arts

Much has been written about *The Bulletin* and its fomenting of racism and nationalism in Australian art. However, the direct connections to art patronage in major art institutions (especially the Art Gallery of New South Wales) have not been clearly drawn. Important for the

⁵² Smith, 'The myth of isolation', [1961], 1976, p. 65.

⁵³ Smith, 'The myth of isolation', [1961], 1976, p. 66.

⁵⁴ Smith, 'The myth of isolation', [1961], 1976, p. 66.

⁵⁵ Heather Johnson, *The Sydney Art Patronage System, 1890-1940*, Bungoon Technologies, Grays Point NSW, 1997, p. 9.

⁵⁶ Johnson *The Sydney Art Patronage System*, 1997, p. 8.

⁵⁷ Williams, *The Quarantined Culture*, 1995, p. 245.

⁵⁸ Williams, *The Quarantined Culture*, 1995, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Bernard Smith, 'The myth of isolation', [1961], 1976, p. 66.

⁶⁰ Bernard Smith, 'The myth of isolation', [1961], 1976, p. 66.

present thesis is to highlight the contradiction that despite the *Bulletin's* vigorous, masculine personality – famously carrying the aphorism of the ‘Bushman’s Bible’⁶¹ – it derived most of its support from a city readership, including well-read women and cultural leaders of the day. It interwove patronage for both writers (Henry Lawson, Joseph Furphy, Banjo Patterson, Miles Franklin who projected rural themes) and prominent artists (brothers Norman and Lionel Lindsay, David Low, Phil May, D.H. Souter), all of whom were key contributors to the weekly’s themes, reach and impact: ‘During The *Bulletin's* heyday ... it dictated the debate in Australian culture and politics.’⁶²

The *Bulletin's* objects of attack are well known, and simply encapsulated in a recent summary of the paper’s ideological landscape – although it was also notoriously volatile and could change its tack and targets suddenly, even reversing a political position when combusive interests reframed current issues quite suddenly:

Between 1880 and 1918 *The Bulletin* cruelly lampooned colonial governors, business leaders, the bourgeoisie, the church, feminists and prohibitionists. It supported the labour movement, Australian independence, liberal democracy and White Australia. It ran extremely racist cartoons attacking Asians, in particular Chinese and Japanese, along with Indians, Pacific Islanders and Jews.⁶³



L: A *Bulletin* cartoon depicting a slave trader using coconuts as a lure to entice buyers for his ‘niggers’, c.1886, SLNSW, Sydney; Phil May, *A Curiosity in her Own Country*, published in *The Bulletin*, March 1888.

The *Bulletin* dealt in a complex politics that could whiplash at any moment in an unexpected direction as civic emotions changed, or were redirected by current events. South Sea Islanders might be sarcastically introduced in a *Bulletin* cartoon as a ‘labour threat’, marshalled by an *outré* oriental overseer touting ‘Niggers for Hire’; yet currents of a *feared imaginary* of external threats from foreign sources were also inscribed under the guise of ridicule. Meanwhile Aboriginal people were similarly subject to an ambiguous politics – part-victim, but nonetheless stamped as outcast.

The *Bulletin* cartoons were so volatile that they often challenge a clear reading today. For example, *A Curiosity in her Own Country*, might have projected a strain of compassionate irony within Phil May’s 1888 cartoon of a displaced Aboriginal woman (and her child) surrounded by gawping cityfolk (where the strongest caricature is definitely reserved for a Chinese onlooker). Yet a racialised stereotyping of Aboriginal defeat in this forlorn scene is inevitably reinforced within the total construct. Nevertheless, the acknowledgment of dispossession and loss in the title is an arresting contradiction to the comforting deceptions of a *terra nullius* colonial ‘settlement’ of

⁶¹ See National Museum of Australia commentary on ‘Bushman’s Bible’ epithet for *The Bulletin*, at <www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/the-bulletin>

⁶² Stephen Thompson, ‘The *Bulletin* Magazine, 1910’, Migration Heritage Centre NSW (Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences), Sydney, January 2013, <www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/objectsthroughtime/1910-the-bulletin-magazine/>, viewed 12 September 2017.

⁶³ Thompson, ‘The *Bulletin* Magazine, 1910’, 2013.

country. Such observation does not mitigate the *Bulletin's* sponsoring of a white Australian nationalism, which was overwhelmingly its anchorage. But it does hint at conflicted contents in the *socius* underlying the period's movement towards Federation; and – from the vantage-point of this thesis – it demonstrates how densely layered and resonant visual art can be as a vehicle (and site) for expressing multiple social contents, including even conflicted currents of value and meaning.



Phil May, 'A Curiosity in her Own Country', (detail) published in *The Bulletin*, March 1888.

3.7 Settler society, bush nostalgia and political Australian Impressionism

The state galleries' cultural position in Sydney and Melbourne, continuing well into the 20th century, reflected many attitudes expressed in the *Bulletin*: notably their favouring of Australian artists who most purveyed pastoralist-era imagery (Buvelot, Roberts, Streeton, McCubbin, Lambert); preferring naturalist styles (in landscape, portraiture, the Heidelberg school, rural genres); boosting acquisition-favourites for state collections (either academy-trained artists from abroad or studio-trained Australian artists who celebrated the Australian landscape and 'rural past');⁶⁴ and reinforcing arguments to secure protection of Australian culture from 'modern art' from Europe.

A published source from 1886 clearly attested to the psychological investment of settler society's land-possession in the nostalgic genre of Australian Impressionist painting and bush landscapes. It also demonstrated the direct link to public art collections, and the power of visual art in providing a scenography shaping both national memory and the social imaginary of a political community – as evident in the following projection of the Victorian colony's desire for pictorial reflections of its wealth and progress from 'rude' beginnings:

We cannot ... urge too strongly ... how requisite it is that we should as soon as possible fill our National Gallery with representative works of our artists and our nation, its early historical scenes, and pictures of the true rude life that must have and did exist in the early days of the colony.⁶⁵

By the interwar years, divisions around disruptive inclinations of 'the modern' versus the security of 'tradition' were heightened through what art historian Ann Galbally has emphasised as the 'aesthetic nationalism' of the Heidelberg school as it maintained a long hold in the Australian imagination.⁶⁶ Images such as Arthur Streeton's 1896 *The Purple Noon's Transparent Might*,

⁶⁴ Arthur Streeton's *Still Glides the Stream and Shall for Ever Glide* (1890), was acquired soon after it was painted by the Art Gallery of New South Wales – at the direct instigation of trustee Julian Ashton, and through his own interests in developing an Australian school of painting (and collecting by state galleries): see Ann Galbally, 'National Life and Landscape: The Heidelberg School as Mythmaker 1880-1905', in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2011, Ch. 6, 71–83; p. 71.

⁶⁵ From 'Tusque', 'The National Gallery: "On the Line"' *Australian Magazine*, July 1886, p. 138; (cited on NGV website for 'Australian Impressionism, at <www.ngv.vic.gov.au/australianimpressionism/education/insights_national.html>, viewed 23 April 2019).

⁶⁶ Galbally, 'National Life and Landscape', 2011, p. 82.

acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria in the same year it was painted, grew steadily in popularity as a subject for reproductions in public buildings in the 1940s (for example, Commonwealth bank buildings in rural towns). This nostalgic view of the Upper Hawkesbury River looking towards the Blue Mountains consolidated a secured Arcadian vision of the Australian landscape in popular social imagination, while contradicted by the realities of steadily clear-felled land preferred for mechanised farming in the interwar and post-War years.



L: Arthur Streeton, *The Purple Noon's Transparent Might*, 1896 NGV, Melbourne; CL: H V McKay farm equipment for tree-clearing, n.d. (image, Museum Victoria); CR: mechanical wheat harvesting; R: mechanised wheat planting

It is possible to perceive some temporal and ideological convergence having occurred in the new national imaginary formed in the post-Federation era, whereby the late-19th century self-concept of 'the native born' (a concept of self-securing historical status in a conquered country) fused with a sense of possession of a settler pastoral landscape, and lyricised admiration of bush subjects. The 'native born' became a key concept fuelling an emergent nationalism and mythologising around the pastoral landscape, as well-analysed by Bernard Smith in 1975 (noting how this concept was mobilised in the art and writing of Sydney Long, when writing in 1905, and who later became a long-serving AGNSW trustee, 1933–49). The nationalist 'myth-making' Smith identified as beginning 'with the distinction which Long makes between the "foreign" and the "native-born"'.⁶⁷

The 'native born' mythology included retrospective tributes to the 'pioneer' generation of battlers who had weathered bushfires and natural disasters to secure occupation of a land that no longer records Aboriginal presence (as still tenuously recognised in the earlier-19th century, in the paintings of the two greatest colonial artists, John Glover and Eugene von Guerard, where Aboriginal subjects still frequently appeared, even if as accessory figures in an occupied territory). Terry Smith has described 19th century art's process of 'calibrating' the perception of landscape, or establishing 'settings for settlement': as colonists progressively 'erased previous land usage and then constantly adjusted their own usage until it conformed, partially but adequately, to pre-visualised frameworks of order'.⁶⁸ By the 1880s and 1890s, a particular vision of landscape had taken hold, as Ann Galbally has emphasised, whereby leading painters had given 'visual form to the concept of life in Australia as heroic and stoic ... [and not] technically experimental'⁶⁹ – which rendered 'the art of this period central to Australian cultural sensibility for over a century'.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Bernard Smith, contextualising documents in Ch. 8, 'Nationalism', 230–281, in *Documents on Art and Taste in Australia: The Colonial Period 1770–1914*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1975, p. 234.

⁶⁸ Terry Smith, *Transformations in Australian Art*, Vol. 1, *The Nineteenth Century – Landscape, Colony and Nation*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 2002, Ch. 2, 'Land into Landscape: The setting of settlement', 44–65, p. 44.

⁶⁹ Galbally, 'National Life and Landscape', 2011, p. 82.

⁷⁰ Galbally, 'National Life and Landscape', 2011, p. 82. See catalogue of the nationally touring exhibition of the 1980s, Jane Clark and Bridget Whitelaw, *Golden Summers: Heidelberg and Beyond*, National Gallery of Victoria and International Cultural Corporation of Australia, 1986; Leigh Astbury, *City Bushmen: The Heidelberg School and the Rural Mythology*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985; and Ian Burn, 'Beating around the Bush: The Landscapes of the Heidelberg School', in Bernard Smith, Anthony Bradley, Terry Smith, *Australian art and architecture: Essays presented to Bernard Smith*, Oxford University Press, New York & Melbourne, 1980, pp. 83–98.



Frederick McCubbin, *Down on His Luck*, 1889 (AGWA, Perth); *The Pioneer*, 1904 (NGV, Melbourne) *On the Wallaby Track*, 1899 (AGNSW, Sydney).

The prolonged emotional loyalism attached to the tradition of Australian landscape painting mobilised by the Heidelberg school can be instanced in the case of the popular and conservative 20th century painter, Ernest Buckmaster (1897-1968), today most remembered as a favoured portraitist for official commissions by the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (a body explored in Chapter 5). Buckmaster was one of the foundation members of the 1937 Menzies-instigated Australian Academy of Art (analysed below); and he ‘earned a reputation as a polemicist, launching many attacks on modern art in letters to newspapers’.⁷¹ In Buckmaster’s polemics it can be discerned how renditions of the pastoral landscape – by now a post-Federation typology and adjunct to nationalism – had become a kind of national duty for a white Australian art by the 1930s. Buckmaster, a resolute opponent of the Contemporary Art Society formed in 1938, was always ready to decry modernists, in a double-pronged attack. In 1940 he castigated ‘these would be Nazis of the art world’, whom he most condemned for ‘fail[ing] to paint our lovely landscape’.⁷²

John Rickard’s cultural history of Australia has provided other linking perspectives across genres, revealing a similar nationalist preoccupation in Australian literature: While ‘[r]everence for pioneers ... blocked out convictism altogether, focusing instead on those who settled the land’,⁷³ significant creative writers inheriting the *Bulletin* tradition, after its ‘war-time transformation ... from a broad radicalism to a conservative populism’ still ‘remained convinced that the bush was the proper inspiration for a national literature’.⁷⁴ Reinforcing these values in visual art, the Art Gallery of New South Wales’ annual Wynne Prize for a landscape painting, established in 1897, was steadily awarded for almost five decades to *pastoralist* landscapes in the great wake of the Heidelberg school’s modelling of national sentiment – until the award (decided exclusively by the trustees) eventually admitted a new typology of the *dry interior*, when Russell Drysdale received the prize in 1947 for his rendition of the country town of *Sofala*.⁷⁵

3.8 Rise of interest in the ‘outback’ and Aboriginal people in the Central Australian deserts

In the same period, a topographical interest in the ‘outback’ grew within mainstream consciousness. It could be argued that the extensive publications of Baldwin Spencer⁷⁶ with his expeditionary partner Frank Gillen, detailing their remarkable journeys and documentation of Aboriginal communities still living on Country in the central deserts and far north were slowly

⁷¹ Alan McCulloch (and Susan McCulloch), *Encyclopedia of Australia Art*, 3rd (rev.) ed., 1994, ‘Ernest Buckmaster’ entry, p. 121. See also *The Art of Ernest Buckmaster*, Lothian, Melbourne, 1951.

⁷² Cited in Christine Dixon, Dinah Dysart, *Counterclaims: Presenting Australian Art 1938–1941*, S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney, 1986, p. 33; reminded also in Margaret Plant, *Love and Lament*, 1918, p. 39.

⁷³ Rickard, *Australia: A Cultural History*, 2017, p. 66.

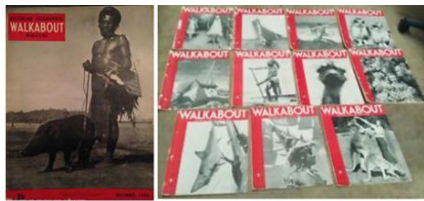
⁷⁴ Rickard, *Australia: A Cultural History*, 2017, p. 121.

⁷⁵ John Rennie Short, ‘The landscape of modernist Australia’, in *Imagined country: Environment, culture and society*, [1991], Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY, 2005, p. 211.

⁷⁶ B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1899; B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1904; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *Across Australia*, 2 vols. Macmillan, London, 1912; Walter Baldwin Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1914.

impacting in wider awareness. Certainly, Spencer and Gillen's *Across Australia*, published in 1912,⁷⁷ had been aimed at a broader audience than their more scientific documentation of expeditions in other publications – since '*Across Australia* was based on a series of columns written by Spencer for the *Leader*, an offshoot of the *Age* newspaper'.⁷⁸ Artists were also beginning to visit the centre in notable excursions of the 1920s – as analysed in Chapter 6, concerning the rise of artist circles' and state galleries' engagement with Indigenous art.

Magazines also promoted a new interest in Australia's 'remote' landscapes. The much-read *Walkabout* magazine (*Australian Geographical Walkabout Magazine*), which first appeared in 1934,⁷⁹ was named through turning an Aboriginal manhood-training and spiritual journey crossing Country into a tourism trope that captured popular white imagination.



L: Cover of *Australian Geographical Walkabout Magazine*, 1945; R: a spread of *Walkabout* covers from 1939.

The magazine was widely informative about Australia's 'outback' regions and geographical diversity (while also providing photographic contents closely followed, and very differently absorbed, by Aboriginal people, often looking to monitor community connections surviving official policies of family partitioning and general segregation of Aboriginal people on reserves).

Artists had begun to be drawn to these new landscapes: Jessie Trail and Violet Teague first travelled to Central Australia and visited Aboriginal groups at Hermannsburg (and exhibited their own work there) in the 1920s and 1930s⁸⁰ – as covered in Chapter 6. However, painter Margaret Preston's interest in the outback and remote communities would emerge separately. Although Preston had practised for years and had extensive experience abroad, it was only after her return voyage from the US in 1919 (and subsequent marriage and relocation to Sydney for the remainder of her life) that she seriously turned to forging an Australian modernism in her work, and then explicitly espoused 'Aboriginality' as a basis for a new national tradition throughout the 1920s (see Chapter 6).⁸¹

3.9 Continuing deference to British art networks and Imperial values

In the interwar period, although popular magazine culture was rising and commercial design and illustration opening up new fields, including the expansion of advertising, Australian art was still considered to devolve ultimately to decisions made within the framework of 'fine art' and

⁷⁷ Spencer and Gillen, *Across Australia*, 1912.

⁷⁸ Susan Lowish, *Rethinking Australia's art history: The challenge of Aboriginal art*, Routledge, New York & Abingdon, Oxon, 2018, Ch. 6; online (n.p.) through National Library of Australia at <www.search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1752803>.

⁷⁹ *Walkabout*, an illustrated magazine published from 1934 to 1974, combined cultural, geographic, and scientific content with travel literature. See A.T. Bolton (ed.) *WALKABOUT's Australia: An anthology of articles and photographs from Walkabout magazine*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1964.

⁸⁰ See Jane Hardy, 'Visitors to Hermannsburg: An Essay on Cross-Cultural Learning', in Jane Hardy, J.V.S. Megaw and M. Ruth Megaw (eds.) *The Heritage of Namatjira, The Watercolourists of Central Australia*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1992, 137–175; see also Deborah Edwards, 'Transitions 1920s: The National', in Deborah Edwards and Rose Peel with Denise Mimmocchi, *Margaret Preston*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2005, p. 105.

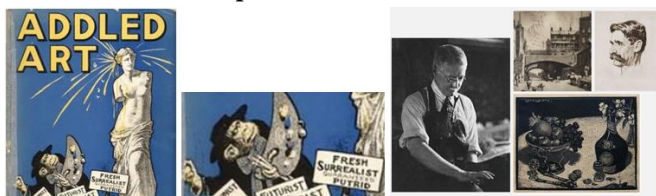
⁸¹ Preston's first article on Aboriginal art, 'The Indigenous Art of Australia', was published in the March 1925 issue (No. 3), of *Art in Australia*, with the support of the Magazine's publisher, Sydney Ure Smith.

controlled by privileged groups in the few south-eastern capital cities. Despite vaunting its independent character and distinctive values, Australia's continuing need to gain parental recognition for its art and artists in Britain would persist throughout the 20th century – as analysed in Chapter 5. Julian Ashton and Sydney Ure Smith were the joint organisers of a large and significant exhibition of paintings to be shown at the Royal Academy Galleries in London in 1923, with a preview-airing at the Education Department Art Gallery in Sydney (in Phillip Street) before it was shipped to London in June.⁸² Responses by critics in London were unencouraging. The exhibition was noted for its conservative selection and fondness for pastoral landscape, arousing descriptions such as 'monotony [and] lack of experiment', 'honesty of purpose', 'subdued uniformity', 'obvious sincerity', and 'sensible'.⁸³

Lionel Lindsay had been enlisted in Sydney to write the Preface to the catalogue.⁸⁴ This was during his first decade as an AGNSW trustee (1918–1929), and in the same year when he had the first really successful exhibition of his own etchings in London.⁸⁵ Lindsay welcomed the position of writing as a 'provincial', or even 'old-fashioned' interpreter in introducing the Australian exhibition to an English audience, especially if this demarcated him from 'the Red Army of art that has trampled upon the great tradition we inherit from the Greeks'. In introducing the exhibition, Lindsay vaunted his separation 'from all the revolutionary manias of a rotted world ... which strikes in envious hate, upward, at everything most noble in man's past'.⁸⁶

3.10 Militant traditionalism: Lionel Lindsay and J.S. MacDonald

Lionel Lindsay continued to sharpen his attacks on modern art throughout the 1930s: with lugubrious speculation as to its alleged sponsorship by a cabal of Jewish dealers. He made his prejudices explicit not only in written denunciations, but also visually translated to picture external threats from Europe.



L & C: Cover of Lionel Lindsay's *Addled Art*, publ. 1942; detail of caricature of a Jewish dealer; R: Lionel Lindsay and panel of his works – finely crafted, informed by a connoisseur's study of past masters of graphic techniques; securely traditional, with the profile portrait of Henry Lawson (1919, etching) one of his most popularly known works (and subjects).

The analysis laid out in Lindsay's slim but polemical 1942 publication, *Addled Art*,⁸⁷ with its cover-caricature of a Jewish art dealer as a bow-tied ape, is no less remarkable when it is registered that Lindsay compiled this deliberately incendiary work during his first period as a trustee of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and it in no way impeded his later reappointment to the Gallery's

⁸² *Exhibition of Australian Art to be held at the Galleries of the Royal Academy London 1923*, catalogue of exhibition held at Education Dept Art Gallery, Sydney, prior to sending to London, June 1923; title and details cited Heather Johnson, *The Sydney Art Patronage System, 1990-1940*, Bungoona Technologies, Sydney, 1997, p. 243.

⁸³ Review quotes cited in McQueen, *The Black Swan of Trespass*, 1979, p. 3.

⁸⁴ See Heather Johnson, *The Sydney Art Patronage System, 1990-1940*, Bungoona Technologies, Sydney, 1997, pp. 32–33.

⁸⁵ Bernard Smith, 'Lindsay, Sir Lionel Arthur (1874–1961)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986; online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lindsay-sir-lionel-arthur-7756/text12457>.

⁸⁶ Lionel Lindsay, 'Preface' to the *1923 London Exhibition Catalogue*, cited in McQueen, *The Black Swan of Trespass*, 1979, p. 3.

⁸⁷ Lionel Lindsay, *Addled Art*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1942.

board.⁸⁸ Lindsay's vision of a heroic art cleansed of European modernist movements ('Fresh Surrealist, guaranteed putrid'⁸⁹ on one of the cover banners) was also distinctively masculine. Juliette Peers has highlighted the derogatory position in which Lindsay held women artists, whom he noted acerbically as outnumbering men locally in studio classes⁹⁰ (with the additional remark 'the superficial nature of modern painting attracts their light hands: picture or hat all is one'):⁹¹

Lionel Lindsay had already in the 1940s identified women as lax and lazy painters who wanted easy and quick shortcuts and for whom the fallacies of modernism had as easy an appeal as they did for Jews.⁹²

Addled Art (which quickly sold out on its Sydney publication in 1942)⁹³ appeared the year after Lionel had received a knighthood, and when he (along with his other artist-brothers) enjoyed a long-standing friendship and social contacts with Robert Gordon Menzies.⁹⁴ In Menzies' surviving papers his opinion and lessons learned from *Addled Art* are detailed after viewing the Archibald Prize in Sydney in 1946. The brief extract below is from a letter of surprising length and detail for a busy politician, who had recently (from Opposition) been involved in the formation of the Liberal Party in 1944-45, 'in whose gestation Menzies' influence was the most prominent',⁹⁵ and which party he would subsequently lead as Prime Minister for seventeen years. The letter reveals not only the strength of fondness for Lionel Lindsay but a general preoccupation about 'standards' for Australian art, which had so disturbed Menzies by the late 1930s that he had decided an Academy was needed, with himself (then Attorney-General) as founding Chairman, and Lindsay a founding member. Lionel would doubtless have been gratified to receive a long letter supporting his views about the current Archibald Prize entries, with a constellation of stereotypes spuriously linking the 'abominations' licensed by modern art to an 'art racket' by dealers and to people not of British stock, namely 'refugees':

My dear Lionel: After seeing you in Sydney, Pat and I went to see the Archibald Prize entries. As a result, I entirely favour the abolition of the Archibald Prize! Of all the competitors, I would regard ninety percent as rank impostors; some of them refugees who have discovered the art racket since their arrival in Australia ... For myself, I walked around the collection almost convulsed with mirth, but I could not fail to notice that many of those present gazed with respectful and anxious eyes at the abominations hung upon the walls! ... You may judge by the tone of this letter, and quite rightly, that I have recently re-read *Addled Art* with supreme joy. ...⁹⁶

Addled Art had also appeared a year after youngest brother Daryl Lindsay had become Director of the National Gallery of Victoria (in 1941),⁹⁷ which increased the sensitivity of such an anti-

⁸⁸ Lionel Lindsay, originally from Victoria, served as a trustee of the National Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1918-29 and 1934-49; see Bernard Smith, 'Lindsay, Sir Lionel Arthur...', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1986.

⁸⁹ Lindsay here echoed a phrase ('putrid meat') used by Melbourne Director (and both a Lindsay and Menzies friend) J.S. MacDonald when attacking the *Herald* exhibition in 1939 (see further below).

⁹⁰ Lindsay, *Addled Art*, 1946, p. 53, fn. 64; quoted by Juliette Peers in 'Women artists as drivers of early art historical activities and alternative art historical narratives in Australia', *Journal of Art Historiography*, Number 4, June 2011, 1-18, p. 12; published online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/peers-the-canon-and-its-disc.pdf>.

⁹¹ Peers, 'Women artists as drivers...', 2011, p. 12.

⁹² Peers, 'Women artists as drivers...', 2011, p. 16.

⁹³ Sheridan Palmer, *Centre of the Periphery: Three European Art Historians in Melbourne*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2008, p. 126.

⁹⁴ See Joanna Mendelssohn, *The Art of Sir Lionel Lindsay*, Copperfield Publishing Company, Brookvale, NSW, 1982, and *The Art of Sir Lionel Lindsay, Volume II*, Copperfield Publishing, Brookvale, NSW, 1987.

⁹⁵ A.W. Martin, 'Menzies, Sir Robert Gordon (Bob) (1894-1978)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 14, Melbourne University Press, 2000, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/menzies-sir-robert-gordon-bob-11111/text19783>, accessed 3 May 2018.

⁹⁶ From a 1946 letter of R.G. Menzies to Lionel Lindsay, held in the Lindsay Papers, MS 9104/1610, Box 1999, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne; reprinted in Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, Philip Goad (eds), *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917-1967*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2006, pp. 483-485.

⁹⁷ Leonard Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861-1968: Search for a Collection*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1970, p. 170.

modernist publication – not that Daryl supported his two Sydney-based artist-brothers' articulated anti-Semitism in his own professional conduct in Melbourne. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, Daryl Lindsay in fact crucially appointed the first art historian to enter a state gallery, Hamburg-trained Jewish exile, Dr Ursula Hoff;⁹⁸ and in the same period he invited Jewish refugee ethnologist Leonhard Adam to curate an exhibition on *Primitive Art* for the Melbourne Gallery (realised in 1943). This was shortly after meeting Adam who had (with local help) been released from detention at the Tatura migrant camp in 1942 and assigned to work on the Melbourne Museum's ethnological collection under the supervision of history professor Max Crawford at the University.⁹⁹

Meanwhile Daryl's predecessor, J.S. ('Jimmy') MacDonald – director sequentially of the Art Gallery of New South Wales 1928–36,¹⁰⁰ and (against the Melbourne board's preference) the National Gallery of Victoria, 1936–40¹⁰¹ – was a serial provocateur in his critical writings of the 1930s. The state galleries, according to MacDonald, should shun modern art (declaring from his NGV director's post, in 1937: 'I don't think we should have modern art in the gallery at all. It is not liked by the art galleries of Australia').¹⁰² Instead, according to MacDonald's values (and a dash of ethno-nationalism in an article on Streeton, published in 1931): if Australians learned from Streeton's landscapes, they could become 'the elect of the world, the last of the pastoralists, the thoroughbred Aryans in all their nobility not only a nation but a race ... spring[ing] from a particular soil'.¹⁰³

However, MacDonald was well aware of the licence he was taking in his statements, and self-consciously exploited his power to provoke. He had been among those serving artists of World War 1 (along with Streeton) who volunteered as an AIF-attached War Artist; but through war injuries MacDonald had been 'classified unfit for active service' in October 2015¹⁰⁴ and had to withdraw to other roles. His war experience (which included Gallipoli) may go in some way to explain his extremist sense of an old order that had 'rotted', from which the Australia to which he returned still stood apart. As Humphrey McQueen astutely observed: 'For MacDonald's generation, delight in an Australian Pastoral became one measure of their distance from Pozières, and of their attachment to that one country still to make.'¹⁰⁵

These were but some of the heated value-contests waged in the interwar years, demonstrating how deeply divided and unsettled this 'settler society' had become. Race-and-soil nationalist sentiments, enunciated in some of the most elevated social and cultural circles, starkly echoed Nazism's *Blut und Ehre* (Blood and Honour) slogan of the Hitler Youth movement formed in the

⁹⁸ The singular impact of Dr Ursula Hoff on professional training in art museum scholarship is covered in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

⁹⁹ See Palmer, *Centre of the Periphery*, 2008, pp. 102–3; see also Robyn Sloggett, 'Has Aboriginal art a future?' Leonhard Adam's 1944 Essay and the Development of the Australian Aboriginal Art Market', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 18(2), 2015, 167–83, p. 169. See also detailed analysis of the Melbourne department in Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁰ See Geoffrey Serle, 'MacDonald, James Stuart (Jimmy) (1878–1952)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, 251–252, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/macdonald-james-stuart-jimmy-7338/text12737>.

¹⁰¹ Serle, 'MacDonald [JS]', *ADB*, 1986.

¹⁰² J.S. MacDonald, when NGV Director, reported in *The Sun*, Melbourne, 5 June 1937.

¹⁰³ J.S. MacDonald, 'Arthur Streeton', *Art in Australia*, 15 October 1931; quoted in Williams, *The Quarantined Culture*, 1995, p. 196.

¹⁰⁴ Serle, 'MacDonald, [JS]', *ADB*, 1986.

¹⁰⁵ Humphrey McQueen, *The Black Swan of Trespass: The Emergence of Modernist painting in Australia to 1944*, Alternative publishing Cooperative Limited, Sydney, 1979, p. 115.

1920s¹⁰⁶ – and Australia was not free from deep currents of anti-Semitism among its own social and cultural elites, as Lionel Lindsay knowingly courted in his polemics.

Varied, competing identities in Australia now espoused mutually contesting attachments to privately owned land, the commonly accessible ‘bush’, and the distant, imagined ‘outback’ (with Aboriginal people’s claims to their Country almost entirely ignored. A vigorously advocated ‘White Australia’ culture espoused home-grown, soil-nourished character, protected through imperial alliances from external threats. Meanwhile for the interests in power in Sydney in the interwar years, social status was also carefully guarded. There was a sharp put-down for Elioth Gruner, sarcastically described as a ‘grocer’s lad’ artist by Norman Lindsay, when Gruner was proposed as a member of the nascent Australian Academy of Art instigated by R.G. Menzies. As John Williams has discerned the stratified social relations underpinning the art establishment of this era:

To be an artist was to belong to a class and caste. That a grocer’s lad might be educated to become a fine artist did not enter Norman’s calculations, nor those of his brother Lionel, nor those of J. S. MacDonald, who fully endorsed Lionel’s belief that ‘enforced education has more to answer for than the cheap press and over industrialisation’.¹⁰⁷

The sharpness of contested values, both political and social – and so directly expressed in literature, in the visual arts and in state gallery circles of standards-setting – was highlighting chasms in the social imaginary and conflicting aspirations for shaping a strong national future. The most advantageous aspects of British heritage were still guardedly maintained, while also seeking to promote Australian art and artists locally. Indigenous people were excluded from all categories.

3.11 Political leaders divided over Australian art’s future

The developments traced above, where political divisions received such sharp articulation across cultural affairs, formed an important background to the surfacing of both R.G. Menzies (future Prime Minister from the Liberal Party he had yet to form, and a British loyalist) and H.V. Evatt (High Court judge, a future Labor Opposition leader, a United Nations founding figure and a committed internationalist). Both were leading voices espousing oppositional positions for Australia’s visual arts development in the last years of the 1930s – as analysed below. It is often underestimated today how culturally active and polarised were the leaders in the Labor and proto-Liberal party politics of the late 1930s. Each national leader took an instigative role in cultural affairs, ranged on either side the stirrings of greater historical self-consciousness and contrasting ambitions for national development and self-definition in the young Australian nation of the interwar period.

Conflicted attitudes deepened in the first decades of the 20th century towards an embrace of modern products in popular design and service-manufacturing while rejecting modernism in the more sanctioned realms of art. This was a division that thwarted notable late-19th century aspirations to unify all layers of life through efforts such as the Arts and Crafts movement advocated by William Morris,¹⁰⁸ and well known through his Australian exponents, with particular

¹⁰⁶ Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany: History of the German Youth Movement*, Routledge, New York, 2017.

¹⁰⁷ Williams, *Quarantined Culture*, 1995, p. 165, fn. 13 - ‘Cited by J.S. Macdonald, ‘Lionel Lindsay’, *Art in Australia: The Art of Lionel Lindsay*, Third series, No.23, March 1928.’ n.p.

¹⁰⁸ Gillian Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of its Sources, Ideals and Influence on Design Theory*, Studio Vista, London, 1971.

effects in Australian architecture and design.¹⁰⁹ In the early-20th century, ‘Modernism ... was about life-style and modern styling before it was a paradigm shift for the arts in Australia.’¹¹⁰

The formation of an Australian Academy of Art in 1937, and the counter move of forming a Contemporary Art Society the following year, involved many contending personalities, events, and vigorously-waged arguments that are well documented historically in many accounts of the period. For the analysis pursued here, primary interest is focused upon the broader social context of cultural value-struggles of the period – in which the state galleries in Sydney and Melbourne were directly involved, and they drew many swirling currents around them. This confluence occurred through the galleries’ direct patronage of Australian art through acquisitions and exhibitions.¹¹¹ Meanwhile the influence of their trustees (such as Lionel Lindsay), and sometimes even the public positions of directors (notably in the case of J.S. MacDonald), drew strong protest from critics in the artworld who sought to embrace modernist ideas. In highlighting a picture here of the contests waged around oppositional standards for art, attention is always drawn to the wider social tensions and contradictory visions of Australia’s cultural future that simmered behind contending public events.

❖ *R.G. Menzies and the founding of an Australian Academy of Art*

Robert Menzies’ first trip to England in 1935,¹¹² for the silver jubilee celebrations of the reign of George V, left a powerful impression. One biographer recorded of Menzies’ first English encounter that ‘nothing could dim his joy in experiencing, as he put it, the reflections which “can so strangely ... move the souls of those who go ‘home’ to a land they have never seen.”’¹¹³ Subsequent official visits in 1936 and 1938, both ‘enhanced Menzies’ reputation [especially as a public speaker in England] and confirmed his affection for British culture’.¹¹⁴ Menzies’ admiration for British institutions led him also to admire British art as shaped by the standards long maintained by the Royal Academy in London.¹¹⁵



L. & C. William Powell Frith, *The Private View at the Royal Academy, 1881* (1881–83); Oscar Wilde, with critic's pen raised, is at the centre of the social circle on the right; R. G. Menzies (centre), with founding members of Academy of Australian Art (image from Richard Hesse, *Rebels and Precursors: The Revolutionary Years of Australian Art*, Penguin Books, Melbourne, 1981).

¹⁰⁹ See Harriet Edquist, *Pioneers of Modernism: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Australia*, Melbourne University Publishing, 2007; Caroline Miley, *The arts among the handicrafts: The arts and crafts movement in Victoria 1889-1929*, St Lawrence Press Banyule [Vic.], 2001.

¹¹⁰ Plant, *Love and Lament*, 2017, p. 57.

¹¹¹ J.S. MacDonald, when AGNSW Director, had organised substantial exhibitions of Arthur Streeton (1931–32), Elioth Gruner (1932–33), and Hans Heysen (1935) at the AGNSW – see Eileen Chanin and Steven Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts: The 1939 Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2005, p. 258, fn. 72, p. 258. However, substantial monographic exhibitions of Australian artists lapsed afterwards under the directorship of Will Dyson, when programming again became haphazard and the trustees’ tastes ruled. Director Hal Missingham’s organization of first retrospective exhibitions of (first) Russell Drysdale in 1960, then an even stronger survey of William Dobell’s art (in 1964), demonstrated new and benchmarking attention to living artists at the beginning of the 1960s, as the gallery directors gained more impetus – see thesis Chapter 5.

¹¹² Martin, ‘Menzies [RG]’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2000.

¹¹³ Martin, ‘Menzies [RG]’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2000.

¹¹⁴ Martin, ‘Menzies [RG]’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2000.

¹¹⁵ Sidney Hutchison, *The History of the Royal Academy, 1768–1968*, Royce, London, 1968.

Menzies decided in the late 1930s that the British academy in England was the ideal model to shape the visual arts in Australia. In 1937, as then-Attorney-General, he convened a meeting in Canberra in June, which formed an Australian Academy of Art, with himself as Chairman,¹¹⁶ and a plan was already in place to seek a Royal Charter from the British Crown. With two prominent Sydney personalities as key 'foundation members'¹¹⁷ from New South Wales – Lionel Lindsay (as artist friend) and Syd Ure Smith (leading art publisher), and both men then AGNSW trustees – the Academy's aims were 'modelled on those of the R.A., and included organising annual exhibitions and acting as an "expert body" on artistic matters'.¹¹⁸ The Australian academy was conceived to shore up support for an art grounded in a pastoralist vision of a successful settler country, conserving the continuity of British heritage, while also on guard against 'contamination' from the new ideas for art spreading through avant-garde cultural circles in Europe. Menzies made his sense of contesting values clear. The Academy was to provide a bulwark of standards to be upheld against 'modernists':

Experiment is necessary in establishing an academy, but certain principles must apply to this business of art as any other business which affects the artistic sense of the community. Great art speaks a language which every intelligent person can understand. The people who call themselves modernists today talk a different language.¹¹⁹

Reaction from artists and patrons who sought to advance the innovative potential of modernism was swift and determined. Menzies found his new Academy confronted quickly by forces that moved to form a contrary national body (in Melbourne), and this loose coalition was pleased to have High Court judge, H.V. ('Doc') Evatt, from the Labor side of politics, ready to champion their oppositional cause.

❖ *H.V. Evatt, the Contemporary Art Society, and the cause of modern art*

In July 1938 the Contemporary Art Society was formed at a meeting in the Victorian Artists Society's rooms in Melbourne,¹²⁰ in response to the establishment of the Australian Academy of Art in Canberra the previous year. Although there was strong animus against the Academy model in many circles in eastern Australia, the oppositional spearhead was quickly forged in Melbourne, where there was trenchant reaction against Menzies' perceived move to secure a conservative instrument that would control art affairs nationally.¹²¹ Bernard Smith (who had a close view of events at the time) later encapsulated the larger framework of what was at stake:

The contemporary movement did not emerge as a force strong enough to challenge the authority of academic naturalism until 1937 when it united all elements opposed to the formation of the Australian Academy of Art ... [and] it was in Melbourne that the crucial battle was fought.¹²²

Bernard Smith also records that 'The Press controversy continued vigorously for weeks' after the Academy's creation, with Menzies and a group of artists ranged on one side, and a more

¹¹⁶ The event was reported under the headline, 'Academy of Art Formed at Canberra. Royal Charter Sought', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 June 1937, p. 10; see also Alan McCulloch (and Susan McCulloch), *Encyclopedia of Australia Art*, 3rd (rev.) ed., 1994; 'Australian Academy of Art', p. 59.

¹¹⁷ Menzies collection documents held at the University of Melbourne, available online at <www.menziescollection.esrc.unimelb.edu.au/biogs/E000045b.htm>, accessed 2016.

¹¹⁸ 'Menzies collection documents', Univ. of Melbourne.

¹¹⁹ Bernard Smith, in 'Contemporary Art Arrives' in *Australian Painting, 1788–1970*, p. 225, fn. 12, quoting Menzies as reported in *The Argus*, Melbourne, 28 April 1937.

¹²⁰ Allan R Henderson, 'Contemporary Art Advances', *Art in Australia*, August 15th, 1939, 13–15; p. 13.

¹²¹ A.W. Martin's coverage of Menzies' career for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* recorded his 'embroilment in the artistic controversies of the mid-1930s' and his 'dislike of modernism' as 'yet another expression of his conservatism, which was undoubtedly true – but questioned more extreme assertions about Menzies' 'philistinism' as unjustified.¹²¹

¹²² Smith, 'Contemporary Art Arrives', *Australian Painting*, 1971, pp. 215, 214.

vociferous group of artists, critics 'and Mr Justice Evatt on the other'.¹²³ Art patrons John and Sunday Reed (who had in 1934 purchased their rural Heide property at Bulleen)¹²⁴ were already prominently involved with the cause of modern art; and John Reed's law office in Melbourne functioned as the contact address for the new Contemporary Art Society in 1938.¹²⁵



L: H.V. Justice Evatt (from R Hæge, *Rebels and Precursors*); LC: Mary-Alice Evatt (from B Smith, *Pavane for Another Time*); RC: Fernand Léger's *Branch on a Black Background*, which Mary-Alice Evatt purchased from the 1939 *Herald* exhibition and later donated to the AGNSW, Sydney; R: John and Sunday Reed. Photographed by Albert Tucker, 1943 (SLV, 50971414).

The purpose of the CAS was explicit in its constitution: 'The primary and paramount object ... is the encouragement and fostering of contemporary art.'¹²⁶ It is notable in this period that 'contemporary' had begun to displace or parallel 'modern' as the rallying term for support of innovation in current art.

Melbourne's CAS was soon followed by a Sydney branch, formed (with its own autonomy) in 1939.¹²⁷ The first meeting was held at the home of Dr H.V. Evatt and his active, adventurous wife, Mary-Alice. Mary-Alice Evatt had taken art lessons in Sydney (with Grace Crowley and Rah Fizelle), and later at the George Bell School in Melbourne (in 1936), and she continued some painting of her own afterwards.¹²⁸ Easily forming personal friendships with artists, Mary-Alice would later become the first woman trustee of the Art Gallery of New South Wales (1943–1970),¹²⁹ where she acted as a progressive force for modern art against conservative trustees (especially Lionel Lindsay).

American-born though raised in Sydney, Mary-Alice ensured her husband's acquaintance (when travelling abroad) with modern art to be seen in the United States and Europe.¹³⁰ With expanding commitment to public life, the Evatts meanwhile were living between Sydney and Melbourne in the 1930s. Dual residences enabled Mary-Alice to be drawn into common interests with John and Sunday Reed, through whom she was introduced to the art-focused circle around the Reed home at Heide. The Evatts easily and strongly supported the cause of modern art espoused by the Reeds in Melbourne, as they were already doing through their own circles in Sydney.¹³¹

As in Sydney, so in Melbourne: the close entanglements of the period between art, social debates and political contests over Australian values flowed into the affairs of the state galleries. In 1939, the National Gallery of Victoria (with J.S. MacDonald, a personal friend of Menzies, as Director), made available its McAllan Gallery for the presentation of the second exhibition of the

¹²³ Smith, 'Contemporary Art Arrives', *Australian Painting*, 1971, p. 217.

¹²⁴ Today preserved as part of the Reeds' legacy forming the Heide Museum of Modern Art in outer Melbourne, at Bulleen.

¹²⁵ See on John Reed's influence through his law office headquarters and related activities on behalf of contemporary art, Nancy Underhill, 'Introduction', in Barrett Reid and Nancy Underbill (eds.) *Letters of John Reed: Defining Australian Cultural Life 1920–1981*, Viking/Penguin Books, Melbourne, 2001, pp. 1–31.

¹²⁶ Henderson, 'Contemporary Art Advances', 1939, 13–15; p. 14.

¹²⁷ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994; 'Contemporary Art Societies', pp. 176–7.

¹²⁸ Barbara Dale, 'Evatt, Mary Alice (1898–1973)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 14, Melbourne University Press, 1996; online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/evatt-mary-alice-10132/text17887>.

¹²⁹ Dale, 'Evatt [MA]', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1996.

¹³⁰ Dale, 'Evatt [MA]', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1996.

¹³¹ For Evatt's spontaneous enthusiasm for new ideas that led him easily into a support for avant-garde artists, see Peter Crockett, *H.V. Evatt: A Life*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 21–3.

Academy of Australian Art, with the opening on 5 April performed by Menzies.¹³² After strong counter-activity from the Reeds and others supporting the new Contemporary Art Society in Melbourne (and presumably with support from trustee Keith Murdoch, impatient with MacDonald's obstinacy), the CAS negotiated for an exhibition of alternative works to be held in the same NGV space, which opened on 6 June 1939.¹³³ This time 'Doc' Evatt was enlisted to perform the launching ceremony. In his opening speech, Evatt was forthright about the cause of freedom in art, and (though Menzies was not named) explicit in his rejection of the Academy model along with its protectionist bid to regulate standards nationally:

The Contemporary Art Society ... stands against reactionary and retrogressive art and art organizations. ... [It] is convinced that the principle of authority is the very antithesis of what is necessary to the healthy development of Art in Australia. ... Improvement in art has been achieved only through struggle and sacrifice, often against the insolence of conservative groups, surrounded as they often are, by admiring cliques of Yes-Men.¹³⁴

According to a contemporary commentator, Allan Henderson, the CAS exhibition 'created a great stir, and the number of people who saw the pictures was over 20,000 ... [or] far in excess of the number of people who saw the exhibition of the Academy' in the same NGV space.¹³⁵ Not surprisingly, the Evatts – and especially in view of H.V. Evatt's later presidential involvement in early meetings of the United Nations¹³⁶ – were attracted to an internationalist vision of a modern, interconnected world. They were also drawn enthusiastically to uphold aspirations for Australian culture to play a part in reshaping new engagements between nations in the 20th century. The example of Menzies advancing the cause of a (potentially 'Royal') Academy of Australian Art, with its inevitable deference to a colonial heritage and the filiations of Empire, spurred Evatt to declare his support for the challenges of contemporary art. He easily embraced the aspirations for innovation and more varied international relationships in a world experiencing an advancing pace of change through the challenges of modernity.

3.12 Australia's first 'blockbuster': The 1939 'Herald exhibition' arrives on the eve of War

Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art,¹³⁷ as it was named in Melbourne, *Exhibition of French and British Modern Art*,¹³⁸ as a different catalogue title ran in Sydney, or simply 'the Herald exhibition' as it became popularly known, was the occasion of both excitement and controversy when it arrived by ship, and was unpacked for presentations in Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sydney in

¹³² Herbert Vere ('Doc') Evatt, 'Opening Address, First Exhibition of the Contemporary Art Society 1939', in Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, Philip Goad (eds), *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917-1967*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne University Publishing, Melbourne, 2006, 392-396; p. 392,

¹³³ Stephen, McNamara and Goad, *Documents*, 2006, p. 392

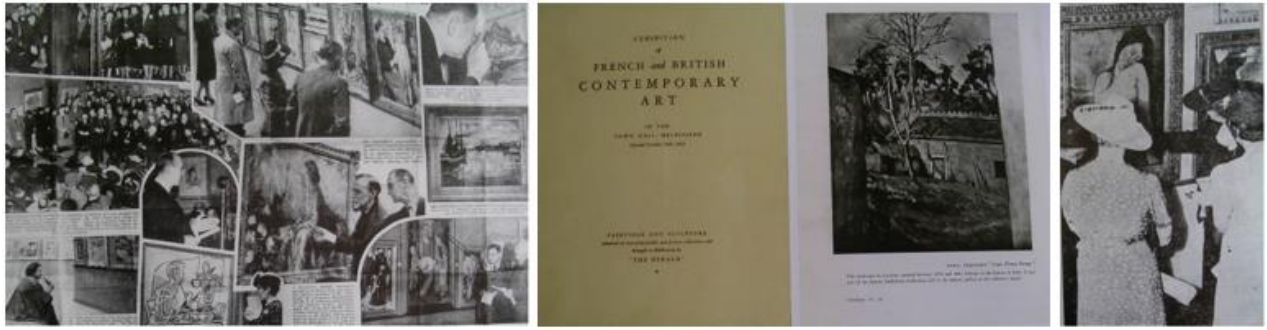
¹³⁴ Evatt, 'Opening Address, [Contemporary Art Society] 1939', in Stephen, McNamara and Goad, *Modernism & Australia: Documents*, op. cit., 2006, pp. 393, 394.

¹³⁵ Henderson, 'Contemporary Art Advances', *Art in Australia*, 1939, 13-15; p. 15.

¹³⁶ H.V. Evatt was a member of the 1945 San Francisco Conference which devised the United Nations Charter, and was later elected President of the UN General Assembly in 1948-49 (Stephen, McNamara and Goad, *Documents...*, 2006, p. 392.

¹³⁷ *Exhibition of French and British Contemporary art*, the Herald and Basil Burdett, and Association française d'action artistique, and National Gallery of South Australia; *Exhibition held Town Hall, Melbourne, opened 16 October 1939*; organizer of exhibition, Basil Burdett; *Exhibition brought to Melbourne by the Herald*, Advertiser, Adelaide, 1939.

¹³⁸ *The Daily Telegraph Exhibition of French and British Modern Art: Under the patronage of the Trustees of the National Art Gallery of NSW and the Society of Artists: Held at the Exhibition Gallery, David Jones ... Sydney, Opened November 20 1939*; *The collection brought to Australia by the Melbourne Herald*, Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW) and Association française d'action artistique, and National Art Gallery of New South Wales, Trustees, and Society of Artists (Sydney, NSW), and Herald and Weekly Times.

1939.¹³⁹

The exhibition's instigator was Keith Murdoch (1885–1952),¹⁴⁰ managing chairman of the Herald and Weekly Times, with its flagship broadsheet the evening Melbourne *Herald* acting as auspicing body publicist for the entire event. Murdoch had been a trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria since 1933, and was later to become Chairman from 1945 until 1952, the year of his death.¹⁴¹

Although conservative on many issues politically, Keith Murdoch was also open to modern art and cultural change as aspects of a changing, modernising world. In reviewing Murdoch's life and career, historian Geoffrey Serle noted: 'In art politics, which became his major private interest, Murdoch was a cultural liberal.'¹⁴² Impatient with the retarded situation and staff resources of the National Gallery of Victoria, within the (still combined) Library, Museums, and Gallery trust buildings and governance structure, Murdoch had decided to take an initiative independently.

Turning to resources within his own preserve, Murdoch commissioned the *Herald's* enterprising art and drama critic, Basil Burdett,¹⁴³ to put together an exhibition of international art that would cast a reverberant reflection across the conservatism of Australia's state galleries and expose modern art to a broad public. This venture, he decided, would require harnessing of non-museum spaces. The exhibition was presented in the Town Hall in Melbourne, and in the enterprising David Jones Art Gallery within Sydney's leading department store. Only in Adelaide did it gain a state gallery's presentation. Basil Burdett, who was fluent in French and Spanish, and had spent time intensively acquainting himself with advanced art in Europe in 1929–31 and 1934–35,¹⁴⁴ had extensive critical experience and proved ideal for the task of shaking Australian public taste with an exhaustive outlay of advanced modern art from Europe and England:

Between 1936 and 1941 Burdett brought to art criticism in Australia a unique combination of aesthetic perception, intellectual awareness and open-minded sympathy for the work of the young and the *avant-garde*.

¹³⁹ An exhaustive and invaluable monograph on this exhibition, and essential resource for details and context, is Eileen Chanin and Steven Miller, with an essay by Judith Pugh, *Degenerates and Perverts: The 1939 Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton, Vic., 2005.

¹⁴⁰ Geoffrey Serle, 'Murdoch, Sir Keith Arthur (1885–1952)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, MUP, Melbourne, 1986, pp. 622–627, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/murdoch-sir-keith-arthur-7693/text13467>.

¹⁴¹ Serle, 'Murdoch, Sir Keith Arthur', *ADB*, 1986.

¹⁴² Serle, 'Murdoch [Keith]', 1986, *ibid*.

¹⁴³ Richard Haese, 'Burdett, Basil (1897–1942)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 7, 1979, Melbourne University Press, available online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/burdett-basil-5425/text9201>.

¹⁴⁴ Haese, 'Burdett', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1979, *op. cit*.

His closest cultural ties were with the values of European society and he felt frustrated by parochial attitudes towards the arts in Australia.¹⁴⁵



Keith Murdoch, commissioner of the exhibition (source: R Haese); Basil Burdett, *Herald* art critic and organiser of the *Herald* exhibition, (R Haese); C: Paul Gauguin, *The Moon and the Earth*; Paul Seurat, *Sketch for 'Le Chahut'*; Van Gogh, *Le Mont Gaussier*.

Burdett had considerable contacts in Europe,¹⁴⁶ and was able to secure an exceptionally varied assembly of works,¹⁴⁷ especially from sources in Paris and London, as well as from New York. He knew many of the artists personally. The quality of his selection was utterly remarkable in the varied territories (and even sub-territories) that it navigated within the compass of its survey. Even Sydney's long-expatriate John Power was included with a single work – although Power was included as an artist who had achieved distinction in Paris (without any elevation of his home country origins). Ironically this was the year in which Power made his will, on the Island of Jersey (where he would die under Nazi occupation in 1943). No-one could have known that Power would leave an immense fortune to Sydney University for sponsoring *the latest art and ideas*, which would only mature at the death of his widow in 1962 – eventually leading to today's Power Institute.

It is again a measure of the lack of trained staff in Australian art museums that there would not have been a person in any state gallery with even the beginnings of knowledge or contacts internationally to negotiate loans for such an exhibition. Travel opportunities were rare, even for a Director, and sea journeys before the age of high-volume jet aircraft made travel outside Australia difficult and lengthy. Only the wealthy could afford the Flying Boat service to London (with stopovers), established at Rose Bay in Sydney in 1938.¹⁴⁸ There was no economy class. The cost of such travel was equivalent to a year's public service salary for a low-paid state gallery director in the 1930s. Meanwhile, no notion of a 'professional staff', trained to exercise informed, independent judgment, yet existed in Australian art museums in the 1930s, or even the beginning of the 1940s.

One of the primary issues calling for change in state galleries was the inflexibility and unsuitability of their buildings for the staging of exhibitions (as well as the lack of staff to organise them). A view of the *Herald* exhibition's installation when shown at the Art Gallery of South Australia documents clearly how state galleries of the 1930s struggled even to show works of modern art – in galleries still defined by 19th century 'salon' painting presentations, and necessitating removal of collection works to accommodate any temporary or visiting exhibition sourced through loans from abroad. The *Herald* works were hung in Adelaide cheek-by-jowl in 1939 in the only gallery spaces that could be made available for an unusual event of such size.

¹⁴⁵ Haese, 'Burdett', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1979, op. cit.

¹⁴⁶ Haese, 'Burdett', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1979, op. cit.

¹⁴⁷ Haese, 'Burdett', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1979, op. cit.

¹⁴⁸ See information on Sydney's Flying Boat service of the 1930s at <www.sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/flying-boats-sydneys-golden-age-aviation>.



The 'Herald' Exhibition of French and British Modern Art, 1939, shown crowded in constrained conditions at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 1939.

In supporting new forms of visual art (while being a conservative collector, personally, in his own life), Keith Murdoch's interest as a trustee of the NGV in 1939 was to increase the social impact of the visual arts, with a concern to promote 'a wide, an Australia-wide, understanding of the language of art'.¹⁴⁹ Murdoch's introductory essay in the slim catalogue for the *Herald* show was brief and insouciant. Long experienced in public communication and assured of his social position, he had no need to waste words. Yet he was explicit about the cultural stimulus for a broad public that he hoped the exhibition resourced through his newspaper group would provide:

The exhibition is designed to give Australian people an opportunity – their first opportunity – of direct contact with the work of those great masters whose discoveries are so profoundly influencing the artistic expressions of our time. The Collection is offered in the deeply-felt belief that, through those who will observe and study it, a force will go forth in ever-widening circles with useful effect upon Australian life.¹⁵⁰

Such objectives were indubitably achieved. The *Herald* exhibition, when it arrived in Australia on the P&O liner *Strathnaver* in 28 cases,¹⁵¹ contained 215 works – many small, certainly, but a huge number even by today's standards.¹⁵² Among works from leading dealers and private collectors were works from the Tate Gallery, London; the Jeu de Paume gallery's Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings in Paris, part of the national collections in France; and a few paintings from further afield were lent by the Museum of Modern Art, New York.¹⁵³ Yet the international situation was precarious and Menzies had already put Australia on a war-footing by the time the exhibition opened.

After a brief introductory showing in Adelaide (at the Art Gallery of South Australia), the exhibition opened to a far more amplified public launching in Melbourne, in October 1939. However not at the Melbourne state gallery, but at the Melbourne Town Hall, where the works were derided by director J.S. MacDonald, who was not reluctant to declare that some of the works were from 'degenerates and perverts' – providing years later the title for an admirably researched monograph exhaustively reviewing the cultural background, context and contents of the exhibition. However, the same monograph accomplishes an exhaustive and multi-sided assessment of MacDonald, searching beneath the often-extreme stances he offered in his cut-out remarks of an arch conservative.

¹⁴⁹ 'Sir Keith Murdoch speaks on art', *Society of Artists Book 1945-46*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1946, p. 10, cited in Chanin and Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts*, 2005, p. 167.

¹⁵⁰ *Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art*, Town Hall, Melbourne, October 1939, introduction by Keith Murdoch, quoted in Chanin and Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts*, 2005, p. 9.

¹⁵¹ Chanin and Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts*, 2005, p. 198.

¹⁵² There were some sculptures (by Maillol, Zadkine, Epstein and others). However, most were paintings, with multiple examples by Cézanne, Bonnard, Gauguin, Signac, Seurat, Derain, Modigliani, Van Gogh, Picasso, Matisse, Rouault and others. Insurance to a value of £200,000 pounds stg. was arranged in London (equivalent to c. \$AUD 17,600,000 in 2018 values – however still only a fraction of increased art values for modern works in the 21st century, when a single substantial Picasso could easily attract a valuation of \$AUD 60 million dollars).

¹⁵³ Richard Haese, *Rebels and Precursors: The Revolutionary Years of Australian Art*, Penguin Books, Melbourne, 1981, p. 62.



L: Catalogue cover of monographic study of 1939 exhibition, 'Degenerates and Perverts', by Eileen Chanin and Steven Miller, Maccunyah Press, Melbourne, 2005; C: J.S. MacDonald, Director, NGV years (R. Haase); R: Daryl Lindsay, when he became Director, NGV, after trustee Murdoch forced the non-reappointment of the reactionary MacDonald (R. Haase).

MacDonald was actually internationally experienced,¹⁵⁴ and had produced some measures of improvement in Sydney, while director for seven years, including a new corner basement gallery for the AGNSW 'remodelled to display prints (achieved with Carnegie money)'.¹⁵⁵ He had also 'instituted a programme of temporary exhibitions to showcase Australian artists, including retrospectives of Arthur Streeton, Elioth Gruner and Hans Heysen'¹⁵⁶ – all of whom were exemplary figures of the Australian *pastorale* landscape, and vehicles (however unwillingly) of a nationalist vision in cultural terms. By the late 1930s MacDonald's conservatism was wholeheartedly behind Menzies' Academy and had hardened into a locked-down position against all modern art – which he was keen to vent publicly when trustee Keith Murdoch sought to influence Australian public taste towards new ideas imported from abroad.

Evaluating the impact of the *Herald* exhibition years later, art critic Alan McCulloch (aged 22 at the time) declared it to be 'the most momentous exhibition in Australia's art history':

It created an unprecedented furore in both Melbourne and Sydney where the conflict between academics and moderns had already reached a climax. The final result of the exhibition was that, like the *Armory Show* of New York (1913), it changed the direction of art throughout a continent and established a basis for the development of an entire generation.¹⁵⁷

As McCulloch noted in making comparison with the impact of the 1913 *Armory Show*¹⁵⁸ in New York, a continuing memory of the excitement of modern art and an appetite to nurture the exhibition's spirit locally was aroused comparably in the Australian community in 1939.



L: Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912), one of the most famous paintings from the Armory exhibition (collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art); C: Armory Show poster, 1913; R: Cubist room from the 1913 Armory exhibition, when later shown in Chicago (1913) after a showing in Boston.

In the case of New York, the after-desire to extend the *Armory Show*'s potential had led to the privately-sponsored founding of the Museum of Modern Art itself in 1929, with innovative Director,

¹⁵⁴ MacDonald had spent time in London with his artist friend Hugh Ramsay, and later lived in New York some years after marrying an American. See Chanin and Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts*, 2005, op. cit., pp. 171–179.

¹⁵⁵ Chanin and Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts*, 2005, p. 176.

¹⁵⁶ Chanin and Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts*, 2005, p. 176; see details of the (1931–32) Streeton, (1932–33) Gruner, and (1935) Heysen retrospectives mounted by J.S. MacDonald, fn. 72, p. 258.

¹⁵⁷ Alan McCulloch, under 'Exhibitions' section, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, op. cit. pp. 789–90.

¹⁵⁸ The *Armory Show*, also known as the *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, was a three-city exhibition organized by the Association of American Painters and Sculptors in 1913, and the first large exhibition of modern art to be shown in America. In New York, it was held in the vast spaces of U.S. National Guard armories, then travelled to Boston and Chicago. These capitals secured the long-term effects of modernist art in leading eastern cities of the U.S.

Alfred H. Barr, employed to shape its inaugural frameworks and acquisitions.¹⁵⁹ In Australia, however, the immediate effects of the *Herald* exhibition (26 years after the *Armory Show*) occurred distantly in the southern hemisphere, far from Paris, London or New York, and about to be overtaken by enveloping events internationally as a new World War took hold. When the exhibition opened in Australia, armed hostilities had already broken out in Europe, which would delay return of works through the War's duration. Following showings in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, the exhibition's remarkable contents were retained in the care of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, until works could safely be returned to owners in the northern hemisphere.

Many accounts (including by critic Robert Hughes) have asserted that the *Herald* exhibition works were held entirely in storage in the AGNSW during WW2, which careful research by Eileen Chanin and Gallery historian Steven Miller has comprehensively disproved. Selected works were loaned at various times to Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane, and on one short tour even to Hobart and Launceston.¹⁶⁰ However, the selected Sydney showings occurred only after public pressure, including complaints to NSW politicians, which caused some forty-to-fifty works to be on view for some periods in Sydney during the War. This recalcitrance and resistance to modern art brought to a head some determined public protests against the Sydney artist trustees, who had so many of their own works on show, and even some 100 *reproductions* of art displayed on the lower ground floor,¹⁶¹ while outstanding European modernist originals were confined to storage.

The degree to which trustees (and even the Director) in the 1930s could abuse the privilege of their position and display their own art – without reproof from government – is scarcely credible by today's ethics standards for public institutions. Trustees preferred exhibiting their own works to multiple examples of works by Cézanne, Manet, Monet, Seurat, Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Léger, Soutine, Dali, Modigliani, leading English modernists, and many more artists with by then secure histories of innovation and international influence. In 1940, two letters from artist-critic Paul Haefliger to the *Sydney Morning Herald*¹⁶² complained about this recalcitrance, while 56 items of the trustees' own works of art were on display: 'eleven by Sydney Ure Smith, nine by Sydney Long, eight by gallery Director Will Ashton, four by Lionel Lindsay and thirteen by Gallery President B. J. Waterhouse.'¹⁶³ Chanin and Miller further calculated that:

A collection twice the size of the *Herald* loans could have been accommodated in space taken up by these paintings. In fact, half the works on loan could have been hung if only the works of Lister Lister had been taken down.¹⁶⁴

Years later AGNSW Director, Hal Missingham (appointed to the Gallery in 1945), recorded the continuing resentment against the trustees in Sydney art circles 'ever since the great French Exhibition was taken down from the gallery walls in 1939 to be replaced by local favourites'.¹⁶⁵

An understanding of J.S. MacDonald's views, and how they so clearly profiled a nationalist and

¹⁵⁹ See Russell Lynes, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of The Museum of Modern Art*, Atheneum, New York 1973; Margaret Scolari Barr, 'Our Campaigns: Alfred H. Barr Jr. and the Museum of Modern Art: A Biographical Chronicle of the Years 1930–1944', *The New Criterion*, special summer issue, 1987, 23–74; Sybil Gordon Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and the intellectual origins of the Museum of Modern Art*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 2002.

¹⁶⁰ Full details are available in Chanin and Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts*, 2005, op. cit., pp. 208–217.

¹⁶¹ Chanin and Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts*, 2005, p. 210.

¹⁶² Paul Haefliger, Letters to the Editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 June 1940 and 8 October 1940 (Chanin and Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts*, 2005, fn. 41, p. 259).

¹⁶³ Chanin and Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts*, 2005, p. 210.

¹⁶⁴ Chanin and Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts*, 2005, p. 210.

¹⁶⁵ Hal Missingham, *They Kill You in the End*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1973, p. 8.

ideological vision of Australian art that consolidated an isolationist social imaginary, provides a direct context for the inevitable clash between Director and his ambitious trustee in Melbourne, when Keith Murdoch brought the *Herald* exhibition to Australia. MacDonald had courted a confrontation in his attacks on the imported artists, unhesitating in his excess ('They are exceedingly wretched paintings ... putrid meat ... the product of degenerates and perverts ... filth.')

¹⁶⁶ Murdoch was in the superior position (having become Chairman in 1939)¹⁶⁷ to dispose of such opposition afterwards, and Daryl Lindsay was appointed Director by March 1941.¹⁶⁸ However, following MacDonald's unsparing judgments of the exhibition, Keith Murdoch was equally ready to use public means to broadcast his championing position, and he had an ample trumpet within easy reach:

The anti-establishment campaign of which the exhibition was a crucial part culminated in a *Herald* editorial on 28 October 1939 [while the exhibition was still showing in Melbourne], in which Murdoch blasted the conservative and insular buying policies of Australia's principal national galleries.¹⁶⁹

One direct effect of the *Herald* show was the organisation the next year, through the Contemporary Art Society in Melbourne, of a substantial and adventurous exhibition of contemporary Australian art (staged in 1940). Bernard Smith (who exhibited a surrealist painting of his own) later judged the whole exhibition a pivotal event, despite the strong backing of the Reed forces in Melbourne, which he regarded warily. This would have been partly through critical differences, since John and Sunday Reed so unreservedly espoused the modernist avant-garde which Smith regarded at best cautiously. Yet relations were also exacerbated by John Reed's coolness towards the ambitious Sydney critic ever since Smith sought some impromptu interaction on a visit to Melbourne, having lined up appointments with other crucial figures, but which produced a rebuff when the two met (along with Max Harris) at John Reed's law office.¹⁷⁰

After the CAS exhibition showing in Melbourne, the contemporary Australian exhibition was subsequently transported to Sydney and installed at the David Jones Gallery (where the *Herald* exhibition had been presented).¹⁷¹ And there was unexpected newspaper support, perhaps through manifest public interest captured by the *Herald* show, when the *Daily Telegraph* lent its support.¹⁷² This amplified the CAS exhibition's public attention even more in Sydney than it had gained in Melbourne.

¹⁶⁶ Serle, 'MacDonald [JS]', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1986, op. cit.

¹⁶⁷ After the President of the Library board died on 6 September 1939, Sir Keith Murdoch was appointed President of the combined institutions – i.e., the Library Board. (Leonard Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861–1968: Search for a Collection*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1970, p. 165.) At the end of 1944 'the Public Library, National Gallery, and Art Museum Act of 1944 ... [created] four separate boards'. (Cox, op. cit., p. 176).

¹⁶⁸ J.S. MacDonald was on sick leave in December 1940, and the directorship was advertised in January 1941; Daryl Lindsay, who had been encouraged to come on staff at the Gallery by Murdoch, was raised from the position of Curator to Director on 26 March 1941, and an influential partnership was cemented. (See Leonard Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861–1968: Search for a Collection*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1970, p. 170.) See also Serle, 'MacDonald [JS]', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1986, op. cit.

¹⁶⁹ Haese, *Rebels and Precursors*, 1981, op. cit., p. 63.

¹⁷⁰ Bernard Smith, *A Pavane for Another Time*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 2002, p. 138.

¹⁷¹ Sydney Nolan's *Boy and the Moon* [Moon Boy], 1939–40, now regularly displayed in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Australia, caused a stir through its abrasive simplicity of stark shapes and colour when first exhibited in 1940, at the CAS in Sydney. Bernard Smith rejected 'Moon Boy' in 1940 (almost rebutting its claim to be an artwork), but years later came to concede that Nolan had achieved an iconic image and intellectual construct of a pared-down subject.

¹⁷² Smith, *A Pavane for Another Time*, 2002, op. cit., p. 45.

The Sydney showing also became the occasion for staging prepared public discussions. These events were led by Bernard Smith and two prominent artists: Albert Tucker (visiting from Melbourne) and James Gleeson in Sydney.¹⁷³ The exhibition proved a rallying point for reviewing the different energies and interests in Australian art circles at the time. Here was a second striking example of effective action and public impact *outside* the state galleries, and directly challenging their repressive hold on taste. Years later, Bernard Smith recalled the 1940 artists-organised exhibition and the energies activated around it:

That 1940 Contemporary Art Society show was the first large exhibition of Australian contemporary art to arouse real controversy. Largely through the publicity it was given through the pages of the *Daily Telegraph*, it achieved a high public profile. One thousand, nine hundred people attended during the first two days. The press was keen to use the show to develop public debate.¹⁷⁴

However, it was finally not the flamboyant conservatism of MacDonald's statements against modern art that most marked his position as terminal when he opposed Murdoch's moves for change. It was actually MacDonald's thoroughgoing hostility towards improvements to the Gallery's presentation of its collections or its obligations to a wider public that precipitated his removal. The most damning assessment of MacDonald's directorship¹⁷⁵ had in fact been made three years earlier than the *Herald* exhibition's arrival, and by an English expert in museums contracted to report on the NGV's development. Sir Sidney Cockerell (recently retired Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, who was also London Felton Adviser for the NGV from 1936 to 1939),¹⁷⁶ visited Melbourne late in 1936 and later reported comprehensively (in 1937) on the Gallery's needs. Cockerell judged that the Gallery had fine collection resources that were ill-used. He highlighted the NGV's poor physical conditions, which he assessed (in a later meeting with Murdoch in London), reflected the 'indolence and ineffectiveness of the Director', MacDonald.¹⁷⁷

It was to Daryl Lindsay's credit, despite the conservatism of his elder brothers, that when he joined the staff in 1939 (at the instigation of Keith Murdoch), he perceived the dilemmas afflicting the National Gallery of Victoria as comprehensively governance-related. This viewpoint guided his actions when he soon afterwards became Director ('under the Dickensian mantle of the Victorian Public Service').¹⁷⁸ The pervasive constraints on the Gallery began with its institutionally antiquated housing and display, ranging far beyond the values-contests over Australian art waged among Lindsay's artist peers. The Cockerell Report was the most professionally informed and

¹⁷³ Smith, *A Pavane for Another Time*, 2002, p. 49.

¹⁷⁴ Smith, *A Pavane for Another Time*, 2002, p. 45.

¹⁷⁵ It is noteworthy that the Melbourne trustees were split over MacDonald's appointment, and the trust's recommendation had favoured the appointment of architect Hardy Wilson – a recommendation that was overturned by forces (unnamed) within the Country Party making up the state government. The story is related in Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861-1968*, 1970, op. cit., pp. 143–4. Since MacDonald (in correspondence) had sought Menzies' support, it is possible that this was the source of intruding influence.

¹⁷⁶ See Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861-1968*, 1970, Ch. 13, 'Search for an Adviser: Sir Sydney Cockerell', 140–170.

¹⁷⁷ Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861-1968*, 1970, quoting from Cockerell papers, p. 145. The Sydney Cockerell Report, received and dated 'Melbourne, 25 January, 1937' is provided in full in Cox, Appendix 6, pp. 410–416. The Report also forms the most comprehensive description of the beleaguered conditions of the Gallery in the 1930s, housing major works of art, but poorly displayed and without even its own entrance (planned to be off Russell or LaTrobe Streets). The Cockerell Report's recommendation of the Gallery's needs for its own independent and purpose-designed building was one of the strongest visions that clearly guided Keith Murdoch in his subsequent, and eventually successful moves to gain the Gallery's separation from the Library and Museums combined trusteeship, and ultimately to have land reserved for a future, purpose-designed building (realised in 1968, after Murdoch's death).

¹⁷⁸ Palmer, *Centre of the Periphery*, Melbourne, 2008, p. 126.

detailed report on the National Gallery of Victoria in the 76 years since its founding. It formed a crucial framework document that would guide Daryl Lindsay's actions during the 15 years of his directorship, in which nearly all of its recommendations were implemented (with the final one, for a new Gallery building, already secured and in process when Lindsay retired after 15 years in December 1955).

3.13 Conclusion

In this chapter, the review of the isolationist interwar period in Australian art has sought to demonstrate how cultural endeavors in the visual arts, with some parallels suggested in literature of the period, reveal much about social tensions and contradictions within a national social imaginary of the era. The purposive isolationism and exclusions pursued by cultural elites (which played right into the practices, standards and value-systems of state galleries in Sydney and Melbourne) reveal many deep-running tensions of the period.

Paradoxes are evident in the conditions whereby Australia's economic future depended increasingly on export of raw materials across an international world of exchange yet its social and political self-images were in substantial measure isolationist, nationalist and protectionist within its own region. The sense of national identity was still tied to Britain, even while asserting a new post-War independence vested in Australia's 'purified' soil uncontaminated by an ageing continental Europe, viewed by nationalists as in decay. It was clear how cultural affairs were managed by elites to secure these contradictions, disguising many fractures in social relationships within an encompassing pastoralist vision of colonial success while still maintaining guarded but secure relationships within a British enclave of Empire.

Turning these alignments towards a political scrutiny, the fractures traced above reveal a classic economic-materialist dislocation and *contradictions* evident in dominant circles of Australian values-setting in the interwar period. The consistency with which cultural ideas, art's desired directions, and contesting political values formed such clear oppositional alignments reveal the 1920s and 1930s as one of the most polarised periods in Australia's cultural development in the whole of the 20th century.

A period so stratified and riven with tensions in the national imaginary (and contests over received history) was also configured by internally repressed issues and fears about race, miscegenation and 'purity' of stock in a new region of the world, where a transplanted settler society clearly felt surrounded by Otherness, both from without and within. The desire to secure 'whiteness' as a national ideal, and the mechanisms formed to uphold this objective (the Federation-established White Australia Policy; the Australian Natives Association with its 'whites-and-males-only' membership) provide evidence of an anxious monitoring of 'white' values within a bleached socius and exclusionary polity. These tensions subsumed the new political striving of the interwar years to overlay the averted reality of a repressed Aboriginal population that the 19th century's leading citizens had explicitly isolated as 'primitive', and without prior history, therefore annulled as social subjects and of *nullius* entitlement to stolen lands.

The discontinuities evident above were evident culturally in some of the contradictory impulses animating debates in art circles. This was witnessed in the pastoral landscape tradition elevated as a national 'school' of painting, and espoused consistently by artists seeking to support Menzies' Australian Academy of Art, to regulate national standards and uphold a conservative and

anachronistic projection of a pastoral imaginary that was increasingly at variance with Australia's urbanism and embrace of modernisation. Meanwhile, those reaching out to international sources of modern art, eager to advance experimental impulses and seeking new forms for art's development (especially evident in art centres such as Paris), were equally vehement in their denunciation of the Academy.

What was at stake (as detailed abundantly in this chapter) was a long-standing battle as to whether artists should control all standards of the production of art, its criticism in newspapers, its acquisition for public collections and prevailing judgments of value – as Lionel Lindsay and James MacDonald vigorously maintained – or whether other kinds of training and professional assessment should be brought to the responsibilities of state galleries. The artist-trustees' dominance of boards for decades in Sydney and Melbourne had entirely precluded recognition of how an intellectual training in art's history and practices, a professional training in museology, a critical training in the sifting of contrary values, and an orientation to *public education* (which Lionel Lindsay and MacDonald explicitly despised), could transform the professional conduct and responsibilities of museums as public institutions.

Scant intellectual traditions of interpretation existed in the public sphere that might have challenged local taste on any grounds of reasoned historical argument. No comparative framework of scholarship was on offer to link the *Herald* exhibition in 1939 to the precedent of Roger Fry's famous exhibition of Post-Impressionist painting at the Grafton Galleries in London three decades previously, in 1910, or to the *Armory Show* of 1913 in New York, Boston and Chicago, and its stirring after-effects on American art and values when the Museum of Modern Art was being formed as a prospective institution in the late 1920s (to open in small city premises in New York in 1929).

While many movements of prominent figures around the cause of modernist art outside major institutions suggested where progressive energies, art practices and debates were tending, the situation *within* institutions presented great obstacles to the progress of knowledge, the raising of performance standards, or the advance of comparative ideas already strengthening in Europe and the United States. The need for such training, for an infusion of wider cultural comparisons in public experience, and for an interconnection of scholarship within the life and professional practices of art museums, along with an examination of how this was achieved, shapes the themes of inquiry in Chapter 4.

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End of Chapter 3

Ch.4: Intellectual training in art's history and criticism: The Herald Chair of Fine Arts (f. 1946)

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Chapter 4

Intellectual training in art's history and criticism: The Herald Chair of Fine Arts (f. 1946)

The present chapter focuses on the introduction of art historical training in Australia, after the long delay of its admission as a discipline in our universities, and the effects of such absence within and beyond art museums. This account analyses the foundation of the first of the two earliest chairs in Fine Arts (as both were named) as a significant case-study to illuminate the introduction of art history within the scope of the humanities. This was a much-needed academic discipline for the study, teaching and critical evaluation of art's origins historically, and for appraisal of its evolving role and place in Australia's cultural life. The two earliest chairs in art history were significantly brought about through philanthropic initiatives: first, with the Herald Chair of Fine Arts, inaugurated in the University of Melbourne in 1946;¹ and two decades later, the Power Institute of Fine Arts, established at the University of Sydney in 1967 through the J.W. Power Bequest.² This sequence gave the Melbourne chair virtually a generational head-start on all other university ventures for art history in Australia, and established its 'fountainhead' status nationally.³

¹ The endowment of the Herald Chair of Fine Arts by Keith Murdoch through the Herald and Weekly Times newspaper group was made in 1945, while the Chair was founded a year later in 1946 with the successful appointment of Professor Joseph T. Burke (from London).

² The J.W. Power Bequest was received by the University of Sydney in 1962, but the University took many years to resolve how to proceed with the implementation of its gift. The Power Chair and Power Institute of Contemporary Art were inaugurated in 1967, with the appointment of Bernard Smith (from Melbourne) as Power Professor of Contemporary Art and Director of the Power Institute. See for this history, Bernice Murphy, *Museum of Contemporary Art: Vision & Context*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1993.

³ Bernard Smith has made a case for a 1941 series of lectures led by Dr George Berger, 'The Art of Today and Yesterday', arranged by the Teachers' Federation Art Society at Federation House, Sydney, as being the first art history lecture series put together in Australia that included trained art historians (such as Dr. Berger, who had

4.1 Early stirrings for art history in Australia

There has been some advocacy recently to trace the origins of art history in Australia back to the colonial period. This has been explicitly argued by curator Jacqueline Strecker, in an essay 'Colonizing culture: The origins of art history in Australia',⁴ emphasising 'the study and promotion of the fine arts through lectures and the establishment of public art institutions' as being 'high on the agendas of each of the colonies during the middle of the nineteenth century'.⁵ It is true that such topics were discussed, and appeared in records of public lectures of the period, but arguably more often in the context of the instructionally-oriented mechanics institutes – whereby the most extravagant example of local ambition arose in the title of artist Benjamin Duterrau's lecture to the Hobart Mechanics Institute in 1849: 'The School of Athens as it Assimilates with the Mechanics' Institution'.⁶

However, it is not possible to make a case for the origins of *art history* in the colonial period – that is, for recognition of an intellectual discipline within the humanities, with specific bodies of literature, discursive analysis, and interconnected methodologies of historical interpretation and critique, which are essential conditions for an art historical enterprise to be present and advance systematic learning – as opposed to occasional lectures. As this thesis details (especially in Chapters 2, 3, and 5), the early conditions in which the colonial galleries arose were severely constrained. Staffing was poorly qualified and minimal, professional specialisation non-existent, works of art uncatalogued, publications scant, buildings restrictive and their storage conditions inimical to safe handling of works of art, while art collections were often under co-tenancy arrangements with other institutions.

Meanwhile the overwhelming authority of the partial (and sometimes ignorant) colonial trustees of 19th century art galleries inhibited the advance of systematic knowledge, collection building or institutional development. Despairing descriptions of the early state gallery histories in Melbourne and Sydney, on record from the first director in each case to make substantial improvements, can be found respectively in the memoirs of Daryl Lindsay (for the National Gallery of Victoria)⁷ and Hal Missingham (for the Art Gallery of New South Wales).⁸ It is necessary to turn to the 20th century to trace the beginnings of an art historical approach to collections in Australia on any systematic, disciplinary basis.

The two earliest Chairs – at Australia's oldest universities, in Sydney and Melbourne – provide the exemplary (and, as will be analysed, also complex) conditions upon which principal arguments are advanced in this thesis about the foundational challenges of intellectual training in art history in the second half of the 20th century. Both chairs provided crucial academic increments in their respective capital-city universities, not only inaugurating the study of art

trained under Josef Strzygowski in Vienna). However, there is no realistic comparison to be made between the Sydney series and the founding of the Herald Chair and a department of art history in Melbourne – either in substance or in long-term legacy. (See Bernard Smith, *A Pavane for Another Time*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 2002, p. 40.)

⁴ Jacqueline Strecker, 'Colonizing culture: The origins of art history in Australia', in Elizabeth Mansfield (ed.), *Art History and its Institutions*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002, 100–111.

⁵ Strecker, 'The origins of art history in Australia', 2001, p. 100

⁶ *Dictionary of Australian Artists* database, in DAAO online, <www.daa0.org.au/bio/benjamin-duterrau/biography/>, viewed 23 Oct. 2017.

⁷ Daryl Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1965.

⁸ Hal Missingham, *They Kill You in the End*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1973.

history but also providing impetus for the gradual professionalisation of Australia's art museums in the later-20th century, to which many of the graduates of the new departments were subsequently recruited. All further developments nationally represented extensions or variations of the cultural ambition and desired impact on training for art museums, art schools, and related professions that were facilitated in the creation of the first two chairs. The Melbourne Herald Chair in Fine Arts is the main focus of the present chapter, while the Power Institute of Fine Arts is treated in a more condensed manner in Chapter 7 – and primarily through the role of Bernard Smith, as founding Professor of Contemporary Art and Director of the Power Institute, in particular focusing on his parameters for Australian art, and the exclusion of Aboriginal art within his schema.

4.2 The cause of art history in Melbourne: some background in the 1930s

In turning to the inauguration of the Herald Chair in Fine Arts in 1945, it is worth noting some significant early-20th century developments to foster public lectures on art. Art historian Juliette Peers has recently drawn attention to the role of a number of distinguished Australian women artists and artist-educators who provided lecture programs that were 'publicly visible attempts to set visual art in its historical and theoretical context during the period 1900-1940'.⁹ Peers has also stressed that 'lectures at public art galleries' proved to be 'a key forum where women proactively disseminated knowledge of art history in Australia during the interwar era'.¹⁰

In addition to Margaret Preston's well-known lectures on art (including Aboriginal art) beginning in Sydney in the 1920s,¹¹ Peers's research has highlighted the less-recognised lecturing achievements of Violet Teague (in Melbourne, in the Federation era);¹² of Vida Lahey (in Brisbane in the interwar years and mid-20th century at both the Queensland Art Gallery and Queensland University);¹³ and of expatriate artist Mary Cecil Allen, whose move from Melbourne to the United States in 1927 led to two books published that decade in New York that brought her an international audience for her innovative ideas in the understanding of modern art and artists' education.¹⁴ Research by Anne Rees has established that in 1926, before her move to the US, Allen had been employed by the National Gallery of Victoria as a guide and lecturer on art – 'the first woman to hold such a position'.¹⁵ Juliette Peers' investigation of early-20th century records has shown how these women 'explained art's histories, rather than its present ... in order to indicate an Australian sense of connectedness with the broader narratives of classical art history';¹⁶ and she has fairly emphasised that '[a]ll this material predates the often accepted

⁹ Juliette Peers, 'Women artists as drivers of early art historical activities and alternative art historical narratives in Australia', *Journal of Art Historiography*, Number 4, June 2011, 1-18; published online at, <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/peers-the-canon-and-its-disc.pdf>.

¹⁰ Peers, 'Women artists as drivers of early art historical activities', 2011, p. 9.

¹¹ See Deborah Edwards, 'Transitions 1920s: The National', in Deborah Edwards and Rose Peel with Denise Mimmocchi, *Margaret Preston*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2005, 104-105.

¹² Peers, 'Women artists as drivers of early art historical activities', 2011, p. 4, noted that '[Violet Teague] is currently the earliest Australian woman artist for whom we have an academically tenable range of primary sources, particularly an oeuvre of writing and opinion. She published narratives on Australian and international art history and talked of historical artists during press interviews.'

¹³ Peers, 'Women artists as drivers of early art historical activities', 2011, p. 14.

¹⁴ Peers, 'Women artists as drivers of early art historical activities', 2011, p. 9.

¹⁵ Anne Rees, 'Mary Cecil Allen: Modernism and Modernity in Melbourne, 1935-1960', *emaj (electronic Melbourne art journal)*, p. 2, accessed 12 May 2016.

¹⁶ Peers, 'Women artists as drivers of early art historical activities', 2011, p. 1.

emergence of art history in Australia in the 1940s and 1950s'.¹⁷ However events in the 1940s leading to the foundation of a Herald Chair at Melbourne University provided a new tidal movement that lifted all boats in the navigation of art and cultural history's causes – especially across Victoria, with radiating impacts across two generations nationally.

4.3 Stephanie Taylor's case-arguments for a Chair at Melbourne University

A further early-20th century artist-lecturer on art's history, and the most interesting of all in the present context of early advocacy for a chair, was Stephanie Taylor. Taylor had studied at the National Gallery Art School under Bernard Hall and W.B. McInnes between 1914 and 1917.¹⁸ She gave guided lectures within the National Gallery of Victoria for a decade (1940–50),¹⁹ was a member of the Victorian Artists Society, and (until 1972) the Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors.²⁰ Taylor also gave lectures on Australian art, significantly at the University of Melbourne, through its public extension series that involved some of the university's own professors.²¹ Sheridan Palmer, in a monograph covering key teachers in the founding years of the Herald Chair and Department of Fine Arts, has also noted the importance of Stephanie Taylor, especially her voluntary work for the Gallery and concerns about advancing art historical knowledge, long before Keith Murdoch responded to Daryl Lindsay's suggestion of a university endowment in 1945.²²

In her exposition of the Melbourne University department's background, Palmer rightly identified Stephanie Taylor as an early proposer of a university chair for art's history in the late 1930s. She further speculates that Taylor might also have advocated the idea to Daryl Lindsay when she was a regular guide-lecturer on art at the NGV,²³ in the period when he had joined the staff (as 'Curator of the Art Museum and of Prints') at the beginning of 1940,²⁴ and a year later became Director (in March 1941,²⁵ as Murdoch's preferred candidate after the ousting of the obstructive J.S. MacDonald, as covered in Chapter 3). Juliette Peers has further highlighted Taylor's singularity in her early advocacy for a chair, a decade before its actual realisation:

Her most compelling and unexpected claim to a place in art historical memory came in 1938 when she put forward the then astonishing proposal that the University of Melbourne should establish a 'Chair of Art'. This request was not for a general humanities appointment, but a request for a fine arts or art history specialist position as her letter to the *Argus* shows.²⁶

¹⁷ Peers, 'Women artists as drivers of early art historical activities', 2011, p. 1.

¹⁸ 'Taylor, Stephanie', in Alan McCulloch, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1964; 3rd edition, with Susan McCulloch, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994, p. 691.

¹⁹ 'Taylor, S', McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian art*, 1994.

²⁰ Sheridan Palmer, *Centre of the Periphery: Three European Art Historians in Melbourne*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2008, p. 143.

²¹ Reported in *The Argus*, 29 March 1934 (cited Peers 2011, p. 13).

²² Palmer, *Centre of the Periphery*, 2008, 142.

²³ Cited by Palmer 2008, p. 143, as sent by the Secretary, National Council of the Women of Victoria (NCWV), to the Council of the University of Melbourne, 25 June 1937 (NCWV Archives).

²⁴ Leonard Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861-1968: Search for a Collection*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1970, p. 168.

²⁵ Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria*, 1970, p. 170. The date of Lindsay's appointment is variously given as 1942, which is incorrect, and important to factual events in some sequences – especially concerning the exhibition *Art of Australia: 1788-1941* sent to the U.S. in 1941, and concerning Lindsay's invitation to Leonhard Adam to curate an exhibition of Primitive Art for the NGV (which would have been made in 1942, when Lindsay was already Director since March the previous year).

²⁶ Peers, 'Women artists as drivers of early art historical activities', 2011, p. 12. Taylor's letter to the editor, again taking up the cause of a chair, was published in *The Argus* on 4 May 1938,

Peers is not quite correct in chronology. There seems not to have been an awareness of Taylor's proposal to the University of Melbourne at least a year earlier (in 1937). Neither was Peers apparently familiar with the longer rationale put forward to the University Council by Taylor,²⁷ which in addition to highlighting the case for a 'Chair of Art', spoke also of the need for study in 'the Fine Arts' and 'the Philosophy of Art' – in contrast to her short letter to *The Argus* a year later, which was clearly a reaction to the University Registrar's rebuttal of 'a Chair of Art' concept. A chair in Architecture, he had claimed, was more urgent.²⁸

However, the thoroughly developed case-arguments for a 'Chair of Art' put together by Taylor in 1937 constituted an exemplary document for its time: in the range of arguments employed and the degree to which she had researched her case. First, she advocated the study of art within the humanities at university level by international comparison: 'Out of the 28 major Universities of the British Empire only those in Australia have no Chair of Art.'²⁹ The next year (1938), when she wrote more briefly to the editor of *The Argus*, she cited now-30 British universities worldwide with a chair for the historical study of art – excepting those in Australia.

In her rationale put to Melbourne University, Taylor provided solid critique of deficiencies in *artists' education*, without any lecturers qualified to provide informed understanding of art's history or to train judgments of artists' work:

Our Art Gallery School itself is deficient... [The student] is not taught anything about the history or aesthetics of art, except in a very desultory way, and solely according to the goodwill and enthusiasm of his teachers on the practical side.³⁰

Despite her use of masculine pronouns, Taylor was elsewhere explicit that she aimed to benefit women, who made up the greater number of students. Yet she accurately lamented that 'The serious pursuit of the Fine Arts may fairly be said to begin just about where the teaching of art ends in our schools';³¹ and that the National Gallery of Victoria included 'a School for Artists but none for those who purchase their products' – that is, to train judgments about the comparative quality of artworks.³² She then emphasized the narrow, commercially-oriented training offered in the *technical colleges* or trade schools: 'Art as taught in the Schools is mainly for commercial work or for Crafts.'³³

The quality of *art criticism* was also highlighted as deficient without historical background or training in differing critical traditions: 'Recent discussions on Art have shown that even the professional critics lack a training in the Fine Arts and in the Philosophy of Art.'³⁴ And finally,

²⁷ Stephanie Taylor's expanded views are contained in a 19-page typescript, within a series of documents cached as a file, 'Herald Chair of Fine Arts', in the Melbourne University Archives (documents variously registered; some unregistered, when consulted in 2004). While later writing to Vice-Chancellor Sir John Medley in a letter dated 8 October 1945, Taylor's typescript letter attached her earlier, longer case-statement for a Chair which had been provided in June 1937: 'The Chair of Fine Arts, Compiled by Stephanie Taylor for the Press, Arts and Letters sub-committee of The National Council of Women in Victoria' [25/06/1937; n.p.], Melbourne University Archives

²⁸ Taylor, 1938 letter to *The Argus*, quoted in Peers 2011, p. 14.

²⁹ Taylor, 'case documents' for Chair of Fine Arts, forwarded to Vice-Chancellor Sir John Medley, University of Melbourne, 8 Oct. 1945; typescript, n.p.; Melbourne University Archives, 'Herald Chair of Fine Arts' (including 1937 rationale for Chair).

³⁰ Taylor, 'case documents', 1945 [& 1937], Melbourne University Archives, n.p.

³¹ Taylor, 'case documents', 1945 [& 1937], Melbourne University Archives, n.p.

³² Taylor, 'case documents', 1945 [& 1937], Melbourne University Archives, n.p.

³³ Taylor, 'case documents', 1945 [& 1937], Melbourne University Archives, n.p.

³⁴ Taylor, 'case documents', 1945 [& 1937], Melbourne University Archives, n.p.

Taylor cogently stressed the instrumental importance of art historical studies at university level to train the staff who would later work in *art galleries and museums*, and needed to acquire discrimination when making acquisitions from the art market:

One very practical outcome of this University training would be that qualified graduates would be available to take charge of Art Galleries and Lectureships in country centres, as well as to act as Buyers. At present all such training is very haphazard and is acquired by private experience as opportunity offers.³⁵

The full material presented by Stephanie Taylor in 1945 (including her longer 1937 arguments), provided a resonant background to the case for the first Chair of Fine Arts in Australia, by then already in train at Melbourne University. Her critique of contemporary institutions and practice was strong. Yet what lifted it beyond the register of narrowly-based personal criticism was the scope of her documents, the astute rationales she applied to the whole tertiary education system in the field of visual arts in Victoria, and the investigation she had undertaken internationally to highlight the unique exclusion of art history maintained in Australia's universities.³⁶ The breadth of her needs-analysis, and the manner in which conditions across various institutional settings were interconnected, make Stephanie Taylor's case-arguments over a decade a valuable (and in published histories to date, unanalysed) source for the period.

4.4 Melbourne's unique disposition of art schools and provisions for art education

There is a further reason to highlight the multi-sided rationale in Taylor's case for an art history chair, and again this relates to a unique spread of interconnected relationships around art training in Melbourne. First, the NGV had long incorporated an art school. In addition to Melbourne's multiple technical schools or colleges offering training in art, the National Gallery of Victoria had hosted an art school within its fold since 1867,³⁷ with five well-trained artists having headed the school by Stephanie Taylor's time: Eugene von Guerard, George Folingsby, Bernard Hall, William McInnes, and Charles Wheeler.³⁸

[T]he painting school had always had close ties with the gallery: it was housed in the south-eastern corner of the library building, and until 1936 the gallery director had also been head of the school. ... Like the NGV, its role was perceived as the maintenance of standards.³⁹

This situation set the NGV apart from all other state galleries. There had been a similar idea present in the earliest architectural schemes for the 'National Gallery of New South Wales' in the late-19th century, where studios for art training were evident on early concept plans drawn up for a colonial gallery.⁴⁰ There was also a time when the Sydney gallery was to be joined with the natural history museum on College Street, and including the colony's library (as in Melbourne). Yet such plans (and a grand James Barnet architectural scheme for the College Street site

³⁵ Taylor, 'case documents', 1945 [& 1937], Melbourne University Archives, n.p.

³⁶ Some comparative material occurs at the end of the 1937 document, forming an appendix to the main case-arguments.

³⁷ For the NGV's Art and Design schools' establishment see <www.archives.unimelb.edu.au/explore/exhibitions/past-events/primary-sources-50-years-of-the-archives/the_stories/national_gallery_art_school>.

³⁸ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 3rd edition, 1994, Appendix 8: 'Schools and Universities', p. 868.

³⁹ Christopher Heathcote, *A Quiet Revolution: The Rise of Australian Art 1946-1968*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1995, p. 151.

⁴⁰ The idea for an art school's studios was evident on early plans viewed by the author, along with Daniel Thomas, when both were preparing a small exhibition marking the (then believed) centenary of the Gallery's development, displayed in the AGNSW Project Gallery in 1977. The founding is today proved by archivist Steven Miller to be 1871.

addressing Hyde Park) were never realised. Three separate institutions finally evolved on disparate sites.

Melbourne's National Gallery School, as it became, gained a unique identity through a number of interactive factors and mutually reinforcing facilities. In addition to the School's distinguished teachers, it was known for 'the student body attracted to it from all parts of Australia'⁴¹ – for example, Margaret Preston (in 1893–4 and 1896–7),⁴² although she was born in Adelaide and after 1920 became a dominant personality in art circles in Sydney where she lived for the remainder of her life. The NGV school's studios also offered proximity to the Gallery's art collections as well as to the resources of the natural history museum, 'which provided natural history studies' close by.⁴³ And not least, students were abundantly resourced by the adjoining state Library, with an international-standard collection of specialist books on art as a result of an outstanding buying policy and resources in its formative decades. For example, while an unfinished work of the young Sidney Nolan might have remained untouched and abandoned for weeks in the Gallery School's painting studios, Nolan is known to have absorbed much-needed intellectual stimulus in periodicals on modern art and contemporary graphic design in Europe, all to be browsed nearby in the state Library's capacious Reading Room.⁴⁴

Melbourne meanwhile had a history of multiple schools in one city (and again, uniquely so), which offered training in fine or applied arts outside of the National Gallery of Victoria. Technical schools, often evolved from the strong Australian colonial tradition of mechanics institutes, had been established at Collingwood (since 1912), Swinburne/Hawthorn (1909), Prahran (1915), RMIT (first established as the Working Men's College in 1887), Footscray (1916), Caulfield (1922), Box Hill (1924), and later at Preston (established in 1937).⁴⁵ It is this range of schools offering different types of art training for 'working men' – from all of which artists might emerge – that Stephanie Taylor was integrating in her 1937 Chair-case for art history at Melbourne University. And again, the comparison with Sydney's meagre art school resources and training within the generally restricted technical education system of New South Wales is striking.

The mechanics institutes⁴⁶ of the 19th century had steadily 'exemplified the full-blown Victorian self-help principle',⁴⁷ and had been adopted in the colonies within a few years after the first was established in London (in 1823). Originated in Scotland in the early-19th century, the institutes, or 'schools of arts and design' as alternatively known, had spread rapidly throughout the colonies, and in addition to the skills they imparted, their socialisation of imperial values was a distinctive feature of their existence:

There was no centralised policy behind this diaspora of mechanics' institutes throughout the Empire and the English-speaking world. ... [But] as repositories of English culture, educational ideas, books, journals – and

⁴¹ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 3rd edition, 1994, App. 8: 'National Gallery of Victoria Art school', p. 868.

⁴² McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994 'Preston, Margaret Rose, p. 580.

⁴³ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, Appendix 8: 'National Gallery of Victoria Art school', p. 868.

⁴⁴ Nancy Underhill, *Sidney Nolan: A Life*, NewSouth Publishing, 2015, p. 42.

⁴⁵ All these schools are cited within an article on Victorian technical education, available at <www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00510b.htm> (viewed 21 Sept. 2018).

⁴⁶ See Bronwyn Lowden, *Mechanics' Institutes, Schools of Arts, Athenaeums, etc.: An Australian Checklist*, 3rd Edition, 2010, Lowden Publishing, Donvale, Australia, pp. 64–111.

⁴⁷ Derek Whitelock, *The Great Tradition: A History of Adult Education in Australia*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1974, p. 87 – cited in Lisanne Gibson, *The Uses of Art*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2001, pp. 18–19.

humbug – the institutes contributed more to the sense of imperial community than all the rhetoric in the press and the stately tours by proconsuls.⁴⁸

Somewhat ironically, although the proliferation of mechanics institutes across towns and cities was designed to provide education and amenities for workers, to elevate their leisure time and encourage 'civilising' pursuits, their classes and meetings were soon more attractive to the middle classes.⁴⁹ This shift occurred especially as the Institutes became a vehicle for promoting the obsessive vogue for watercolour painting and sketching as leisurely pursuits for the gentry (especially women). Their activities began to neglect the interests of 'mechanics' until the introduction of trade classes in the 1870s, which proved to be a step towards the organisation of public Technical Education by the end of the century, especially in Victoria.⁵⁰ In both cases – whether through social elites shaping the formation of art galleries, or the quite contrary purposes of the mechanics institutes designed to provide skills-training for a labour force – a consistent framework of Victorian taste and values had set particular limits on the scope of art in the Australian colonies.

4.5 Murdoch endowment and establishment of the Herald Chair of Fine Arts (1946)

Much has been published in recent years concerning the foundation of the Herald Chair of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne in the late 1940s, also highlighting the key personalities who shaped the first two decades of the university department under the leadership of Professor Joseph Burke.

The account below seeks not to duplicate narration of events unnecessarily. However, the Herald Chair and early departmental history merit review in this thesis for the wider institutional and educational connections established, and especially to highlight the Chair's specific connections to the National Gallery of Victoria and inauguration of museological training in Australia in the 1950s. The roles that the Gallery's leading personalities (Daryl Lindsay, Keith Murdoch) played in shaping the Chair venture, and its unique character when realised, are crucial to understanding the radial connections impacting on the University and Gallery as well as the community's life culturally. Some of the earliest documents concerning the Herald Chair's creation are therefore significant to understanding the definition of the founding professor's role, which was so broad pedagogically and publicly oriented, in contrast to all other departments in art history that followed later in Australia.

Credit for drawing key figures together around a defined need and proposed solution must go to Daryl Lindsay, who had been grappling with the dearth of trained staff in the state gallery for some years. Lindsay's interest in linking an academic chair to the Gallery's needs was explicit: 'It seemed to me that Melbourne with the vast resources of the Gallery and the Felton Bequest was the ideal place for training.'⁵¹ Following Lindsay's advocacy, as 'architect of the

⁴⁸ Derek Whitelock, *The Great Tradition: A History of Adult Education in Australia*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1974, p. 87, cited in Gibson, *The Uses of Art*, 2001. See also George H. Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture: Ideas, Men and Institutions in Mid-Nineteenth Century Eastern Australia*, F.W. Cheshire Melbourne, 1957.

⁴⁹ Gibson, *The Uses of Art*, 2001, 24–26.

⁵⁰ Gibson, *The Uses of Art*, 2001, 24–26.

⁵¹ Daryl Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree: My Family*, FW Cheshire, Melbourne, 1965, pp. 149–50.

Melbourne chair'⁵² during a dinner with Keith Murdoch and Vice-Chancellor John Medley at the Melbourne Club in 1944,⁵³ things moved quickly. Murdoch acted decisively in later arranging the endowment of a chair through two major payments to Melbourne University in 1945, totalling £10,000.⁵⁴

The role of John (Jack) Medley, which has rather lapsed in recent memory of the Herald Chair's gestation, would also have been crucial. Medley, English-born and Oxford educated, was at the time (with Murdoch) already a trustee of the combined Library, Gallery and Museums; and later (following Murdoch) he would become Chair of the Gallery's independent board. Medley was a remarkably liberal Vice-Chancellor and public figure at a very difficult period of recession for the University in wartime, during which Medley himself grew in stature as a figure of national significance and far-sighted vision.

World War II brought [Melbourne] university development to a full stop. Student numbers dwindled; many senior staff undertook national tasks; teaching suffered; scientists massively contributed to the war effort; major building had to be abandoned. The Australian Broadcasting Commission called on Medley in mid-1940 to give a series of talks aimed at raising national morale. In later talks he was among the first to discuss postwar reconstruction, advocating a planned society based on co-operation.⁵⁵

This picture lends understanding of some natural affinities between Keith Murdoch and John Medley. Both men's lives were deeply marked by WW1, in which Medley had served in the horror of the Somme, and variously lost most of his friends and acquaintances during that War's devastation. Now both were close witnesses of the effects of WW2 in Australia. These men easily agreed on goals they both perceived for rebuilding of institutions, education, and public life after a crippling six years of War – in Europe, the Middle East, and finally the Pacific region. In 1945, when a Herald Chair in fine arts was first taking shape as a prospect, the University of Melbourne was introducing the PhD degree. It was also 'a year of desperate planning in the knowledge that the Commonwealth inevitably had to finance emergency expansion'⁵⁶ with War's end in sight.

Such connections provide added context for the Herald Chair's creation and the synergies of the three key figures involved. They also illuminate Murdoch's ultimate wording of his benefaction, expressive of the commemorative sentiments from the Pacific victory, with cruel losses in battles and Japanese imprisonment still so strongly in mind in 1946. The Chair was to be known, after Murdoch's flagship newspaper group, Herald and Weekly Times Ltd, and 'in commemoration of the victory of the allied nations in the Pacific', as 'the *Herald Chair of Fine Arts*, for teaching the understanding and appreciation of the fine arts and the application of their

⁵² Jaynie Anderson, 'Interrogating Joe Burke and His Legacy: The Joseph Burke Lecture 2005', *Melbourne Art Journal*, No 8, 2005, 89–99; available online in *Art Historiography*, at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/anderson-on-burke.pdf>.

⁵³ Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree*, 1965, pp. 149–50; quoted also in Jaynie Anderson, 'Interrogating Joe Burke and His Legacy: The Joseph Burke Lecture 2005', *Melbourne Art Journal*, No 8, 2005, 89–99; available online in *Art Historiography*, at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/anderson-on-burke.pdf>.

⁵⁴ 'Schools and universities', Appendix 8, in McCulloch, *EAA*, 1994, p. 864; the endowment of £10,000 in 1944 would be equivalent to c. \$AU 740,000 in 2020 values, when RBA inflation-calculated at <www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.html>. This is not equal to the sum an endowed Chair would require today, but it was an outstanding philanthropic gift within the resources-strapped university sector of the 1940s.

⁵⁵ Geoffrey Serle, 'Medley, Sir John Dudley Gibbs (Jack) (1891–1962)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 15, Melbourne University Press, 2000, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/medley-sir-john-dudley-gibbs-jack-11101/text19763>, accessed online 15 May 2018. See also John Poynter and Carolyn Rasmussen, *A Place Apart. The University of Melbourne: Decades of Challenge*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1996.

⁵⁶ Serle, 'Medley, Sir John...', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2000.

principles and practice to the life of the community'.⁵⁷ Murdoch hoped that similar moves would be made in other capital cities, introducing the study of art history in other states.⁵⁸

Medley went on to be knighted and play an outstanding role in the affairs of universities nationally. He was trusted by prime ministers Chifley during wartime and RG Menzies afterwards as a key adviser on policy for the development of Australian universities in all states. Moreover, these contacts illuminate Prime Minister Menzies' strong support for universities in the post-War period and the Australian National University's founding in 1946 by the federal Parliament⁵⁹ in a youthful Canberra. In its early years, the ANU was a creature of Melbourne University, which furnished many of the first key lecturers/professors shaping new disciplines: for example, C.M.H. (Manning) Clark in Australian history, John Mulvaney in archaeology, A.D. Hope in English literature, W.E.H. (Bill) Stanner in anthropology within the research School of Pacific Studies, and other figures gathered on the emergent ANU bushland campus, later remembered as national leaders in their fields.

4.6 The broad brief for the Herald Chair and National Gallery of Victoria connections

The expectations of Keith Murdoch for the impact of a *Herald* Chair were crucial, not only through the resources he could command but also because he was by then 'the leading figure in a new art establishment' in Melbourne, a liberal culturally while conservative politically.⁶⁰ Murdoch's memory of the *Herald* exhibition he had commissioned in 1939 would also have been an important experience for him about the power of modern art to reach a much broader audience nationally than attended the state galleries (which he had attacked at the time as backward, ill-housed and poorly led – as covered in Chapter 3).



Daryl Lindsay, 1930; Keith Murdoch, 1945 (Univ.Melb.Archives); Daryl Lindsay before Florentine profile portrait of a lady acquired on advice of Sir Kenneth Clark (Christmas card to Ursula Hoff), (Univ.Melb.Archives)

Murdoch had experienced the *Herald* show's virtual shunning by then-governing gatekeeper opinion (by conservative artist-directors and trustees) in the art museums in Melbourne and Sydney; meanwhile the exhibition was eagerly absorbed by artists and galvanised a broad and curious public to crowd its displays. Murdoch's vantage-point as Chairman (since 1939) of the

⁵⁷ Joanna Mendelsohn, Catherine De Lorenzo, Alison Inglis and Catherine Speck, *Australian Exhibitions: Opening Our Eyes*, Thames & Hudson, Melbourne, 2018, p. 30, fn. 17, citing 'University trust record UTR.24, *Herald Chair of Fine Arts*', viewed 1 June 2016.

⁵⁸ Keith Murdoch was noted at the time as 'a strong advocate for the establishment of departments of fine arts in all Australian universities' (McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, p. 864).

⁵⁹ The federal Department of Post-War Construction was established in 1942, and the *Australian National University Act 1946* was passed by the Chifley Government in August 1946. ('History of ANU', *Australian National University*, online at <www.services.anu.edu.au/campus-environment/heritage>, viewed 6 April 2013.)

⁶⁰ Geoffrey Serle, 'Murdoch, Sir Keith Arthur (1885–1952)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1986, 622–627, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/murdoch-sir-keith-arthur-7693/text13467>.

combined Library, Gallery and Museums trust)⁶¹ was by now decisive in his perception of the potential of the intended academic chair to link important institutions in Melbourne for greater public benefit in the field of visual arts, since he could gather resources the University desperately needed in the strained reconstruction period.

Daryl Lindsay was alert to the public linkage questions in other ways, as he had long been critical of art education and the training of artists, in comparison with the experiences he himself had when studying art in London for a year in the early 1920s, at the Slade School of Fine Art under Henry Tonks (later a life-long friend).⁶² Lindsay was by now eager to help realise the advantages an academic chair could provide in nurturing art historical skills for acquisitions internally, while he was also conscious of the need to strengthen the Gallery's public role in providing lectures and other education services to illuminate Melbourne's outstanding collections on-site, and to produce services for art teachers, schools and public education in the visual arts.

The eventual Statement of Duties adopted for the new university post in 1945 was expansive in its inclusion of both town and gown, declaring that 'it is not intended that the Chair should be a Teaching Chair in the ordinary sense of the term'.⁶³ The inaugural professor was expected to:

- (a) take some part in the work of the Faculties of Arts, Education, Architecture and Music, and the University Extension Board; (b) organise small groups of advanced students; (c) deliver public lectures in the National Gallery and elsewhere; (d) stimulate activity, whether creative, critical or appreciative, both in the University and the community at large.⁶⁴

The articulated links beyond the Faculty of Arts to Education, Architecture, Music and the 'community at large' are notable in this brief, and illuminate how broadly the visual arts were conceived in outreach (a conception often disremembered today about art history's foundational aims within Melbourne University). The University decided against public advertisement, preferring to utilise its own networks of expert advice sourced internationally. A 'Standing Committee for the Chair of Fine Arts', incorporating the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, and deans of relevant faculties, was established to assist the Council in finding a suitable candidate.⁶⁵ The University's Standing Committee included Murdoch and Lindsay⁶⁶ – both men by now close through years of personal friendship and trust, many shared social networks, and recently joined roles in leading the NGV.

Despite the Melbourne Gallery's growing collections since it received new buying power through the Felton Bequest of 1904,⁶⁷ there had never been academically trained staff to provide expert interpretation of works acquired, nor even to formulate briefs for desirable acquisitions. This situation was emphasised years later by Dr Ursula Hoff, who in 1943 was employed by

⁶¹ Murdoch had been a trustee since 1933, became president of the combined Library, Museums and Gallery trust in 1939, and championed the Gallery's institutional development until the Gallery was finally separated in 1945, with Murdoch as Chairman, continuing until his sudden death in October 1952. (Serle, 'Murdoch, Sir Keith Arthur', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1986.)

⁶² Bernard Smith, 'Lindsay, Sir Ernest Daryl (1889–1976)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986; online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lindsay-sir-ernest-daryl-7759/text12457>.

⁶³ *Second Report of the Standing Committee for the Chair of Fine Arts*, Council document of meeting at the Law Courts, Melbourne, 27 March 1946; documents held in Melbourne University Archives, no reg. no.

⁶⁴ *Second Report...*[SRSCFA] 1946, MUA.

⁶⁵ SRSCFA, 1946.

⁶⁶ SRSCFA, 1946.

⁶⁷ See John Poynter, *Mr Felton's Bequests*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2003.

Daryl Lindsay as the first trained art historian in any state gallery. She later became the celebrated head of the NGV's Department of Prints and Drawings, leading the Gallery's scholarship over decades. 'Except for cataloguing', Ursula Hoff later recalled, 'writing on art had not been part of the Melbourne gallery's activities.'⁶⁸ Instead, what she called 'the older style of publications' about works of art in public collections in Australia had been marked by a purely 'descriptive approach'⁶⁹ to objects, bereft of comparative study or historical evidence for the formation of critical judgments, establishment of provenance of works, or rationalised cataloguing of the state's public holdings. Only the introduction of staff trained in the methods of art historical scholarship and systematic research could produce publications that would be authoritative in building comparative knowledge of the value of collection contents, as well as more informed publications for general use educationally.

For Lindsay's part, his realisation of the transformative skills that Ursula Hoff's outstanding art historical training in Germany provided (and later experience of museum collections and the world's historical art market in London expanded) caused him to realise that the Gallery's professional capacities were suddenly upgraded in many directions with her arrival on staff. As Sheridan Palmer has recorded, a 1944 letter from Daryl to his brother Lionel Lindsay 'conveyed his sense of excitement at his "brilliant find"' in hiring the new Keeper of prints and drawings just three years into his directorship:

What a difference ... in having a trained colleague who knows how to go about things with the right flair for the research side of things – I've never come across it here before.⁷⁰

Even Lionel, despite his anti-Jewish prejudices, came warily to appreciate Hoff's knowledge and capacities, for he at last encountered someone with expertise that could enhance and challenge his own knowledge in the field he most cared about: the technical qualities achieved by the most outstanding artists in the prints and drawings fields (for in addition to his own art, he was an ambitious collector in these fields). Ursula Hoff's skills proved to be decisive in turning a potential enemy into an admiring artist-colleague, and ultimately a patron and eventual donor to the NGV's Prints and Drawings collection in the area of its 'master works'.

4.7 International search process for the Herald chair, and US connections

The University's search process for the founding Herald professor was astute, measured (and inevitably gendered, according to the times). It was automatically envisaged that an outstanding 'man' would fill the post. Sir John Medley communicated the University's broad expectations in a letter of 27 November 1945 to Professor G.W. (actually W.G.) Constable, originally the founding Director of the Courtauld Institute in London (1932–1936), but by then heading the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.⁷¹ As Vice-Chancellor, Medley was brief and to the point:

Clearly what we want to find is a man with an unusually wide range of cultural sympathies and an unusual flair for expounding them, both inside and outside the University, to a community which has much to learn.⁷²

⁶⁸ Ursula Hoff, 'Observations on Art History in Melbourne 1946–1964', *Australian Journal of Art*, Vol. 3, 1983, 5–9; p. 9.

⁶⁹ Hoff, 'Observations', 1983.

⁷⁰ Daryl Lindsay to Lionel Lindsay, 29 April 1944, cited Palmer, *Centre of the Periphery*, 2008, p. 125.

⁷¹ A full statement of sources contacted by the University of Melbourne has been variously catalogued by the University of Melbourne.

⁷² University of Melbourne Archives, 'Herald Chair of Fine Arts' docs. (letter 27 Nov. 1945, Vice-Chancellor Sir John Medley to Prof G.W. Constable, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, USA) – no reg. no. when consulted on site, 2006.

Meanwhile in 1944, Daryl Lindsay prepared to make his first overseas travel in three years as NGV director. He drafted an itinerary covering ‘the USA and Great Britain to study modern museum administration’⁷³ – an extensive tour only possible with Murdoch’s governance support (against Public Service Board bureaucracy and parsimony); and financial help produced through the Felton Bequest, enabling months of travel on Gallery business through the United States and Britain accompanied by his wife Joan Lindsay. Lindsay’s influential contacts included some political help sourced through the Chifley government, enabling the convenience of flying all the way, though the War had not yet ended. No matter how parlous its conditions were internally, the NGV always had advantages of its collections’ prestige internationally; and Lindsay’s own social networks were extensive and influential, especially in the UK (where both he and Joan Lindsay had lived in the 1920s). Daryl Lindsay by now had another mission added to his travel: ‘As I was leaving for the U.S.A. and Europe ... [in 1944] I was asked to find a suitable man to fill the post’ [of Herald Chair].⁷⁴ His appointments abroad, doubtless helped by diplomatic support from Australia, were with directors of some of the most prestigious museums.

4.8 Yale University Art Gallery and Theodore Sizer’s Melbourne connections

An important contact in the United States was Theodore Sizer (1892–1967), jointly professor of art history at Yale University and Director of the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven.⁷⁵ Sizer well knew the Australian art and galleries context, having visited in late 1940 to advise on selection (on behalf of the Carnegie Corporation, New York) for the landmark exhibition, *Art of Australia 1788-1941*, which travelled for a long tour of the US and Canada (1941–1945) in partial reward to a wartime ally.⁷⁶



Theodore Sizer, Director Yale Art Gallery
(source: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/96283633/theodore-sizer>).

Sizer also knew, from first-hand experience in 1940–41, how riven Australian art circles were by bitter factionalism between traditionalists and those seeking change. He had concluded in an astute 1941 advice letter to an officer in the Carnegie Corporation, New York: ‘Modern art is a hornet’s nest in Australia.’⁷⁷

⁷³ Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree*, 1965, p. 147.

⁷⁴ Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree*, 1965, p. 149. There is a slightly different account in Sheridan Palmer’s monograph (Centre of the Periphery, p. 142), and it’s possible that Keith Murdoch (or John Medley) sought Theodore Sizer’s opinion, as they had met in Melbourne during Sizer’s visit in late 1940–early 1941. However, Daryl Lindsay’s visit to Yale doubtless also proved fruitful in eliciting Sizer’s recommendation of Joseph T Burke, whom Sizer had supervised for the former’s master’s degree at Yale. Lindsay also has a tendency to exaggerate at times (and his memoir, *The Leafy Tree*, was published in 1965, two decades after the events concerned).

⁷⁵ ‘Theodore Sizer, Art Teacher and Heraldist, Dies; Professor at Yale...’, *New York Times*, 22 June 1967, www.nytimes.com/1967/06/22/archives/theodore-sizer-art-teacher-and-heraldist-dies-professor-at-yale.html.

⁷⁶ Theodore Sizer (1892–1967), Letter to the Carnegie Corporation, New York, [15 November] 1941’, in Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara and Philip Goad, *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917–1967*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2006, 404–405, p. 404.

⁷⁷ Sizer, Letter to the Carnegie Corporation, in Stephen, McNamara and Goad, *Modernism & Australia: Documents...*, 2006, p. 405.

Sizer's summation in a few words or sentences of all the key players in Australian art and patronage circles was remarkably astute, and he sharply perceived the backwardness of the artist-directors of the state galleries (in Sydney and Melbourne), regarding both Will Ashton and James MacDonald as retarding and obstructive ('Mr. MacDonald ... has a completely closed mind to all forms of artistic expression since 1870 ... Mr. Ashton takes in all of Impressionism, which is more advanced than Mr. MacDonald — what charming gentlemen both are!')⁷⁸ Yet Sizer had also made positive contacts in Australia, including with Daryl Lindsay and Keith Murdoch in Melbourne, and Sydney Ure Smith, Margaret Preston and others in Sydney. Being already informed about art and art gallery training needs in Australia, Sizer was supportive and well primed for helping to shape Lindsay's itinerary for the US tour (which he did).⁷⁹

4.9 Joseph T. Burke (an alumnus of both the Courtauld Institute and Yale)

Sizer had a strong recommendation for consideration for the Herald Chair when Lindsay met up with him again at Yale.⁸⁰ Sizer favoured a young British scholar, Joseph T. Burke, whom he had supervised some years earlier during the latter's study for his master's degree at Yale.



L: Joseph Burke at 10 Downing Street, London, then Personal Secretary to the British PM Clement Attlee, 1943 (Univ. of Melbourne Archives); R: Sir Joseph Burke with Dame Elisabeth Murdoch in front of the portrait by Fred Williams (Univ. of Melbourne Archives); R: (detail) Joseph Burke, with mace, leading University procession, PM R.G. Menzies behind him (Univ. of Melbourne Archives).

After a first degree in English, Joseph Burke had subsequently graduated with a master's degree in art history (in 1935)⁸¹ from London University's then-pathfinding and newly established Courtauld Institute, founded in 1932,⁸² at which he would have been among the first intake of graduate students in the early 1930s. Burke subsequently pursued further study for a year in the United States, undertaking his second master's degree at Yale, where, 'along with courses on

⁷⁸ Stephen, McNamara and Goad, *Modernism & Australia: Documents...*, 2006, p. 405.

⁷⁹ The sustained relationship between Theodore Sizer and Daryl Lindsay is attested by the essay Sizer contributed years later to the *Festschrift*-style volume of essays honouring Daryl Lindsay after his retirement from the Gallery: Theodore Sizer, 'The Training of a Gallery Administrator', in Franz Philipp and June Stewart (eds), *In Honour of Daryl Lindsay: Essays and Studies*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1964, 33–36.

⁸⁰ Jaynie Anderson, 'Interrogating Joe Burke and His Legacy: The Joseph Burke Lecture 2005', *Melbourne Art Journal*, No 8, 2005, 89–99; available online in *Art Historiography*, at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/anderson-on-burke.pdf>. See p. 4, f/n 4, for this slightly different version of the same story appearing in Daryl Lindsay's *The Leafy Tree*.

⁸¹ The subject of Burke's dissertation at the Courtauld was *A Critical Edition of William Hogarth's Analysis of Beauty* (Palmer, *Centre of the Periphery*, 2008, p. 68).

⁸² The Courtauld Institute of Art (founded 1932): 'Its initial aim was to provide an education in attribution for postgraduates wishing to enter the art business, but under the influence of the Warburg émigrés, and later the leadership of Anthony Blunt, it widened its sense of the discipline, in terms of its ambitions, approaches and its materials of study.'

<www.archives.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/organisations_projects/Courtauld_Institute_of_Art.html>

American Art, History and Literature', he completed a biographical and critical study of the early life of the Anglo-American artist Benjamin West, which formed the subject of his thesis.⁸³

Having later joined the staff of the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1938,⁸⁴ Burke had gained enthusiasm for the full range of fine arts, decorative arts, crafts and design represented by the V&A collections – an experience that would have lasting effects in his later career, when design, and especially industrial design, were abiding causes he championed. While still a member of the V&A staff, Burke had been seconded to the Home Office during the War, and after 'several important secretaryships'⁸⁵ had finally (while still on prolonged secondment after the War was over) become principal private secretary to socialist Prime Minister Clement Attlee, with an office in 10 Downing Street.⁸⁶ Having been in an entourage with world leaders at the 1945 Potsdam Conference at the Prussian Sanssouci Palace, neighbouring Berlin,⁸⁷ for the settlement of WWII in Germany, the young scholar was now also an experienced public servant with an understanding of the inner workings of the British government during and immediately after the War. Clement Attlee would also have been a model for Burke in other ways, as he had an astute sensibility for eloquent compression. Attlee was responsible for an inspiring sentence (described as 'the work of a statesman and a poet') which became a keystone concept in the founding of UNESCO in 1946, to build new links culturally across a scarred world. Attlee provided a resonant image of recent experience and the challenging cause of world peace: '[S]ince wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed'.⁸⁸

Following TheodoreSizer's detailing of Burke's abilities, Daryl Lindsay followed up the recommendation by arranging a meeting in London to assess the prospective candidate directly and test his availability for Melbourne. During a lunch on 19 June 1945,⁸⁹ and with subsequent recommendations from the V&A in London, Burke's entertaining qualities, impeccable record and professional connections, convinced Lindsay of Burke's suitability⁹⁰ – which he communicated in a letter to Murdoch.

By late 1945, Vice-Chancellor Medley was well along in the search process when he enquired of Professor W.G. Constable in Boston for his opinion of Burke's academic background and suitability (as another former academic supervisor of Burke, when at the Courtauld), but especially concerning the public presence sought of the successful appointee to the Herald chair. No record survives of Constable's opinion, presumably positive. But more significant for later

⁸³ Palmer, *Centre of the Periphery*, 2008, pp. 68–9. Burke's later lecturing on Benjamin West and the revival of history painting, with a special focus on West's 1770 painting of *The Death of General Wolfe* at the 1759 Battle of Quebec (National Gallery of Canada), was a memorable experience for students in Melbourne.

⁸⁴ After a period of casual attachment to the National Portrait Gallery, Burke joined the staff of the Victoria and Albert Museum in July 1938 (Palmer, *Centre of the Periphery*, 2008, pp. 69–70).

⁸⁵ From short biographical notes (undated) in the file on the Herald Chair, Joseph Burke was still serving Prime Minister Clement Attlee, on prolonged secondment from the Victoria and Albert Museum, at the time he was invited to the Melbourne Chair. ('Herald Chair of Fine Arts', Melbourne University Archives, n.p.)

⁸⁶ From short biographical notes (undated) in the file on the Herald Chair, Melbourne University Archives, n.p.

⁸⁷ Palmer, *Centre of the Periphery*, 2008, p. 72.

⁸⁸ Clement Attlee is praised for this foundational UNESCO concept in Fernando Valderrama, *A History of UNESCO*, UNESCO, Paris, 1995, p. 24.

⁸⁹ Burke, appointments diary, 17 June 1945 (University of Melbourne Archives), cited in Palmer, *Centre of the Periphery*, 2008, p. 73. Daryl Lindsay (in *The Leafy Tree*) recalled an evening dinner at 'a Spanish restaurant' with Burke as the clinching occasion, but Burke's appointments diary provides authoritative evidence of their likely first meeting over lunch.

⁹⁰ Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree*, 1965, p. 147.

events was the reference of Sir Kenneth Clark⁹¹ (formerly youngest-ever Director of the National Gallery, and one of the most influential figures in British art history).⁹² Clark's laudatory opinion clearly excited the University committee's anticipation that they had found the 'right man for the job'. Following an enthusiastic short overview of Burke's achievements and capacities, Clark ended with the summation: 'If he goes to Australia he will be much missed in this country, where h[e] is generally regarded as one of the most promising art scholars of his generation.'⁹³

With such strong credentials, and backed so convincingly by Kenneth Clark, Joseph Burke was unanimously recommended to the Melbourne University Council to be offered the Herald Chair of Fine Arts (resolved 27 March 1946).⁹⁴ His acceptance arrived by telegram in April 1946,⁹⁵ and Burke now prepared (with his Canadian-born wife and young son) for a completely new career in another hemisphere. Burke packed his library and eventually sailed from England later that year, disembarking in the last days of December 1946 in Sydney, and turning a discerning eye to his new surroundings: 'The spectacle of the suburbs surrounding Sydney Harbour was exactly as D.H. Lawrence had described it [in *Kangaroo*]...[a] panorama of red roofs above innumerable single storey suburban homes'.⁹⁶

4.10 Burke's arrival: an orientation to the Australian landscape and its painters

From Sydney, Burke took the overnight train to Melbourne.⁹⁷ This inaugural long-distance journey overland provided him with his first experience of the unexpectedly park-like aspect of the Australian countryside, thinly wooded with eucalypts, always filtering rather than providing a canopy of foliage against the intense sunlight. He judged 'the introduction to an unfamiliar art through landscape' as fortunate: 'because I happened to arrive at the time of a great advance in Australian painting, an advance to which the new attitude to landscape was to contribute'.⁹⁸

⁹¹ The outcomes of Kenneth Clark's many contacts with Australia were extensive, including his serving later for a short time as Adviser on Felton Bequest purchases in London. For his characterisation of an art museum, Clark's published (27 January) 1949 lecture, *The Idea of a Great Gallery* (later re-published in Franz Philipp and June Stewart (eds), *In Honour of Daryl Lindsay: Essays and Studies*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1964, 2–9), was encouraging to Melbourne supporters of the NGV. Two early directors of the National Gallery, London, and simultaneously RA Presidents, were influential 'buyers' for Australia: Charles Eastlake had been a London-based adviser for the Felton Bequest, while Edward Poynter later became an adviser to the young Art Gallery of Western Australia from 1895 to 1918 (Alison Inglis, 'Imperial Perspectives on Art in Nineteenth-Century Australia', in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2011, Ch. 5, 55–70; p. 62.)

⁹² Robert Gaston has subtly recorded a somewhat more acerbic view of the connoisseurial approach to artworks favoured by Kenneth Clark – habits undoubtedly deepened during Clark's early mentorship with Bernard Berenson in Tuscany. This opinion of Clark, and similarly of the Courtauld Institute's Anthony Blunt, was seemingly firm among the philologically more erudite German-Viennese scholars at the Warburg Institute (see Robert W. Gaston, "My greatest debt": Bernard Smith, the Warburg Institute, and the evolution of European Vision and the South Pacific', in Jaynie Anderson, Christopher R. Marshall and Andrew Yip (eds), *The Legacies of Bernard Smith: Essays on Australian Art, History, and Politics*, Power Publications, Sydney, in association with the Arts Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2016.) Nevertheless, Clark's supreme stature and influence in England, and continuing connections to Australia through his protégé, Joseph Burke, proved hugely consequential for some Australian artists, and to a lesser extent the National Gallery of Victoria.

⁹³ University of Melbourne Archives, 'Herald Chair of Fine Arts' docs., as cited

⁹⁴ *Second Report...*[SCCFA] 1946, MUA.

⁹⁵ *Second Report...*[SCCFA] 1946, MUA.

⁹⁶ Joseph T. Burke, The Post-War Years in Australian Art: Some Lessons for the Future, The Sixth Sir William Dobell Memorial Lecture, The William Dobell Art Foundation, Sydney, 1982, 26 pp., p. 5.

⁹⁷ Burke, The Post-War Years [6th Dobell Memorial Lecture, Sydney], 1982, p. 5.

⁹⁸ Burke, The Post-War Years [6th Dobell Memorial Lecture, Sydney], 1982, p. 7.

Burke most admired Sidney Nolan – ‘the most imaginative and original painter whose work I have seen in Australia’,⁹⁹ as he advised Kenneth Clark in advance of the latter’s first visit to Australia a year later, in 1948.¹⁰⁰ This quickness of judgment meant that Joseph Burke had effortlessly jumped a generation of taste beyond the local state gallery directors and their trustees of the 1930s.

Among artist-studio and collection visits arranged for Clark in Melbourne, Burke ensured a crucial introduction to Nolan’s work (and a personal visit to the artist’s studio later in Sydney, where Nolan had then moved). Results of this resourceful itinerary-shaping were that Clark’s later support and published interpretation of Nolan’s work proved decisive in launching the artist’s career in London.¹⁰¹ Burke’s agility in drawing such connections across many situations was astute, linking his training in visual interpretation to literature, history, a flux of cultural ideas, and an address to the environment and aspirations of an entirely new country founded in a British mould. This also meant that his efforts to establish the discipline and impacts of art history within the university never ceased at the perimeter of the campus. Burke’s diary bulged with extra-curricular appointments in his first years in Melbourne.

Having early discerned and supported what he identified as ‘the new attitude to landscape’ of Drysdale, Dobell, Nolan, Arthur Boyd and others, rather than the ‘old attitude’ of the Heidelberg school, Burke readily found a footing in the innovative currents of the present rather than the ‘aesthetic nationalism’¹⁰² of a nostalgic past, which had cast such a long and restraining influence across the earlier 20th century (as covered in Chapter 3). Burke’s active steps to meet contemporary artists were fruitful, helping not only to support their work but offering affirmative signs that he saw his task as relating to a broad spectrum of contemporary cultural activity, not simply art history as an academic discipline. In fact, Burke moved swiftly and skilfully in making clear that he regarded the best of current Australian artists as the direct counterparts and contemporaries of Henry Moore, Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland in England, and to be taken with equal seriousness.¹⁰³

Burke’s earlier public service attachment to a socialist Prime Minister at the time of Britain’s first steps in post-War reconstruction had also helped prepare him for the demotic character of Australia. In addition to his ready acceptance within establishment circles in Melbourne, Burke befriended artists on the far left of political life – for example, artist Noel Counihan and writer Judah Waten, at a time when known membership of the Communist Party exacted a price in terms of patronage (as was the case with Counihan). In fact, Burke remained a steadfast supporter of Noel Counihan over decades, describing him as a man ‘who celebrated the dignity of the human spirit amongst the humble and oppressed’.¹⁰⁴ And when opening an

⁹⁹ Jaynie Anderson, ‘Interrogating Joe Burke and His Legacy: The Joseph Burke Lecture 2005’, *Melbourne Art Journal*, No 8, 2005, 89–99; available online, *Art Historiography*, 2011, at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/anderson-on-burke.pdf> (p. 9).

¹⁰⁰ See Anderson, ‘Interrogating Joe Burke and His Legacy’ [2005], *Art Historiography*, 2011.

¹⁰¹ See the monograph that gave Sidney Nolan an international audience: Kenneth Clark, Colin MacInnes and Bryan Robertson (authors), *Sidney Nolan*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1961.

¹⁰² Ann Galbally, ‘National Life and Landscape: The Heidelberg School as Mythmaker 1880–1905’, in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2011, Ch. 6, 71–83; p. 82.

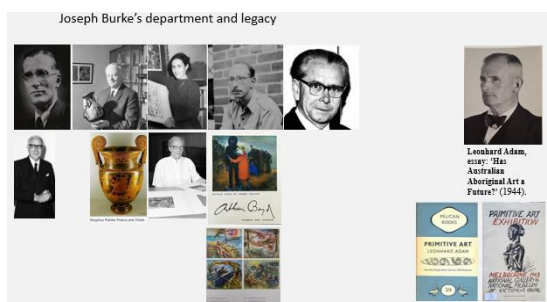
¹⁰³ This kind of direct comparison of living Australian artists with their contemporaries in Britain, familiar to students of Joseph Burke’s lectures, was repeated in his final Dobell lecture in Sydney in 1982.

¹⁰⁴ Palmer, *The Centre of the Periphery*, 2008, p. 153.

exhibition of his work in 1978, when Counihan was now 65, Burke described him – if somewhat generously (given the complexity of Arthur Boyd’s work and sources) – as ‘Australia’s leading humanist painter’.¹⁰⁵

In overview, the new Herald Professor of Fine Arts in the 1950s clearly demonstrated that he had grasped local aspirations astutely in Melbourne and warmly embraced them. His specialist knowledge of 18th century English art also opened up other important connections – especially to architecture, of which he soon became a keen and articulate interpreter of the colonial Georgian sandstone buildings of Tasmania and Sydney, while he also cast a sharp eye on remarkable industrial structures of the 19th century. Burke also embraced the architecture of the 20th-century, turning to the leading local work of Robin Boyd and Roy Grounds, who were secured for occasional lectures to fine arts students. Burke demonstrated by precept and his own example how scholarship could not only open up a knowledge of the past, but provide critical tools and informed comparison to nourish an active interpretation of contemporary society in its cultural development and creativity – exactly as the Herald Chair’s brief had envisaged.

Joe Burke (as all associates and friends knew him) indeed maintained throughout his long career a capacity to project that pronounced 'enthusiasm' for art first noted by Sir Kenneth Clark in 1946. His move to Australia inaugurated an academic and public life in Melbourne that eventually spanned 32 years in the country of his adoption, and he was honoured as the University's longest-serving Professor at his retirement in 1978.¹⁰⁶ When lecturing, Burke's striking enthusiasm, resonant voice, witticisms, and perambulatory style of exposition as a tall figure pacing in well-cut suits, were such as to be recalled by former students decades later. It would be fair to say that no subsequent professor of art history in Australia has taken on such a broad public orientation, crossed so many influential circuits in public life, or garnered such diverse effects educationally, across a broad horizon from the visual arts to crafts and industrial design, as Joseph Burke gained in his early years, and maintained until his retirement.



4.11 Specialist scholars enlisted locally: Ursula Hoff, Dale Trendall, Franz Philipp

Dr Ursula Hoff (who emigrated from London to Melbourne in 1939, initially to take up an administrative post at Melbourne University's Women's College) was recruited to curatorship of

¹⁰⁵ In a hand-written speech for opening of Noel Counihan exhibition, Mornington, Frid. 3 March, 1978; consulted among Joseph Burke papers, Melbourne University Archives (uncatalogued when consulted, 2004). See also Bernard Smith, *Noel Counihan: Artist and Revolutionary*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne & New York, 1993.

¹⁰⁶ Burke retired on 14 November 1978 (Anderson, 'Interrogating Joe Burke and His Legacy' [2005], online version, *Art Historiography*, 2011, p. 17).

the NGV's prints and drawings collection in 1943 (by Daryl Lindsay). She thereby became the first trained art historian to be appointed as a curator in an Australian state gallery. Having been forced to flee Hamburg, along with her distinguished Jewish professors Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl in the 1930s, Ursula Hoff was engaged by Burke as an adjunct lecturer in his new department at Melbourne University. Jaynie Anderson – a student in the 1960s, and years later herself appointed to the Herald Chair – has reflected on the early building of the Fine Arts department that nurtured such strong links between the University and the Gallery:

Burke made a brilliant appointment in his first year (1947) with Ursula Hoff, a German art historian, who had studied at the Warburg Institute, Hamburg, and who had written a doctoral thesis on 'Rembrandt and England' (1935). Rembrandt was well represented in the Gallery and her appointment was a joint one with the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Gallery.¹⁰⁷



Dr Ursula Hoff, holding William Blake's *The Creation of Eve* (1822), from Milton's *Paradise Lost* (VIII, 452-77), one of the celebrated corpus of William Blake watercolours in the prints and drawings collection of the NGV, Swanston Street (c. the early 1950s).

Most important for Hoff's influence was the physical and conceptual reorganisation of the NGV's prints and drawings collection she accomplished, and the ambitious acquisitions framework she developed to guide future collecting (and gifts), with the support of Melbourne's exceptional Felton Bequest:

A coherent acquisition policy was articulated whose aim was the building of a comprehensive collection of the major developments in the graphic art of Europe and Australia through the finest examples possible.¹⁰⁸

Ursula Hoff subsequently influenced many university students and young staff through lectures at the University, while also facilitating university classes for honours students to encounter works *in situ* in the Gallery. Such classes in the NGV's Prints and Drawings department, with prepared examples of finest original drawings and prints by artists of the calibre of Dürer, Rembrandt, Blake and others, included the viewing of prints in different impression-stages, with artists' hand-tools nearby for understanding of different print-processes. The classes she led – or otherwise enabled academic tutors and colleagues (such as Bernard Smith) to lead – introduced students directly to the scholarly and connoisseurial knowledge necessary for curatorial work, as well as detailed art historical scholarship needed for informed writing on art.

Through her varied curatorial work, international connections, publications and mentoring, Ursula Hoff conveyed the intellectual resources of the intensive training she had received in Germany, and later extended through more practical apprenticeships in London. Her example years later produced concepts, research-skills and legacies that she passed on to younger NGV colleagues who eventually rose to senior positions in galleries dispersed around Australia (for example, John Stringer, James Mollison, Ron Radford, among others). After her death in 2005,

¹⁰⁷ Jaynie Anderson, 'Art history's history in Melbourne: Franz Philipp in correspondence with Arthur Boyd', The Franz Philipp Memorial Lecture, University of Melbourne, 1998; published online, *Art Historiography*, 2011, at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/anderson-on-philipp.pdf>, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ Irena Zdanowicz, 'Ursula Hoff, AO, OBE 1909–2005' (obituary tribute), National Gallery of Victoria, 2005, <www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/obituary-ursula-hoff-ao-obe-1909-2005/>.

Ursula Hoff was described by a former colleague of more than three decades in Melbourne, Irena Zdanowicz, as ‘the person who, more than any other individual, shaped [the National Gallery of Victoria’s] character and scholarly reputation for the better part of the twentieth century’.¹⁰⁹

James Mollison recalled in 2014 the impact of many sessions he had in his youth, enabled by her guidance, to familiarise himself with prints and drawings in the NGV print room:

I can still remember Dr Hoff’s quizzical look as she questioned me, and sometimes I feel her behind me now as I compare everything I see with everything of that kind I can remember having seen. Many of us at the A.N.G. have sought Dr Hoff’s opinion, drawing on a tradition of teaching that I know has continued for forty years.¹¹⁰

Professor A.D. (Dale) Trendall (1909–1995) – who (since 1939) had been Professor of Greek at Sydney University and (after 1948) also held the new Chair of Archaeology – was enterprisingly secured for a regular visiting-lecturer bracket in first year Fine Arts at Melbourne University. This was negotiated shortly after Joseph Burke made an early collegial visit to Sydney in 1948.¹¹¹ Trendall’s first Melbourne contribution was made in 1949,¹¹² and he was still delivering guest lectures on Classical art, when available for the first-year survey course, well into the 1960s.



L: A.D. (Dale) Trendall, photographed at La Trobe University later in his career;
R: South Italian Greek vase, decorated by the ‘Sisyphus painter’, representing Peleus and Thetis.

As ‘a legendary figure ... and world authority on the painted pottery produced in the Greek colonial cities of southern Italy and Sicily during the Classical period’,¹¹³ Trendall was also instrumental in advising the NGV (from 1957, with Felton Bequest assistance)¹¹⁴ on acquisitions that enabled Melbourne’s Gallery to build a highest-quality collection in a special area of classical antiquities, and illuminate the significance of objects in lectures and publications:

Trendall assisted consecutive directors, as well as the boards of the Gallery and of the Felton Bequest, in the formation of a representative and remarkably fine collection of Greek and South Italian vases.¹¹⁵

One of the most remarkable teachers in Joseph Burke’s Herald department team, Franz Philipp (1914–1970), was also recruited for some guest lecturing in the first teaching year of 1948, though of all the early lecturers he is sadly less known today. Philipp’s contributions at Melbourne University are returned to a little further below; but first the context of his arrival in Victoria, and others who arrived with him, were highly significant.

¹⁰⁹ Zdanowicz, ‘Ursula Hoff’, 2005.

¹¹⁰ James Mollison, ‘A personal tribute’, *Art Journal*, Vol 28, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 19 June 2014; online at <www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/a-personal-tribute/>.

¹¹¹ Palmer, *The Centre of the Periphery*, 2008, p. 155.

¹¹² See ‘Herald Chair of Fine Arts’ file documents, Melbourne University Archives: report by J.T. Burke to Vice-Chancellor Medley on the first year of the Fine Arts Department’s operation, 1948 [Jan. 1949]; documents uncatalogued when viewed and note-recorded, 2004.

¹¹³ See <www.latrobe.edu.au/trendall/about/trendall>.

¹¹⁴ Hoff, ‘Observations on Art History in Melbourne’, 1983, p. 8.

¹¹⁵ Ursula Hoff, ‘Obituary: Prof. A D Trendall’, *Art Bulletin of Victoria*, No. 36, 13 June 2014, viewed online at <www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/obituary-prof-a-d-trendall/>.



Franz Philipp, 1950s (from Jaynie Anderson, 'Art history's history in Melbourne', *Journal of Art Historiography*, No. 5, 2011, 1–18, fig. 1).

Franz Philipp had come to Australia in 1940, from England, on the infamous British-hired military transport ship, the HMT *Dunera*,¹¹⁶ whose overcrowded cargo of some 2,000 (largely Jewish) German and Austrian deportees yielded remarkably gifted people who later made diverse contributions to the intellectual and cultural life of Australia, many gaining distinguished careers in universities.¹¹⁷ The *Dunera* 'refugees' – in fact rounded up as 'enemy aliens' by the British and scandalously mistreated by British army officers while at sea as *deportees* – were sent on arrival variously to internment camps at Hay and Orange in New South Wales (in 1940–41), then relocated to Tatura in north-east Victoria later in 1941. Franz Philipp, who came to Tatura in this manner, returns in some detail below.

4.12 Further remarkable refugees from Nazism: Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack; Leonhard Adam

Artist Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack (formerly a distinguished artist-teacher at the Nazi-closed Bauhaus at Weimar and other disbanded schools in Germany) was also among those confined at Tatura. While interned, Hirschfeld-Mack made various woodcuts of camp-scenes (now in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria) that give small glimpses of this world of outstandingly gifted human beings in detention and segregated from the rest of Australian society in 1941.



Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, 1893–1965, German/Australian, *Internment Camp, Tatura*, 1941, woodcut, 15.0/24.1cm, gift of Mrs Franz Philipp 1971, National Gallery of Victoria.

Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, 1893–1965, German/Australian, *Tatura*, 1941, woodcut, 14.8/19.5cm, gift of Mrs Franz Philipp 1971, National Gallery of Victoria.

Eventually rescued in 1942 by Dr J.R. Darling, Headmaster of Geelong's Church of England Grammar School,¹¹⁸ Hirschfeld-Mack was provided accommodation and resources in return for his expertise as Art Master offered to students for their extra-curricular development – since art was not a formal teaching subject at the school. Curator Daniel Thomas recalls,¹¹⁹ when a young boarder at Geelong, the impact of seeing small works by Paul Klee on the walls of Hirschfeld-Mack's study along with his own strongly-incised woodcuts. Klee's agile linear figures and abstract dissections of space in high-key colour were Thomas's first intimations of modern art from Europe.

¹¹⁶ See Cyril Pearl, *The Dunera Scandal*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1985.

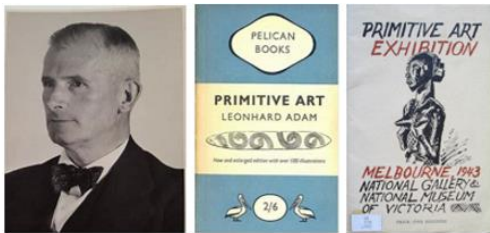
¹¹⁷ See Ken Inglis, 'From Berlin to the Bush', *The Monthly*, Melbourne, August, 2010, available online at <www.themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-ken-inglis-berlin-bush-2638>; Ken Inglis, Seumas Spark, Jay Winter & Carol Bunyan, *Dunera Lives, Volume 2, Profiles*, Monash University Publishing Clayton, Victoria, 2020.

¹¹⁸ Tim Fisher, 'Hirschfeld-Mack, Ludwig (1893–1965)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 14, Melbourne University Press, 1996, available online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hirschfeld-mack-ludwig-10510/text18651>, viewed online 3 June 2018.

¹¹⁹ Daniel Thomas, in conversation with the present author about Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, in 2006.

Joseph Burke also ensured that Hirschfeld-Mack's expertise and knowledge of the Bauhaus and its radically innovative workshops-based learning in Germany were introduced to the University and other networks, and his own works exhibited, with a resulting impact on design, art training and education in Victoria. Hirschfeld-Mack was a distinguished contributor to the 1954 UNESCO-sponsored seminar, *Education Through Art in Australia*, with Herbert Read providing an introduction to the published proceedings. The seminar was held at the University of Melbourne's Women's College in 1954.¹²⁰ Burke reviewed Hirschfeld-Mack's total contribution in the 1980s, after the artist's death, affirming that 'he [had] devoted his life in Australia to carrying out the ideals of the Bauhaus in education'.¹²¹ Dr Darling meanwhile recalled him memorably as 'an almost perfect man ... a beautiful character and an original teacher'.¹²²

Another distinguished figure rescued from Tatura, through local representation on his behalf, was Leonhard Adam (1891-1960). A gifted linguist who had 'studied ethnology, law and sinology at the Centre for Oriental Studies' in Berlin,¹²³ Adam had been a judge and enjoyed a university teaching post in cultural jurisprudence as well as an institutional affiliation with the remarkable collections of Berlin's Ethnological Museum/Staatliches Ethnologisches Museum. After losing all academic and other positions under the Nazi regime, Adam had to escape from Germany.



Leonhard Adam, n.d.; Cover of Leonhard Adam's *Primitive Art*, Pelican Books [1940], 3rd (rev.) ed., 1954 (cover likely drawn by Adam); Cover of Leonhard Adam's catalogue for *Primitive Art Exhibition*, National Gallery & National Museum of Victoria, 1943, cover designed by Leonhard Adam.

Relocated in London in 1938, Adam gained some teaching at the University of London and conducted research in the British Museum to enable publication of a highly successful book, *Primitive Art* (published by Penguin Books UK in 1940, then reprinted and revised in later editions). However, these professional activities did not prevent Adam's subsequent British internment as a German 'alien' and eventual expulsion from London on the infamous *Dunera* voyage, which disembarked its deportees in Sydney. Relocated to Victoria and for a short time interned at the Tatura migrant camp, Adam was released in May 1942, with support from distinguished anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski and other advocates locally. He was assisted to live at Melbourne University's Queens College, where tutorials to students were offered; and

¹²⁰ See list of participants in Bernard Smith (ed.) *Education Through Art in Australia* [papers delivered in UNESCO seminar, Women's College, University of Melbourne, June 1954], later published by Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1958.

¹²¹ Joseph T. Burke, 'The Teaching of Art History and Appreciation in Victoria from 1934 to 1984', [n.d.], p. 2 of 3-pp. typescript document. University of Melbourne Archives, ID:1978.0039.00010. Electronically accessible at <www.gallery.its.unimelb.edu.au/imu/imu.php?request=multimedia&irn=17233>.

¹²² Fisher, ['Hirschfeld-Mack'], *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1996.

¹²³ Author-provided details (printed on back cover) accompanying Leonhard Adam's publication *Primitive Art* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1949 edition). See also Greg Denning, 'Adam, Leonhard (1891-1960)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 13, Melbourne University Press, 1993, available online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/adam-leonhard-9962/text17651>.

was attached (as still officially an ‘enemy alien’) under ‘supervision’ of Professor Max Crawford, heading Melbourne University’s history school. Max Crawford promptly facilitated an introduction to the director of the Museum of Victoria, to enable Adam to work there in his own professional capacities – in the first instance cataloguing some of the stone tools gathered in the ethnological collections. From this post arose an invitation from Daryl Lindsay to prepare an exhibition for the National Gallery of Victoria – resulting in the hugely significant *Primitive Art Exhibition* curated by Adam in 1943, which is studied in detail in Chapter 6.

In view of his outstanding academic background, Leonhard Adam was enlisted by Joseph Burke, in 1948,¹²⁴ to give lectures the next year on Primitive Art to Fine Arts students. The invitation to Adam was innovative on Burke’s part at the time: to bring the disciplinary vantage-points of ethnology (and the study of recently collected Aboriginal objects) *within* a newly established department for training in European art’s history.¹²⁵ Important for the present analysis, however, Burke inclusively welcomed Leonhard Adam as an ‘art historian’ in the field of non-western and indigenous cultures – not specifically as a representative of anthropology or ethnology as separate disciplines within the social sciences. And Burke would have made the invitation on the basis of Adam’s demonstrated study of ‘Aboriginal art’ in the Victorian state collections, noting that Adam’s *Primitive Art Exhibition*, which had occurred in 1943, was much admired by Daryl Lindsay. Adam’s teaching to diverse students at Melbourne university was directly enhanced by the ready availability of his Penguin-published monograph, *Primitive Art*,¹²⁶ which was also used by art teachers, design students and others taking University courses in the 1950s.¹²⁷ Such an attitude of openness to art from non-western cultures by Burke was singularly important in the ‘broad church’ vision of art, architecture and design that the new Melbourne department of art history displayed under his leadership from the late 1940s.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Report of Prof. Joseph Burke on the first year of teaching to 65 students in 1948: ‘Dr Leon[h]ard Adam has generously offered to make his lectures on the art of primitive peoples open to Fine Arts [s]tudents.’ (Professor Joseph Burke (Herald Professor of Fine Arts), in ‘Report for the Vice-Chancellor’, 28 January 1949 [reviewing the first year of operation of a first-year course, ‘Fine Arts A’, in the fledgling Dept. of Fine Arts]; hand-signed typescript, 5 pp. p.3; University of Melbourne Archives, ‘Herald Chair of Fine Arts’ file, viewed 2004.

¹²⁵ Burke’s open attitude to Aboriginal art, and his introducing of Kenneth Clark to Leonhard Adam and Charles Mountford, which among other events helped stimulate Clark’s enthusiastic interest in Aboriginal art on his first visit to Australia in 1948–49, have been documented in an important article by Jaynie Anderson (discussed in Chapter 6).

¹²⁶ Leonhard Adam, *Primitive Art* [1940, repr. 1947], 2nd rev. & enlarged ed., Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, UK, 1949.

¹²⁷ Leon Paroissien, who first studied Fine Arts at Melbourne University while undertaking an art training at RMIT (as also did James Mollison, both of them first becoming art teachers), reported to the present author on the impact of Adam’s lectures: ‘It was exciting to be introduced to such a large range of remarkable material from different cultures of the world, including Aboriginal art, as a counterpoint to the study of western art. This was reinforced also by the ready availability of Adam’s Pelican paperback on *Primitive Art*.’ (Interview comments, 20 May 2020.) Some Victorian art teachers still had a copy of Adam’s text years afterwards.

¹²⁸ This is attested in the later text by Burke when describing his early actions as founding Herald Professor of Fine Arts in preparing an article on the historical and recent development of art history for *Vestes*: ‘An early and congenial task had been to make contact with other art historians already in Australia. These were, in chronological order of their special fields, the late Dr Leonard Adam, Professor Dale Trendall (*primus inter pares*), Mr. Franz Philipp from the University of Vienna, later to become my colleague and the chief architect of the Department, Dr Ursula Hoff and Dr Bernard Smith.’ (Joseph T. Burke, ‘The Teaching of Art History and Appreciation in Victoria, c. 1984.’)

4.13 Franz Philipp as ‘architect’ of the Melbourne department’s teaching of art history

Franz Philipp,¹²⁹ 23 years younger than Leonhard Adam, had experienced internment in Dachau after expulsion from the University of Vienna before he had finished his *Habilitationsschrift*¹³⁰ (or doctoral thesis and presentation). When eventually able to find his way onto a university campus again in Australia, Philipp had to take a harder road in Melbourne than Adam, and revert to studying for a bachelor’s degree. However, this led eventually from Tatura to non-combatant army service (where he met painter Arthur Boyd) and eventually to Max Crawford’s History Department in 1946, in which Philipp could attend only evening lectures (while working during the day), but still starred as best graduate of his final year.¹³¹



Franz Philipp, 1946 (from Jaynie Anderson, ‘Art history’s history in Melbourne’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, No. 5, 2011, 1–18, fig. 2)

Philipp soon gained some tutoring in Renaissance history as his first university employment, before he was invited in 1948 by Joseph Burke to join Fine Arts and become (in Burke’s generous later description) ‘the architect of the Department’, which acknowledged Philipp’s expertise in the structuring of different domains within art’s history.¹³² With his rare knowledge of the literature of western art history, from Greek scholia to Baroque source-documents of the 17th century, Philipp began to help with preparation of reading lists of crucial literature to support course development, and by 1950 he began teaching full-time in the Fine Arts Department.

Franz Philipp could now begin to resume his real vocation and expansive anchorage in art history. He soon manifested his outstanding knowledge of art history’s resources in multiple languages, especially the diverse methodologies of scholarship developed in the German-Austrian university complex in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Philipp concentrated on the establishment of art history through a sequence of courses, while Burke gave his attention to the public mission of ‘the fine arts’ in its broadest outreaches through the Herald Chair. In Burke’s review estimation years later:

Philipp, an inspired teacher who continued to attract brilliant students until his untimely death in 1972 [1970], first secured the assistance of Dr Hoff and in 1955 recommended Bernard Smith, who built up a strong school in Australian art history in Melbourne before being appointed to the first Chair of Art History and Directorship of the Power Institute in Sydney in 1967.¹³³

¹²⁹ For biographical details see Jaynie Anderson, ‘Philipp, Franz Adolf (1914–1970)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, 2000, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/philipp-franz-adolf-11383/text20337>.

¹³⁰ Franz Philipp’s thesis topic concerned north Italian Mannerist portraiture.

¹³¹ Anderson, ‘Philipp, F. A.’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2000.

¹³² Burke, ‘The Teaching of Art History and Appreciation in Victoria’, c.1984.

¹³³ Burke, ‘The Teaching of Art History and Appreciation in Victoria’, c.1984, Burke inaccurately recalled the date of Philipp’s sudden death in London, which occurred in 1970. Terry Smith has also pointed out that Bernard Smith ‘did not teach the history of Australian art at Melbourne University, despite his pivotal role, at that time and since, in writing that history’. Bernard Smith was initially teaching courses in Melbourne that illuminated British and European influences and sources for Australian art (See Terry Smith, ‘Inside out, outside in: changing perspectives in Australian art historiography’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, No. 4, June 2011, 1–13, p. 2; published online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/smith-inside-out-outside-in.pdf>.)

Franz Philipp's training in art history at the University of Vienna ('with some of the greatest Viennese scholars, Julius von Schlosser, Hans Tietze, Martin Eisler, Karl Swoboda and Hans Sedlmayr')¹³⁴ had located him, as noted by Ursula Hoff, in 'the oldest and, together with Hamburg, the most important school of this discipline in central Europe'.¹³⁵ In Vienna, Philipp's extensive knowledge of artworks of a variety of periods, styles and media was gained through first-hand study of the remarkable collections of the imposing, purpose-built Kunsthistorisches Museum, and its sandstone neighbour and twin, the natural history museum (Naturhistorisches Museum), facing each across Maria-Theresien-Platz in a spacious landscaped setting in the heart of the former Habsburg capital.



L: Kunsthistorisches Museum, and (R) Naturhistorisches Museum, flanking Maria-Theresien-Platz, Vienna.

Both museums were imperially commissioned to house the amassed Austro-Hungarian collections and make them available to a general public. These were (and remain) some of the most remarkable constellations of paintings, sculpture, graphic arts, decorative arts, armaments, numismatics and natural history collections in Europe.

Franz Philipp¹³⁶ was particularly influenced by the legendary knowledge-range of his most influential teacher, Julius von Schlosser,¹³⁷ attached both to the museum and Vienna's university – and whom Ernst Gombrich (another former student) described in an obituary tribute in the *Burlington Magazine*, after Von Schlosser's death in 1939, as 'one of the most distinguished personalities of art-history'.¹³⁸ Along with his extensive knowledge of literature, music, history and philosophy, as well as the historical development of visual arts, Julius von Schlosser's most influential legacy proved to be his comprehensive gathering of the documentary records, historical commentaries and variegated literary sources forming the dense literature of art's history from the classical era to the 18th century: *Die Kunstliteratur* (1924).¹³⁹ This work of

¹³⁴ Anderson, 'Art history's history in Melbourne', 1998 [rev. 2011], *Journal of Art Historiography*, 2011, p. 3.

¹³⁵ Hoff, 'Observations on Art History in Melbourne', 1983, p. 6.

¹³⁶ For biographical details see Jaynie Anderson, 'Philipp, Franz Adolf (1914–1970)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, 2000, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/philipp-franz-adolf-11383/text20337>.

¹³⁷ See Mathew Rampley, *Julius von Schlosser: Aesthetics, Art History and the Book*, Report on the 150th Anniversary Conference on Julius von Schlosser, 6th and 7th October 2016, *Journal of Art Historiography*, Number 15 December 2016, 6 pp. published online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/rampley-conference-report.pdf>.

¹³⁸ E. H. Gombrich, 'Obituary of Julius von Schlosser', *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 74, 1939, pp. 98–9.

¹³⁹ See Karl Johns' progressive translation and commentary on various parts of the corpus of Julius von Schlosser's writings, including portions of *Die Kunstliteratur* – notably 'Julius von Schlosser on Vasari: A translation from *Die Kunstliteratur* (1924)', in the 2nd volume of the online *Journal of Art Historiography*, published in 2011, accessible at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/media_152492_en>. Additionally, in the cause of bringing

formidable synthesis was effectively a framing essay and critical bibliography of the cumulated historical sources on art's development since Greek and Roman antiquity. It also provided a framing text for Von Schlosser's methodology of teaching, where works of art were brought to an intense actualisation as cultural works to be apprehended intellectually and sensorially, while also surrounded by the most scrutinising 'scientific' examination of all literature and other documentary sources that could contextualise the pathways leading to their creation.

The range of Franz Philipp's lectures in Melbourne (from mediaeval Romanesque art and architecture to Mannerism and the Baroque, but especially focused on the art and architecture of the Italian Renaissance) was followed for honours students by his memorable, and preferred, seminar-style of teaching. The seminar format, ideally conducted in close contact with art objects and textual sources in a museum environment, was the mode of learning Philipp had experienced in Vienna with Julius Von Schlosser, his successor Hans Sedlmayr¹⁴⁰ and other specialists conducting seminars in public galleries and private study-rooms at the Kunsthistorisches Museum. The full resources of Philipp's training – and many of the research-methods cultivated by Schlosser and his colleagues to achieve the scientific study of intellectual processes underlying art's history – were brought to very different circumstances of inquiry in Melbourne in the 1950s and 1960s. Advanced students in Melbourne were directed to study original works in local collections or *in situ*, including Australian art and architecture, to ensure their comparable training in art historical methods using primary sources turned towards original works and sources available locally. Jaynie Anderson, in her published lecture on Philipp and the context of the training he absorbed in the early-20th century, has also illuminated these methods:

Scholars of the Viennese school were praised for having created a study of the 'science of the mind' (Geisteswissenschaften), which went beyond the historiography of Jacob Burckhardt or the unifying comparisons of styles devised by Heinrich Wölfflin. So an Australian version of the Austrian 'sciences of the mind' was Philipp's agenda for the new department.¹⁴¹

Many comments that follow in the last part of this section on Franz Philipp are guided by remembered personal experience of his lectures and seminars in the later 1960s. The challenge of understanding artworks when guided by Philipp was formidable. His 'incisive reasoning', Ursula Hoff later recalled in a tributary essay, 'allowed for no loose ends or vague "appreciationism"'.¹⁴² In 1983 Hoff provided her own contrast of the difference between the English and German approaches to art history:

In England familiar figures are the Fine Arts expert, such as the connoisseur, the museum curator and the private scholar, usually with a degree in classics, who specialise in provenance, authorship and date of works of art and in evaluating them aesthetically in elegant strains of Ciceronian English. The German art historian ... is an academic or museum curator, with a degree in art history, who sets the work of art in its historical and cultural context, interprets its subject matter and regards it as a vehicle for the communication of ideas.¹⁴³

Schlosser's major writings into English, see the recent publication of Julius von Schlosser, *Art and Curiosity Cabinets of the Late Renaissance: A Contribution to the History of Collecting*, ed. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, transl. Jonathan Blower, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, 2021.

¹⁴⁰ Tragically (when he succeeded Julius von Schlosser on the latter's retirement) Sedlmayr's support for National Socialism and its proscription of Jewish scholars and students was finally the direct cause of Philipp's expulsion from the University of Vienna before completion of his doctoral work. Philipp years later could still acknowledge Sedlmayr's intellect while distancing himself from his politics.

¹⁴¹ Anderson, 'Art history's history in Melbourne', 1998 [rev. 2011]; *Journal of Art Historiography*, 2011, 7–8.

¹⁴² Ursula Hoff, 'In memory of Franz Philipp', *Art Bulletin of Victoria*, Issue xii, 1970–1971, p. 30.

¹⁴³ Hoff, 'Observations on Art History in Melbourne', 1983, p. 5.

Franz Philipp manifestly believed in the centrality of visual art to understanding the *cultural imaginary* of any collective human achievement in history, stating in an early-published article – typically circumscribed as ‘Notes on the Study of History of Art’ – that ‘the fine arts of a period are perhaps more significant of the collective content of a civilisation, of its communal temper and atmosphere than even its literature or its music’.¹⁴⁴ This was in no way a diminution of literature or music, as Philipp cherished both in his personal life along with visual art.¹⁴⁵ The judgment arises through a recognition of the capacity of visual art (and he would have included architecture and sculpture) to project broadly experienced ideas and symbolic expression of the whole of a society, including within non-literate communities – as for example in the mediaeval period of Christian religious beliefs conveyed through sculptural decoration, mosaics, stained glass, paintings and votive design in church architecture. His *affective concepts* of this process were significant in embracing the ‘communal temper’, ‘atmosphere’ and ‘collective content of a civilisation’ (with the Swiss Jacob Burckhardt a respected influence for his whole-of-culture exposition of the Italian Renaissance). Philipp also grasped the impact of the visual arts on human memory: through the power of mnemonic structures of thought condensed in visual forms (via the links between imagery, literature and narrative); and for the social character of a people’s shared memory and expression, as transmitted across time and space historically.

Franz Philipp’s teaching of art history’s methodologies brought attention to the multiple vantage-points (and equally important, ideological investment and prejudices) of art historians and critics. Among texts set for seminars,¹⁴⁶ the formalism that shaped the writing of some field-leaders (Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin, Wilhelm Worringer) was strategically contrasted with scientific techniques guiding connoisseurship and attribution (Giovanni Morelli, Bernard Berenson); the study of iconology (Aby Warburg, Émile Mâle, Jean Seznec, Erwin Panofsky); the psychoanalytic interpretation of art (Sigmund Freud, Ernst Kris); the philosophy of art and aesthetics (Plato, Immanuel Kant, Benedetto Croce); the philosophy of language (Wittgenstein’s exploration of philosophy shaped by the limits of language);¹⁴⁷ philosophy of art, aesthetics and mental processes (Susanne Langer); art’s connections with counter-rational energies and non-Western sources (Edgar Wind, Herbert Read); and the social history of art, examined in the work of the two leading Hungarian Marxist art historians in this field (Frederick Antal, Arnold Hauser).

In ensuring that his students encountered a range of very different (and theoretically divergent) approaches to the history of art, Franz Philipp structured an impressive convening of different theoretical approaches to art’s history. The texts he set for 4th year/honours-student seminars also accessed crucial tools to highlight class structures and ideology determining patronage, subject-matter and the social production of meaning, and thereby challenging the

¹⁴⁴ Franz Philipp, ‘Some Notes on the Study of History of Art’, *Present opinion*, No. 3, 1948, 9–14.

¹⁴⁵ Among the few possessions Philipp managed to bring from Vienna via London to Australia, in a suitcase containing his unfinished doctoral thesis, he managed to save his copy of the collected works of the tragic German poet and philosopher, Friedrich Hölderlin.

¹⁴⁶ No attempt has been made to list key texts of the figures traversed, since major works of all are well known; moreover, any listing would demand the supplement of citing much recent literature on these authors – especially with the upsurge of art historical literature currently through new studies of the ‘Vienna school’.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Ludwig Wittgenstein’, entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available online at <www.plato.stanford.edu/entries/wittgenstein/> (viewed May 2018)

distillations of an ahistorical formalist idealism.¹⁴⁸ Ernst Gombrich was a recurring resource for the range of the latter's investigations across many of these fields.

Such a sketch of the disciplinary analyses guided by Philipp obviously indicates the terrain and field-limits of the 1960s. Yet the habits of inquiry he instilled implicitly held open doors to further disciplinary analysis that would later contest any settling of art history's methodologies for apprehending a visual image. Philipp laid the groundwork to admit later challenges from, variously: feminist art historiography and its deconstruction of the masculine; psychoanalytic exploration of the subject's interiority, and progressive self-definition within a fraught struggle for autonomy; post-structuralism's scrutiny of language and power; or post-colonial studies of imperialist/subaltern arrangements of a coercively self-privileging authority, along with centre/periphery debates and their reverberance within increasingly globalised and decentering cultural encounters. Philipp did not prefigure these intellectual turnings. Yet his methodologies anticipated that further challenges and change in art history's disciplinary orientation were inevitable, should be addressed, and would shift analysis of artworks and their wider relationships within more varied and differently socialised cultural settings.

The design of coursework in Fine Arts guided by Franz Philipp was by the 1960s such as to equip students to navigate their own futures afterwards. Patrick McCaughey, in a valedictory tribute in *Art and Australia* in 1970, highlighted the distinction of Philipp's intellectual legacy:

[Philipp's] course in Renaissance Art which he taught for almost two decades in the Fine Arts Department of the University of Melbourne was as rigorous and profound a grounding in the history of art as could be obtained anywhere.¹⁴⁹

Such a judgment can be extended to Philipp's entire fourth-year seminar course on methodologies of art history, which Terry Smith appreciated similarly in retrospective comparison when relocated to New York on a Harkness Fellowship in the 1970s, finding that only the graduate school of the New York Institute of Fine Arts (and in the course led by Myer Schapiro) offered a comparable methodological investigation.¹⁵⁰ Yet Terry Smith's description slips way off course in referring to 'Philipp's course on aesthetics'.¹⁵¹ Franz Philipp would never have sanctioned such a description. His background in the 'Vienna school' of art history required a cognate discipline (a *Kunstwissenschaft* in contrast to *Ästhetik*¹⁵²), which moved systematically beyond the amateurism often suggested by aesthetics in its wayward connections with

¹⁴⁸ See for an updated analysis of these debates in the 21st century, and especially of the subtle challenges that a social materialist/Marxist history of art engaged in the art historical work of Tim J Clark: Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1989, Ch. 6, 'The End(s) of Art History', 156–179.

¹⁴⁹ Patrick McCaughey, 'Franz Philipp: A Tribute', *Art and Australia*, Vol. 8(3), 1970, p. 218.

¹⁵⁰ Smith, 'Inside out, outside in', 2011, p. 2.

¹⁵¹ Smith, 'Inside out, outside in', 2011, p. 2.

¹⁵² See Richard Woodfield, 'Kunstwissenschaft versus Ästhetik: The Historians' Revolt Against Aesthetics', Ch. 1 in Francis Halsall, Julia Jansen, and Tony O'Connor (eds), *Rediscovering Aesthetics: Transdisciplinary Voices from History, Philosophy, and Art Practice*, Stanford University Press, Stanford CAL, 2009, 19–33, pp. 20–21. See also Francis Halsall's emphasis on the concern of the leaders of the Vienna School '... to distance themselves from a tradition of connoisseurship, from art criticism and the passing of aesthetic judgements on works of art; that is, art history had to have some claim to validity in its judgements – it wasn't merely art criticism, or the passing of aesthetic judgements on works of art.' (Francis Halsall, 'Making and matching: Aesthetic judgement and art historical knowledge', *Journal of Art Historiography*, No. 7, December 2012, 1–17, p. 3.)

connoisseurship,¹⁵³ personal taste and dilettantism.¹⁵⁴ Philipp's fourth-year seminar course in Melbourne was titled Theory and Method of Art History and Art Criticism.¹⁵⁵

Although Franz Philipp had little time from his heavy teaching-load to publish extensively, it is notable how he turned his mind towards Australian subjects, including Australian art, literature and architecture as the cultural host-context of his intellectual practice. While he admired Robin Boyd (1919–1971) as a distinguished architect and interpreter of Australia's achievements, he closely read Boyd's (1952) *Australia's Home: Its Origins, Builders and Occupiers*, when published, and in the same year wrote a finely-crafted review article for *Meanjin*.¹⁵⁶ Phillip's review astutely critiqued (as architectural historian Philip Goad recently concurred) Robin Boyd's projection of uniformity in Australian domestic architecture. Franz Philipp questioned the 'fatal impression that the absolute rule of the small house, which according to many writers implies the doom of any true ideal of urbanism, is inevitable'.¹⁵⁷

While praising Boyd's monograph overall, Philipp challenged its creation of a 'national mystique (the small house as predetermined form of Australian family life)'; he then argued that Boyd had ignored other models of adjoined dwellings of the 19th century, and even of fine apartment complexes designed by local architects in the 20th century, which offered new typologies of urban design in Australia's main cities. Philipp gave examples of ignored sources for Australian domestic buildings, 'the remnants of colonial terraces in Sydney', late-18th century and early-19th century models of tenement houses in England and Ireland – even Mediterranean models for adjoined dwellings – that delineated a greater range in Australian buildings than autonomous dwellings on housing estates, which were Boyd's focus. At a deeper level, in this one article Philipp articulated a close reading of Australian architecture as derived from multiple sources, while providing a thoughtful critique of a negative tendency to reinforce a 'settler society' nationalist narrative of expansive land-occupation as the principal dynamic driving Australian domestic architectural style.

¹⁵³ 'In connoisseurship', Kenneth Clark related in his autobiography covering his Oxford education and later development under Bernard Berenson in Italy, 'memory of facts and documents is replaced by visual memory ... of spatial and compositional elements and colour; all of which must be related to what was happening in the rest of European art at the time (hence the necessity of dating) and even to mere fashion. It is an exacting discipline.' Kenneth Clark, *Another Part of The Wood: A Self-Portrait* [1974], Ballantine Books, New York, 1976, p. 153.

¹⁵⁴ See Robert Gaston's noting of Ernst Gombrich's remark that the Vienna department was founded on 'a manifesto against amateurism' as represented by 'belle-lettristic art writing', in Robert W Gaston, "'My greatest debt": Bernard Smith, the Warburg Institute, and the evolution of *European Vision and the South Pacific*', in Jaynie Anderson, Christopher R. Marshall, Andrew Yip (Eds), *The Legacies of Bernard Smith: Essays on Australian Art, History and Cultural Politics*, Power Publications, in association with the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2016, 39–54, p. 49.

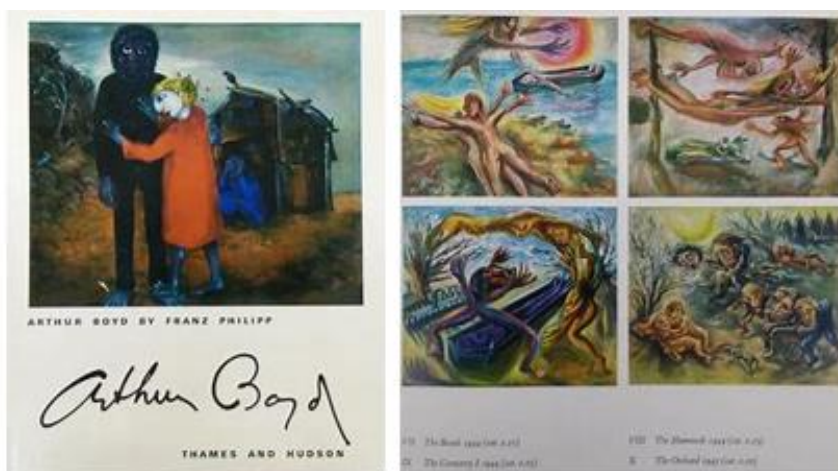
¹⁵⁵ This title has been confirmed by email in 2018 by Ruth Zubans, a long-serving Senior Tutor in the Department in the 1960s, who still has documentary records of courses for the period. It is likely that Franz Philipp was also stimulated locally in conceiving his course, since a Theory and Method course, if somewhat loosely taught as a final-year Honours seminar, was a feature of Professor Max Crawford's leadership of Melbourne University's History school in the 1950s (when Franz Philipp took the History major, recently enrolled locally for academic training to replace his unfinished PhD in Vienna). Philipp later tutored briefly on Renaissance history in Crawford's department, before being recruited to Joseph Burke's new department of Fine Arts. (On Crawford's Theory and Method seminar, see Tom Griffiths, *The Art of Time Travel: Historians and their Craft*, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2016, pp. 200–201.)

¹⁵⁶ Franz Philipp, 'Book Review, [Robin Boyd] *Australia's Home: Its Origins, Builders and Occupiers*', in *Meanjin*, No. 11, Melbourne, Autumn 1952, 36–41, 178; reprinted in Stephen, McNamara and Goad, *Modernism & Australia: Documents*, 2006, 849–854, p. 850.

¹⁵⁷ Philipp, 'Book Review, [Robin Boyd] *Australia's Home*, [1952], in Stephen et al, *Modernism & Australia: Documents*, 849–854, p. 852.

Franz Philipp meanwhile pursued an attentive openness to art's modern and contemporary developments, in Australia and internationally, which in many ways marked his judgments as culturally broader than those of his colleague Bernard Smith, who occupied a more prominent critical position in these fields. In marking Philipp's untimely death as an 'irreplaceable' loss to art history in Australia, Patrick McCaughey recalled Philipp's openness to contemporary art as a deeply regarded obligation of his commitment to art's history in the present tense, in particular noting Philipp's 'enthusiasm for Jackson Pollock after his first visit to America in 1963'.¹⁵⁸ By contrast Bernard Smith's first substantial encounter with Pollock (in the Biennale of Venice in 1949) had produced scepticism about the American painter's 'dribbling technique' (and its 'cul-de-sac' influence on British artist Alan Davie). Years later (in 2002) Smith judged the 'decorative splendour of Pollock's work' as 'not ... a new mode of painting' but heralding 'the last phase of the style I have called the Formalesque'.¹⁵⁹ Bernard Smith was unable to perceive how radically Pollock had abandoned the constraints of 'style', creating a new kind of metaphysical painting configured by performative actions in the contingent world.

The most enduring example of Franz Philipp's own scholarship and legacy to his adoptive country in fact lies in the field of Australian art.



Franz Philipp, *Arthur Boyd*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1967.

Philipp's handsomely illustrated monograph, *Arthur Boyd*,¹⁶⁰ was a benchmarking study of a living Australian artist when published by Thames & Hudson in 1967, and remained so for decades afterwards. It is still an exemplary exposition of the sources, iconographical range and formal development of a single Australian artist (a living contemporary when the book was compiled, with whom Philipp enjoyed a long and close friendship, formed when both were in non-combatant military service in the army in Victoria of the 1940s). Franz Philipp was about to visit Arthur Boyd while on sabbatical leave in London, in May 1970, when a heart attack brought the life of a remarkable scholar and teacher to a sudden close.

¹⁵⁸ Patrick McCaughey, 'Franz Philipp: A Tribute', *Art and Australia*, Vol. 8(3), 1970, p. 218.

¹⁵⁹ Smith, *Pavane for Another Time*, 2002, pp. 443-4.

¹⁶⁰ Franz Philipp, *Arthur Boyd*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1967.

4.14 Bernard Smith's arrival from ANU, and enlargement of the field of studies



Bernard Smith, n.d.

It was Franz Philipp who had advocated to Joseph Burke, in 1955, the prospective inclusion of Bernard Smith as the third significant lecturer in the teaching department in Melbourne. This was before Smith had completed his post-Courtauld studies and developed these into his eventual doctoral thesis at ANU.¹⁶¹ Philipp advocated bringing Smith to join the Melbourne Department, both for his having studied classical Greek art and archaeology for a year under Dale Trendall at Sydney University, and for his specialised knowledge of Australian art and its 18th- and 19th-century English and European sources. This was a proposal that Joseph Burke affirmed and helped to realise by inviting Smith to come south from Canberra, over two years, to give a fortnight's series of guest lectures within departmental programs (while also lecturing at the National Gallery of Victoria).¹⁶² Bernard Smith eventually joined the Melbourne Department of Fine Arts in 1956, after completion of his doctorate, and research for what would become his outstanding monograph, *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1769–1850*.¹⁶³ This publication, in 1960, yielded one of the most influential books in Australian (and European) history, and secured Smith's fountainhead status thereafter in charting the history of Australian art.

Although Bernard Smith had an influential academic career and art critical impact for a decade at Melbourne University, before he was appointed foundation Chair and Director of the Power Institute of Fine Arts at the University of Sydney in 1967, some difficult aspects of his shaping of Australian art's history in respect of this thesis inquiry (specifically, his exclusion of Aboriginal art) are analysed in Chapters 6 and 7.

4.15 Review of the Herald Chair's impact nationally over two generations

Overviewing the Herald Chair's impact in Melbourne from the late 1940s, Joseph Burke's public role stands out as expansively (it could be said exhaustively) realising the original vision for the first university Chair to lead the establishment of art history and an intellectual training impact upon art museums in Australia.¹⁶⁴ Beyond the sphere of the campus in Melbourne, Burke's many years of public life created a multi-sided legacy of advocacy for the visual arts, for art education,

¹⁶¹ Bernard Smith noted, in his own later autobiographical work, that Franz Philipp had responded positively after receiving (late in 1950) an offprint of Smith's first article on his 'European Vision' thesis, published in England at the conclusion of his period abroad on a British Council scholarship. Smith believed this later 'landed [him his] first academic post', when Franz Philipp had supported his appointment to Melbourne University in 1956 'as the third full-time member of the Department of Fine Arts'. Smith's article was published in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (XIII, 1950). (See Smith, *Pavane for Another Time*, 2002, p. 370.)

¹⁶² Sheridan Palmer, *Hegel's Owl: The Life of Bernard Smith*, Power Publications, Sydney, 2016, 159–160.

¹⁶³ Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768–1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1960.

¹⁶⁴ See Margaret Plant, 'Professor Joseph Burke 1913–1992', *Art Monthly Australia*, No. 50, June 1992, 22; Laurence Course, *Professor Emeritus Sir Joseph Burke, KBE: Foundation Professor of the Herald Chair of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne, 1947–1979*, Victorian Artists' Society, Melbourne, 1992; Jaynie Anderson, 'A dose of scholarship: Joe Burke and the Department of Art History in Melbourne', in Benjamin Thomas, *Joe Burke's Legacy: The history of art history in Melbourne*, exhibition catalogue, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 2008, n.p.

art teacher education, and for design and architecture, which survived in indirect ways long after his retirement.¹⁶⁵

Burke had been assisted by the degree to which his own abilities and temperament were well matched to the cultural disposition and close interrelations of many institutions in his host city. The very different (more dispersed) configuration of institutions in Sydney posed very different challenges: with the state gallery set in parklands on the Domain and disconnected from the city; natural history segregated from fine arts; and the applied arts, crafts and design collections disposed in a different museum constellation allied to applied science and technology (in the then-poorly housed Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in another part of the city, in Ultimo). Meanwhile there was no Gallery School in Sydney, and in a less affluent city technical education had produced fewer schools for art training in New South Wales. It is likely that Sydney's more constrained institutional histories would not have been so hospitable to Joseph Burke's unique background and articulate advocacy for the arts and design in the public sphere. There was a small irony, however, that his last public lecture on behalf of the visual arts and their social impact was actually delivered in Sydney rather than his home city of Melbourne

In 1982, by then Emeritus Professor in retirement, Joseph Burke delivered the sixth Dobell memorial lecture, at a dinner in honour of William Dobell in Sydney.¹⁶⁶ During this lecture, reviewing the work of distinguished artists he met when he first arrived in Australia (Dobell, Drysdale, Nolan and others – his contemporaries), Burke reaffirmed the vision that he had formed and articulated when he first took up the Herald Chair. He reviewed the overarching concerns of his public mission in Australia in a manner that surprised some of his Sydney listeners (as recalled by the present author):

I believe Industrial Design to be the most important artistic cause of our time because it determines nine-tenths of our man-made environment. For this reason, I have made this cause the centre of my life's work both in the Victoria and Albert Museum in England and in the Chair of Fine Arts at Melbourne. My first publication in this country was *A Hundred Years of Industrial Design* (1946).¹⁶⁷

After quoting from this early publication, Burke then stated his admiration for a 'younger generation' of artists in Australia, citing specifically (and adventurously) John Nixon, for the latter's steadfastly activist vision of the unity of art and life. Moreover, he approved Nixon's embrace (in a 1980 manifesto) of a quotation from the great Russian Constructivist artist, Alexander Rodchenko, issued at a State Exhibition held in Moscow in the Soviet period. Joseph Burke finally made a broad cultural statement that perhaps summarised his view of the responsibilities he had undertaken as first Herald Professor of Fine Arts in Melbourne. Having signalled that the Dobell lecture in Sydney was his last public address, Burke restated, almost valedictorily, his vision of art in society:

Art is not a visit to an Art Gallery, a picture on a wall, a sculpture in a garden, a visit to a dealer gallery or to a one-man or group exhibition. It is not even a visit to a Cathedral if our only purpose is to wrap ourselves

¹⁶⁵ An unusual interconnection of curricula at first-year level in Melbourne's sole university exposed (in the author's experience of the late 1960s) three different types of future professionals to a commonly experienced broad survey course of art history (from Lascaux to the Bauhaus): (a) future Art Teachers (otherwise enrolled in Melbourne's technical colleges for Art Diploma courses); (b) future Architects (enrolled in Melbourne University's Faculty of Architecture), and (c) Arts Faculty undergraduates wishing to undertake a single subject or even 'major' in art history as part of a general humanist education. This *socialisation* of visual arts as forging more broadly shared cultural experience was unique to Victoria and the Melbourne Fine Arts Department's 'Joe Burke' impacts in the early decades.

¹⁶⁶ Joseph T. Burke, *The Post-War Years in Australian Art: Some Lessons for the Future, The Sixth Sir William Dobell Memorial Lecture*, The William Dobell Art Foundation, Sydney, 1982 (26 pp.)

¹⁶⁷ Burke, *The Post-War Years in Australian Art* [Sixth William Dobell Lecture], 1982, p. 23.

up in a vanished glory, and not to apply the lesson of the Cathedral to our own times. Art is either a whole environment, or it is nothing.¹⁶⁸

The Melbourne Herald Chair and Department of Fine Arts, as the sole centre for the discipline of art history for a generation, was distinctive in having drawn on an unusually-sourced series of distinguished lecturers and scholars, through accidents of history as much as purposive recruitment. This created a broad footprint for the further development of the discipline by others, elsewhere, pursuing very different emphases in diverse settings. However, a measure of the long-range influence of the Keith Murdoch initiative of the Herald Chair, and the successful manner in which its mission was realised under Joseph Burke's founding leadership, is that seven subsequent holders of chairs in art history in Australia were Melbourne undergraduate students of the first two generations, joined by two further chairs of the next generation.

The first generation of scholarly training in Melbourne later produced professors Patrick McCaughey (Professor of Visual Arts at Monash University, 1975–81);¹⁶⁹ Virginia Spate (Power Professor and Institute Director, University of Sydney, 1978–1993); Margaret Plant (Professor of Visual Arts, Monash, 1982–1986¹⁷⁰ and later Professor Emeritus after retirement); Margaret Manion (Herald Chair, 1979–1996, succeeding Joseph Burke);¹⁷¹ and Terry Smith (Power Professor and Director of the Power Institute, 1994–2001, succeeding Virginia Spate). Meanwhile Jaynie Anderson, after a distinguished career in the UK, especially at Cambridge, was the third appointee to the Herald Chair of Fine Arts in Melbourne, 1997–2014,¹⁷² vacated years earlier by her first teacher, Joseph Burke. Alexander (Sasha) Grishin, who established the Fine Art program at the Australian National University, Canberra, in 1977, had also been nurtured at Melbourne University through the Herald Chair and the state Gallery connections, and later became second Dobell Professor of Art History at ANU (2006–2014).¹⁷³

When turning to the next generation trained in the Herald Department, two further names can be added to the list of chair-holders spawned through Melbourne University's by then long-established resources for art history and cross-institutional links to an incomparable art collection nationally. Roger Benjamin was appointed (in 2003) as Professor-Director to the Power Institute in Sydney,¹⁷⁴ the fourth in line succeeding Bernard Smith, Virginia Spate and Terry Smith (but since then having vacated the Chair for a more independent scholarly role while still serving the Power Institute). And most recently, Ian McLean, mentored for his doctorate by Bernard Smith in the latter's Melbourne retirement years, was appointed founding Professor to the newly-created Hugh Ramsay Chair of Australian Art History at Melbourne University (from 2017).

¹⁶⁸ Burke, *The Post-War Years in Australian Art* [Sixth William Dobell Lecture], 1982, p. 23.

¹⁶⁹ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 3rd edition, 1994, 'McCaughy, Patrick', p. 444.

¹⁷⁰ Margaret Plant, biographical details at www.monash.edu/mada/news/articles/2018/monash-academic-margaret-plant-celebrated-with-new-namesake-lecture-series, (viewed 12 February 2019).

¹⁷¹ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 3rd edition, 1994, 'Manion, Margaret', p. 465.

¹⁷² Jaynie Anderson, biographical details, Melbourne University website, at www.findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au/display/person14903 (viewed 17 February 2019).

¹⁷³ Sasha Grishin biographical details, ANU website, at www.researchers.anu.edu.au/researchers/grishin-s (viewed 16 January 2019).

¹⁷⁴ Roger Benjamin biographical details, University of Sydney website, at www.sydney.edu.au/arts/art_history/staff/profiles/roger.benjamin.php (viewed 14 February 2019).

It is not likely to occur again that seven occupants of Chairs in art history – now variously named in new disciplinary configurations – will be spawned from a single university department in Australia across three generations.

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End of Chapter 4

Ch. 5: A profession stirs: Australian art museums 1948–1960s

- 5.1 Australia's state galleries in the earlier 20th century
- 5.2 The National Gallery of Victoria in the 1940s
- 5.3 The National Art Gallery of New South Wales in the 1940s
- 5.4 Training for art museums in the 1940s
- 5.5 The state galleries shaping change after mid-century ('the AGDC years')
- 5.6 Collaboration to improve expertise, practices and exhibitions (1950s–1960s)
- 5.7 Exhibitions, professional practices, training
- 5.8 The Australian state gallery directors organise (AGDC meetings 1948 ff.)
- 5.9 *French Painting Today* (1953) – a new benchmark in exhibition organisation
- 5.10 Role of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board/CAAB (1912–1972)
- 5.11 Two Australian exhibitions in London: Whitechapel Gallery (1961); Tate Gallery (1963)

Chapter 5

A profession stirs: Australian art museums 1948–1960s



Daryl Lindsay, Joseph Buckle, Joan Lindsay, Eric Wertheim, Melbourne, 1958 (Christopher Heathcote, *A Quiet Revolution: The Rise of Australian Art 1940–1960*, Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1995).

The present chapter examines the development of Australian art museums from the 1940s to the early 1960s. The analysis again engages the thesis framework of exploring the important role of artworks (emerging from visual culture in all its forms) in providing images that shape significant contents within the *social imaginary*,¹ or 'ways of representing a collective life' of a nation. Images are again considered in their capacity to mobilise imaginative ideas; to visualise varying conditions of nature, society, and inter-personal relations; and in their collective power to shape a repertoire of concepts for a nation's *ways of thinking and being* in the wider world. While focusing primarily on art museums and their projections of a *cultural imaginary*, the investigation again picks up threads of the power of images and the work of artists to express broader social constructs that may also convey ideological contents, and sometimes direct political agency.

The earlier study (in Chapter 3) of the 1920s and 1930s highlighted how major political leaders of the era, R.G. Menzies and H.V. Evatt, took up frontline opposing positions in public debate of the desired character and conditions for Australian art's development. The present chapter seeks to illuminate how those pivotal debates of the late 1930s, which had gained attention in broadest press coverage as well as more confined forums and art journals, created persistent agency and presence in the worlds of Australian art and cultural affairs long afterwards. Although the public impact of the 1930s debates might have been adjourned by engulfing events of World War II, they were not at all extinguished. On the contrary, an analysis in this chapter of continuing political contests over Australia's desired cultural

¹ See Chapter 1 for an introduction and definition of the concept of the 'social imaginary', with reference to John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984.

development, highlighted through events of museums' institutional life in the 1950s and early 1960s, yields striking evidence of the political contests that continued to play out within the larger cultural framework of an evolving nation. And once again, the issue of inclusion or exclusion of Aboriginal art, and the deeper reckoning of Australia's history, surface at critical points of image-contrasts between bleached nation and black Country.

5.1 Australia's state galleries in the earlier 20th century

As earlier chapters have analysed, the co-ordinating social background for museum developments was through 'settler society' self-definition and an organised structure of white governance across all institutions, with historical self-explanation shaped by continuing filial relationships with Britain. For all of Australia's independent impulses and desired self-definition achieved in visual art throughout the 19th and early-20th centuries, the long overhang of the bonds of Empire still impacted strongly in cultural affairs until the 1970s, as this chapter discloses.²

All state galleries in the early-20th century were still shaped by their lineage as having been formed within separate colonies. Despite Federation in 1901, some state galleries still carried the term 'national' etched in stone on their facades through to the 1950s and beyond: 'The AGNSW was the first to shed its 'national' tag in 1958, followed by QAG in 1959 and AGSA in 1967.'³ When the NGV reopened in its new St. Kilda Road building in 1968, its retention of 'national' in its title declared its special-status claim as holding the most outstanding old master collections in the country. The NGV also had remarkable collections of decorative arts and design, which historically had been combined in the one institution – as similarly in Adelaide; whereas Sydney, by contrast, had allocated decorative and industrial arts to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, where they would never be adequately displayed until the building of the purpose-designed Powerhouse museum (opened in 1988).

² The archival records of Conference of Interstate Directors/CID – later Australian Gallery Directors Conference (AGDC, 1948–1980) – are a significant set of resources for this chapter, as cited in footnotes where they are utilised specifically. These records are archived at the National Gallery of Australia (as mentioned in thesis Ch. 1, and cited in the Bibliography). The present author first researched these archives comprehensively in the late 1970s, when working as the Senior Exhibitions Co-ordinator (Overseas Exhibitions) for the highly-active Australian Gallery Directors Council Ltd. This resulted in a compressed history of the parent organisation, published as: Bernice Murphy, 'Historical Review of the AGDC: Australian Gallery Directors Council – thirty-one years of co-operative activity, 1948–1979', in *Australian Gallery Directors Council: Report and Review, 1979*, Australian Gallery Directors Council, Sydney, 1980, pp. 10–14. The AGDC archival records were consulted again during research for many aspects of the present thesis. The AGDC reached the height of its activities, with an outstandingly active agenda (some 120 exhibitions in-process at its peak of activity) under the impetus of the Whitlam Government's proactive arts support from 1972–1975. The AGDC had acquired its own director, staff and financial support and grown substantially through financial support from the Australia Council. However, the AGDC experienced a financial crisis in 1980, and ceased operations unexpectedly as a result of that critical impasse (which might easily have been resolved by a variety of rescue measures). The outcome was that operations were suddenly terminated and the organisation wound up in 1980. Its administrative records and specific exhibition files were later rescued for archival storage by the National Gallery of Australia.

³ Joanna Mendelsohn, Catherine De Lorenzo, Alison Inglis and Catherine Speck, *Australian Exhibitions: Opening our Eyes*, Thames & Hudson, Melbourne, 2018; Introduction, p. 29. The present author was an 'industry partner' for the ARC grants-supported academic project over a number of years, which resulted in this important study of the transformative, agency role of *exhibitions* in the state and national art galleries/museums, and their frontline impact on the formation of a sense of history nationally through the experience of Australian visual art in temporary and travelling exhibitions presented over a long period.

To sharpen analytical tools for examining the development of our art institutions in the later-20th century, it is crucial to recover a contextual sense of the museums sector's resources in Australia in a different era, to help identify benchmarking ventures when they occurred, amidst generally limited or dismal provision by state governments.⁴

5.2. The National Gallery of Victoria in the 1940s

Despite Victoria's abundant early wealth, its colonial Gallery had made its way in constrained physical conditions, along with the two Museums' collections, as a lowlier sibling at the rear of the imposing Public Library with its grand circular Reading Room modelled on the Library of the British Museum. The Art and Design School studios, attached to the Gallery since 1867,⁵ were reached via a side entrance. National Gallery of Victoria Chairman, Keith Murdoch,⁶ who in the 1940s 'had become the leading figure in a new art establishment'⁷ in Melbourne, later reflected on the beleaguered circumstances of the NGV during his first, pre-War involvement with the Gallery as a trustee:

[T]he Government grant for the purchase of works of art was nil. The staff was meagre and under-paid; the galleries ill-lit; drawings and prints ... were crowded in an attic; the Director was inaccessible; the building shoddy and unkempt.⁸

Daryl Lindsay (1889-1976), Director of the NGV from 1941⁹ to December 1955,¹⁰ having been engineered into the job by Murdoch¹¹ to replace then-incumbent (the 'inaccessible' director) J.S. MacDonald,¹² was charged with bringing about change. Lindsay later reflected on the low status of the NGV directorship in his first years, which remained 'two rungs below

⁴ The model of a fully-researched institutional history for Australian art museums remains the monograph researched to celebrate the NGV's relocation to its new Melbourne Southbank building in 1968: Leonard B Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861-1968: Search for a Collection*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1970. The National Gallery of Australia (formerly ANG) produced exemplary publications on its shorter history after it opened in 1982: *Building the Collection*, 2003; and *European and American Paintings and Sculptures 1870-1970 in The Australian National Gallery* (by Michael Lloyd and Michael Desmond) in 1992. The other state galleries have produced monographs on selected aspects of their collections since the 1980s, as these institutions steadily enlarged through multiple extensions, although they have generally not been comparable in comprehensiveness or historical research to the publications noted. The greatest collections-based research within the art museums sector today tends to be generated by exhibitions – where hugely transformed standards have been achieved in these publications' presentation of research for monographic or thematic exhibitions, associated public programming, and engagement of a broad public. The Art Gallery of New South Wales has a detailed institutional history in production (Steven Miller, *The Exhibitionists: A History of Sydney's Art Gallery of New South Wales*, AGNSW, Sydney, 2021 – forthcoming, 2021.)

⁵ Foundation of the two schools is recorded at <www.archives.unimelb.edu.au/explore/exhibitions/past-events/primary-sources-50-years-of-the-archives/the_stories/national_gallery_art_school>.

⁶ On Murdoch's position in the Gallery see further, in Chapter 3 (concerning the 1939 *Herald* exhibition) and Chapter 4 (concerning his endowment of the Herald Chair of Fine Arts in 1945).

⁷ Geoffrey Serle, 'Murdoch, Sir Keith Arthur (1885-1952)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, MUP, Melbourne, 1986, 622-627, p. 626.

⁸ Keith Murdoch, 'National Gallery Society', *The Quarterly Bulletin of the National Gallery of Victoria*, Vol.2 (4), 1947, p. 2.

⁹ Leonard B. Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861-1968: Search for a Collection*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1970, p. 170.

¹⁰ Conference of State Gallery Directors/Australian Gallery Directors Conference, CSGD/AGDC national directors conference, Minutes, 1956, p. 14 [p. 63 aggreg.] National Gallery of Australia archives, AGDC records and exhibition files.

¹¹ Serle, 'Murdoch', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1986, p. 626.

¹² The complicated character of gallery director and critic J.S. MacDonald was indicated in Ch. 3 (notable especially in relation to the 1939 'Herald exhibition').

the chief librarian on the bureaucratic ladder'.¹³ Lindsay found himself shackled by multiple constraints: 'The library administration and public service board acted jointly to keep NGV staff to a bare minimum of eight people';¹⁴ administrative tasks were endlessly extended by public service bureaucracy such that 'any trifling business had to go through about three departments';¹⁵ and he most of all resented that, while the trustees exercised decisive power over all collections, 'when it came to the acquisition of works of art [they were] utterly incompetent to give an opinion'.¹⁶

However, the situation Lindsay's remarks spoke to was complicated by the fact that the combined institutions of the Melbourne Public Library, the National Museum of Victoria (along with the early Science Museum), and the National Gallery of Victoria were co-located in a single building complex fronting Swanston Street, several blocks north of Melbourne's imposing Town Hall. The institutional complex was administered by a combined group of eighteen¹⁷ trustees, with the Library's overarching authority at the helm. As Lindsay experienced in his early, most difficult years:

[The Gallery] might have boasted the largest and most prestigious collection of Western art in the southern hemisphere, but the NGV was, in public service terms, a minor government department with social trimmings.¹⁸

Yet Lindsay was never without his own network of influential social connections to support his vision of the Gallery's improved development. Long included through family networks in social relations with Robert Menzies (though not sharing some of the rabid prejudices of his influential older artist-brothers, Norman and Lionel), Daryl Lindsay had been advising Keith Murdoch on his private art purchases in the 1930s, and enjoyed Murdoch's confidence in many matters concerning the Gallery's development.¹⁹ Murdoch's backing was crucial, and Lindsay would soon benefit further from Murdoch's unassailable position as Chairman of the Gallery after the separation of the three institutions in 1945.²⁰

One of Murdoch's last legacy-actions for the NGV was securing (in 1945) a Victorian government agreement to earmark the former Wirth's Circus site flanking St Kilda Road for a future home for the Gallery.²¹ And in the same year Murdoch directed two parcels of his business empire funds to endow the Herald Chair of Fine Arts, inaugurated the following year (as covered in Chapter 4). After the 1904 Felton Bequest itself, it can be argued that the introduction of art history to Melbourne University, in the late 1940s, was the next most

¹³ Christopher Heathcote, *A Quiet Revolution: The Rise of Australian Art 1946-1968*, Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1995, p. 39.

¹⁴ Heathcote, *A Quiet Revolution*, 1995, p. 39.

¹⁵ Heathcote, *A Quiet Revolution*, 1995, p. 39.

¹⁶ Daryl Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1965, cited in Heathcote, *A Quiet Revolution*, 1995, p. 40.

¹⁷ Eileen Chanin and Steven Miller, with an introductory essay by Judith Pugh, *Degenerates and Perverts: The 1939 Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2005, p. 164.

¹⁸ Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree*, 1965, pp. 150–151.

¹⁹ Daryl Lindsay had known Murdoch since WW1, and had advised him on early art purchases: 'Rarely have I known anyone develop a sense of connoisseurship quicker than Murdoch. From pictures he went into period furniture, silver, glass and Oriental art.' (Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree*, 1965, p. 137.)

²⁰ Serle, 'Murdoch', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1986, p. 626; see also Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861–1968*, 1970, for details of Keith Murdoch's accession to President of the combined institutions (the Library Board) in 1939 (Cox, p. 165), and the Victorian Government's creation of four separate boards in 1944, with Keith Murdoch automatically becoming Chairman of the National Gallery of Victoria (Cox, p. 176).

²¹ Serle, 'Murdoch', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1986, p. 626.

transformative influence on the future of Victoria's state gallery. The first philanthropic endowment transformed the collection, while the second (indirect) benefaction by Murdoch to the state's sole university helped to build an expert staff.

5.3 The National Art Gallery of New South Wales in the 1940s

In Sydney by comparison, with a very different colonial history from Melbourne, four key state institutions had arisen independently on dispersed sites: the Public Library of New South Wales (housing the earliest collections, begun in 1826, but with a permanent home opened only in 1845);²² the Australian Museum (founded in 1827 to procure 'many rare and curious specimens of Natural History' for naturalists in England,²³ but soon to become 'Australia's first public museum');²⁴ the Technological Museum opened in August 1893 (with collections arising through the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition), later renamed Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences; and the National Art Gallery of New South Wales (inaugurated through the NSW Academy of Art's establishment in 1871), which had gained only a provisional brick structure on its Domain site by the 1890s.²⁵ Meanwhile the Art Gallery director's position in Sydney remained as circumscribed as the NGV situation for anyone appointed to these posts well into the early 20th century.

The AGNSW had operated (since 1895) in a still-incomplete building²⁶ that had not changed since the late-19th century designs by Government Architect W.L. Vernon were built to a half-complete stage in the Edwardian era.²⁷ World War I and the Depression had intervened in the Gallery's life, while it remained marooned in a large parkland setting detached from the city's heart. There would be no state government commitment to improving the Gallery's building or facilities for another three decades. A stirring occurred in the late 1960s, when 1970 loomed as the impending bi-centenary of Captain Cook's first voyage navigating the eastern Australian coastline – which prompted belated plans for a footprint-completing state gallery 'extension', but with a delay in voting necessary funds.²⁸

New South Wales, although self-regarded as the 'mother colony', had lagged far behind Victoria in gaining substantial cultural resources. When the principal public gallery was

²² See <www.sl.nsw.gov.au/about-library/history-library>.

²³ See <www.australianmuseum.net.au/a-brief-history-of-the-collections>.

²⁴ The Australian museum was founded in 1827, with the purpose of procuring 'many rare and curious specimens of Natural History', but its various collections were first brought together on its first purpose-built site near Hyde Park opened in 1857. See Australian Museum history: <www.australianmuseum.net.au/a-short-history-of-the-australian-museum>, viewed 1 June 2018.

²⁵ AGNSW institutional history: <www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/about-us/history/>, viewed 1 July 2018.

²⁶ AGNSW building history: <www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/about-us/history/history-of-the-building/>, viewed 1 July 2018.

²⁷ See Florence M. Taylor, 'Australian Architecture; The Sydney National Art Gallery and the History of its Development', *Building: the Magazine for the Architect, Builder, Property Owner and Merchant*, Vol., 23, No. 139, 12 March 1919; concerning AGNSW architectural changes since the late 1960s, see 'Museums and Artspace', chapter in Bernice L Murphy and Leon Paroissien, *Andrew Andersons: Architecture and the Public Realm*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney [forthcoming, 2021].

²⁸ Murphy and Paroissien, 'Museums and Artspace', Ch. 10 in *Andrew Andersons*, 2021.

finally established in Sydney in 1874,²⁹ '[a]ll but a hundred years of British colonisation had brought to the city a degree of economic prosperity, but little cultural wealth.'³⁰ Support from the NSW government later was minimal and meanly provided. It was assumed, as in Britain, that wealthy patrons would supply philanthropic gifting of collections and resources for the Gallery's benefit; whereas – again, like Britain – such expectations proved unfounded. In 1946, a government-commissioned arts inquiry in the UK (coinciding with similarly hard times for the state galleries in Australia) explicitly lamented the lack of philanthropic patronage in Britain: 'In recent years only one or two of the great English collectors have bequeathed their collections to the nation'; and the same report highlighted the self-interested priorities of the richest trustees: 'Even Trustees of the National Gallery [in London] have sold their collections of old masters without informing the Director.'³¹

In New South Wales, the parochial governance and operational procedures under Sydney's all-powerful trustees in the early-20th century have been well detailed by Heather Johnson in research on the Gallery's pivotal role in Sydney's art market at the time. British example and value-settings taken from London for desirable artwork sales were still decisive: 'Before 1914 the Gallery functioned as an outpost of the London art complex.' Alison Inglis has also highlighted the early preference for foreign works in both Melbourne's and Sydney's colonial galleries in their early years:

The predominance of imported works in Australia's colonial art collections ... played an influential role in reinforcing the public's belief in the superiority of European, especially British, art, when compared to local productions.³²

However, Sydney changed quite dramatically after WW1, and became focused on its local market through the strong presence of art societies, as Heather Johnson has highlighted:

The advent of the First World War with its accompanying nationalism ... [and] return to conservative ideas and active promotion of ideology all worked to change the role of the Gallery quickly and permanently.³³

An Australian-art-focused patronage system post-War meant that 'the Gallery's identification with the Sydney art network became all important'.³⁴ Robert Hughes had emphasised this point similarly in a catalogue essay introducing Australian artists to the Whitechapel Gallery audience in London in 1961, stating that 'the State art galleries (especially Sydney's) do yeoman service to local painting'.³⁵ Meanwhile, the power of local artists and their different factions had also played into the Sydney gallery's parochialism in the early-20th century – as Joanna Mendelssohn has traced in examining decades of the AGNSW trustees' records of meetings: 'For many years the AGNSW had been effectively

²⁹ Steven Miller's forthcoming book on the history of the Art Gallery of New South Wales convincingly establishes the case for the '1871' founding date of Sydney's state gallery – not 1876, as previously accepted (Miller, *The Exhibitionists: A History of Sydney's Art Gallery of New South Wales*, 2021).

³⁰ See AGNSW history at <www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/about-us/history/>, viewed 1 July 2018.

³¹ *The Arts Enquiry: The Visual Arts*. A Report sponsored by the Dartington Hall Trustees, Published on behalf of The Arts Enquiry by PEP (Political and Economic Planning), Oxford University Press, London, 1946, p. 110.

³² Alison Inglis, 'Imperial Perspectives on Art in Nineteenth-Century Australia', in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2011, 55–70; p. 63.

³³ Heather Johnson, *The Sydney Art Patronage System, 1990–1940*, Bungoona Technologies Pty. Ltd, Sydney, 1997, p. 9.

³⁴ Johnson, *The Sydney Art Patronage System*, 1997, p. 9.

³⁵ Robert Hughes, 'Introduction', *Recent Australian Painting*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 1961, p. 18.

managed by a cross-factional agreement between the warring Royal Art Society and the Society of Artists.³⁶

Heather Johnson's study also illuminated trustees' overweening authority (as similarly in Melbourne in the 1930s) in deciding all *acquisitions* for the permanent collection. In 1938, the AGNSW trustees 'visited the exhibitions of all the recognised art societies',³⁷ and through their decisions alone (the director had no vote before 1943),³⁸ works were purchased from these artists' exhibitions. For example, 41 such trustee-decided purchases of locally sourced artworks were added to Sydney's permanent collection in 1939.³⁹ The decisions would have been on personal whim, without policy framework or long-term rationale. By contrast, the National Gallery in Melbourne had at least gained the transformative propulsion of the Felton Bequest,⁴⁰ with a mandate and resources to build a 'major collection', and admitting the wider vistas of indisputable 'masterpieces' of European art. (Masterpieces of Asian art began to be substantially augmented only from 1964⁴¹ onwards.)

5.4 Training for art museums in the 1940s

The lack of academic training for the work of Australia's state galleries had particularly aggravated Daryl Lindsay when he became Director of the NGV in March 1941. As described in Chapter 4, Lindsay sought remedy for this situation through his crucial advocacy role for Murdoch's endowment of Melbourne University's Fine Arts Chair in 1945.⁴² In this period, the cavernous gulf between new standards of professional training becoming established in the United States and the backward conditions in the 'British world' of art galleries that had provided minimal government funding, and assumed (unforthcoming) private patronage to finance museums, was deepening. The benchmarking post-graduate course in art curatorial training established at Harvard University by Paul J. Sachs in 1925 was immeasurably impacting on standards of scholarly knowledge guiding curatorship in the United States. Not least among the Harvard course's early laureates was Alfred H. Barr Jr. (1902–1981), the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1929.⁴³

³⁶ Mendelssohn, De Lorenzo, Inglis and Speck, *Australian Exhibitions: Opening our Eyes*, 2018, p. 37.

³⁷ Will Ashton [AGNSW director], 'A National Gallery's Expansion', *Art in Australia*, 15 February 1939, 37–39, p. 37.

³⁸ Will Ashton, in November 1943, was the first AGNSW director to be granted a vote on acquisitions – see Nancy D.H. Underhill, *Making Australian Art 1916–49: Sydney Ure Smith, patron and publisher*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 124.

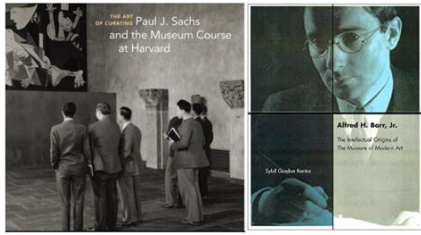
³⁹ Ashton, 'A National Gallery's Expansion', 1939, p. 37.

⁴⁰ See John Poynter, *Mr Felton's Bequests*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2003; J.R. Poynter, 'Felton, Alfred (1831–1904)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972.

⁴¹ Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861–1968*, 1970, p. 345.

⁴² See Chapter 4 on the foundation of the Herald Chair of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne (1945/6).

⁴³ On the influential Harvard course by Paul J. Sachs, see Sally Anne Duncan & Andrew McLellan, *The Art of Curating: Paul J. Sachs and the Museum Course at Harvard*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, 2018. On the founding of MoMA, New York, and the influence of its first director, Alfred H. Barr, see Russel Lynes, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art*, Athenaeum, New York, 1973; Sybil Gordon Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art*, MIT Press, New York, 2001; and Ralph Alexander, 'MoMA as Educator: The Legacy of Alfred H. Barr Jr.' (Review of S.G. Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art*), in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, University of Illinois, Chicago, Vol. 39(2), 2005, 97–103.



Cover of Sally Anne Duncan & Andrew McLellan, *The Art of Curating: Paul J. Sachs and the Museum Course at Harvard*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, 2018; (R:) cover of Sybil Gordon Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art*, MIT Press, New York, 2001.

Such comparisons almost overwhelm attempts to delineate improvement efforts in Australia, but they also contour the impact of particular personalities locally who did commit energy to achieving change. Daryl Lindsay's efforts to raise standards in Melbourne merit record for his awareness of needed training nationally (and this background illuminates his later commitment over decades in the 1950s and 1960s to seeing a National Gallery realised in Canberra). Lindsay began instituting measures of in-house training in the NGV in the early 1940s, until some evident success in these efforts was eventually achieved: '[W]e were able to train two men who after a few years were able to take over the directorships of the Perth and Brisbane Galleries' – with both, in his view, 'doing excellent jobs'.⁴⁴ One was Robert Haines (1916–2005) who served a kind of 'cadetship' as assistant director in the NGV (1947–51), then as first director of QAG, Brisbane (1951–61).⁴⁵ The second, Laurie Thomas (1915–74), served as assistant director in the NGV (1950–52)⁴⁶ then became director of the AGWA, Perth (1952–56),⁴⁷ and finally moved north to succeed Haines in Brisbane (QAG) in 1961.

It was notable that the two successfully-filled gallery directorships through Melbourne's institutional mentorship were in the then-poorest-developed state institutions, in Western Australia and Queensland. Humphrey McQueen's study of the early development of Australian galleries later pointed up the most acute situation of all in the west:

After making almost no purchases during the Great War, the [Perth] Trustees' 1920 Report acknowledged a weakness in their Australian collection. Their entire purchases for the next six years consisted of one drypoint etching.⁴⁸

Further effects of the Melbourne Gallery's influence as a crucible for curatorial training nationally, together with the varied dissemination of its results over decades, appear in various parts of this thesis, and its national influence extended further after it opened in its new St Kilda Road building as part of the Victorian Art Centre complex in 1968.

5.5 The state galleries shaping change after mid-century ('the AGDC years')

Although the life of art museums was still so circumscribed at mid-century – in comparison with their resources and public impact today – it is important to maintain a discriminating

⁴⁴ Sir Daryl Lindsay, 'Art Education and the National Gallery of Victoria' [paper delivered in UNESCO seminar, Women's College, University of Melbourne, June 1954], in Bernard Smith (ed.), *Education Through Art in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1958, 39–42, p. 40.

⁴⁵ Alan McCulloch and Susan McCulloch, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 3rd ed., 1994, 'Haines, Robert Keith Reeve' entry, p. 317.

⁴⁶ <www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/about/our-story/timeline>, viewed 23 Apr. 2018

⁴⁷ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, 'Thomas, Laurie' entry, 695–6, p. 695.

⁴⁸ Humphrey McQueen, *The Black Swan of Trespass: The Emergence of Modernist painting in Australia to 1944*, Alternative publishing Cooperative Limited, Sydney, 1979, p. 31.

historical insight towards *the past of the present*. The fundamentally comparative work of historical analysis of Australian art museums requires a calibrated grasp of processes of change in their character as significant organisations in the public sphere.⁴⁹ Some *comparative contextualisation* is necessary at many points to restore due agency and intellectual venture to actors in the past, rather than flattening out temporal processes as merely anterior to the present tense of current experience (with its own biases of greater resources, higher performance, and privileged supersession, or ‘presentism’).

As noted in Chapter 2, the 1933 Markham and Richards Report by visiting representatives of the U.K. Museums Association (enabled by a Carnegie Foundation grant from New York) had noted ‘the almost complete indifference’ of Australian museums to each other nationally in the 1930s.⁵⁰ The analysis of the beginnings of purposive national co-operation in the second half of the 20th century is a particular focus of the present chapter. In 1948 the state gallery directors began to hold collaborative meetings annually to pursue common concerns. Eventually settling on the name Australian Gallery Directors Conferences,⁵¹ the AGDC acronym came later to cover a 32-year period of purposive collaboration – most buoyant under the stimulus of the Whitlam government’s resources-stimulus and sharpened cultural ambition in the 1970s, until the organisation eventually wound up in 1980. The directors’ meetings, which rotated to a different hosting state institution each year, began to remediate the situation whereby the galleries had arisen in isolation historically under separate colonial, and then state structures, and institutional confinement under parsimonious state governments had continued to circumscribe their activities for decades after political union as a Commonwealth.

5.6 Collaboration to improve expertise, practices and exhibitions (1950s–1960s)

During early AGDC meetings at the end of the 1940s,⁵² directors raised dissatisfaction with the poor quality of many exhibitions on offer through organising bodies set up for this purpose abroad. This meant extrication from the Empire Art and Loan Exhibitions Society/EALES and its organisation of exhibitions for distant institutions in Britain’s former colonies. Concern was raised at the first directors’ meeting in 1948 about two dismal EALES exhibition proposals: ‘English Sporting Pictures, including works from the Collection of Major Paget’; and a ‘Famous Constable owned by Mr. Walter Hutchinson, or alternatively his Collection of British Sports and Pastimes’.⁵³ Successive meetings took a stronger stance on EALES offerings, and by 1956 the state directors had effectively withdrawn from further negotiations with this source.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ The important concept of *the public sphere* as conceived by Jürgen Habermas, where judgments of shared value are secured, has been traversed in Chapter 1.

⁵⁰ Sydney F. Markham, W.R.B. Oliver, and H.C. Richards, *A report on the Museums and Art Galleries of Australia*, Museums Association (U.K.) and Carnegie Corporation (New York), London, 1933 (113 pp.), p. 7.

⁵¹ The abbreviations throughout indicate (by initials) the altering names of the Conferences, while ‘/AGDC’ always follows for consistent identity of galleries-sector meetings despite small name-variations in Minutes records.

⁵² The present author’s detailed research of archival resources for this section of the thesis on the AGDC is explained in detail under note (2) above.

⁵³ CSAGD/AGDC#9, QNAG, Brisbane, 1–4 Aug. 1956, Minutes, p. 4/53.

⁵⁴ CSAGD/AGDC#9, QNAG, Brisbane, 1–4 Aug. 1956, *ibid.*

While there were laudable objectives to improve the quality of exhibitions brought to Australia, the poor conditions for local displays, lack of handling areas, proper storage, packing or conservation facilities, and the scarcity of works of internationally recognised quality for return-loans abroad (except in the case of Melbourne), were always constraints on ambition to improve exhibition programs from sources outside of Britain. Colleague museums abroad in other countries had scant interest in Australian art (only Aboriginal culture registered as distinctive). This made any ‘exchange propositions’ difficult, except those shaped through diplomatic agreements.

Few museums or major private lenders internationally would entertain artworks travelling to Australia, moving interstate internally, or being away many months before any possibility of the return journey (again by sea). This had only worked in the past when loans for exhibitions were mostly from private sources or from dealers, with a number of works for sale – as in the case of the sensational ‘Herald’ exhibition of 1939 (commissioned by Keith Murdoch through the contacts of his well-connected art critic, Basil Burdett);⁵⁵ or *French Painting Today* steered to realisation by Hal Missingham for multiple Australian venues in 1953.⁵⁶ It is often overlooked that *Two Decades of American Painting*, which had such decisive public impact⁵⁷ when it came to Australia in 1967 through the International Program of MoMA, New York, again contained many works for sale. This opportunity yielded, for example, the Morris Louis, *Ayin* (1958), acquired by the AGNSW; Helen Frankenthaler’s *Cape (Provincetown)* (1964) bought by the NGV; and each of these galleries also acquired well-priced yellow paintings in Joseph Albers’ *Homage to the square* series (both of 1966).⁵⁸

When the NGV was planning for the 1968 opening of the new Gallery and adjoining Cultural Centre on St Kilda Road, it was able to negotiate for an exhibition of works by the German Renaissance master Lucas Cranach (1472–1553), with all loans sourced in then-Western Germany (BRD).⁵⁹ However there was no possibility that such an exhibition would travel beyond Melbourne to galleries that lacked any dedicated spaces for handling high-quality visiting exhibitions: among all the missing facilities, one of the most decisive was now the absence of climate control. Yet greatest contemporary impact was gained for the

⁵⁵ See Chapter 3 for discussion of the Murdoch-commissioned *Herald* exhibition of modern art (presented under variant titles), and its exhibition in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney in 1939.

⁵⁶ *French Painting Today*, 1953. Full title in catalogue: *French painting today: Peintres vivants de l'École de Paris: An exhibition arranged between the French and Australian governments through the Boards of Trustees of National Art Galleries of Australia for exhibition in the Commonwealth, January–September 1953*. Organised for Australian tour of state galleries by Hal Missingham, Director, National Art Gallery of New South Wales. Remarkably, for an exhibition including so many foreign loans, the itinerary accomplished a tour of Australian state galleries in January–December 1953.

⁵⁷ *Two Decades of American Painting* (an exhibition mounted for foreign tour through the International Program of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and shown in Melbourne and Sydney, 1967) was regarded as ‘Australia’s introduction to the full range of the New York School of painting, especially Pop and Minimalism’ (Mendelssohn, De Lorenzo, Inglis and Speck, *Australian Exhibitions: Opening our Eyes*, 2018, p. 32). See also Charles Green and Heather Barker, ‘The watershed: Two Decades of American Painting at the National Gallery of Victoria’, *Art Journal*, Vol. 50, National Gallery of Victoria, 3 January 2013; available online at <www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/the-watershed-two-decades-of-american-painting-at-the-national-gallery-of-victoria/>.

⁵⁸ Green and Barker, ‘The watershed: Two Decades of American Painting’, 2013.

⁵⁹ CSGD/AGDC#14, NGV, Melbourne, 18–22 September 1961, Minutes, p. 114.

NGV's 1968 (re-)opening through its self-organised exhibition, *The Field*,⁶⁰ presented in the new temporary exhibitions space by exhibitions officer John Stringer, in collaboration with Curator of Australian Art, Brian Finemore. This exhibition, a critical sensation at the time, has since been the subject of museological and art critical studies, and even historical re-creations⁶¹ and emulations, including in film.⁶²

Another factor inhibiting state galleries in the 1950s and 1960s was costs. Organisation of exhibitions, freight, and insurance charges was expensive; consignment by long sea-voyages was hazardous; and some lenders were beginning to charge escalating fees for substantial exhibitions to be realised. Hal Missingham reported in 1961 to fellow directors that efforts in recent years to try to source a quality exhibition from the United States had been fruitless: '[A]ll possibilities of obtaining a major exhibition were exhausted, the only exhibitions now offered being minor graphic art exhibitions which are unsatisfactory.'⁶³ A Joseph Albers exhibition proposed in 1960 from the United States proved too expensive as a proposal;⁶⁴ and similarly an exhibition of 'Pre-Columbian art' was finally judged as beyond the likely interest areas of Australian audiences when the organisation and transport costs would be high.⁶⁵

Hal Missingham, who had begun as AGNSW Director in September 1945,⁶⁶ was to become a key player in the transformation of the state galleries into a momentum of structured cooperation and greatly improved programming in the 1950s. After training as an artist in Perth, studying in Paris and London, then practising as an artist/photographer in the UK and Canada, Missingham returned to Australia in 1941 (to Sydney, during wartime).⁶⁷ When he began as AGNSW director some years later, Missingham found he occupied one of a mere few staff positions at the time (apart from the public attendants).⁶⁸ Over a quarter-century, the professional staff had barely expanded 'from a beginning of two (a director and a restorer) ... to five, with the addition of a deputy director, a curator and an assistant'.⁶⁹ Missingham soon realised he was effectively secretary to the board of trustees and expected to perform tasks at their direction, since '[m]any trustees saw the directors as having nothing more than an administrative role'.⁷⁰ Missingham's indignation was forthright, even years later, to critic Robert Hughes (when interviewed in 1959 for a blunt article in *Nation*):

⁶⁰ *The Field*, an Australian exhibition organised for the opening of the National Gallery of Victoria, Victorian Cultural Centre, 21 August–28 September 1968; curators John Stringer (principal selector) and Brian Finemore.

⁶¹ '*The Field*' Revisited was a substantial regathering and re-evocation of the impact of original extant works shown at the NGV, Melbourne, 27 April–26 August 2018.

⁶² ABC-TV film, *Finding The Field*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, broadcast 13 December 2018.

⁶³ CSGD/AGDC #14, NGV, Melbourne, 18–22 September 1961, Minutes, p. 115.

⁶⁴ CSGD/AGDC #13 Minutes, AGNSW, Sydney 15–19 August 1960, Minutes (cumul.), Agenda item 5, p. 102.

⁶⁵ '[Hal] Missingham reported the large [Pre-Columbian] exhibition offered would cost between £7,000 and £8,000 [or between AUD c.\$213,000 to AUD \$245,000, RBA pre-decimal figures inflation-calculated to 2020 values] and this expense would probably be more justifiable when public interest in Pre-Columbian Art is more general.' (CSGD/AGDC #14 Minutes, NGV, Melbourne, 18–22 September 1961, Minutes (cumul.), p. 116.)

⁶⁶ Bernard Smith, *A Pavane for Another Time*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 2002, p. 145.

⁶⁷ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, op. cit., 'Hal Missingham' entry, p. 489; Lou Klepac, *Hal Missingham*, Beagle Press, Sydney, 2017.

⁶⁸ Robert Hughes, 'Grandad's Gallery: Some plain words from Mr Missingham', *Nation*, Sydney, 19 December 1959, 19–20; p. 19.

⁶⁹ Hal Missingham, *They Kill You in the End*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1973, p. 13.

⁷⁰ Mendelssohn, De Lorenzo, Inglis and Speck, *Australian Exhibitions: Opening our Eyes*, 2018, p. 30.

‘Imagine a director having to do [these things] ... with no time to attend to the collection.’⁷¹ Difficulties in displaying art included the fact that the AGNSW still lacked electric lighting in the old exhibition courts in the 1950s, depending instead on skylight or clearstorey illumination during daylight hours.⁷² This precluded the institution’s functioning in the evening. On dull days the collection dimmed into gloom.

Financial resources were drastically restricted. Robert Hughes noted in 1960 that the entire AGNSW budget for both acquisitions *and* running costs was only c. £9,000 (or c. \$A273,000 in 2020 values).⁷³ This was equivalent to a tiny fraction of the budget developed in the later-20th century through several expansions and transformations of resources, amenities, collections and programming. Hal Missingham also provided sharp testimony of the beleaguered physical conditions of Sydney’s building in 1959, with the collection ill-protected against the local climate, which could cause surfaces of paintings to ‘bloom’ under extreme conditions: ‘Sometimes, when the humidity’s up to 98 at saturation point you get water running down the walls.’⁷⁴ The Director’s description of the practical obstacles when moving any large artwork from storage to place on view in the Gallery in the 1950s attested to perilous deficiencies in handling works of art: ‘[T]o get a big picture out of store ... [w]e have to hump it out the side door round into the street, and then drag [it] back through the main entrance. That’s what you’re up against.’⁷⁵ Daniel Thomas, years later the distinguished head of Australian art at the National Gallery in Canberra and subsequently Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, provided similar memories of when he first joined the Sydney gallery (under Missingham) in 1958:

I was the first-ever curator at the [Gallery] ... [W]e were very backward: the roof leaked and the collections were mediocre compared with the wealthier state galleries in Adelaide and Melbourne, where curators existed and where there were huge private endowments for acquisitions – the 1897 Elder Bequest [in Adelaide] and the 1904 Felton Bequest [in Melbourne]. The state galleries in Perth and Brisbane were even more primitive than that in Sydney.’⁷⁶

Despite Victoria’s greater collection resources, its wider European orientation in its acquisitions through the outstanding resources of the 1904 Felton Bequest⁷⁷ (and its succession of Felton Advisers based in London),⁷⁸ the layout of the National Gallery of Victoria in the 1950s was still uninviting to a general public. Daniel Thomas’s memory of the NGV when he returned to Australia with an Oxford degree in history in 1956, and hope for a

⁷¹ Hughes, ‘Grandad’s Gallery’, *Nation*, 1959, p. 19.

⁷² Lou Klepac, ‘A life lived through the eyes’, article in *The Australian*, 16 November 2017, coinciding with the publication of a monograph by Lou Klepac, Nat Williams and Peter Missingham: *Hal Missingham: Artist, Author, Photographer*, Beagle Press, Sydney, 2017, online at <www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/visual-arts/hal-missingham-a-life-lived-through-the-eyes/>.

⁷³ Robert Hughes, ‘Introduction’, *Recent Australian Painting*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, p. 14. The 1960 budget revaluation has been calculated through Reserve Bank of Australia pre-decimal calculation resources online at <www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.htm>.

⁷⁴ Hughes, ‘Grandad’s Gallery’, 1959, p. 19.

⁷⁵ Hughes, ‘Grandad’s Gallery’, 1959, p. 19.

⁷⁶ Daniel Thomas, 2011, ‘Art museums in Australia: A personal account’, in Des Griffin and Leon Paroissien (eds), *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology*, National Museum of Australia, published online at <nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/DThomas_2011.html>. ISBN 978-1-876944-92-6>.

⁷⁷ See Daryl Lindsay, *The Felton Bequest: An Historical Record, 1904-1959*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1963; Ursula Hoff, *European Paintings Before 1800*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1961.

⁷⁸ Lindsay, *The Felton Bequest*, 1963.

career in galleries, was that the Melbourne gallery was ‘a rabbit warren concealed behind a great public library’.⁷⁹

A study of Australian art in the post-War period by Christopher Heathcote also revisited the NGV’s early-20th century layout at the rear of the Library and Museum, and the values conveyed by the physical disposition of displays. The sequence of rooms ‘arranged art into a hierarchy’, Heathcote records, in which ‘British art often commanded the better positions along the way’, with ‘[t]he main bays in the centre of the building ... reserved for the European “Old Masters”’. Visitors seeking to view the Australian collection, ‘tucked away in a minor space at the rear of the building flanking the natural history museum’, had first to ‘pass these canonical images’.⁸⁰ Masterpieces of European art in the prints and drawings collection were mostly in drawers and rarely displayed – a situation gradually transformed by the expertise of German-trained Dr Ursula Hoff over many years after her appointment as Assistant Keeper in 1943, when she held ‘the Gallery’s sole curatorial position at that time’.⁸¹

For visiting exhibitions, all state galleries in the 1930s and 1940s were still dependent on such bodies as the Empire Art Loan Exhibitions Society (its ‘Empire’ moniker suggestive of framing values), from which ‘collections of paintings and sculpture [were] sent out from England for exhibition in the Art Galleries of Australia and New Zealand’.⁸² This was a poor-quality system of sourcing exhibitions, which the combined state directors later petitioned the Commonwealth government – via the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (CAAB), discussed below – to help improve.⁸³

The AGNSW was principally reliant on static displays of collected works in the early-20th century. Bernard Smith recalled that exhibitions from Europe ‘virtually ceased’ in the 1920s’ isolationist period: ‘Indeed between 1923 and 1932 I do not know of any significant exhibition, academic or modern, to reach Australia, whereas during the 1880s and 1890s they had been fairly frequent’.⁸⁴ However, with a small number of temporary exhibitions having begun to be presented annually since the mid-1930s, increased annual attendances in Sydney in the immediate pre-WW2 years averaged 230,000.⁸⁵

In 1937, four visiting exhibitions had been presented: of ‘Contemporary Canadian Art’, of ‘British Masters’, and of ‘Dutch and Flemish painters’, along with an exhibition of prints and drawings.⁸⁶ Yet it was still accepted practice in the 1930s to exhibit ‘coloured reproductions’ in Sydney’s state gallery. From material supplied by director Will Ashton in 1939, it was recorded that 700 reproductions were ‘on exhibition in the lower basement courts’, including some recent additions: 33 of these were stated to be of ‘masters in famous galleries’ and 12

⁷⁹ Thomas, ‘Art museums in Australia’, 2011.

⁸⁰ Quotes are from Heathcote, *A Quiet Revolution*, 1995, p. 41.

⁸¹ Irena Zdanowicz, ‘Obituary: Ursula Hoff, AO, OBE 1909–2005’, online at <www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/obituary-ursula-hoff-ao-obe-1909-2005/>.

⁸² *Annual Report, Trustees of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery Western Australia*, WA State Government, Perth, 1937, p. 5.

⁸³ CSGD/AGDC#5, NGSA, Adelaide, 10–11 July 1952, p. 3/22).

⁸⁴ Bernard Smith, ‘The Myth of Isolation’ [1961], reprinted in *The Antipodean Manifesto: Essays in Art and History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1976, 57–69, p. 66.

⁸⁵ Will Ashton, ‘A National Gallery’s Expansion’, *Art in Australia*, May 15th, 1939; unsigned article, compiled as ‘material supplied by Director Will Ashton’, p. 39.

⁸⁶ Ashton, ‘A National Gallery’s Expansion’, *Art in Australia*, 15 May 1939, p. 37.

were reproductions of ‘well-known Swedish artist Anders Zorn’, presented by a donor.⁸⁷

5.7 Exhibitions, professional practices, training

A vital means of gaining experience in the art museums sector depends on the ability to travel and study institutions and colleagues’ practices *in situ* elsewhere. Yet travel abroad for state gallery directors was a sticking-point with all public service boards until the 1970s. Hal Missingham recorded years after his retirement as Sydney’s Director, in a notoriously frank memoir, *They Kill You in the End* (1973), that when he first achieved paid travel abroad in 1951 (to Europe), after six years in his position, he was ‘the first New South Wales director to be permitted official travel since 1914’.⁸⁸ Learning about professional practices through international experience was hard to come by until some travel in connection with a special exhibition’s negotiation, or a building extension, made such an excursion necessary.

In general, Daryl Lindsay had been the sole state director in the 1940s with privileged access to some international travel. This was secured through the resources and history of the Felton Bequest, and through his personal connections and the direct backing of his powerful friend and trustee Keith Murdoch, as detailed above and in Chapter 4. Meanwhile Lindsay well knew the British art institutions and had himself studied art at the Slade school in London when living there in the 1920s.⁸⁹

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the development of state galleries in the post-WW2 period. It especially follows, in the first instance, an initiative of professional co-operation across state borders that began to enable the rise of *exhibitions* – as distinct from permanent collection *displays* – as forming an engine for engaging new audiences and ultimately gaining the agency to drive developments in all areas of art museums’ life. Meanwhile, the mounting and circulation of *temporary exhibitions* locally, especially of Australian art, became a co-operative national enterprise for state galleries for more than three decades, from 1948 to 1980. This joint venturing, linking the various institutions and stirring them all forward to a larger engagement at a national level had never been possible previously. The galleries were at first contained in local contexts, under the overweening control of trustees while starved by their state public service boards – with an often-well-entrenched hostility between these two entities.⁹⁰

5.8 The Australian state gallery directors organise (AGDC meetings 1948 ff.)

At the end of the 1940s the state galleries began to organise their planning more collaboratively, through instituting an annual meeting, titled (in the first years) the Interstate Gallery Directors Conference – subsequently renamed the Australian Gallery Directors Conference, and eventually Council, or AGDC, as it was later identified and re-

⁸⁷ Ashton, ‘A National Gallery’s Expansion’, *Art in Australia*, 15 May 1939, p. 44.

⁸⁸ Missingham, *They Kill You in the End*, 1973, p. 15.

⁸⁹ Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree*, 1965, p. 126.

⁹⁰ See variously (passim) in Missingham, *They Kill You in the End*, 1973. It is regrettable that this publication has no index to help find important contents, as it remains one of the few significant first-hand accounts of the early institutional history of the AGNSW. Familiarity with the whole is required to help contextualise insights into its often-colourful contents.

constituted in its most buoyant, and outstandingly productive, period of operation in the 1970s.⁹¹ Convened only three years after the end of WW2, the first formal meeting of directors took place in August 1948 in the old building of the National Gallery of Victoria. Hal Missingham had liaised with Daryl Lindsay in the previous year to bring a first directors' meeting together for cooperative purposes, 'to consider' (as he later recalled) 'how they all might work together on common problems'.⁹² In addition to Lindsay and Missingham, only Louis McCubbin (from AGSA Adelaide) could attend the first meeting, reflecting difficulties of affordable air travel nationally in the early post-War period, even for directors. However, others were interested in the 1948 initiative and joined in later.⁹³

Concerns of the State Gallery Directors Conferences in the 1950s were numerous, with a crowded agenda created through the sudden stimulus of coming together at last in common cause. It is important to reach back into the context of the 1950s to appreciate the background, specific advocacy efforts, skills development and professional initiatives that eventually formed a momentum sealing the legacy of that decade within conditions enjoyed today:

The rich menu of exhibitions available in Australia today is a result of a series of conscious decisions by art museum directors in the 1950s to improve their facilities and staff. Their long-term legacy is a visually rich landscape for the display of art in national, state and local government museums.⁹⁴

Early meeting agendas began to build a prospectus of diverse items for attention. Many issues were stubbornly practical, forming nagging obstacles to better functioning: for example, customs regulations governing import of works of art from abroad;⁹⁵ duties payable on gifts and bequests to public collecting institutions;⁹⁶ government administrative regulations varying from state to state and trip-wiring the need for collaborative advocacy;⁹⁷ cost-sharing of exhibitions' organisation and touring,⁹⁸ packing and freight, reproductions and copyright;⁹⁹ the need for films on Australian art (proposed for attention of the Commonwealth News and Information Bureau);¹⁰⁰ and improved salaries for professional staff, to be raised above the often-lowest rungs of public service board classification for routine administrative duties. There were repeated appeals to the Commonwealth Government for tax exemption for gifts of works of art to 'national collections' held in public art museums¹⁰¹ – which was finally granted on a trial basis much later, in 1977.

⁹¹ Again, concerning this particular section: the present author's detailed research of archival resources for the AGDC history is explained in detail under note (2) above.

⁹² Missingham, *They Kill You in the End*, 1973, p. 91.

⁹³ CID/AGDC#1, NGV, Melbourne, 25–27 August 1948, Minutes, p. 1.

⁹⁴ Mendelssohn, De Lorenzo, Inglis and Speck, *Australian Exhibitions: Opening our Eyes*, 2018; Introduction, p. 16.

⁹⁵ CID/AGDC#3, QNAG, Brisbane, 4–5 September 1950, Minutes, p. 3/10; CID/AGDC#3, QNAG, Brisbane, 4–5 September 1950, Minutes, p. 4/11; Conference of State Gallery Directors/CSGD, AGDC#5, Adelaide, 10–11 July 1952, Minutes, p. 4/23; Conference of State Art Gallery Directors/CSAGD, AGDC#7 Minutes, TMAG Hobart, 15–18 September 1954, Minutes, p. 6/36.

⁹⁶ CSAGD/AGDC#7, TMAG, Hobart, 15–18 September 1954, Minutes, p. 5/35; CSAGD/AGDC#8, NAGNSW, Syd., 10–13 August 1955, Minutes, item 25, p. 6/45.

⁹⁷ CID/AGDC#3 Minutes, QNAG, Brisbane, 4–5 September 1950, Minutes, p. 3/10; CSAGD/AGDC#6, NGV Melbourne, 28–30 October 1953, Minutes, p. 4.

⁹⁸ CID/AGDC#1, NGV Melbourne, 25–27 August 1948, Minutes, p. 1; CID/AGDC#3, Brisbane, 4–5 September 1950, Minutes, p. 3/10.

⁹⁹ CID/AGDC#2, Sydney, NAGNSW, 18 August 1949, Minutes, p. 4/7.

¹⁰⁰ CSAGD/AGDC#6, NGV, Melbourne, 28–30 October 1953, Minutes, item 5, p. 4/29.

¹⁰¹ CID/AGDC#3, QNAG, Brisbane, 4–5 September 1950, Minutes, p. 4/11.

The directors' shared concerns about broader issues of cultural outcomes, traceable through the records of successive early meetings, can be highlighted through a number of recurrent themes. These were: 'the educational importance to Australia of international Travelling Exhibitions,'¹⁰² *reciprocal exchanges* of exhibitions with other countries;¹⁰³ and the need to achieve some national funding (via the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board/CAAB).¹⁰⁴ Commonwealth funding was urgently required to assist the organising of exhibitions for touring across state borders, and to help in sharing freight costs more equitably, since audiences in Australia's capital cities were separated by huge distances. No state budgets in the 1950s or 1960s provided any resources for co-operative sharing of heritage collections through exhibitions mounted for interstate touring. This was a *national* role that only federal funding could enable. At the first meeting in 1948, it was resolved (at the behest of Daryl Lindsay) to enlist Keith Murdoch to approach the Commonwealth for assistance – which was accomplished in 1949.¹⁰⁵

The first request from gallery directors – for £2,000 to provide Commonwealth support to improve both the quality of exhibitions brought from abroad and the strength of Australian exhibitions mounted for national touring – achieved moderate success. The 1950 directors' meeting noted¹⁰⁶ that the request had been 'met with an offer of up to £1,500 in any one year from the Commonwealth [c. \$AU 80,000 in 2020 values]'.¹⁰⁷ But there was a caveat: 'provided that particulars of proposed exhibitions were given beforehand'. In other words, the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board reserved the power to assess likely content before recommending assistance to particular projects. CAAB members' attitudes to desired values in Australian art therefore proved crucial in any federal decisions as to funding for the work of state galleries – and as analysed below, in the long period of R.G. Menzies' reign as Prime Minister, the CAAB's role would be increasingly brought under the control of the Office of the Prime Minister, who took special interest in the contents of any Australian exhibition travelling abroad, with a particular interest to curb the inclusion of 'modern art'.

Other concerns of directors in the 1950s were: to enhance not only the popularity but also the educational value of the state galleries,¹⁰⁸ and strengthen their wider connections with the Australian public; to plan more effective promotion of Australian art abroad;¹⁰⁹ to co-ordinate some shared exhibition programming for state galleries on a planned national

¹⁰² CID/AGDC#1, NGV Melbourne, 25–27 August 1948, Minutes, p. 1.

¹⁰³ An important improvement in exhibitions planning that appeared early in the Australian Gallery Directors' meetings was a strategic effort to consider *both incoming and outgoing exhibitions* in a more interrelated framework, including for funding and rationalised planning over successive years.

¹⁰⁴ For an overview of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (CAAB), see below in this chapter ('The Commonwealth Art Advisory Board/CAAB').

¹⁰⁵ CID/AGDC#1, NGV, Melbourne, 25–27 August 1948, Minutes, p. 1. At this first meeting it was decided 'to urge the Commonwealth Government to make the sum of £2,000 annually (c. \$AUD 126,000 p.a. in 2020 values – RBA inflation calculator) available for this purpose, to be apportioned out to the various States so as to allow all Galleries to participate equally', (p. 1).

¹⁰⁶ CID/AGDC#3, QNAG, Brisbane, 4–5 September 1950, Minutes, p. 3/10.

¹⁰⁷ Reserve Bank of Australia inflation calculator, <www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.html>, accessed 9 May 2020.

¹⁰⁸ CID/AGDC#1, NGV Melbourne, 25–27 August 1948, Minutes, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ CID/AGDC#1, NGV Melbourne, 25–27 August 1948, Minutes, p. 1.s

basis;¹¹⁰ and concern for the content and quality of touring exhibitions,¹¹¹ while seeking to embrace both Australian and international art as *interconnected* objectives. A good summary of the changes sought by state directors in the late 1950s is provided in the 2018 monograph, *Australian Exhibitions: Opening Our Eyes*, the outcome of multi-year Australian Research Council grant funding and the combined research efforts of four Australian art historians: to focus on the key role of exhibitions of Australian art in building public engagement and national self-understanding over more than a half-century.¹¹²

By 1956 the state gallery directors felt it necessary to inform their governing trustees of the pressures confronting the museum sector in running exhibition programs due to inadequate buildings and lack of professionally trained staff. They pointed to the changing nature of art museums in Australia, and how they had moved from playing a passive to an active role ‘in the lives of their communities’. They described how hosting temporary exhibitions had become an accepted part of the practice of art museums ‘to give the public the necessary background to appreciation ... [while] the international exchange of information and works of art’ [was now] ‘a regular procedure’.¹¹³

Meanwhile, further related issues were articulated in the mid-century directors’ meetings, highlighting concerns that had wider ramifications in terms of museum professionalism. Quite early in the annual directors’ meetings cycle, attention was given to the need for regularised practices in recording of art works, especially in the improved *documentation* of collections.¹¹⁴ This was long before any galleries had dedicated positions such as registrars. Collaborative changes included implementing standardised models for documenting signatures, recording inscriptions, retrieving acquisition details (the beginnings of *provenance* methodology), and restoring authoritative titles of works, which had often been casually corrupted over time.¹¹⁵

In the case of Australian art, much of the groundwork for building systematic descriptions and catalogue entries for *Australian art* had been laid by Bernard Smith’s catalogue of the AGNSW paintings collection,¹¹⁶ first researched in the late 1940s and resumed after his return from London and studies at the Courtauld and Warburg Institutes in 1951.¹¹⁷ The model-standard that Smith brought home with him was the collection catalogues of the schools of Netherlandish, French, and British painting by Martin Davies in the National Gallery, London, published from 1945 to 1946. Davies’ catalogues ‘received worldwide

¹¹⁰ CID/AGDC#1, NGV Melbourne, 25–27 August 1948, Minutes, p. 2.

¹¹¹ CID/AGDC#1, NGV Melbourne, 25–27 August 1948, Minutes, pp. 2–3.

¹¹² Mendelsohn, De Lorenzo, Inglis and Speck, *Australian Exhibitions: Opening Our Eyes*, 2018. See the present author’s ‘industry partner’ connection to this ARC-funded project, acknowledged under note (3) above.

¹¹³ Mendelsohn, De Lorenzo, Inglis and Speck, *Australian Exhibitions: Opening Our Eyes*, 2018, p. 30.

¹¹⁴ CID/AGDC#1, NGV, Melbourne, 25–27 August 1948, Minutes, pp. 2–3. The first state gallery to pursue systematic cataloguing of its collections was the National Gallery of Victoria, under Dr Ursula Hoff (after 1945), who in 1949 published her researched *Masterpieces of the National Gallery of Victoria* (NGV, Melbourne, 1949); this was followed by a first edition of her *catalogue raisonné* monograph on the Melbourne collections, *European Painting and Sculpture before 1800*, published in 1961, and subsequently updated in further editions up to 1995.

¹¹⁵ Bernard Smith’s ‘Catalogue of Australian Oil Paintings in the New South Wales Collection’ was tabled at the 6th meeting of Gallery Directors, in Melbourne, and praised for being the best catalogue produced on Australian paintings in any national/state collection. (CSAGD/AGDC#6], NGV, Melbourne, 28–30 October, 1953, p. 4.)

¹¹⁶ Bernard Smith (ed.), *A Catalogue of Australian Oil Paintings in the National Art Gallery of New South Wales 1875–1952*, National Art Gallery of New South Wales (later AGNSW), Sydney, 1953.

¹¹⁷ For Bernard Smith’s time in London and his studies at the Courtauld and Warburg Institutes, see ‘The Black Swan’, Ch. 4 in Sheridan Palmer, *Hegel’s Owl: The Life of Bernard Smith*, Power Publications, University of Sydney, 2016, 99–149.

recognition and created a new standard of scholarship for such publications'.¹¹⁸ In Melbourne, Ursula Hoff was similarly influenced by the Martin Davies catalogues when developing new catalogue standards in the same period at the NGV (see Hoff's first version of these improved standards, produced to mark the centenary of the NGV's founding in 1961, which she built upon immeasurably in subsequent publications).¹¹⁹

5.9 *French Painting Today* (1953) – a new benchmark in exhibition organisation

One particular exhibition in the early years of the AGDC can be seen as a key project for illuminating both the enterprise of Hal Missingham in the 1950s and the achievement this exhibition accomplished in pushing the envelope of more enterprising practice in art museums. *French Painting Today*¹²⁰ secured a panoramic exhibition of foreign loans of modern art, while managing to share the results nationally. It was shown in all six state galleries on a national tour (January–September 1953).



L: Catalogue cover, *French Painting Today*, 1953; C: Governor of New South Wales Sir John Northcott and the French Ambassador Louis Roche visit *French Painting Today*, Sydney 1953; R: Edwina Hordern and Charles Lloyd-Jones visit the exhibition, Sydney, 1953.

This exhibition provides a strong example of the case for *comparative contextualisation* in our historical understanding of museum histories. *French Painting Today* demonstrates the need to retrieve lapsed histories of the past; and to question horizon-claims that easily settle over received narratives of our museums' development and their exhibition records, when not subjected to the same scrutiny as the artworks and art histories that gained prominence through the institutional vehicles of public encounter with art.

Many non-historical judgments also abound casually in accounts of the rise of invidiously-named 'blockbuster' exhibitions in Australia. The phenomenon of a hugely successful exhibition – arousing massive public impacts, with audiences straining institutional capacity but producing uncommon returns¹²¹ – has variously been ascribed in Australia to *Two Decades of American Painting* (from MoMA, New York, shown 1967 in

¹¹⁸ National Gallery (London) website, at <www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/history/directors/sir-martin-davies>.

¹¹⁹ See Hoff, *European Paintings Before 1800*, NGV, 1961.

¹²⁰ As noted at footnote 56, the full title of the exhibition, providing the circumstances of its commissioning and realisation, was *French painting today: peintres vivants de l'Ecole de Paris: An exhibition arranged between the French and Australian governments through the Boards of Trustees of National Art Galleries of Australia for exhibition in the Commonwealth, January–September 1953*.

¹²¹ For an art-historical overview, see S.J. Freedberg, Gervase Jackson-Stops and Richard E. Spear, 'Art History and the "Blockbuster" Exhibition', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 69, No. 2, College Art Association, June 1987, pp. 295–298. For a balancing-act evaluation of the impacts on a hosting institution, see an important first-hand assessment from the 1980s, Albert E. Elsen, 'Museum blockbusters: assessing the pros and cons,' *Art in America*, Vol. 74, No. 6, 1986, pp. 24–7.

Melbourne then Sydney);¹²² or *Modern Masters: Manet to Matisse* (again from MoMA, shown 1975 in Sydney then Melbourne, and afterwards at MoMA New York);¹²³ or to *The Chinese Exhibition*,¹²⁴ (shown 1977 in Melbourne and Sydney, then extended to include Adelaide). Former NGA director, Betty Churcher (1931–2015) has in popular accounts been credited with creating the phenomenon decades later, when Director (1990–1997) of the National Gallery – and when the NGA brought to Canberra the hugely successful exhibitions of *Rubens and the Italian Renaissance* (1992),¹²⁵ *The Age of Angkor* (1992),¹²⁶ *Rembrandt to Renoir* (1993),¹²⁷ and *Surrealism: Revolution by Night* (also 1993).¹²⁸

However, if all conditions are compared and relativised, attention must be directed back to the ‘Herald exhibition’ of 1939¹²⁹ (covered in Chapter 3), and *French Painting Today* realised in 1953. For Bernard Smith, the comparison was clear when he judged *French Painting Today*:

This was the most important exhibition held in the country since the Murdoch exhibition of ‘French and British Modern Art’ of 1939.¹³⁰

A great deal of credit is due to Hal Missingham, for first demonstrating within Australian art museums the capacity to organise their own ‘blockbuster’ phenomenon: with *French Painting Today* exhibited nationally in 1953, creating institution-bursting crowds when shown in Sydney and Melbourne. Although spread across multiple state galleries in its tour, the records of attendances and catalogues sold are almost at the level of *Modern Masters: Manet to Matisse* (shown in Sydney and Melbourne more than two decades later in 1975). In 1995, Christopher Heathcote assessed the French exhibition’s public impact as still outstanding comparatively:

Art historians have agreed that one exhibition, *French Painting Today*, which toured Australian capital cities in 1953, set the nation’s artistic agenda for nearly a decade. The facts are straightforward. Some 385,000 Australians visited the exhibition, buying 43,000 catalogues, and viewing 119 paintings and four

¹²² See Charles Green and Heather Barker, ‘The Watershed: Two Decades of American Painting at the National Gallery of Victoria’, *Art Bulletin of the National Gallery of Victoria*, 2011, accessible online at <www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/the-watershed-two-decades-of-american-painting-at-the-national-gallery-of-victoria/> (viewed 20 May 2018).

¹²³ The success of *Modern Masters: Manet to Matisse* in Australia caused the exhibition later to be shown at MoMA itself (5 August–28 September 1975) before final dispersal to lenders. See images on MoMA’s website at <www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1894?installation_image_index=0> (viewed 20 Nov. 2018).

¹²⁴ Full title of the exhibition was *The Chinese Exhibition: A selection of recent archaeological finds of The People’s Republic of China*.

¹²⁵ *Rubens and the Italian Renaissance*, NGA, Canberra, 28 March–8 June 1992.

¹²⁶ *The Age of Angkor: Treasures from the National Museum of Cambodia*, NGA, Canberra, 22 Aug.–25 Oct. 1992.

¹²⁷ *Rembrandt to Renoir: European Masterpieces from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco*, NGA, Canberra, 14 Nov. 1992–31 Jan. 1993.

¹²⁸ *Surrealism: Revolution by Night*, NGA, Canberra, 13 March–2 May 1993.

¹²⁹ The 1939 *Herald* exhibition of modern French and British art was a sensation when it came to Australia, but it was commissioned privately, was shown in full form at the Town Hall in Melbourne and David Jones Art Gallery in Sydney – and only in Adelaide was it presented within a state gallery, at the AGSA. The 1906 national tour of Holman Hunt’s *The Light of the World* (1851–53) is often adduced for the first massed-crowds effect – but that was for a single painting, and as much a demonstration of religious sentiment (and arguably, Empire-related social demonstration of unifying Christian values), since it was a response to Hunt’s Pre-Raphaelite allegorical effects in his ‘risen Christ’ image.

¹³⁰ Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting, 1788–1970* [1962]; 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1971, p. 305.

tapestries including works by Picasso, Braque, Leger, Rouault, Chagall and Matisse. No exhibition was as successful, as widely attended and discussed, during the decade.¹³¹

Missingham later recorded the statistics of 1953 (which challenge those of *Modern Masters, Manet to Matisse* in 1975): ‘In Sydney we had 150,000 visitors in a month and sold 15,500 catalogues’;¹³² meanwhile Alan McCulloch provided notable records for the Melbourne showing, indicating the huge public impact for a poorly-accommodated state gallery of the period to manage:

The NGV recorded 85,000 exhibition attendances in thirty-four days, and made £490¹³³ on over 10,000 catalogue sales. The show was so popular that the gallery opened until 9.30 p.m. one evening each week, averaging 700 visitors these nights.¹³⁴

French Painting Today developed as an exhibition of French modern art, after an initial diplomatic approach to French authorities in 1949 seeking an exhibition of ‘French painting from Delacroix to the present day’¹³⁵ was (predictably) rebuffed. Since it was unthinkable that French museums would lend 19th or even early-20th century works to travel by sea to poorly provisioned galleries in Australia, modern art became the focus, as most contents could be sourced from private lenders and dealers, including works offered for sale in Australia. When the final exhibition was realised in 1953, it had taken four years of Hal Missingham’s resolute steerage, and overcoming of numerous travel-obstacles from the Public Service Board, to accomplish. Although organised through the collaborative AGDC meetings structure, the exhibition would never have been realised without his persistence in securing loans from owners (and some dealers) in Europe and the United States, including from the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Missingham’s ‘Foreword’ recorded the prominent role in first negotiations in Paris of Sydney art patron and businessman Charles Lloyd-Jones, and that the CAAB had agreed to federal costs-sharing with state galleries, ‘provided that its share did not exceed a sum of \$1,500’ (or c. \$AUD 86,000 in 2020 values).¹³⁶

Contrary to a recent academic judgment that Robert Menzies’ ‘attitude to modernism had become more tolerant by 1953’,¹³⁷ such support is not evidence of Menzies’ change in values (witness the Tate exhibition’s near-wreckage by the PM in 1960–1962 to maintain a conservative Australian selection, as described below). Commonwealth assistance was more likely because Labor Prime Minister J.B. Chifley’s support had earlier been guaranteed for the French exhibition, and Menzies would not have revoked a government commitment on a project already supported diplomatically by both lenders in France and the British Council’s office in Paris.

¹³¹ Heathcote, *A Quiet Revolution*, 1995, pp. 22–23.

¹³² Missingham, *They Kill You in the End*, 1973, p. 55.

¹³³ This would be equivalent to \$18,000 (RBA-calculated 2020 figures) recouped on the merely booklet-sized catalogue produced for the French exhibition – an outstanding economic and public-interest result among the modest state gallery publications produced in the 1950s.

¹³⁴ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, [‘Exhibitions’ section] p. 333.

¹³⁵ CID/AGDC#2, NAGNSW, Sydney, 18 Aug. 1949, Minutes, p. 2.

¹³⁶ RBA pre-decimal inflation calculator estimate, at <www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.html>, accessed 9 May 2020.

¹³⁷ Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, Philip Goad (eds), *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917–1967*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne University Publishing, Melbourne, 2006, p. 673.

Hal Missingham was crucially assisted in France by fellow-Australian Peter Bellew, then ‘of the Arts and Letters Division of UNESCO’, and Frank McKewan, a ‘fine arts officer of the British Council in Paris’.¹³⁸ On his successive visits to Paris these two men helped Missingham to access vital networks and introductions for loans, augmenting the selection’s range and inclusion of important artists, as sought for the exhibition’s impact. The project was the outcome of Missingham’s determination to bring to Australia an exhibition that could transform the position of state galleries in public engagement achieved through their own program-development – breaking the historical mould of Australian museums’ passively having received ‘package-shows’ from abroad, without local involvement in selection.

French Painting Today had been one of the first state gallery-initiated proposals to appear in directors-conference records (in the second meeting of 1949, and then planned for 1951).¹³⁹ Its final realisation in 1953 remained for some years a benchmark in the galleries’ post-War development of more ambitious concepts for securing exhibitions of foreign art for Australia from diverse sources. It provided the direct model (with Missingham again as organiser) for a subsequent exhibition of Italian art, *Italian Art of the Twentieth Century* (1956), and in retrospect was the leader in a series of single-nation exhibitions in the 1950s, ending with *Recent Paintings: Seven British Artists*, which came to Australia through the British Council in 1959.

French Painting Today also led to Missingham’s later achieving a comparable impact (and even more consequential in the Australian art historical record) for the *William Dobell* exhibition in Sydney in 1964, after a successful retrospective of Drysdale four years earlier. The impact of the Dobell exhibition produced the same institution-bursting crowds, sold-out catalogue-runs, and strain on public facilities in the Gallery as Missingham had achieved for French art in 1953. This was a transformative event in demonstrating Australia’s capacity for engagement with its own artists.

During the 1960s Missingham pioneered the exposure of three of the most important painters of our time, with full and magnificent retrospectives: Russell Drysdale in 1960; William Dobell in 1964; then ... in 1967, Sidney Nolan for Nolan’s 50th birthday.¹⁴⁰

Missingham’s commitment to living artists was the prelude to Australian artists gaining recognition in their lifetime for bodies of work that challenged accepted frameworks through their contents, transforming the *social imaginary*¹⁴¹ of how Australian audiences experienced their evolving culture through imagery produced by artists.

Robert Menzies’ values and academic conservatism may have won out in the cruel Sydney court decision achieved against William Dobell’s Archibald prize in 1944 (when J.S. MacDonald was prepared to serve as a prosecution witness). The judgment of ‘caricature’ rather than ‘portrait’ of Joshua Smith caused permanent damage psychologically for both Dobell and his friend, Smith. Yet Hal Missingham gained some just reversal of that public

¹³⁸ Missingham, *They Kill You in the End*, 1973, p. 54.

¹³⁹ CID/AGDC#2, NAGNSW, Sydney, 18 Aug. 1949, Minutes, p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ Lou Klepac, ‘Hal Missingham transformed the perception of art’, in *The Australian*, 17 Nov. 2017, marking the launch of Lou Klepac, Nat Williams and Peter Missingham, *Hal Missingham: Artist, Author, Photographer*, 2017.

¹⁴¹ The ‘social imaginary’ has been conceived sociologically as ‘the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective life’ (John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, Univ. of California Press, 1984, p. 6).

outcome years later, when Dobell's along with other retrospectives gained such an outstanding public response, bringing previously regarded 'modern artists' into a new presence as *contemporary artists*.

5.10 The role of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board/CAAB (1912–1972)

As gallery directors' shared objectives were first set out in 1948, there was an agreed need articulated for federal support financially.¹⁴² Throughout the 1950s directors sought support from the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (CAAB), which reported to the federal government in national arts matters. The influence of the CAAB over gallery affairs was decisive when it came to cooperative ventures and touring exhibitions. A clear grasp of its role and powers, and the resources it controlled, is crucial to contextual understanding of museums' collaborative work, and especially the mounting of exhibitions of Australian art and representation internationally.

The Commonwealth Art Advisory Board had emerged in 1912 as an adjunct to the (1911) Historic Memorials Committee, the latter drawn from political ranks and chaired by the Prime Minister (then Andrew Fisher).¹⁴³ The Memorials Committee was to decide on 'Votes for Historical Memorials for Representative Men';¹⁴⁴ and to mobilise official portrait commissions for this purpose (the first was of Federation's 'father' Sir Henry Parkes).¹⁴⁵ The Committee was also to guide the recording of significant national events (most famously, Tom Roberts' *Opening of the First Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia*, of 1903).



Tom Roberts, *The Opening of the First Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia* by H.R.H. The Duke of Cornwall and York (later H.M. King George V), May 9, 1901 Oil on canvas, Melbourne, 1903; on permanent loan to the Parliament of Australia from the British Royal Collection – on display Australian Parliament, Canberra.

Although the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board was created in the first instance as an ancillary body, to advise the PM's new Memorials Committee on suitable *artists* to be selected for official portrait commissions or memorials,¹⁴⁶ it soon took on a momentum and influence that reached across standards-setting for Australian art more broadly where any government patronage was involved. And it took an exceptional interest in any exhibitions that would represent Australian art internationally – for example, at the Tate Gallery in London (in 1961); or in the Biennale of Venice – where, after assisting works of William

¹⁴² CID/AGDC#1, NGV Melb., 25–27 Aug. 1948, Minutes, p. 1.

¹⁴³ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, op. cit., 'Commonwealth Art Advisory Board' [CAAB] entry, pp. 173–74; p. 173.

¹⁴⁴ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, ['CAAB' entry], p. 173.

¹⁴⁵ Frances Wong-See, *The Commonwealth Art Advisory Board from 1912 to 1926: Its role in the Australian Art World*, BA (Hons) thesis, Department of Art History, Australian National University, Canberra, 1991; NGA Library Reference copy, p. 12.

¹⁴⁶ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, ['CAAB'] entry, p. 173.

Dobell, Russell Drysdale and Sydney Nolan to be shown first in the Biennale (in 1954), and works by Albert Tucker (in 1956), the CAAB reasserted its influence in preferring the late Arthur Streeton's works to join Arthur Boyd in representing Australia in Venice in 1958.¹⁴⁷ This was to provide the first representation of Australia art in Venice, at the decision of the CAAB in 1948. These events bracket a period of the greatest influence of the CAAB, from the 1940s until the Whitlam Government's election in 1972, as detailed in the analysis below.



(L:) The Commonwealth Arts Advisory Board c. 1960. From left to right. Front row: Russell Drysdale, Valda Leeb (secretary), William Ashton. Back row: Daryl Lindsay, Douglas Pratt, William Dargie, Robert Campbell. Commonwealth Arts Advisory Board Meeting, Sydney, 13 May 1960. (National Archives of Australia [A463 1960/4313]). Image source: Sarah Scott monograph.) (R:) William (Will) Ashton, c. 1940s, photograph by Max Dupain (National Portrait Gallery, Canberra). William Ashton served 44 years on the CAAB (until age 81), with persistent hostility to 'modern art'.

Two state gallery artist-directors were the first approached for appointment to this advisory body – G.V. Mann in Sydney, and Bernard Hall in Melbourne. However, Hall declined, announcing that as a portraitist himself, such appointment could be at the cost of his receiving valuable commissions.¹⁴⁸ Mann (1863–1948)¹⁴⁹ was appointed, and retained his position on the CAAB for the next 46 years (the last 30 as Chairman);¹⁵⁰ his reign continued until 1948, the year of his death, aged 83. Will Ashton (1881–1963) was another long-serving member (44 years, 1918–62), Chair of the CAAB for 10 years (1953–1962)¹⁵¹ until shortly before his death, aged 82.¹⁵² J.S. MacDonald (1878–1952) was appointed to the CAAB in 1947, after being forced out of the directorship National Gallery of Victoria by chairman Keith Murdoch – following MacDonald's public vilification of the 1939 Herald loan exhibition of modern art that Murdoch had commissioned (work of 'degenerates and perverts' in MacDonald's flamboyant parlance) – as covered in Chapter 3.

Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (sample terms of service)

- GVF Mann (served 1912–48) – 46 years (30 as Chairman, until yr. of death, aged 83)
- Will Ashton (served 1918–62) – 44 years (10 as Chairman, until near-death, aged 82)
- J S MacDonald (app't by Menzies after NGV sacking; served 1947–52) – 5 years (2 as Chairman, until sudden death)
- William Dargie (served 1952–73) – 20 years
- Daryl Lindsay (served 1952–73) – 20 years (9 as Chair); CAAB disbanded by Whitlam, 1973

Robert. Menzies' longstanding favour and friendship to J.S. MacDonald shaped a new

¹⁴⁷ See complete list of Australian artists represented in the Biennale of Venice on the Australia Council website at <www.australiavenebiennale.com.au/venice-biennale/>, viewed July 2019.

¹⁴⁸ Wong-See, [*The CAAB*], 1991, op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁴⁹ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, 'Mann, [GVF]', entry, p. 465.

¹⁵⁰ Frances Wong-See, [*The CAAB*], 1991, op. cit., p. 22; see also McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, 'Mann, [GVF]' entry, ibid.

¹⁵¹ Katherine Harper, 'Ashton, Sir John William (Will) (1881–1963)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Vol. 7, 1979; online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ashton-sir-john-william-will-5071/text8457>.

¹⁵² Cited <www.menziescollection.esrc.unimelb.edu.au/biogs/E000085b.htm>.

public role for him after his forced exit from the NGV, when he was appointed to serve on the CAAB for five years (1947–52), the last four years as Board Chairman. It was only MacDonald's sudden death after a fall in 1952 that cut short this normally 'life appointment' tenure.¹⁵³ Portraitist William Dargie (1912–2003) subsequently served for 20 years 1952–1973,¹⁵⁴ two years as Chair, continuing until aged 60 when the CAAB was disbanded by the Whitlam government in 1973, to Dargie's public indignation. Meanwhile after J.S. MacDonald's death in 1952, Daryl Lindsay (then NGV director) and Robert Campbell (AGSA director) had been appointed to the Board.¹⁵⁵ Lindsay was soon knighted, later to become CAAB Chair in 1960, stepping down from this position in 1969 but remaining on the Board until the early-1973 Whitlam government disbanding. Artist Douglas Pratt had joined them in 1953;¹⁵⁶ and William Drysdale was a late appointment, as one of the last CAAB appointees from a long period of continuous conservative government control of national arts patronage.

Daryl Lindsay and Robert Campbell have a special place in this Chapter's analysis. When appointed by Menzies (both in 1952), Lindsay and Campbell were known public figures in art affairs, each sympathetic to Menzies' values, and would not have opposed his wishes – although Daryl Lindsay was much more robust and knowledgeable in what became his overarchingly influential role over two decades. Lindsay stepped down from the Chair only when he wanted more time for his own artistic work and some travelling, but remained on the board as *the* key figure steering the rationale, collection guidelines and vision for the realisation of the National Gallery (the 1966 'Lindsay Report' shaped the collecting future of the National Gallery, eventually to open in 1982).

Lindsay's consistency and ability to speak his mind on important matters was never in doubt to all who knew him. However, Campbell – in some relevant details in the state galleries' affairs – was a less robust figure in matters of principle. Robert Campbell was compliant when Menzies in 1958 requested him to present an exhibition of the artworks of Winston Churchill in Adelaide's state gallery and to organise a tour to other venues¹⁵⁷ – to the dismay of some fellow directors such as Hal Missingham, who was disgusted at such political manipulation. Campbell also played a discernibly devious role vis-à-vis his fellow directors in diverting already established negotiations with the Tate Gallery for an Australian exhibition in London (realised in January 1963) away from the AGDC's professional guidance, and bringing the project directly to the AGSA's control in partnership with the CAAB. This more

¹⁵³ See Wong-See, ['CAAB'], 1991, and Geoffrey Serle, 'MacDonald, James Stuart (Jimmy) (1878–1952)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp. 251–252.

¹⁵⁴ See <www.menziescollection.esrc.unimelb.edu.au/biogs/E000085b.htm>; William Dargie was knighted 'for services to art' in 1970.

¹⁵⁵ CSGD/AGDC#5, NGA, Adelaide, 10–11 July, 1952, Minutes, p. 6; McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, records that Robert Campbell (pp. 132–3) served on the CAAB until c. 1970.

¹⁵⁶ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, op. cit., 'Pratt, Douglas F.' entry, p. 579. Pratt also served on the CAAB, like Dargie and Lindsay, until the Whitlam government came to power in 1972. Russell Drysdale (*Encyclopedia of Australian Art* entry) was also a member of the CAAB (1962–72) during its late period, but his name doesn't feature in any of the actions described in this chapter. He seems not to have been involved in the most political value-contests waged under Menzies.

¹⁵⁷ 'Mr. Campbell, asked by the Prime Minister to organize this exhibition, reported that it had been arranged by the Commonwealth Government, who were responsible for all expenses.' (CSGD/AGDC#11, AGWA, Perth, 14–17 October 1958; Minutes, item 10, pp. 3/80.)

closely enabled Menzies' personal influence in selecting the artists – with some publicly ridiculed outcomes when trial-exhibited in Adelaide in 1962, before its later shipping to London, as analysed below.

The CAAB's patronage role, since 1911, had originally been a contained one: of inviting practising artists to join a committee to advise the government on other suitable artists to be commissioned for official portraiture and commemorative monuments. However, the Board (as carefully researched by critic Alan McCulloch) was later 'charged also with the responsibility of advising the Commonwealth government on the purchase of paintings which would become part of a national collection', and be housed in a 'national gallery' when eventually constructed.¹⁵⁸ In 1955 (under Menzies) the CAAB was given a further role, with an annual grant attached, to purchase paintings for Australian embassies abroad.¹⁵⁹ By the early 1960s – when Menzies had exercised political power variously since 1939, including the longest-ever term as Prime Minister (1949–1966) – the CAAB had experienced continuing expansion of its role, budget and purchasing powers, which enabled the widening influence of its decisions across the arts sector nationally.

This was not just a case of mission creep. It was the achievement of an Academy of Australian Art by stealth, through direct exercise of political power and financial patronage of the Commonwealth. As some exhibition case-studies demonstrate below, the 1950s and early 1960s witnessed the ultimate triumph of Menzies' 1937 aspirations for an Academy of art (minus the name, brocade, and royal charter).¹⁶⁰ The CAAB now had an overarching brief and increased financial resources from federal cabinet enabling it more assertively to steer cultural values at the national level. In art, it favoured styles of academic naturalism and constraint of all forms of 'extreme' modern art, which Menzies explicitly rejected.

The CAAB could partially contain inclusions of modern art in exhibitions of Australian art supported through the AGDC – by determining which projects for the state galleries' shared exhibitions interstate would be supported (and which not). The Board guided government patronage (through commissions) and controlled the image of Australian art in works (directly purchased) for display in embassies and Trade posts in foreign countries. And the CAAB also influenced the character of official representations of Australian art to represent Australia internationally – with any exhibition to be shown in Britain always being the highest target for its supervision. A further point merits attention. The CAAB's visual arts patronage over the greater part of the 20th century was entirely dispensed by a small group of men and it favoured male artists. Not a single woman artist was appointed to the Board in the 60 years of its existence. The most glaring exclusion was of Mary-Alice Evatt, the most internationally informed woman in the country about arts developments abroad since the 1930s, and herself having had artist-training in Sydney and Melbourne (and even exhibited

¹⁵⁸ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, ['CAAB' entry] pp. 173–74.

¹⁵⁹ McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1994, ['CAAB' entry] p. 174.

¹⁶⁰ For details of the Academy's founding and short-lived life, see in Chapter 3 (under section 3.11, 'RG Menzies and the founding of an Australian Academy of Art'). Menzies' scope of influence through the CAAB was even broader than the powers exercised in Britain in the period, where the Royal Academy (a privately funded organisation) and the Arts Council of Great Britain were quite separate bodies.

her work).¹⁶¹ Her Labor associations and support for modern art would have precluded her, no less than the impregnable masculinism of the CAAB patronage system.

5.11 Two exhibitions of Australian art in London: at the Whitechapel Gallery (1961), and Tate Gallery (1963)

The CAAB's powers, and exercise of a mandate overseen directly by the Prime Minister during Menzies' reign, can best be demonstrated through the gestation of two equally significant but very different exhibitions that represented Australian art in London in the early 1960s – and remarkably, presented only 18 months apart.

The Whitechapel Gallery exhibition, *Recent Australian Painting* (1961),¹⁶² was the earlier of the two, and put together in a brisk selection process by the Whitechapel's director, Bryan Robertson, during a visit to Australia in 1960. The enduring critique of this exhibition by Bernard Smith, first mounted in two Brisbane lectures a few months after the London opening, is taken up in detail in Chapter 7 – examining Smith's overarching influence on Australian art's history and critical values. Bernard Smith's critiques would never admit the actual success of the Whitechapel exhibition in engaging an interested London audience, which the politically-manipulated Australian exhibition sent to the Tate Gallery dissolved a year later.

In fact, the Whitechapel show's speedily-curated launch occurred within a larger unfolding of events, during which an exhibition at the Tate Gallery was discussed bilaterally at the diplomatic level over a decade. The gestation of this second exhibition involved numerous parties from England and Australia, with successive contests over its desired contents often arousing fierce local critiques, especially in Melbourne. A final exhibition determined by the CAAB – and utterly different from the Tate's original brief – opened in London in January 1963, with the title *Australian Painting: Colonial, Impressionist, Contemporary*.¹⁶³ An analysis of these exhibitions' interconnected background becomes clearer if the Tate exhibition is taken up first.

A major presentation of Australian art at London's Tate Gallery¹⁶⁴ had been mooted in AGDC directors' meetings since 1951 – and an earlier suggestion of a major Australian exhibition for London was mentioned as already under discussion in London through diplomatic channels as early as 1948.¹⁶⁵ An agenda item at the directors' Perth conference

¹⁶¹ Barbara Dale, 'Evatt, Mary Alice (1898–1973)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 14, MUP, Melbourne, 1996; online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/evatt-mary-alice-10132/text17887>.

¹⁶² *Recent Australian Painting*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, June–July 1961; catalogue essays by Kenneth Clark, Bryan Robertson and Robert Hughes; selection by Bryan Robertson, Director.

¹⁶³ Tate Gallery and Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (Australia) and National Gallery (Great Britain), *Australian Painting, Colonial, Impressionist, Contemporary / With commentaries by Clive Turnbull, Elizabeth Young, Daniel Thomas*, Commonwealth Art Advisory Board, Canberra, 1962; exhibition opened London, January 1963.

¹⁶⁴ Tate Gallery of British Art was the full name until 1954, when legislatively reconstituted to rationalise collections with the National Gallery and acknowledge the Tate's growing collection of modern European art; see <www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/glossary/tate>.

¹⁶⁵ CID/AGDC#1 meeting, NGV, Melbourne, 25–27 August 1948, Minutes, Item 2, p. 1. This is the earliest evidence of a discussion and proposal for a major exhibition of Australian art for London, which eventually moved on to involve John Rothenstein (Tate Director), and thereafter the possibility of an exhibition at the Tate Gallery.

that year framed a ‘Suggested Exhibition of Contemporary Australian Art’, with accompanying sketch-details: to contain some 60 works; to open at the Tate Millbank, before touring to ‘English Provincial Galleries’; and to be sponsored by the Arts Council of Great Britain.¹⁶⁶ The proposal was noted as having arisen from Tate Trustee, Sir Colin Anderson,¹⁶⁷ who maintained a keen interest in the project over following years (though later with increasing despair at political manipulation from the Australian side).

It is also clear from AGDC records that the directors decided this project needed time to be prepared properly when first raised; that it could be planned as a consolidated, high-quality exhibition of Australian art that might later travel to the United States, France ‘and other centres’ before returning home;¹⁶⁸ and a further – and significant – topic was on their minds: ‘perhaps with the addition of aboriginal art’.¹⁶⁹ The directors conjectured whether the exhibition could also be related to another objective on their agenda in the early 1950s: how to ensure an adequate representation of Australian art in the Biennale of Venice.¹⁷⁰ All these topics brought into consideration around the Tate exhibition proposal reveal the degree (within just three years) to which the directors’ meetings had gained momentum in rationalising, co-ordinating and improving both the quality and diversity of Australia’s organisation of Australian art exhibitions for presentation abroad.

The first influential champion of contemporary Australian art in London was undoubtedly Kenneth Clark, following his 1948–49 visit to Australia, organised by Prof. Joseph Burke when just settling into his new Herald Chair in Melbourne (as covered in Chapter 4). Clark’s subsequent support for Sidney Nolan, who had his first London exhibition at the Redfern Gallery in 1951, launched Nolan’s career at the highest levels. Clark’s generous personal backing (including hospitality at his home) ensured the artistic patronage and social connections that secured Nolan’s place as a significant artist within the British art scene for the remainder of his life.¹⁷¹ The later reputations of Russell Drysdale and Arthur Boyd in London can also be traced to the impact of Clark’s first meetings and encounter with their work in Australia (again, on Joseph Burke’s recommendation) in 1948. Meanwhile Clark’s continuing museum associations with the NGV, in particular, were consequential for years afterwards. Another aspect of Kenneth Clark’s enthusiastic experience of Australian art, landscape and culture in 1948 – and little known until recent research by Jaynie Anderson – was his seemingly profound engagement with Aboriginal art, and later unsuccessful attempt to have an exhibition of bark paintings presented by the British Museum (as examined in Chapter 6).

¹⁶⁶ CID/AGDC#4 meeting, AGWA, Perth, 21–23 November 1951, Minutes, p. 4/17, item 16A.

¹⁶⁷ AGDC#4 meeting, AGWA, Perth, 1951.

¹⁶⁸ AGDC#4 meeting, AGWA, Perth, 1951.

¹⁶⁹ AGDC#4 meeting, AGWA, Perth, 1951.

¹⁷⁰ AGDC#4 meeting, AGWA, Perth, 1951.

¹⁷¹ See Nancy Underhill, *Nolan: A Life*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2015; Nancy Underhill (ed.), *Nolan on Nolan: Sidney Nolan in his own words*, Viking Press, New York, 2007.

John Rothenstein (Tate Director 1938–1964)¹⁷² was the son of artist Sir William Rothenstein¹⁷³ who had been a close friend of Charles Conder (1868–1909).¹⁷⁴ This formed a background to Rothenstein's own 1938 biography of Conder, a project requiring extensive knowledge of the English artist's formative Australian years. In the 1950s, Rothenstein was impressed by the exhibition, *Twelve Australian Artists* when shown at New Burlington House (1953), which had included strong works by Drysdale and Dobell as well as Nolan's *Ned Kelly* series. There was also an approach in the early 1950s from the Australian High Commissioner to Kenneth Clark, raising the idea of a substantial exhibition of Australian art to expand on interest already aroused. Rothenstein's continuing support was nourished by his own interchanges with Australian artists, including Nolan and others, while he also 'kept in close contact with the three major British patrons of Australian art: Clark, Tate Trustee Colin Anderson and Whitechapel Gallery Director Bryan Robertson'.¹⁷⁵

A detailed study of the Tate exhibition's history by Sarah Scott (2008)¹⁷⁶ has invaluable linked archival records from the Tate Gallery, London, with CAAB records in the National Archives of Australia (NAA) in Canberra. Scott's research has provided important primary evidence of the negotiation and exchanges between Australia and London over some years towards a substantial exhibition of Australian art to occur at the Tate. The only omission in Scott's research was knowledge of the state gallery directors' records in Australia relating to the same events, and a little more contextual awareness of both the CAAB and the art museums sector at that time.

In 1959, John Rothenstein moved to lock in support for a prospective Australian exhibition in multiple directions. He made contact with the Felton Bequest's London advisor, John McDonnell, while also establishing personal contact with newly appointed NGV Director, Eric Westbrook (originally from England).¹⁷⁷ He then gained assurance through the High Commission that the CAAB would provide financial resources for the exhibition's selection and assembly in Australia, and its consolidated shipping to London. Finally, he secured Tate Trustees' support for what he had come to regard as 'the ever fascinating but alas ever distant thing an Australian exhibition at the Tate Gallery'.¹⁷⁸ All these strands are thoroughly documented by Sarah Scott.

However, by 1959, disputes behind the scenes of the exhibition's organisation were becoming bitter. This stemmed from several sources. Tense debates had arisen in Australia among artist networks about the desired character of an exhibition for the Tate. In 1957 the Contemporary Art Society (with continuing leadership of John Reed) made its own efforts 'to secure an Australian art exhibition at the Tate' – a prospective collaboration the Tate

¹⁷² <www.tate.org.uk/about-us/history-tate>, viewed 23 Sept. 2018

¹⁷³ <www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/sir-william-rothenstein-1874>, viewed 23 Sept. 2018.

¹⁷⁴ Ursula Hoff, 'Conder, Charles Edward (1868–1909)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 3, Melbourne University Press, 1969, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/conder-charles-edward-3249/text4913>.

¹⁷⁵ Sarah Scott, 'A colonial legacy: Australian Painting at the Tate Gallery, London, 1963', in *Seize The Day: Exhibitions, Australia and The World*, (eds) Kate Darian-Smith, Richard Gillespie, Caroline Jordan & Elizabeth Willis, Monash University ePress, Melbourne, 2008, pp. 19.1–19.22.

¹⁷⁶ Scott, 'A colonial legacy: Australian Painting at the Tate Gallery...', 2008.

¹⁷⁷ Eric Westbrook was appointed Director (following Daryl Lindsay's December 1958 retirement) in January 1956 (CSGD/AGDC#9), QNAG, Brisbane, 1–4 August 1956, Minutes, p. 14)

¹⁷⁸ Minutes, Tate Gallery 1959, first quarter, TGA. (quoted Scott, 'A colonial legacy...', 2008, and fn. 9).

Trustees eventually rejected, doubting that the CAS had ‘sufficient authority and resources to organize such an exhibition’.¹⁷⁹ Meanwhile there was rising indignation among key figures on the English side, as the CAAB made determined efforts to ‘historicise’ the whole project, thrusting the exhibition’s selection further back in time and diminishing contemporary art’s desired prominence. Tate archival records also make clear how perturbed the London side became by the Australian Prime Minister’s interference in the selection process. In addition to his conservative re-gearing of artists and periods, Menzies’ specifically political framework for the Tate exhibition is revealed in CAAB records – notably in a statement to the Board, that:

[I]t is about time we were known for our cultural achievements as well as our sporting prowess. We are looking for British immigrants. They should know that the things of the spirit mean something to Australia as well as material things.¹⁸⁰

Records unearthed by Sarah Scott in Tate Gallery archives also point to surreptitious behaviour in 1959 by AGSA director Robert Campbell. Campbell had already shown his compliance with Menzies’ wishes in art matters, with CAAB support, having only the previous year agreed to exhibit and speciously valorise Winston Churchill’s artworks in Australia.¹⁸¹ It seems that a 1959 letter from Tate Director Rothenstein came to Campbell when he would then (through a load-sharing principle of a rotating secretariat) have been managing AGDC directors’ correspondence between annual meetings.¹⁸² Rothenstein’s letter made clear the Tate’s wishes for a primarily contemporary exhibition, and that the state directors should guide selection of a quality exhibition. This letter was instead redirected (without fellow directors’ knowledge) to the CAAB, on which Campbell served and carried divided interests.¹⁸³ The diversion was then cemented by the CAAB’s action, as Scott’s study of correspondence disclosed:

The CAAB (over which Menzies had power of veto) assumed sole responsibility for the selection of works for *Australian Painting* even though they continued to reassure Rothenstein that the State Gallery Directors were still actively involved with the selection process.¹⁸⁴

The intent in this deception was to prevent involvement of the two state directors the Tate most sought within the AGDC group, as colleagues to ensure a strong contemporary outcome: namely, Hal Missingham and Eric Westbrook (with both of their galleries and staff seen as key partners). There is further evidence of the ideological contest at stake, as stated by CAAB’s Chairman William (Will) Ashton – artist member of the CAAB since 1918, and Chair

¹⁷⁹ See Tate Gallery archival document researched by Sarah Scott: ‘Exhibitions, 13 November–15 December 1957’, ‘Minutes’, Tate Gallery, 4, 1957, TGA.(quoted Scott, ‘A colonial legacy...’, 2008, and fn. 6).

¹⁸⁰ Menzies to the CAAB, January 1960, *Meeting of CAAB, Sydney Jan–Feb 1960*, A463, 1960/3022; *Tate Gallery Exhibition, London: Policy*, A463, 1967/2704, NAA.

¹⁸¹ CSGD/AGDC#11, AGWA, Perth, 14–17 October 1958, Minutes, p. 3, item 10: ‘Exhibition of paintings by Sir Winston Churchill. Mr. Campbell, asked by the Prime Minister to organize this exhibition, reported that it had been arranged by the Commonwealth Government, who were responsible for all expenses.’

¹⁸² Scott, ‘A colonial legacy’, 2008 (and fn. 12), records that Campbell redirected the Rothenstein letter to the CAAB.

¹⁸³ ‘Unbeknown to the Tate authorities ... CAAB member and the Chairman of the State Gallery Directors’ Council, Robert Campbell, took Rothenstein’s letter of request to the CAAB.’ (Scott, ‘A colonial legacy...’, 2008, and fn. 12). This action effectively removed further involvement of other state directors in influencing the selection, despite Tate Director Rothenstein’s prior direct dealings with the AGDC. This in part explains the later indignation and letters to the press by Hal Missingham and Laurie Thomas expressing their protest at the conservative selection.

¹⁸⁴ Scott, ‘A colonial legacy’, 2008.

since 1953. Ashton advised Menzies that if Missingham and Westbrook were involved, ‘the sort of art that people would be seeing [in London] would ... be the extreme modernistic type’, while instead, ‘the Commonwealth should be trying to prevent this sort of art leaving Australia and should [itself] be arranging for a Commonwealth exhibition to go abroad’.¹⁸⁵

The outcome was that the tasks of selection and preparation of the exhibition were allocated to Campbell (and the resources of a state gallery were secured by the CAAB, through diverting an ideological task to the AGSA director). At the AGDC meeting in Sydney of August 1960, hosted by Hal Missingham (with ‘Sir William Ashton’ listed as attending on behalf of the CAAB),¹⁸⁶ directors were unaware of Campbell’s subterfuge. Some attempted moderation against conservative historicism by the CAAB is recorded (one can hear the voice of Missingham): ‘Instead of [a] general historical approach’, the directors argued, it would be more effective ‘to concentrate the exhibition in three main sections, Early Australian Painting, a small but first-rate section of paintings by Conder, Streeton and Roberts, and a Modern section.’¹⁸⁷ However, the CAAB’s support for Menzies’ framework was already locked in, and now under Campbell’s direction. Meanwhile recently gallery-retired Daryl Lindsay, who would later become CAAB Chair,¹⁸⁸ could also be relied on for strong collections experience but containment of modernist extremes.

The concept of a discrete historical *introduction* – as originally proposed by Rothenstein – was extended to become an historical *survey* reaching back to the colonial period. The selection of modern and contemporary artists was then restricted (favouring more pallid examples in both categories). Rothenstein’s conception of an emphasis on contemporary art to engage the Tate’s audiences was ignored.¹⁸⁹ This progressively aggravated situation is crucial context for understanding how the Whitechapel exhibition came about. The extreme tensions played out across hemispheres (with cables between Australia House and the PM’s office in 1960) aired possible cancellation through the CAAB’s indignation at the Tate’s requests for a more suitable selection.¹⁹⁰

The Whitechapel Gallery, in East London, came into the picture quite suddenly. Director Bryan Robertson, well aware of all the machinations endured by Rothenstein and colleagues, wrote to Hal Missingham (with whom he was in good contact)¹⁹¹ informing him of a proposed lecture tour of Australia in 1960 to be organised by the British Council. This was a strategy by which Robertson himself would be able to survey the Australian art scene in the

¹⁸⁵ ‘Report to the Prime Minister’, 9 October 1959, *Tate Gallery Exhibition: Suggested List of Paintings*, A463, 1962/6836, NAA. (Quoted by Scott, 2008, with source cited in fn. 9.)

¹⁸⁶ CSGD/AGDC#13, AGNSW, Sydney, 15–19 August 1960, Minutes, item GB3, pp. 104–5.

¹⁸⁷ CSGD/AGDC#13, AGNSW, Sydney, 15–19 August 1960.

¹⁸⁸ ‘Lindsay was a member of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board for 20 years, 1953–73 (chairman 1960–69)’. See Bernard Smith, ‘Lindsay, Sir Ernest Daryl (1889–1976)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, MUP, Melbourne, 1986, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lindsay-sir-ernest-daryl-7759/text12457>, accessed 19 April 2019.

¹⁸⁹ Christopher Heathcote enlarges on Rothenstein’s expectations: ‘that a brief historical component [should] be included to contextualise local painting, and that the show’s emphasis would be on recent Australian art’ (Heathcote, ‘The Power Struggle: The Reaction Against Modernity’, in *A Quiet Revolution*, 1995, p. 147.)

¹⁹⁰ CAAB Meeting: Sydney, 13 July 1960, A463, 1960/5098, NAA – cited by Scott, 2008, fn. 16.

¹⁹¹ Robertson was noted to AGDC directors by Missingham as a then-adviser for AGNSW British and European modern art acquisitions – (CSGD/AGDC#12, TMAG, Hobart, 26–30 Oct. 1959, Minutes, p. 92).

spring of 1960¹⁹² and make a selection of contemporary artists, for which the Whitechapel would bear all costs and thereby bypass any interference from the CAAB or the Prime Minister's office. The exhibition's impetus was to reveal the increasingly lively contemporary art scene in Australia that the Tate exhibition was being manipulated by the CAAB to conceal. Sarah Scott's research has well probed these connections: 'Recent Australian Painting at the Whitechapel was organised in part as a corrective to the rumoured [character of the] Tate show'.¹⁹³

With Missingham's and Westbrook's help, a fast-moving itinerary was devised to ensure Robertson would have good access to contemporary artists and their works on a short visit. And with the Whitechapel project favouring work by living artists, very few loans would be needed from state galleries, as most works would be sourced from private collections, dealers, or the artists themselves.¹⁹⁴ The result was a speedily organised survey of contemporary Australian painting, which opened in East London in the summer of 1961.



Recent Australian Painting catalogue, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 1961; Bryan Robertson, Director, and Australian artists in the London installation; Brett Whiteley, one of the emerging stars of the show RHS.

The exhibition suffered in some evident respects, as such quick surveys by a first-time visiting curator are bound to do. It was notably too broad in its reach (although the breadth typically narrowed in the case of women artists included). Not all artists or works would prove of lasting value. Some had only just emerged and would vanish afterwards. However, there was sufficient strength present to amplify artists already known in London while setting them in a wider framework among their contemporaries.

The Whitechapel exhibition gained good attendances, artworld interest, critical reaction and press coverage. Although later condemned for the catalogue and frameworks by Bernard Smith (who had earlier approached Robertson, proposing his own concept and a different approach)¹⁹⁵ the Whitechapel exhibition was highly successful. Audiences in London came to see the art rather than read Robert Hughes' racy essay or misrepresentation of Australian art's lack of tradition as 'virtually ... a *tabula rasa*'¹⁹⁶ (which so incensed Smith). The Whitechapel exhibition consolidated English enthusiasm for Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd, Russell Drysdale and their contemporaries. More clearly than in any other Australian exhibitions of the period it excited interest in recent art emerging from a former British dominion that had been judged inferior and parochial in its art on previous occasions.

¹⁹² Bryan Robertson, in *Recent Australian Painting*, 1961, Whitechapel Gallery, London, June–July 1961, 'Preface', 5–12; p. 7.

¹⁹³ Scott, 'A colonial legacy', 2008, op. cit.

¹⁹⁴ CSGD/AGDC#13, AGNSW, Sydney, 15–19 August 1960, Minutes, item GB3, p. 106.

¹⁹⁵ Bernard Smith later provided a damning analysis of the Whitechapel exhibition's formulation (especially Robert Hughes' catalogue essay) in the two John Murtagh Macrossan Lectures (Brisbane, 1961), University of Queensland Press, 1962; republished in *The Antipodean Manifesto: Essays in Art and History*, OUP, Melbourne, 1976.

¹⁹⁶ Robert Hughes, in *Recent Australian Painting*, 1961, Whitechapel Gallery, London, June–July 1961, 'Introduction' [13–21], p. 14.

One further aspect of Bryan Robertson's interests (and discussion in his catalogue Preface) was the presence and role of *Aboriginal art* in the minds of Australian artists, which impressed him as recurrent and strong when he made his many studio and gallery visits in 1960. Robertson reminded audiences of '[p]art of Charles Mountford's collection of aboriginal bark paintings'¹⁹⁷ having been exhibited earlier at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London [n.d.]; and he elsewhere asserted that 'Australian artists feel a special bond with the aboriginal art of their country for it is the nearest thing to a tradition close at hand'.¹⁹⁸ This also doubtless inflamed Bernard Smith's severe contest in his Macrossan lectures critique about 'tradition' in Australian art, when back in Australia after the exhibition. However, this issue is taken up in a later analysis, dealing specifically with Smith's role as art historian and critic, and particularly in respect of his ideological exclusion of Aboriginal art – as examined in Chapter 7.

Meanwhile, the last stages in the beleaguered Tate exhibition's assembly were still being played out on the other side of the world. The story of Menzies' hand in the final stages is covered in Richard Heathcote's study of the 1940s:

Robert Campbell [had] assembled the show and the prime minister's office [had] sent a brief letter to state galleries to advise them that it was producing the exhibition.¹⁹⁹

Campbell then presented the result, 'provisionally titled Antipodean Vision', in the program for the 1962 Adelaide Festival of Arts, as a prelude to concluding the show destined for London. The Prime Minister launched the exhibition on 17 March, at an illustrious local gathering also marking the AGSA's new extension for special exhibitions. Menzies made clear his curatorial agency in achieving an historical survey of Australian art for an imaginary British audience of the past:



The Prime Minister of Australia, the Right Hon. RG Menzies opening the Festival Exhibitions in the New Wing of the Art Gallery of South Australia. 1962.

A proud Robert Menzies opened the exhibition ... The prime minister mentioned ... that he had a hand in the selection and made no apologies for its conservatism: 'I am a reactionary and a traditionalist,' he boasted.²⁰⁰

Meanwhile many forces in the Australian art world had become more resolute in their repudiation of Menzies' controlling ideology and the CAAB's regulation of federal patronage of art through an academy in all but name. Within a few weeks of the Adelaide 'outing' of the Tate show's planned selection, an affray erupted in Sydney and Melbourne press commentary. Protesting voices and letter-writers not only attacked the selection but targeted the CAAB's conservatism in more direct terms than on any previous occasion. Menzies'

¹⁹⁷ Robertson, *Recent Australian Painting*, Whitechapel Gallery, 1961, p. 5

¹⁹⁸ Robertson, *Recent Australian Painting*, Whitechapel Gallery, 1961, p. 11.

¹⁹⁹ Heathcote's sources for the public fracas over selection (*A Quiet Revolution*, 1995, op. cit., p. 147) were cited as: *Herald*, 28 Mar. 1962; [Max] Harris, *Nation*, 7 Apr. 1962; [Dawn] Sime, interview, 21 May 1989; Eric Westbrook, letter, *Herald*, 28 March 1962; and Hal Missingham, letter, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April 1962.

²⁰⁰ Heathcote, *A Quiet Revolution*, 1995, p. 148.

influence was confronted, not only for his manipulation but also his parochial ignorance of Australian art. In the Tate preview, the Impressionist-oriented works were shown to have omitted the pre-eminent figures, Phillips Fox and John Peter Russell (too modern, too French). Meanwhile the representation of Colonial art had stooped to callow aggrandisement of colonial officials and amateurs – again while excluding the best artists of the period:

In the colonial section, Campbell preferred a self-portrait by William Light, the first governor of South Australia, and four amateur watercolours by Simpkinson Wesselow, a relative of the first governor of Van Diemen's Land, to works by Earle, Strutt and von Guerard.²⁰¹

Normally moderate figures, such as Melbourne painter Arnold Shore and critic Allan McCulloch, were stirred to outrage. Fellow state gallery directors Hal Missingham and Eric Westbrook (as by-now vocal dissenters among Campbell's professional colleagues) wrote critical letters to newspaper editors about misrepresentation of Australian art for an English audience. The strongest broadside came from artist Albert Tucker, stating that 'taste in this country is being dictated by a group of men whose ideas have never progressed beyond the 19th century'.²⁰²

Following such public uproar, the 'Tate exhibition' contents were moderately adjusted by Campbell, and a further 'exit showing' of the final version was presented at the state gallery in Perth before being shipped to London.²⁰³ Through these further delays, the exhibition was finally opened in London not in 1962 (as scheduled) but in January 1963. Its impact was barely warm.



(L:) Sir John Rothenstein, Director of the Tate Gallery (LHS) in the Australian exhibition when installed; (R:) *A Brief Introduction to the Tate Gallery*, with exterior view of entrance.

The enthusiasm for Australian art in London was sealed as 'finished' with this exhibition's final appearance, which the Tate Gallery friends and supporters still graciously supported, despite Australia's politicised and disgraceful betrayal of professional trust from British colleague institutions. However, although Menzies and the CAAB had appeared to triumph in their objectives, this exhibition's realisation marked one of the greatest public humiliations at home for the role of both.

In fact it is possible to discern a change in relations already occurring through the spirited critique of the Tate exhibition's selection by three state gallery directors, now including Laurie Thomas who had been appointed to the state gallery in Perth in March 1952.²⁰⁴ Thomas attacked the adjusted Tate gallery selection by Campbell, since Menzies' disastrous launch in Adelaide, as having produced a lamentable neither-fish-nor-fowl result.²⁰⁵ However, The AGDC's conference held in Melbourne in 1961, with a now week-long agenda, incorporated a joint-meeting on one of these days with the CAAB (with only Will

²⁰¹ Heathcote, *A Quiet Revolution*, 1995, p. 148.

²⁰² Quoted by Heathcote, *A Quiet Revolution*, 1995, p. 147.

²⁰³ Tate Gallery, & Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (Australia), & Western Australian Art Gallery, *Australian Painting, Colonial, Impressionist, Contemporary*, Western Australian Art Gallery, Perth, 1962.

²⁰⁴ CSGD/AGDC#5, NGSA, Adelaide, 10–11 Jul. 1952, Minutes, p. 6.

²⁰⁵ CSGD/AGDC#14, NGV, Melbourne, 18–22 Sept. 1961, Minutes, p. 121.

Ashton and Douglas Pratt noticeably absent).²⁰⁶ The presence of the Board's Secretary, Mr J. McCusker, also indicated some determined effort to improve relations with the state galleries and contain any further public affray resulting from the Tate exhibition.

It was made clear to the directors (by Secretary McCusker) that there would be no further exercise of prime ministerial interference in exhibitions' content, and the CAAB alone would make future decisions on exhibitions' financial support.²⁰⁷ Meanwhile the directors recorded their views 'that they would like to pursue the same aims and be considered as equal partners with the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board in many enterprises'. Such forthright advocacy is evidence of a boldly empowered body of directors, with a wholly transformed sense of their own professionalism, authority and agency, in comparison with their subservience to governmental authority and even to their own trustees as was evident in records of the first AGDC meeting in 1948. The CAAB system was not surrendering the power that came with financial support on its side; but it was at least seeking to avoid future confrontation with the state galleries and the artworld.

However, reviewing Will Ashton's 1960 statements quoted above about the need for the CAAB to contain 'the extreme modernistic type' of art in Australia, the stumbling expression and ignorance of a century of art's advance are the least significant aspects of his views. More arresting is the bald assertion of ideology: the deliberate enunciation of censorship of modern art as one of the *tasks* of the Commonwealth Advisory Board in its management of Australian art's presentation internationally. As demonstrated in this chapter, the long-exercised power of political incumbency in determining public cultural values is laid bare in the Tate exhibition imbroglio. This is evident not only through effects of the 17-year duration of Robert Menzies' reign as Prime Minister, but also in the instrumental regulation of 'public taste' through Commonwealth patronage that he had contrived to steer personally over decades, following the failure of his short-lived 1937 Academy of Australian Art. The cabalistic nature of the CAAB's structure of control by a small group of conservative male artists is stark in its details. Will Ashton had been exercising his values and judgment within the CAAB since the final year of World War 1. And he had been *chairing* Commonwealth art patronage and funding decisions since 1953, the year Dwight Eisenhower was inaugurated as United States President and Joseph Stalin died in the USSR.

Ashton would be replaced by the end of the year of his capsular remarks on 'influence' by Daryl Lindsay as Chair (late in 1960). And Daryl Lindsay's 20-year service on the CAAB – animated by his long personal friendship with Menzies that had been shaped first by his older brothers Norman and Lionel Lindsay – would make Daryl the key figure to guide the CAAB's critical briefing documents for collections and eventual construction of the National Gallery in Canberra. Such was the controlling carriage of the CAAB's arts patronage by a few individuals throughout successive decades until 1972. Gough Whitlam's disbanding of the CAAB and installation by 1973 of an Australian Council for the Arts, seven artform boards and arms-length decision-making on programs and financial support, finally ended the

²⁰⁶ CSGD/AGDC#14, NGV, Melbourne, 18–22 Sept. 1961, Minutes (GB1- Cooperation with the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board), p. 122.

²⁰⁷ CSGD/AGDC#14, NGV, Melbourne, 18–22 Sept. 1961, Minutes, p. 121.

closed system of inscrutable exercise of ideology in Commonwealth patronage of the visual arts since the Edwardian era.

In reality, the ‘New Commonwealth’²⁰⁸ Menzies was trying to engineer in 1961, with the Tate exhibition used as a vehicle for his political presentation of a conservative Australian culture on a British stage in London, was already in a twilight of distorted reality. In 1961 the UK had already applied to join three crucial European Communities (for Agriculture, Customs and Atomic Energy) that would shape the pathway of its eventual entry to the European Union,²⁰⁹ and seal its forever-changed relations with British Commonwealth countries.

It was to the Edwardian era that the silhouette of Menzies’ academic patronage had always inclined. However, the energies of the state galleries’ stirring in the 1950s, and their new ventures in professionalisation and cooperative programming for public engagement in a rapidly transforming world, were to prove the most durable forces for advance of the *evolving nation* dynamics framed within this thesis project.

* * * * *

End of Chapter 5

²⁰⁸ The ‘British Commonwealth’, a political association today of 53 states, was originally formed by 7 members (the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Irish Free State, and Newfoundland). Menzies’ idea of a ‘new Commonwealth’ entailed cementing the original character of a group of nations celebrating their British inheritance, and he sought to play a leading role as Prime Minister of one of the founding Commonwealth members.

²⁰⁹ The most concise documentation of these key events can be accessed at <www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Economic_Community>.

Ch.6: Transforming heritage: Indigenous art and Australian art museums

- 6.1 The *longue durée* of Aboriginal art's recognition in cultural awareness
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Chapter 6:

Transforming heritage: Indigenous art and Australian art museums

6.1 The *longue durée* of Aboriginal art's recognition in cultural awareness

An elusive factor mapped across the history of Indigenous art's rise to prominence within Australian art and museums has been a greatly varying chronology invoked by researchers for a generally reported 'recentness' of this phenomenon. On one hand is the long-view judgment of anthropologist Howard Morphy in 2008:

It is easy to forget how recently this process of inclusion happened. Aboriginal art was barely recognised as a significant art form until the 1950s and it was not until the 1980s that it began to enter the collections of most Australian galleries, or gain widespread recognition as a significant dimension of Australian art.¹

A similarly sweeping overview was provided three years later by art historian Ian McLean in 2011:

When a history of Australian art that takes full account of post-contact Aboriginal art is eventually written, it will have to explain the long-term blindness of the artworld. Despite interest in Aboriginal art by some artists and anthropologists earlier in the twentieth century, and intermittent collecting by a few enthusiasts at some state galleries in the 1950s and 60s, artworld institutions were largely unmoved until the mid-1980s.²

The analysis below seeks to provide evidence that challenges such chronologies, whether from anthropology or from art history. In fact, wide discrepancies can be demonstrated not only *between* but *within* different disciplinary literatures to date.

Acceptance of Aboriginal art in the art museum has variously been projected as having occurred

¹ Howard Morphy, *Becoming Art: Exploring Cross-Cultural Categories*, University of New South Wales, 2008, p. 181.

² Ian McLean (ed. and intro.), *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art: Writings on Aboriginal Contemporary Art*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, and Power Publications, Sydney, 2011, p. 23.

in the 1940s,³ 1950s,⁴ 1960s,⁵ 1970s,⁶ or (most often) in the 1980s⁷ – the latter decade profiled by the embrace of Western Desert paintings on canvas as strikingly evident in both collecting and exhibitions presented in the 1980s. A purpose of this chapter is to establish a broader and more nuanced framework: to illuminate a *longue durée*⁸ of interconnected processes that occurred across various scenes of growing interest in Aboriginal people and awareness of Aboriginal culture throughout the entire 20th century, and to indicate how such impacts circulated both around and within art museums.

The analysis below argues that any historical overview of the impact of Aboriginal art (and interest in Aboriginal people) within Australian art circles must begin by tracing links that arose in the late-19th century: first, through examining the impact of the Colonial and International Exhibitions of the period; then noting effects of anthropologist Walter Baldwin Spencer's expeditions and researches in the public impact of his lectures and publications, as well as his interactions with the contemporary *artists* whom he collected, and their interest in Aboriginal subjects in part aroused by his expeditions and first-hand knowledge.

This chapter demonstrates that as early as the 1920s, the interest of Australian *artists* in Aboriginal subjects was gradually rising in degree and variety of impacts in the cultural imaginary, mainly through events traceable in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide. Such interest by artists and others involved in cultural and educational activities is then traced as increasing substantially in the 1930s and 1940s, while the cooperative planning of the Australian state gallery directors in the 1950s and 1960s (through the annual Australian Gallery Directors Conferences) lifted shared efforts towards the profiling and inclusion of Aboriginal art, as *part of* Australian art, to new levels of impact nationally. The 1970s and (more particularly) the 1980s then escalated awareness of

³ Daniel Thomas, 'Aboriginal Art as Art', *Art and Australia*, Vol. 13 (3), January-March, 1976, 281–2; p. 281. More recently, see Benjamin Thomas, 'Daryl Lindsay and the appreciation of indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, in the 1940's: "No mere collection of interesting curiosities"', *Journal of Art Historiography*, Number 4, June 2011, 1–32; published online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/thomas-on-daryl-lindsay1.pdf>.

⁴ The 1950s was marked by the important exhibition, *Australian Aboriginal Art: Arnhem Land Paintings on Bark and Carved Human Figures*, organised by Ronald and Catherine Berndt and presented December 1957–January 1958 in the Art Gallery of Western Australia for the Festival of Perth; and by Tony Tuckson's agency, along with Dr Stuart Scougall, in acquiring Yolngu bark paintings from Arnhem land and mortuary sculpture from the Tiwi peoples' islands for the AGNSW from the late 1950s onwards.

⁵ Angela Philp, 'Life and art? Relocating Aboriginal art and culture in the museum', in *reCollections: Journal of the National Museum of Australia*, Vol. 2 (1), 2007, 48–70, p. 50. The 1960s also encompassed planning for a National Gallery in Canberra (the 1966 'Lindsay Report' – see further in the present chapter) and planning led by Lindsay to include Aboriginal art within the Gallery's whole field of Australian art's collection.

⁶ The 1970s saw Sydney's AGNSW Captain Cook Wing extension opened (in 1972), which (under Tony Tuckson's leadership) included a special gallery for Aboriginal and New Guinean art; and the Tiwi Pukumani funerary poles (*tutini*) were mostly on permanent display thereafter in or near the Gallery's entrance court as a 'first impact' experience when arriving.

⁷ McLean, *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art*, 2011, op. cit. McLean highlights a curatorial change focused on the *Australian Perspecta 1981* survey exhibition (AGNSW, 29 May–21 June 1981; 63 artists; curator, Bernice Murphy) which positioned 3 large Papunya paintings prominently in a central position as 'contemporary art'.

⁸ The influence of the *Annales* school of French historians is broadly acknowledged here (as established in the 1950s and 1960s under Fernand Braudel's leadership of interconnecting studies of extended-time historical processes, based on close-focus analysis of local sources and records rather than broad overviews in received histories). See Braudel: '[T]he way to study history is to view it as a long duration, as what I have called the *longue durée* ... which by itself can pose all the great problems of social structures, past and present ... binding history to the present, creating one indivisible whole.' (Fernand Braudel, *Écrits sur l'histoire*, Flammarion, Paris, 1969; transl. by Sarah Matthews as *On History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980, Preface by Braudel, p. viii.) See also Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School 1929–89*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1990.

Aboriginal art's diverse developments to a remarkable degree, which mobilised the broad national transformations of Aboriginal (and by then Indigenous) art's inclusion as a primary signifier of Australia's cultural identity for the remainder of the century.

While Indigenous people themselves experienced the broad timespan encompassed very differently – in conditions of confinement through decades of racially-based regulation, repression and denied rights – it is important to build a picture of a slow but incremental momentum gathering behind many small, local instances of changing awareness that also reverberated throughout art, literature, dance, poetry, and even including music, marking broader effects in public consciousness. These changes spread slowly through the early-20th century within the wider social imaginary of nation, attaining a dramatic acceleration in the 1970s and 1980s. Meanwhile, for a thorough exposition of the development of the category 'Aboriginal art' in the 19th century (with tentative beginnings in the 1840s and extending to 1929), the 2018 monograph by Susan Lowish covering this field is noted as an essential resource.⁹

6.2 Models of *Primitivism*, 1: Western antiquity to modern art

There are many different strands to the concept of the primitive within the larger history of *western* art, and in particular reference to modern art's development within the 20th century. The upsurge in literature on Primitivism¹⁰ concerning art and museums in recent decades has largely been generated concerning institutions and cultural history in Europe and the United States – then transferred elsewhere. However, a greater particularisation is needed when transposing arguments within the extensive international literature on Primitivism to the Australian context, as covered in (6.3) below. But first it is necessary to provide a brief historical review of Primitivism as a concept in art history.

Whether denoting a rustic *arcadian* vision of a distant past (idealising the ancient Greek rural province of Arcady,¹¹ or the much-admired 'Italian Primitives' of 13th- 14th- and 15th-century painting prior to the spatial and humanist revolution of the Renaissance), 'primitive' epithets in art's history have numerous connotations. The concept of a 'primitive' *stage* in stylistic development had a history of positive reference, mostly applied to peoples *within* western-related art traditions and historiography; and in the case of pre-Renaissance Italian art history often applied to deeply admired 'master' artists of the era (such as Giotto). Many primitivising concepts circulating within

⁹ Susan Lowish, *Rethinking Australia's Art History: The Challenge of Aboriginal Art*, New York & Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018, Ch. 2, 'Exploration and Discovery'; available online through National Library of Australia at <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1752803>>.

¹⁰ See especially James Clifford, 'Histories of the Tribal and the Modern', *Art and America*, 74(4), April 1985, reprinted in James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1988, 189–214; James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1986, and see especially Clifford's useful historiographical overview of anthropology in his Introduction, pp. 1–26; Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Objects of Ethnography', in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds) *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 1991, 386–443; Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1991; George Marcus and Fred Myers (eds), *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995; Shelley Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998 – esp. Ch. 2, 'What Became Authentic Primitive Art?' 70–101 [orig. publ. in *Cultural Anthropology*, 9(2), May, 1994, 201–226]; Jack D. Flam (ed.), with Miriam Deutch, *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003.

¹¹ Most famously, in Nicolas Poussin's neo-classical *Et in Arcadia Ego* (1637–38; Musée du Louvre), or the classicised landscapes of Claude Lorrain, which had an evident influence on John Glover's paintings in Tasmania.

western art and cultural history for centuries had nothing to do with peoples of other continents, ethnic traditions (or so-called 'tribal' societies) that became the focus of quite new concepts of 'primitive' cultural conditions after the incursions of 19th century science.¹² The shift in meaning towards a primitivism implying an early-stage development in human society occurred when impacts from evolutionary science began to theorise primordial stages of social formation. Such concepts from evolutionary science then retrojected contemporary living peoples into a stratified past of stadial human evolution (most specifically in E.B. Tylor's 1871 three-stage schema, analysed in Chapter 2, and mentioned briefly below).

Concerning the late-19th century German scholarly milieu, in the period that might be called the forcing-house of a scientific art history, there was a renewed attention to the 'primitive' origins of society and cultural development. This interest now had two impulses. On one hand new concepts arose through what Ernst Gombrich described as 'that powerful trend in nineteenth-century thought which tried to apply the findings of modern science to the subject matter of the humanities'.¹³ At the same time much attention was directed to new inquiries into ancient Greek mythology and its origins within an earlier 'primitive' stage of western civilisation itself. While drawing intensively on philology, the new social sciences seemed to provide tools to unlock revolutionary understandings of the origins of humankind through sharpened attention to ancient myths.

Within art historical attention to these new questions at the end of the 19th century, as Gombrich noted in his biography of Aby Warburg, '[p]sychology and anthropology seemed to offer the key to the classics which a student of Greek civilization could only disregard at his peril'.¹⁴ In pursuing ancient myths with a new archaeological interest in the thought patterns and ideas (the *Vorstellungen*, or mental images) they encompassed, cultural scholars brought classical mythology into several new frameworks of inquiry simultaneously. One interest was the idea of ancient myths delivering evidence of specific concepts of the supernatural; a second concern was to align such study with an exploration of the origins of religion; a third interest entailed linking these inquiries to the emergent science of psychology and its clinical partner, psychoanalysis – in other words, not only to investigate the origins of social systems and beliefs but to gain new understanding of the development of the human mind itself, and the formation of *subjectivity*. Through the intersections of these interests, both art historians and leading theorists in the nascent social sciences (in ethnology, anthropology, and sociology) were drawn to new theorisations of 'primitive' stages within human cultural, social and psychological development. Meanwhile at the end of the 19th century, the emergent disciplines constituting art history as a new field of academic study (especially through the University of Vienna) were suddenly expanding to address new forms of 'developed' and 'primitive' art simultaneously:

¹² See discussion below of concepts gathered in the volume by Jack Flam with Miriam Deutch (eds), *Primitivism and Twentieth-century Art: A Documentary History*, 2003, op. cit.

¹³ E. H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography (With a Memoir on The History of the Library, by F. Saxl)*, The Warburg Institute, University of London, London, 1970, p. 28.

¹⁴ Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 1970, op. cit., p. 28. Gombrich, however, was clear about Warburg's having absorbed evolutionary science's construction of the Other, when attention turned to peoples outside the West, and especially in relation to Warburg's (later famous) travel to the United States in 1895-6, and his encounters in a Hopi village – see Claire Farrago, 'Silent Moves: On Excluding the Ethnographic Subject from the Discourse of Art History', in Elizabeth Mansfield (ed.) *Art History and its Institutions: Foundations of a Discipline*, Routledge, London & New York, 2002, 191-214.

The entire field of art history had expanded in the nineteenth century. By 1906 there was a greater appreciation of non-Western art, including the “developed” art of China, Japan, India, and Persia as well as the “primitive” art of Australia, New Zealand, Africa, and the Americas, not to mention smaller groupings.¹⁵

Turning to the 20th century, the deployment of Primitivism as a construct in relation to art and culture typologies is more complex. However, the concept has regularly been misinterpreted in relation to indigenous arts, especially through anthropology-based critiques of art museums’ purported rejection of non-western cultural objects from frameworks validating ‘art’.¹⁶ In an earlier quest to historicise the term’s usage in the modern period, New York MoMA-curator William Rubin, in detailed research for his large 1984 exhibition, *‘Primitivism’ in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*,¹⁷ began with an etymological review. Rubin established that the term ‘*primitivisme*’ first appeared in the French *Nouveau Larousse* only in 1897; the authoritative dictionary listed 16 definitions, only two of which were pejorative; meanwhile the sole fine arts definition was value-neutral.¹⁸

The foregoing review forms the background to an important clarification – and indeed rebuttal developed in this chapter – of a general claim made variously by anthropologists in recent years: that the art world was entirely responsible for the invention of ‘primitive art’ as a concept implying a derogatory view of non-western peoples; and that anthropology had no part in the history of such primitivising concepts.¹⁹ As has been shown above, and argued in more detail earlier in Chapter 2 of this thesis, there is simply too much counter-evidence to the contrary (in both cases) for such claims to be maintained.

The primitivisation of non-western indigenous peoples ‘discovered’ through western exploration was universally propelled by formulations of the 19th century about early-stage human societies, as articulated through evolution-based western science. Furthermore, the scientific expeditions and publications of Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen, especially those on the *Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899)²⁰ and the later (1904) *Northern Tribes*²¹ of Australian Aboriginal peoples, were hugely influential in Europe. As analysed in Chapter 2, Australian research with Centralian

¹⁵ Richard Woodfield, ‘*Kunstwissenschaft* versus *Ästhetik*: The Historians’ Revolt Against Aesthetics’, Ch. 1 in Francis Halsall, Julia Jansen, and Tony O’Connor (eds), *Rediscovering Aesthetics: Transdisciplinary Voices from History, Philosophy, and Art Practice*, Stanford University Press, Stanford CAL, 2009, 19–33, pp. 20–21.

¹⁶ See especially Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, 1989, op. cit., and Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 1990.

¹⁷ The exhibition was shown at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (27 September 1984–15 January 1985). The present author visited the exhibition during its closing weekend in January 1985.

¹⁸ Rubin’s analysis disclosed 16 definitions current in the 1897 *Nouveau Larousse*, only two of which were pejorative – one of these marked as an ‘ethnological’ use (already from an emergent anthropology), and referring to comparatively ‘less-civilised’ people (‘*Les peuples qui sont encore au degree [corr. ‘au degré’] le moins avancé de civilisation*’). Meanwhile the ‘fine-arts’ definition of ‘primitive’ in *Larousse* at the threshold of the 20th had no negative connotation, noting the term’s use only in relation to the pre-Renaissance period in European painting (‘*Artistes, peintres ou sculpteurs qui ont précédé les maîtres de la grande époque*’). See William Rubin, ‘Modernist Primitivism: An Introduction’, in *‘Primitivism’ in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, Museum of Modern Art, 2 Vols., New York, 1984, fn. 17.

¹⁹ Howard Morphy’s opening sentence of his still much-quoted essay was unhesitating in its judgment of art museums and ‘the art world’: ‘One of the great embarrassments confronting the art world in the postcolonial context is the recent history of the exclusion of much of the world’s ‘artistic’ production from the hallowed walls of the fine art galleries of the West.’ (Howard Morphy, ‘Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery’, *Humanities Research*, Australian National University, Canberra, Vol. 8(1), 2001, pp. 37–50, p. 37. See also Morphy’s later resumption – and temporising of his arguments – in *Becoming Art: Exploring Cross-Cultural Categories*, 2008, op. cit., p. 175; and note his continuing adduced support of Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, 1989, op. cit.

²⁰ W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1899.

²¹ W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, Macmillan, London, 1904.

Aboriginal peoples had a prominent impact in European intellectual expansion of new scientific fields: especially through Baldwin Spencer's fieldwork absorbed within both Émile Durkheim's theorisation of Aboriginal totemism as 'the most primitive' religion known,²² and Freud's *Totem and Taboo*,²³ which was notably sub-titled *Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*.

By the early-20th century, an emergent anthropology was still distinguished by the theorisation of a prior stage of social development in its discussion of recently 'discovered' peoples, and this invariably involved projection of mental conditions of extreme alterity upon newly studied Others. Such a process influencing art concepts was analysed by American art historian Jack Flam and colleagues to provide (in 2003) a significant chronology of *Primitivism and Twentieth-century Art*, through identifying and sampling key texts that formed a generalised trope of primitive culture concerning non-western indigenous peoples.²⁴

A widely influential early-20th century work (because of his influence in both his native Germany and his adoptive United States) was Franz Boas's publication, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, which appeared in 1911,²⁵ followed by his *Primitive Art* in 1927.²⁶ However, Boas's early Darwin-influenced frameworks shifted into a strong rejection of evolutionary determinism in favour of his influential relativist model of multiple, co-existent societies moulded by culturally-prioritised choices and environmentally-responsive local adaptation.²⁷ Following his relocation from to the US from Germany (escaping Nazism), Boas's influence on the development of both anthropological fieldwork and ethnography-based museum displays in the United States entailed a list of illustrious American graduates (Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead²⁸ among the most famous) who produced an 'anthropology academy' of ethnography-framed narratives and representational displays through decades of twentieth-century collection vitrines and dioramas in natural history museums.

²² See Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* [1912], Collier, New York, 1961. Durkheim derived much primary material for his notion of 'early human society' from Walter Baldwin Spencer's and Frank Gillen's published works on central Australian Aboriginal peoples in 1899 and 1904. Durkheim is cited in Tony Bennett (*Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004, pp. 8–9 and fn. 5, p. 190) for the former's observation that Australian Aboriginal totemism formed 'the most primitive and simple religion which is actually known'. (Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* [1912], op. cit., p. 13).

²³ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* [1913]; Authorised transl. Dr A.A. Brill, Vintage, New York [1918], 1946.

²⁴ Flam with Deutch (eds), *Primitivism and Twentieth-century Art: A Documentary History*, op. cit., 2003. Flam's list includes key 19th century scientific texts clearly forming Primitivism as a trope: Edward Tylor's two-volume *Primitive Culture* (1871); Swedish ethnographer Hjalmer Stolpe's publication, *On Evolution in the Ornamental Art of Savage Peoples* (1890); Alfred Haddon's *Evolution in Art* (1895); Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's several works: *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (1910), translated as *How Natives Think* (1926), *La Mentalité primitive* (1922) translated as *Primitive Mentality* (1923), and *L'âme primitive* (1927), translated as *The 'Soul' of the Primitive* (1928).

²⁵ Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, Macmillan, New York, 1911.

²⁶ Franz Boas, *Primitive Art* [1927], Dover, London, 1955. (First published H. Aschehoug & Co. Oslo, 1927, and Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1927.)

²⁷ See Jerry Moore, 'Franz Boas: Culture in Context', *Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists*, Altamira, California, 2009, 33–46.

²⁸ Benedict is notable for her insistence on a 'situated' cultural analysis in all interpretations of cultural thought and performance (in her influential *Patterns of Culture*, 1934). Mead's 1928 *Coming of Age in Samoa*, and 1930 *Growing up in New Guinea* remained widely influential, despite later controversy about her first monograph; meanwhile her *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935) had a powerful impact on emergent feminist thought within anthropology. It is notable, however, how Mead reinforced the idea of 'primitive societies' within 20th century anthropology.

6.3 Models of *Primitivism*, 2: The Australian context

In many respects the situation in Australia needs to be distinguished from international Primitivist discourses of art, while acknowledging that they did have some impact. For variable reasons of cultural delay,²⁹ resistance,³⁰ and even counter-history³¹ to advanced European or American developments elsewhere, Australian consciousness of Primitivism in art was always distinctively mediated by local conditions. Meanwhile, unlike Europe and the United States, there was never a substantial Primitive Art market in Australia in the first half of the twentieth century to promote the development of art collections. The sociology of art movements in Europe – such as Surrealism, Expressionism and Cubism, and their social support through sophisticated, often affluent patronage of artistic avant-gardes – had almost no counterpart in Australia.

This is not to say that no primitivising concepts of the culture of others were in play in Australia, for certainly there were. And such concepts often carried a pernicious undertow of social ostracism when passing through the politically textured discourse of a country with a largely disinherited Indigenous population, and concepts of racial miscegenation like ‘half-caste’, ‘quarter-caste’ and ‘octoroon’ in circulation.³² Meanwhile the 1901 White Australia policy remained in place for a remarkable duration – meriting some comparison with the governmental racism of apartheid in South Africa – until the Australian policy’s gradual erosion in the mid-20th century, and final legislative repudiation in 1975.³³

Themes of Primitive art, when relocated to Australia, therefore played not into a salon culture of sophisticated surfeit (as in Paris, Berlin or New York), but a colonial condition of legal restriction, deprivation and segregation. Projections of ‘Primitive art’ often arose through a troubling historical discomfort about the indigenous Other repressed within. Instead of the exuberant anti-colonial irony suggested in the Surrealists’ distortions of the real – in the 1929 international Surrealist Map of the World, with Australia dwarfed by New Guinea – Australia was engaged in a more sharply local mapping of intercultural relations, with a cartography of *terra nullius* erasing First Nations’ continuing claims to Country.

²⁹ Early general histories of Australian art adhered to an emulative model/delay structure in framing Australian art’s absorption of influences (whether British values earlier, or later, European modernism) from abroad: see variously William Moore, *The Story of Australian Art*, 2 vols., Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1934; Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting, 1788-1960*, Oxford University Press, 1962, & subsequent, rev. editions; Robert Hughes, *The Art of Australia*, rev. ed., Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970.

³⁰ Lionel Lindsay’s *Addled Art* (Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1942); and texts by James (J.S.) MacDonald have been dealt with as primary documents in Chapter 3 – along with the study by John F. Williams, *The Quarantined Culture: Australian Reactions to Modernism 1913-1939*, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

³¹ Humphrey McQueen, *The Black Swan of Trespass: The Emergence of Modernist Painting in Australia to 1944*, Alternative Publishing Company, Sydney, 1979. See also Terry Smith, *Transformations in Australian Art: The Twentieth Century – Modernism and Aboriginality*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 2002, p. 33.

³² See Geoffrey Gray, ‘We Know the Aborigines are Dying Out’: Aboriginal People and the Quest to Ensure their Survival, *Wave Hill Station, 1944*, *Health & History*, Vol. 16(1), 2014, pp. 1-24.

³³ The Immigration Act of 1901 (securing the ‘White Australia policy’ since Federation) was maintained until a gradual erosion of its provisions between 1949 and 1966, and the final demise of race as a criterion for social policy with the passing of the Racial Discrimination Act of 1975.



Le Monde au Temps des Surréalistes (The Surrealist Map of the World), anonymous author, published *Variétés*, Brussels, 1929

There was by the 1920s an element of guilt circling in national consciousness about repression of Aboriginal people and how this might appear on a world stage:

After World War 1 a number of humanitarian and missionary leaders became disturbed by actual and likely overseas criticism of Australia's treatment of Aboriginal people, and therefore of its fitness to administer New Guinea.³⁴

To make such distinctions is by way of indicating a need neither to bring issues of presumed *emulation* nor predictable *delay* to questions of international influences on Australian art's history. It is necessary instead to address how international interest in the world's non-western cultures (as inspiration for modern art) met a specific historical setting in Australia, which often resisted, changed, or repressed such external influences (as analysed in Chapter 3, concerning the 'quarantining' character of many cultural attitudes in the 1920s and 1930s).

Meanwhile anthropology in Australia, in historically having shaped the concept of Aboriginal people as linked to a 'primitive' stage of social evolution, had inevitably furnished a literature and constellation of ideas from which the notion of Primitive art was expanding – and applied in other disciplines and cultural settings, including in state museums. Moreover, Australian anthropologists did not just passively witness the transposition and adoption of the concept of Primitive art by the literature and institutions of art, but had themselves provided a corroborating analysis and language for the emergence of such concepts as applied to Aboriginal art. Archaeologist John Mulvaney has noted how strong was the legacy of Australian fieldwork in forming concepts of Aboriginal life and culture by the beginning of the century: 'By 1903 the works of Spencer and Gillen [had been] coupled with those of Fison and Howitt, as evolution-given Australian quarries'.³⁵ The legacy is also demonstrated later in this chapter in the case of the 1929 exhibition of *Australian Aboriginal Art* (in Melbourne) – and Sydney anthropologist A.P. Elkin's lecture on the opening evening about Aboriginal art as 'primitive art'.

6.4 19th century International Exhibitions and their impact on museums

In addition to events that can be highlighted within museums, examination of Aboriginal art's occasional *museal*³⁶ appearances in the later-19th century must include analysis beyond the walls of

³⁴ Deborah Edwards and Rose Peel with Denise Mimmocchi, *Margaret Preston*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2005, fn. 114, p. 292.

³⁵ Mulvaney, D.J. and J.H. Calaby (1985). 'So Much That Is New': Baldwin Spencer, 1860–1929, *A Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, p. 215. See also Patrick Wolfe, 'On Being Woken Up: The Dreamtime in Anthropology and in Australian Settler Culture', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 33, 1991, pp. 197–224, noting appendix, 'Principal Accounts of the Textual Origins of the Dreamtime and the Alcheringa', p. 281 ff.

³⁶ The term 'museal' is commonly used in European museology – but mostly only in theoretical texts in English – with an inflection of 'museum-like', or 'as in museums'.

newly-emergent museum institutions of the period.³⁷ These connections encompass an important recognition that there are technologies of display and interpretation of scientific and cultural objects that occur beyond museums alone, while having a typological relationship to the museum as an institution. This is relevant to understanding of the International Exhibition displays of the 19th century, which had such a strong relationship both to imperialism and the formation of colonial museums.³⁸ Such evident relationships delineated a particularly dynamic period of the performance of Empire and its spatially extended power of cultural influence through colonialism (as demonstrated in Chapter 1).

Various materials displayed at such International Exhibitions often later became part of museum collections – notably in Melbourne University, Professor Frederick McCoy's collecting of Aboriginal material from the 1880 exhibition in Melbourne, with further context below. Some cross-references to such associated practices and forms of public presentation of objects – and associated constructions of knowledge – are needed to register the parallel presence to emergent museums of the large International Exhibitions³⁹ realised in the southern Australian colonial capitals. In nearly all cases these exhibitions displayed some aspects of Aboriginal culture.⁴⁰



L: View from the Knightsbridge Road of The Crystal Palace in Hyde Park for Great International Exhibition: Read & Co. Engravers & Printers, 1851; C: Interior view around enclosed tree; R: Queen Victoria opening the Great Exhibition, 1851.

The international expositions of the late 19th century in Australia, following the prototype of London's Great Exhibition of 1851,⁴¹ emulated the succession of large expositions realised in an intense momentum in Europe and the United States (to which Australia also contributed Aboriginal material). In these various contributions⁴² it is possible to trace the beginnings of a projection of Aboriginal culture as *unique* among the world's indigenous cultures – a process that is now being

³⁷ See the now-classic post-colonial anthology of essays on these relationships: *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, (eds) Ivan Karp & Steven D. Lavine, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, 1991.

³⁸ See Penelope Edmonds, "We think that this subject of the native races should be thoroughly gone into at the forthcoming Exhibition": The 1866–67 Intercolonial Exhibition'. *Seize the Day: Exhibitions, Australia and the World*, Kate Darian-Smith, Richard Gillespie, Caroline Jordan and Elizabeth Willis (eds), Monash University ePress, Melbourne, 2008, pp. 4.1–4.21. See also Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993.

³⁹ See Angus Trumble, 'Exhibitions' entry, in (eds) Graeme Davison, John Hirst, Stuart Macintyre et al., *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998, 230–31.

⁴⁰ See Graeme Davison, 'Exhibitions', *Australian Cultural History*, vol. 2 (1983), 4–21; and a special edition of *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 14.56 (1995), 'Victoria at the Great Exhibitions 1851–1900'.

⁴¹ *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations*, Hyde Park, London (1 May–15 October 1851). The iron and glass Crystal Palace – an 'infinitely extensible' structure (see Donald Preziosi in the present chapter) – was erected in nine months.

⁴² For the Exposition form in the 20th century, see Ann Stephen, 'Designing for the world of tomorrow: Australia at the 1939 New York World's Fair', *Recollections*, Vol.1(1), National Museum of Australia, Canberra, March 2006, 29–40; online <http://recollections.nma.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/332629/designing_tomorrow.pdf>.

intensively researched and reconnected into a more multi-sided understanding of these successive acts of colonial self-representation over a long period.⁴³

However, the format of the International Exhibition also merits brief attention at the level of theoretical analysis, for its impact on the *museum* form. These Expositions presented a new configuration and dramatic experience of industrialising modernity. They were distinguished not only by their size but also by a spectacular⁴⁴ and *hyperreal*⁴⁵ congregation of marketed products, technologies, and even diverse peoples, brought into a common space of display and interchange of projective ideas. Art historian Donald Preziosi has highlighted these changes inaugurated by the Crystal Palace setting, which produced ‘the most lucid and encyclopedic organization of ... modernity’,⁴⁶ while introducing a ‘performative genre ... in the theatre of modernist nationalism and hypermodernist globalization’.⁴⁷ Preziosi regards the London exhibition as pivotal for a new, more collectivised social imaginary that exceeds single national identities, arguing:

In this extraordinary building, the largest in the world up to that time, and one which could have been extended indefinitely, the products of virtually all nations on earth were displayed in pavilions defined by temporary screens, all within a grid of support columns ... [presenting] a three-dimensional model of an abstract system of classification, capable of absorbing, exhibiting, juxtaposing, and comparing anything with anything.⁴⁸

This was a new representational creature: a temporary, ‘museal’ presentation of a vast accumulation of object-diversities, industrial technologies, and indexical displays of source cultures from which new products and raw materials were derived by colonial powers.⁴⁹ The Crystal Palace exhibition, encompassing elements of both nationalism and industrial modernity, formed a kind of theatricalised *Imperium in extenso*, overarching and interconnecting a vast archipelago of products from colonies and dispersed territories in the British domain. Particularly relevant to emergent museums: the Exposition’s form created huge structures incorporating new industrial materials and technologies to extend the spatiality, typological variety, and topographical panorama of displays. Not only did many products from 19th century Expositions end up in museums. The displays (especially of diverse items from different cultures) influenced a kind of *museal ethnography* for

⁴³ See Louise Douglas, ‘Representing colonial Australia at British, American and European international exhibitions’, in *Recollections*, vol. 3, no. 1, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, March 2008, <http://recollections.nma.gov.au/issues/vol_3_no_1/papers/representing_colonial_australia>. See also Susan Lowish, ‘International and Colonial Exhibitions’, in Lowish, *Rethinking Australia’s Art History*, 2018, op. cit., Ch. 7, ‘Collecting and Exhibiting: The Dawn of ‘Primitive Art’’, (online).

⁴⁴ See Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* [Fr. 1967], transl. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Zone Books, MIT Press, New York, 1994.

⁴⁵ See Ryszard W. Wolny, ‘Hyperreality and Simulacrum: Jean Baudrillard and European Postmodernism’, in *European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, Vol. 3(3), May-August 2017, online at <http://journals.euser.org/files/articles/ejis_may_aug_17/Ryszard.pdf>; and for Baudrillard’s earlier theorisation of social spectacle undermining factual reality, in his concept of the *hyperreal*, see Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, Sage Publications, New York, 1998. However, note the earliest theorisation of a new kind of modernist spectacle, as experienced by the strolling metropolitan *flâneur*, in Walter Benjamin’s unfinished *Passagenwerk*, or Arcades Project, worked on variously between 1927 and 1940: see Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, transl. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Belknap Press, Harvard University, Cambridge, 2002.

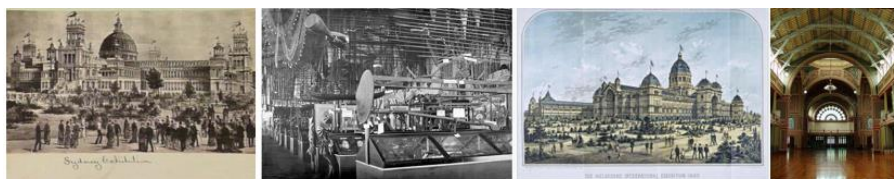
⁴⁶ Donald Preziosi, ‘Hearing the Unsaid: Art History, Museology, and the Composition of the Self’, Ch. 2 in Elizabeth Mansfield (ed.), *Art History and its Institutions: Foundations of a Discipline*, Routledge, London & New York, 2002, 28–45, p. 40.

⁴⁷ Preziosi, ‘Hearing the Unsaid’, 2002, op. cit., p. 38.

⁴⁸ Preziosi, ‘Hearing the Unsaid’, 2002, op. cit., pp. 39–40.

⁴⁹ See Curtis M. Hinsley, ‘The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893,’ in Karp and Lavine (eds) *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, 1991, op. cit., pp. 344–66.

visualising an expanding world of different peoples that ramified into successive contrasts of resources serving colonial powers in the later-19th century.



L: Sydney International Exhibition, 1879-80; LC: 'The Ethnological Court at the Garden Palace Exhibition', Sydney, Australian Museum Archives, Sydney AMS351/V11460; RC: Melbourne International Exhibition, 1880; R: Interior (refurbished) 2010.

The international changes summarised above, which also stimulated new forms of *national self-representation*,⁵⁰ are significant for grasping the importance of the appearance of Aboriginal cultural items or technologies in these Australian manifestations, at a time when the colonial museums were still only in nascent conditions. As mentioned earlier, some Aboriginal material was meanwhile sent to the International Expositions abroad, possibly beginning with the 1851 Great Exhibition in London.⁵¹ Curator and historian Daniel Thomas, drawing on colleague Mary Eagle's doctoral thesis of 2005,⁵² has noted that 'Aboriginal bark paintings made their first appearance in international Expos in the 1850s and, more significantly, cross-cultural pencil drawings on paper by an Aboriginal artist were lent to the 1854 *Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition*⁵³ and the 1855 *Paris Exposition Universelle* by the Melbourne-based artist Ludwig Becker'.⁵⁴

As a number of writers have highlighted concerning Melbourne's 1888 *Centennial International Exhibition* (in the grand 1880 building, by then extended),⁵⁵ a 6-part mounted and framed display of 36 drawings⁵⁶ by residents and inmates of Palmerston/Darwin's Fanny Bay Gaol was notably

⁵⁰ The relationship between the rise of International Expositions and new forms of nationalist self-representation is a potent subject of the late-19th century reaching beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is important to note how the inclusion of Aboriginal art often served forms of colonial and later nationalist self-representation through its profiling of a unique indigenous culture seemingly overwhelmed through Empire's advance. Such displays inevitably obfuscated or annulled the violence inherent within Colonialism, which can never be dispelled by mere analysis of the mechanisms or contents of exhibiting Othered peoples or alienated items of their cultural heritage.

⁵¹ Australian Gaye Sculthorpe, Head of Oceania at the British Museum, who substantially contributed to the British Museum's exhibition, *Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilisation* (shown London, 23 April–2 August 2015), has since assessed historical records suggesting that the Tasmanian objects in that exhibition were originally lent to the 1851 Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace – as noted by Susan Lowish, in *Rethinking Australian Art's History*, 2018, op. cit., (Ch. 7). See Gaye Sculthorpe, John Carty, Howard Morphy, Maria Nugent, Ian Coates, Lissant Bolton and Jonathan Jones, *Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilisation*, British Museum, London, and re-presented National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2015.

⁵² See Mary Eagle, *A History of Australian Art 1830–1930, Told through the Lives of the Objects*, PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2005.

⁵³ See also Andrew Sayers, *Australian Art*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p. 60

⁵⁴ Daniel Thomas, 'Aboriginal Art: Who Was Interested?', *Journal of Art Historiography*, No. 5, 2011, 1–10; p. 3; published online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/daniel-thomas-document.pdf>. See also Gerard Vaughan, 'The Cross-Cultural Art Museum in Australia, in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2011, Ch. 20, 261–289, pp. 264–5.

⁵⁵ This has especially been highlighted since Wally Caruana's entry, 'Black art on white walls? Institutional responses to Indigenous Australian art' – see 'Reception and recognition of Aboriginal art', in Sylvia Kleinert and Margo Neale (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, esp. (21.1) in Ch. 21, 454–461, p. 455. See also Andrew Sayers, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, and National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 1994.

⁵⁶ One of the original six panels of drawings was recently recovered in the possession of the Melbourne Museum during its 2000 relocation of collections to its new Carlton home. See Lowish, *Rethinking Australia's Art History*, 2018, op. cit., Ch. 7, 'Collecting and Exhibiting: The Dawn of "Primitive Art"', (online).

exhibited under the rubric of ‘The Dawn of Art’.⁵⁷



One of the sheets of drawings made by Aboriginal artists in Fanny Bay Gaol, Darwin (1888), exhibited under the group title of ‘The Dawn of Art’, *Centennial Exhibition*, Melbourne, 1888.

The attention gained by this large installation of drawings on multiple sheets of paper also indicated (as Susan Lowish has noted) ‘that the popular press was comfortable with the idea of “Aboriginal art”, even to the extent that judgements of its worth were made’; and that ‘[t]he concept of “native artist” was also rapidly gaining currency in writing from this period’.⁵⁸

Two art museum curators’ remarks are noteworthy here. Andrew Sayers’ specialised research of 19th-century Aboriginal art emphasised that the Dawn of Art panels presented ‘the first drawings by Aboriginal artists to be publicly displayed in Australia’.⁵⁹ In minor contrary detail, it should be noted there were some Aboriginal drawings collected earlier;⁶⁰ but Sayers makes fair stress on the importance of the 1888 drawings as a corpus of works recently produced and presented as a grouped *display*.⁶¹ Daniel Thomas has emphasised that these drawings were catalogued as works of art, and they even ‘foreshadow[ed] the ‘X-ray’ bark paintings from Oenpelli that became, in the 1910s, the best-known examples of aesthetically-excellent Aboriginal art’.⁶² Thomas here refers to the large bark paintings collected by Baldwin Spencer (with local help of Paddy Cahill) from Oenpelli, later forming such a strong presence in the Australian Ethnology Gallery that Spencer organised within the National Museum of Victoria in the early-20th century.

However, most notable about the International Exhibitions for this chapter is that a broad, if loosely formed, interest in the idea of ‘Aboriginal art’ was already incipient in public consciousness *prior to* Spencer’s 1887 arrival in Melbourne. Spencer had been at Melbourne University only little more than a year⁶³ when the huge 1888 *Centennial Exhibition* opened in the purpose-built Exhibition Building – still surviving today as a UNESCO World Heritage-listed and commanding structure in the nearby Carlton Gardens – which was only a short walk from Spencer’s new base at Melbourne University. Meanwhile Spencer would also have studied (within the University) the earlier Aboriginal objects retained by his natural scientist predecessor and Museum of Victoria founder, Professor Frederick McCoy – material originally exhibited in Melbourne’s 1866 *Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia*.⁶⁴ By the 1880s, much Aboriginal cultural material was also reaching a

⁵⁷ Most recently, Daniel Thomas emphasised that these works were catalogued as artworks, not as ethnographic objects: Thomas, ‘Aboriginal Art – Who was interested’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, 2011, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Lowish, *Rethinking Australia’s Art History*, 2018, op. cit., Ch. 7, ‘Collecting and Exhibiting: The Dawn of “Primitive Art”’ (online).

⁵⁹ Sayers, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, 1994, op. cit., p. 81.

⁶⁰ Susan Lowish’s more recent historical work has disclosed the existence of a corpus of Aboriginal drawings produced in the mid-1840s, and later passed to geologist Robert Brough Smyth (1830–1889) when on the Board for ‘Protection of the Aborigines’. (See Lowish, Ch. 7, ‘Collecting and Exhibiting: The Dawn of “Primitive Art”’, in Lowish, *Rethinking Australia’s Art History*, 2018, op. cit., online).

⁶¹ Sayers, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*. 1994, op. cit., p. 81. See also Lowish, 2018, op. cit., Ch. 7.

⁶² Thomas, ‘Aboriginal Art – Who was interested’, 2011, op. cit., p. 2.

⁶³ Spencer and his wife sailed from London for Melbourne on 18 February 1887 (D.J. Mulvaney and J.H. Calaby, ‘*So Much That Is New*’: Baldwin Spencer, 1860–1929, *A Biography*, University of Melbourne Press, Melbourne, 1985, p. 70).

⁶⁴ Thomas, ‘Daryl Lindsay and the appreciation of indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne in the 1940’s, 2011, op. cit., pp. 1–32, p. 4.

broad public through the museums of Adelaide and Sydney, where '[a] diverse range of original artworks were accessible through the extraordinary collections of the South Australian and Australian museums'.⁶⁵

6.5 Growing interest in Aboriginal subjects, late-19th and early-20th century

Public interest in Aboriginal society and technologies took various forms in the later-19th century and was mobilised by attitudes that were not at all consistent, but nevertheless recurrent. Such ambivalences are traceable in Aboriginal representations through the entire history of the international exhibitions held in Australia in the 19th century, as well as in the case of Aboriginal material sent abroad for such representations elsewhere, notably in the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1855.⁶⁶ Divergent (and even falsifying) as these representations might have been, they nevertheless evinced a growing interest in Aboriginal people throughout the later-19th century.



L: Combined State Library of Victoria, National Museums and National Gallery (located behind the Library's grand Reading Room), ND; C: Walter Baldwin Spencer, 'General view of the Australian Ethnological Gallery', black-and-white photographic reproduction, Source: Spencer 1922 – from Lowish 2018, Ch. 7: Figure 7.3; R: detail.

This broadening attention was spurred through the impact of the remarkable Spencer-Gillen expeditions and publications (as covered in Chapter 2), while still confined by primitivising frameworks of stadial social progress furnished by evolutionary science. However, many artists and others looked further than social stereotypes, with a genuine interest to know more of Aboriginal people and culture in different forms.



Portraits by Tom Roberts: (L) *Aboriginal Head-Charlie Turner*, oil, 1892 (NG); (C) *Portrait of an Aboriginal woman*, oil, 1892 (NG); (R) *Portrait of an Aboriginal man*, oil, 1892 (NG). The portraits were painted in 1892 and are now housed in the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.

Tom Roberts painted seven Aboriginal portraits in the 1890s, one of which was the fine 1892 *Aboriginal Head-Charlie Turner*. This was the first work by Roberts to be acquired by the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Roberts' friendship with grazier families in New South Wales drew him north to seek opportunities for major rural subject paintings, with commissioned portraits, in which he excelled, often arising collaterally.⁶⁷ But his portraits of Aboriginal subjects, often observed while located regionally, were made at his own behest. This scenario was the background to Roberts's

⁶⁵ Edwards and Peel, *Margaret Preston*, 2005, op. cit., fn. 122, p. 292.

⁶⁶ The different, and sometimes contradictory interests motivating varied representations, and even placement, of Aboriginal material in the 19th century International Exhibitions (including in Paris, 1855) – from social Darwinism, to Imperialism, to social justice concerns about the consequences of colonialism to subject peoples – is well covered by Kate Darian-Smith in a study of these changing presentations. See Kate Darian-Smith, 'Seize the Day: Exhibiting Australia', in *Seize the Day: Exhibitions, Australia and the World*, Kate Darian-Smith, Richard Gillespie, Caroline Jordan and Elizabeth Willis (eds), Monash University ePress, Melbourne, 2008, pp. 1.1–1.14.

⁶⁷ Roberts' large subject-painting, *Shearing at Newstead*, better known later as *The Golden Fleece*, was purchased as 'the picture of the year' when shown in Sydney in 1894, just a year ahead of the portrait of *Maria Gulgilbar*, acquired by the NSW colonial library (today SLNSW, pictures collection).

movingly realised *Portrait of an Aboriginal Woman (Maria Gulgilbar)*, of 1895 (now in the State Library of NSW collection and exhibited there in 2019).⁶⁸

Roberts was undoubtedly stimulated by his relationship with Baldwin Spencer, who shared among his numerous artist friends many narratives of his expeditions-knowledge of Aboriginal people and culture in the central deserts and far north of Australia. However, Roberts' two male portraits (above) date from *before* Spencer's first desert experiences of Arrernte and Luritja peoples on the Horn Scientific Expedition of 1894.⁶⁹ And these portraits have none of Spencer's primitivising frameworks inhibiting the searching capture of personalised individuals, each rendered with a sense of interiority and individuality extending beyond the brief, inevitably artificial, circumstances of achieving a sketched or painted likeness 'from life'. Roberts' portraits therefore stand in contrast to the 'savages' epithet with which Spencer later liberally cast his judgments on the Aboriginal peoples he studied during his remarkable expeditions. The portrait of *Maria Gulgilbar* is a compelling work. Roberts establishes her almost-frontal figure and strikingly counter-turned head in a strong rendition of her physical presence filling the picture's frame; whereas the images of *Charlie Turner* and *Amehnam* were possibly more constrained by recording circumstances to being head-studies that fold into an abstracted background of gently modulated colour.

While none of the subjects above is from Aboriginal art, these works are evidence of interest by Euro-Australian artists in Aboriginal people, although the valedictory aspect of this perception cannot be overlooked, and even Roberts mentioned his sense of 'a passing race'⁷⁰ captured in his Aboriginal portraits. Nevertheless Roberts's works reveal contemporary individuals, very different from anthropological stereotypes.⁷¹ Art historian Helen Topliss long ago noted, concerning '[Roberts'] trip north in 1892 to Queensland and the Torres Strait Islands' – when the portrait of *Amehnam (Wolya clan, Port Darwin)* was likely captured – that Roberts 'painted Aborigines as individuals rather than types'.⁷²

A steadily growing interest in Aboriginal culture, even when this might have occurred *without* direct contact with Aboriginal people or communities, can be traced in multiple fields of cultural endeavour beyond museums alone. Margaret Plant's multi-stranded reading of Australian arts across the 20th century, *Love and Lament: An Essay on the Arts in Australia in the Twentieth Century*,⁷³ has

⁶⁸ From records of Roberts's movements, it is possible that Maria Gulgilbar was located in (or from) the Clarence River area south of the Queensland border. More tantalisingly: is she perhaps a Bandjalung woman associated with the property known as Yulgilbar, where displaced Aboriginal people subsisted at this time in makeshift conditions on stolen Country?

⁶⁹ See W.A. Horn & Walter Baldwin Spencer, *Report on the Work of the Horn Scientific Expedition to Central Australia*, Melville, Mullen and Slade, London, and Dulau, Melbourne, 1896; D.J. Mulvaney and S.R. Morton (eds), *Exploring Central Australia: Society, the environment and the 1894 Horn Expedition*, Chipping Norton, NSW, Surrey Beatty & Sons, NSW, 1996.

⁷⁰ 'Then and now: Changes in art. Tom Roberts impressed', *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 June 1926, p 11 – cited in Ch. 1 of Steven Miller's history of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2021 (forthcoming, generously shared with the author in draft stage).

⁷¹ It should also be acknowledged that interest in Aboriginal subjects by institutions in the late-19th century was often accompanied by an expectation of their demise, and that such expectation also repressed recognition of often murderous 'land clearing' of Aboriginal people by 'settlers' that yielded the subjects of landscape painting celebrated in the Heidelberg school's pastoral nationalism.

⁷² Helen Topliss, 'Roberts, Thomas William (Tom) (1856–1931)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 11, MUP, Melbourne, 1988; online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/roberts-thomas-william-tom-8229/text14405>, accessed 3 Jan. 2019.

⁷³ Margaret Plant, *Love and Lament: An essay on the arts in Australia in the twentieth century*, Thames and Hudson, Melbourne, 2017.

highlighted cross-currents circulating in other genres and literatures around the work of visual artists. She notes, for example, Catherine Langloh Parker's 1896 *Australian Legendary Tales*,⁷⁴ utilising stories from Aboriginal people on her family's NSW station, which included pen and ink drawings by the remarkable artist Tommy McCrae (of the Yackaduna or Warra-euea people, who continued to live on Kwat-kwat territory in the period); and this was succeeded by Parker's 1905 publication of *The Euahlayi Tribe*,⁷⁵ 'showing [Parker] was well versed in ... inscriptions of ceremony and kinship'⁷⁶ from A.W. Howitt's recent work, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*.⁷⁷ Meanwhile Jeannie (Mrs Aeneas) Gunn's 1905 *The Little Black Princess*, and 1907 *We of the Never-Never*,⁷⁸ drew on very different station life in the Northern Territory's Roper River area while uninformed by comparable efforts of research to Parker's – yet Mrs Gunn's two books gained a wide popular readership, notwithstanding her 'lubra' and 'picanniny' stereotypes, and 'never-never' projections of a people without history.

Further links back to Spencer's fieldwork are also suggestive in Margaret Plant's analysis, and they include early interests aroused in Aboriginal performance and music: when explorer and natural scientist A.W. Howitt (also portrait-painted, at Spencer's behest, by Tom Roberts⁷⁹) had three south-eastern songs notated at the beginning of the 20th century,⁸⁰ as similarly did musician and composer, Percy Grainger, after '[seeking] out Baldwin Spencer and listen[ing] to his recordings of Centralian songs, notating three of them'.⁸¹ This attention aroused Grainger's judgment that 'native' music was 'no less complex than many European tunes'.⁸² Pastor Carl Strehlow had even earlier included some notation of Arrernte songs during the remarkable and detailed work he accomplished at Hermannsburg/Ntaria at the turn of the century (as described at the beginning of thesis Chapter 1). Connecting these disparate events to the broad impact of Spencer's public presentations, such as his 1902 'multi-media lecture in the Melbourne Town Hall on the subject of Aboriginal life in Central Australia, using slides ... together with his own pioneering movie films and sound recordings', Margaret Plant has emphasised the growing public response to Aboriginal subjects – such that by the early-20th century, '[t]he Dreamtime was journeying into white Australian culture endowing it with some sense of a remote and valuable Indigenous past'.⁸³

Other Australian studies were continuing to build interest in Aboriginal people and culture

⁷⁴ Plant, *Love and Lament*, 2017, op. cit., p. 18, citing Catherine Langloh Parker, *Australian Legendary Tales* [1896], Senate, Twickenham, 1998.

⁷⁵ Catherine Langloh Parker, *The Eualayi Tribe*, Constable, London, 1905.

⁷⁶ Plant, *Love and Lament*, 2017, op. cit., p.18.

⁷⁷ A.W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* [1904], Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2001.

⁷⁸ Mrs Aeneas Gunn, *The Little Black Princess: A True Tale of Life in Never-Never Land*, Melville & Mullen, London, 1905; Mrs Aeneas Gunn, *We of the Never-Never*, Hutchinson, London, 1907.

⁷⁹ A portrait of A.W. Howitt, commissioned by Spencer and painted by Roberts in 1900, is in the Monash University collection, Melbourne. (See W.E.H. Stanner, 'Howitt, Alfred William (1830–1908)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/howitt-alfred-william-510/text6037>.)

⁸⁰ Plant, *Love and Lament*, 2017, p. 17, fn. 62, citing Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* [1904], Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2001, p. 418.

⁸¹ Plant, *Love and Lament*, 2017, p. 17.

⁸² Plant, *Love and Lament*, 2017, p. 17, and fn. 71, citing Mulvaney & Calaby 'So Much that is New', *Baldwin Spencer 1860–1929*, p. 200.

⁸³ Plant, *Love and Lament*, 2017, op. cit., p. 17. Plant emphasises Patrick Wolfe's, 'Principal Accounts of the Textual Origins of the Dreamtime and the Alcheringa', p. 281, in his 'On Being Woken Up: The Dreamtime in Anthropology and in Australian Settler Culture', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 33, 1991, 197–224.

through local research. And the concept of 'Aboriginal art' was gaining some currency. In 1912, Victorian naturalist and later government administrator, Charles Daley, had presented a paper to science colleagues in 1912, *The artistic sense as displayed in the Aborigines of Australia*, asserting that Aboriginal people 'possess considerable artistic ability, much greater than they are usually credited with, and skill in the essentials of effective decoration'.⁸⁴ Later, Adelaide-born, medically-trained scientist and geologist, Herbert Basedow, 'one of the few men of his time actively interested in recording traditional Aboriginal life',⁸⁵ was a further figure who studied Aboriginal creativity. Intellectually embedded in German-language sources and scientific thought (through his own medical, anthropology and geology studies at Breslau, Heidelberg and Göttingen), Basedow had (from Adelaide) visited Carl Strehlow at Hermannsburg in 1919,⁸⁶ while conducting fieldwork in Central Australia.⁸⁷

In his 1925 publication, *The Australian Aboriginal*,⁸⁸ Basedow projected the idea that Aboriginal people had developed their art 'to an astonishing degree'. He made a finely-wrought distinction that 'we behold the image; he, the form'⁸⁹ – a statement notable for an effort of carefully balanced cross-cultural interpretation. Meanwhile Deborah Edwards' research for the 2005 AGNSW exhibition of *Margaret Preston* established that a copy of Basedow's book was in sculptor Rayner Hoff's library in Sydney 'shortly after its publication', while also (likely) in Margaret Preston's; and Preston seems to have had identifiable connections with Basedow in Adelaide, having exhibited within the Basedow bookshop in that city.⁹⁰

It is always difficult to trace precise influences on an artist's conceptions, yet Aboriginal subjects clearly attracted sculptor Rayner Hoff's interest, and he was an outstanding artist. His remarkable capacities for historical conceptualisation were later concentrated in his sculpture and reliefs for the ANZAC War Memorial in Hyde Park (1931–34), described by art historian Virginia Spate as 'the most perfect sculptural monument in Australia'.⁹¹ It is striking that two years after Basedow's publication, Rayner Hoff incorporated a highly-modelled profile relief of a Centralian Aboriginal male figure (and less detailed female, 'behind'/alongside) in an expansive depiction of a full panoply of ancient deity figures in his *Deluge – stampede of the lower gods*, a monumental work modelled in plaster relief (with copper patina) of 1927.

⁸⁴ Charles Daley, 'The artistic sense as displayed in the Aborigines of Australia', *Report of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, W.E. Smith, Sydney, 1912, 427–436; p. 434.

⁸⁵ Ian Harmstorf, 'Basedow, Herbert (1881–1933)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 7, Melbourne University Press, 1979; online at <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/basedow-herbert-5151/text8633>>.

⁸⁶ Basedow's work at Hermannsburg was notably a decade before the much more well-known visit of Hungarian psychoanalyst Géza Róheim, along with an 'eight-member Adelaide-based Board for Anthropological Research' which conducted extended research in the mission and vicinity. (See Philip Jones, *Ochre and Rust: Artefacts and Encounters on Australian frontiers*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, South Australia, 2007, p. 331.)

⁸⁷ Harmstorf, 'Basedow', ADB entry, 1979, op. cit.

⁸⁸ Herbert Basedow, *The Australian Aboriginal*, F.W. Preece and Sons, Adelaide, 1925.

⁸⁹ Edwards, with Rose Peel et al., *Margaret Preston*, 2005, op. cit., fn. 113, p. 292.

⁹⁰ Edwards et al., *Margaret Preston*, 2005, fn. 113, p. 292.

⁹¹ Virginia Spate, quoted in Paul Sheehan, 'Peace offering that shocked the church', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 April 2004.



L and C (detail): Raynor Hoff (1894-1937), *Deluge – stampede of the lower gods*, 1927, plaster cast with patina; purchased National Gallery of Australia 1968, displayed 2019 (photo & detail: author); R: Lyndon Dadswell, *Aboriginal head*, included in *Australian Art: 1788-1941* for the US and Canada (1941)

This huge, rarely-seen relief (in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia, and displayed in 2019) is a remarkable conception for the period, fully incorporating Aboriginal figures within an imposing congregation of ancient creator-deities: here depicting a tumult of flood-threatened figures attacked by the revenge of Zeus. Aboriginal man and woman are vividly realised in Hoff's Hellenistic frieze-like composition of ancient 'gods' – a congregation of entities constituting the powerful forces shaping events in the dawn of the universe, before human narrative begins.

Raynor Hoff's conception offers an unusual, full-bodied presence of Aboriginal ancestral figures within a Euro-Australian historical imagination – quite different from the arrested 'stone-age' image current in popular stereotypes of the period. The imposing Hoff relief was displayed at a Society of Artists exhibition in Sydney in 1927,⁹² thereby forming a public event within art's history, in a context where the state gallery rarely mounted exhibitions of contemporary Australian artists' work before the 1940s (and the predominance of painting occluded sculpture).⁹³ Hoff's significant student, Lyndon Dadswell, was also drawn to Aboriginal subjects: a bronze *Aboriginal head* of a strongly modelled male face – again informed by Centralian ethnographical research and hairstyle detailing – was included in the influential 1941 Carnegie exhibition of Australian art to the United States (described below). These two examples from sculpture also demonstrate artists' interest in ethnographic literature of the period, and again unsettle stereotypical assumptions of disciplinary divorce that still restrain commentaries on what were indubitably an array of intercrossing interests in Aboriginal art and culture throughout the 20th century.

However, artists' agency in changing cultural awareness also appeared in other channels: notably, and more well-known, Margaret Preston's espousal of Aboriginal art as the basis for a national art tradition (in her article 'The Indigenous Art of Australia'),⁹⁴ launched in 1925. Relevant in such temporality was also Jessie Traill's 'first white Australian artist' travel from Melbourne 'to Central Australia and Aboriginal communities' in 1928,⁹⁵ when she painted the Flinders and MacDonnell Ranges and exhibited her works in the Alice Springs schoolhouse before leaving.⁹⁶ Jessie

⁹² National Gallery of Australia, detail from identifying label when displayed, August 2019.

⁹³ Bernard Smith, later referring to the joint AGNSW exhibition of the work of Margaret Preston and William Dobell in 1942, emphasised the event's rarity: 'Never before, to my knowledge, was a special exhibition of work by living Australian artists held within a public gallery.' (Bernard Smith, 'The Art Museum and Public Accountability' (1985), reprinted in Rex Butler and Sheridan Palmer (eds), *Antipodean Perspective: Selected Writings of Bernard Smith*, Monash University Publishing, Melbourne, 2018, 22–35; p. 29.) Bernard Smith had forgotten director J.S. MacDonald's highly significant exhibitions of Arthur Streeton and Elioth Gruner at the AGNSW before MacDonald moved to Melbourne (in 1936) to direct the National Gallery of Victoria; however, Smith's general point is significant.

⁹⁴ Margaret Preston, 'The Indigenous Art of Australia', *Art in Australia*, 3rd series, no. 11, March 1925, pp. 32–45; reprinted in Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, Philip Goad (eds), *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917–1967*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2006, 155–160.

⁹⁵ Edwards et al., *Margaret Preston*, 2005, op. cit., fn. 123, p. 292.

⁹⁶ See Roger Butler (ed.), 'Stars in the river: The prints of Jessie Traill', National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2001; Prints and Drawings information web-posted at: <www.nga.gov.au/traill/centralaustralia.cfm>. See also Mary Alice Lee, 'Traill, Jessie Constance Alicia (1881–1967)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Vol. 12, 1990, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/traill-jessie-constance-alicia-8840/text15511>.

Traill (a friend of Tom Roberts) made the journey again five years later (in 1933), with Violet and Una Teague, this time reaching Hermannsburg. Violet made numerous watercolours, and 'included sketches of Aboriginal people'.⁹⁷ Most significantly, the women met Albert Namatjira, at that time 'making pokerwork pieces for the [Hermannsburg] mission's craft industry'.⁹⁸ Arthur Murch (a Sydney student of Raynor Hoff) meanwhile travelled to Hermannsburg and the MacDonnell Ranges' high western peak at Mt Liebig during a six-week stay in 1928, resulting in many landscape works later exhibited at the Macquarie Galleries in Sydney. Murch returned to Hermannsburg again in 1929.⁹⁹

Almost concurrently, Hans Heysen (friend of Baldwin Spencer, and owner of a bark painting that he almost certainly acquired through Spencer, and now in the National Gallery of Australia)¹⁰⁰ had made his revelatory 'discovery' of the Flinders Ranges – in 1926. Heysen's encounter with the majestic Ediacaran folded and faulted rock sediments defining the largest ranges in South Australia ('rugged and full of primitive character'),¹⁰¹ would influence his work for the remainder of his life. Even a conservative artist friend of Heysen, such as Lionel Lindsay, judged Heysen's capture of the still-pristine ranges in his paintings as investing the latter's vision with a powerful identification with an ancient landscape, despite ignorance of Aboriginal people who claimed it as Country. However some white Australian artists among the newly-self-conscious 'native born' were now endowing the land with an antiquity that nudged against general settler claims of the country's youth – in Lionel Lindsay's case even disclosing an inclination to appropriate a *reflection* of Aboriginal culture's heritage (and thereby a small concession to its history and identification with the land, despite stone-age stereotyping). Lindsay later wrote of Heysen's painting:

This mountainous country gives the sensation of an unalterable landscape, old and young as Time – a landscape of fundamentals, austere Biblical, and yet for us intimately associated with our aboriginal stone age.¹⁰²

The records above concerning Hermannsburg, in a still-incomplete history of Euro-Australian artists' contact with Central Desert peoples and their remarkable environment, indicate Namatjira's exposure to Euro-Australian artists' 'landscape' interests and examples of 'art' long before his own watercolours, under Rex Batterbee's guidance, began in 1936,¹⁰³ two years before Namatjira's first solo exhibition in Melbourne in 1938. Another topic of incomplete history – or insufficiently linked analysis developed in the disparate domains of anthropology and art – is the need to build greater understanding of the processes of transformation occurring within Arrernte society itself at this

⁹⁷ Edwards et al., *Margaret Preston*, 2005, op. cit., fn. 123, p. 292.

⁹⁸ Butler (ed.), 'Stars in the river', NGA web-posted information, op. cit. On Namatjira's development at this time, his early poker-work activity and the remarkable 'mulga wood plaques' that preceded and overlapped with his development of watercolour paintings, see the finely grained analysis by Philip Jones, in 'Namatjira and the Jesus plaque', in Jones, *Ochre and Rust* 2007, 305–333.

⁹⁹ Jan Roberts, 'Murch, Arthur James (1902–1989)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 18, Melbourne University Press, 2012, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/murch-arthur-james-15030/text26226>.

¹⁰⁰ Ron Radford, 'Acquiring and presenting Aboriginal art in art museums: my first 30 years', *Sharing Our Common Wealth: Cultural Institutions, 41st Annual Symposium of the Australian Academy of The Humanities*, Adelaide, 19 November 2010, 1–11; online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/radford-document1.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ Hans Heysen in letter to Lionel Lindsay, quoted in Colin Thiele, *Heysen of Hahndorf*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1968, p. 196.

¹⁰² Lionel Lindsay, quoted in Ian McLean, *White Aborigines: Identity Politics in Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1998, pp. 82–83.

¹⁰³ Jones, 'Namatjira and the Jesus plaque', in Jones, *Ochre and Rust*, 2007, op. cit., p. 305.

time, through missionisation and corresponding disruption of ritual practices and religious belief.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, putting together a picture of keen travel by various artists into Aboriginal Country, beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, is an important contextual addition to the more extensively known travel of Australian anthropologists undertaking field-defining ethnographical research under the impetus of Sydney University's new Anthropology Department – following Englishman Radcliffe-Brown's arrival in 1926.

Much better known: a growing awareness of Aboriginal culture projected in the new journal, *Art in Australia*, was signalled by Margaret Preston's advocacy in 1925, when she first focused on Aboriginal society's anchorage in 'totemism'. With typical assertiveness, Preston insisted that 'as totemism is one of the origins of art it is ridiculous to deny that the aboriginal of Australia has no definite place in the making of a national art'.¹⁰⁵ Later, her publisher Sydney Ure Smith ran an anthropologist's viewpoint for the first time, when Queensland-based Ursula McConnel, a graduate of Sydney University, also aired her views in 1935 (in an article, 'Inspiration and Design in Aboriginal Art') on the topics that absorbed Preston.¹⁰⁶

The events outlined earlier, of slowly changing perceptions and evident thought about Aboriginal culture, actually preceded Margaret Preston's more well-known and accentuated experiences of visiting Aboriginal country, notably with her viewing of Western Arnhem Land bark paintings and 'the magnificent "murals" at Injalak Hill' (Oenpelli/Gunbalanya) in mid-1940.¹⁰⁷ It is clear that many more subtly-interconnected links were gathering as historical background to the intense public interest aroused by the important *Aboriginal Art* exhibition presented in Melbourne in 1929, examined below. Along with the impact of the 19th century International Exhibitions, the process of diffusion of interest in 'traditional' Aboriginal society, however limited and still primitivising it might have been, was advancing by the early-20th century. Such background suggests why the 1929 exhibition of *Australian Aboriginal Art*,¹⁰⁸ realised through a degree of liaison of the National Museum of Victoria with the National Gallery of Victoria, drew such crowded audiences for a temporary exhibition organised primarily by associates of the natural history museum.

6.5(i) *Australian Aboriginal Art, 1929*

This often-noted exhibition merits more careful contextual analysis. It was organised through an extra-mural collaboration of field naturalists (after Spencer had left Australia and there was no on-staff Victorian Museum expertise in anthropology to interpret his work for the next three

¹⁰⁴ It is profoundly startling, for instance, to realise one of the intercultural outcomes of Violet and Una Teague accompanying Jessie Traill to Hermannsburg in 1933: anthropologist Philip Jones has established (from research of Teague papers) that 'sixteen *tjurunga*, sacred objects ordinarily forbidden to women, passed easily into the hands of ... Una Teague' during this visit.¹⁰⁴ Jones then comments economically on the enormity and ambiguity of this change: 'The intimate possessions of Arrernte individuals had become public, operating as generic indicators of an entire culture.' (Jones, 'Namatjira and the Jesus plaque', 2007, op. cit., p. 333.)

¹⁰⁵ Margaret Preston, 'The Indigenous Art of Australia', *Art in Australia* (no. 11, March 1925, pp. 32–45), reprinted in Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, Philip Goad (eds), *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917–1967*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2006, 155–160, p. 156.

¹⁰⁶ Ursula McConnel, 'Inspiration and Design in Aboriginal Art' in *Art in Australia*, 59, 1935, p. 49 ff.

¹⁰⁷ Edwards et al, *Margaret Preston*, 2005, op. cit., p. 173.

¹⁰⁸ Charles Barrett and A.S. Kenyon, *Australian Aboriginal Art, Issued in connexion with the Exhibition of Australian Aboriginal Art, National Museum, Melbourne*, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1929.

decades).¹⁰⁹ The exhibition was put together in 1929 through the collaboration of Charles Barrett, Alfred Kenyon, R.D. Croll and D. J. Mahony. But it is important to establish *where* the exhibition was displayed.



L: Cover of *Australian Aboriginal Art* (image by Percy Leppagh, cartoonist/illustrator and a follower of painter Max Meldrum), shown at the National Museum, Melbourne, in 1929; R: installation view, National Museum, archival photograph of visitors to the *Australian Aboriginal Art* exhibition.

Contrary to usual accounts, the exhibition was presented *not* in the Museum (as long assumed from the catalogue publication details) but in the ‘print room’ space of the National Gallery of Victoria, elsewhere but within the same building complex, as reported in Melbourne’s *Argus* the next day:

Aboriginal art in its various phases, depicting the customs, manners, and history of the Australian blacks, is on exhibition in the printroom of the National Gallery. Arranged by the trustees of the Public Library, Museums, and National Gallery of Victoria, at the suggestion and with the assistance of the Field Naturalists’ Club, the exhibition was opened yesterday by the Chief Secretary (Dr. Argyle) before a large assembly.¹¹⁰

Doubtless this was because the National Museum would not itself have had space for temporary exhibitions, since such programming was out of character institutionally; nor indeed a budget for such an event, within a tight annual vote of funds from the state government.

Art critic and later encyclopaedist Alan McCulloch, who built extensive archival files supporting his work for the *Argus*, later recorded that costs for the *Aboriginal Art* exhibition in 1929 were ‘donated by R.D. Elliott, then treasurer for the gallery trustees’.¹¹¹ ‘Donation’ indicates private support from a *Gallery* trustee; and further support for the exhibition was evident in the hosting of an evening lecture delivered in the Gallery by visiting Sydney anthropologist, Dr A.P. Elkin, following the opening by Victoria’s Chief Secretary during the day.¹¹² The Gallery location would have lent a wholly different context for the exhibition held in 1929, which Susan Lowish has noted as the first in the world entitled *Australian Aboriginal Art*. (Did the Gallery even influence the title, which otherwise seems so at variance with a natural history museum’s stance at the time?) Certainly, the details above make clear the Gallery’s direct involvement in presenting the 1929 exhibition – significantly correcting a long-held assumption that the event was entirely a venture of the Museum alone. This also demonstrates early interest of the NGV and art circles in the idea of ‘Aboriginal art’ at the end of the 1920s, and is relevant to a deeper grasp of changing cultural ideas in the inter-War period (analysed in Chapter 3). Yet there is more to add to the 1929 event’s significance.

Anthropologist Philip Jones has pictured the exhibition’s contents, which aroused such strong

¹⁰⁹ John Mulvaney records that the first staff position in anthropology after Baldwin Spencer left was created in 1949 – see his survey of staff positions in John Mulvaney, ‘Museums, Anthropologists and Indigenous Peoples’, *Bulletin of the Conference of Museum Anthropologists*, No.23, April; *Proceedings of the Conference held at The National Centre for Cultural Heritage Science Studies*, University of Canberra, Nov.–Dec, 1989, publ. 1990, 1–11, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ All details are given in a contemporary article headed, ‘Aboriginal Art. Exhibition at Gallery. Arunta Tribesmen Present’, *The Argus*, Melbourne, 10 July 1929, page 10.

¹¹¹ Alan McCulloch, ‘Aboriginal Art: Exhibitions’, entry in his *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1st ed., Hutchinson, London, 1968, p. 23’.

¹¹² ‘Emphasising the value of the study of primitive art in the study of the aborigine, Dr. A.P. Elkin addressed a large audience at the National Gallery last night.’ (‘Aboriginal Art. Exhibition at Gallery...’, *The Argus*, 10 July 1929, op. cit.) Elkin’s lecture would doubtless have reinforced the essay provided by Charles Barrett in the catalogue, ‘The primitive artist’, *Australian Aboriginal Art*, 1929, op. cit., pp. 5–13.

public interest:

Supplemented by Oenpelli bark paintings, William Barak's drawings and a number of sacred incised *tjurunga*, the exhibition contained the broadest selection of Aboriginal art yet exhibited. At its core was the collection of bark paintings obtained at Oenpelli by museum director Baldwin Spencer during his 1911 fieldwork, and during subsequent years (assisted by the buffalo hunter Paddy Cahill).¹¹³

In addition to the catalogue's cover design by illustrator Percy Leason (a follower of painter Max Meldrum), there was a further impact involving Leason, who made a field trip to record copies of rock paintings from a cave in the remarkable sandstone Grampians ranges (between Stawell and Horsham). This area contained the greatest concentration of rock art in the state. Leason then inserted his copies on the interior walls of a small *papier-mâché* model of the cave prepared by the 'museum articulator' for the exhibition.¹¹⁴

Leason – as an artist – was clearly drawn closer to the contemporary situation of Aboriginal people through the exhibition experience. He later visited and made sympathetic portraits of individuals living in the confined conditions of the Lake Tyers Reserve, in Gippsland – even though (as Margaret Plant has noted) the portraits were somewhat 'elegiac' in mood.¹¹⁵ These details provide an expanded sense of cross-cultural currents, and further suggest the demonstrably engaged interest of artists surrounding the 1929 exhibition. Moreover, artist and teacher Frances Derham (who was prominent in the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria,¹¹⁶ gave two public lectures on Aboriginal art while the exhibition was showing at the Gallery.¹¹⁷ Such observations lend further texture to Philip Jones' judgment (although he erred about both the exhibition's title and its location) that: 'It was not unusual for Australian museums to display a similar range of ethnographic material. What was new ... was the definition of the material as "art"'; and 'that this notion ... was not beyond the public's appreciation'.¹¹⁸ On the contrary, the notion demonstrably engaged various members of the Melbourne art community, some of whom were already pursuing their own interests in Aboriginal art. Aboriginal subjects and design influences permeated Frances Derham's graphic works at this time, indicating a more typically modernist trope of the period ('Her awareness of Indigenous culture complemented modernist themes developing in her own art').¹¹⁹ However, the

¹¹³ Philip Jones, 'The Art of Contact: Encountering an Aboriginal Aesthetic from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries', in Jaynie Anderson, 'Cross-Cultural Encounters: Introduction', in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2011, 22–37, p. 31.

¹¹⁴ 'The model was prepared by the Museum articulator, Mr. C. W. Brazenor, and the paintings reproduced by Mr. P. A. Leason.' Barrett, Charles and Kenyon, A. S. and Public Library, Museums and National Gallery (Vic.). *Australian Aboriginal Art: issued in connexion with the Exhibition of Australian Aboriginal Art, National Museum, Melbourne*. Published for the Trustees of the Public Library, Museums and National Gallery of Victoria by H. J. Green, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1929.

¹¹⁵ See Plant, *Love and Lament*, 2018, op. cit., p. 110. Plant highlights the 1999 exhibition of Leason's Aboriginal portraits (and catalogue): Michael D. Galimany and Sylvia Kleinert, *Recognition, Percy Leason's Aboriginal Portraits*, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, 1999, while adding some observations – see Plant, *Love and Lament*, 2018, op. cit., fn. 209, cited p. 430.

¹¹⁶ Margaret H. White, 'Derham, Frances Alexandra (Frankie) (1894–1987)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 17, MUP, Melbourne, 2007, available at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/derham-frances-alexandra-frankie-12415/text22319>.

¹¹⁷ Robyn Sloggett, in her significant article on Leonhard Adam's later *Primitive Art Exhibition* (1943), cites Sylvia Kleinert for this information (S. Kleinert, 'On the identity politics of the 1929 exhibition of Primitive Art in Melbourne', *Signatures*, No. 5, 2002, 110–148) – see Robyn Sloggett, 'Has Aboriginal art a future?' Leonhard Adam's 1944 Essay and the Development of the Australian Aboriginal Art Market', in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 18 (2), 2015, 167–83; p. 174.

¹¹⁸ Philip Jones, 'Perceptions of Aboriginal Art: A History', in Peter Sutton (ed.), *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, Asia Society Galleries, New York, 1988, p. 167.

¹¹⁹ White, 'Derham, Frances Alexandra', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2007, op. cit.

wider impact of Derham's interests in Aboriginal art, while providing a comprehensively innovative impact within Victorian art education and teacher training, should not be underestimated:

From 1929 [Derham] contributed to a growing awareness amongst non-Aboriginal Australian artists of the aesthetic value of Aboriginal material culture. She achieved this largely through the promotion of Aboriginal material culture in various lectures and exhibitions, but also within her own art work.¹²⁰



Frances Derham, *The aboriginal artist*, linocut, 1931, NGV, Melbourne; Frances Derham, cover design for *The Recorder* (Magazine of the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria), n.d., NGV, Melbourne; Frances Derham, *Aboriginal motif*, linocut, 1936, NGV, Melbourne; Frances Derham, *Aboriginal hunter*, linocut on tissue paper, 1930, NGV, Melbourne.

The 1929 exhibition in Melbourne was restricted in many of its concepts and structures – especially in its decontextualised arrangements according to object types rather than source-cultures, language, kinship or regions – which echoed, in fact, the typological clustering of objects in Spencer's Ethnology installation in the Museum, retained during the 1920s. However, one of the most ethnographic and estranging devices (quite outside the practice of an art gallery) was the transport to Melbourne and installation of two seated Wangkangurru men 'from the Birdsville track region', to demonstrate the making of cultural objects in a constructed *mia-mia* arrangement *within* the exhibition.¹²¹ This sadly ensured that they would be viewed as 'exhibits' when a visiting public came upon their presence within the space of display. Nevertheless – and another innovation for this exhibition – this was the first-ever occasion when Aboriginal people were brought on site to experience a presentation of their culture in an exhibition prepared for a mainstream audience. In terms of the self-conscious development of Aboriginal art in the later 20th century, this event deserves emphasis as providing the beginnings of an active perception, on the part of Aboriginal people visiting from 'remote' communities, of how institutions such as museums and galleries functioned, and how these places could become places for Aboriginal people to project their culture to a mainstream audience.¹²²

Members of the broad public that jostled to see the Museum/Gallery's display were manifestly interested to know something of Aboriginal culture, peoples and history. The exhibition also had an impact within Australian art history, as recorded in the foundational 1934 *Story of Australian Art* by William Moore¹²³ – the first such researched historical compilation (providing much information utilised a decade afterwards by Bernard Smith in *Place, Taste and Tradition*¹²⁴ and in his later

¹²⁰ Jonathan Parsons, 'Aboriginal motifs in design: Frances Derham and the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria', *The LaTrobe Journal*, National Library of Victoria, Vol. 43, 1989, 41–42, p. 41.

¹²¹ Jones, 'Perceptions of Aboriginal Art: A History', 1988, op. cit., pp. 166–7: 'For the 1929 exhibition [George Aiston, a former mounted police trooper in South Australia] escorted two Wangkangurru men from the Birdsville Track region to Melbourne to demonstrate artefact manufacture, including the production of ceremonial headgear.'

¹²² Somewhat extraordinarily, the successful *Dreamings* exhibition in 1988, at New York's Asia Society galleries, would repeat this 'ethnographic' performative gesture six decades later, by not only bringing Aboriginal 'Papunya painters', Billy Stockman and Michael Nelson Jakamarra, to New York, but also cooperating with the Asia Society's insistence on the execution of a painting on canvas before a public audience – a precariously-shaded 'proof-of-skill' demonstration (since it could not be a genuine cultural performance, breaking secret-sacred protocols). Such a demonstration would not have been sought of any artist in an Australian art museum at the time. (See the account of this 'event', presented on two weekends, in Fred R. Myers, *Painting Culture: The Making of an Aboriginal High Art*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2002, pp. 269–272.)

¹²³ Moore, *The Story of Australian Art: From the Earliest Known Art of the Continent to the Art of To-day*, 1934, op. cit.

¹²⁴ Bernard Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study of Australian Art since 1788*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1945.

codifying history, *Australian Painting: 1788–1960*).¹²⁵ Moore noted, five years after the event, that the 1929 exhibition at the Museum in Melbourne ‘did much to raise the Aboriginal and his art in the estimation of the general public.’¹²⁶ Through a variety of contemporary records, the 1929 exhibition in Melbourne can be seen clearly to have vibrated chords not only in science and art circles, but also in wider public interest (as evident in the diverse press coverage the exhibition gained).

Australia’s First Peoples had meanwhile stirred artists in Europe. A remarkable event connecting Aboriginal art to a European avant-garde was the 1917 Dada performance by Romanian artist Tristan Tzara, at Zurich’s Cabaret Voltaire (founded as a centre for Dada events in 1916).¹²⁷ The event was a rendition by Tzara of two songs derived from Carl Strehlow’s multi-volume Frankfurt publication (in German, with interlineal translation) of ‘Arunda’ song-cycles¹²⁸ sung for him at Hermannsburg in the early years of the 20th century. Audiences heard Tzara’s performance – in French translation of transposed raw elements – of the ‘*Chanson du Cacadou*’ (Song of the Cockatoo) and ‘*Chanson du Serpent*’.¹²⁹ Art historians Ann Stephen and Andrew McNamara have marked this 1917 event as ‘perhaps the earliest modernist engagement with Australian Aboriginal culture as a source for avant-garde art’.¹³⁰

However, it is notable that the Dada/Arrernte songs were derived from Carl Strehlow’s interlineal rendition (of line-by-line transposition of elements, rather than the additional complete translation into the structures of German). Tzara’s performance (in French) thereby retained a framework of non-translated aspects of the Arrernte sources, through a form of *bricolage* of raw elements in his rendition,¹³¹ rather than presenting a total incorporation within a western language (as occurred in Cubism’s visual appropriation of African source-forms). The Dada rendition preserved a little more of the source-materials’ alterity, their resistant and untranslatable contents. Tzara’s performance was also eight years earlier than Preston’s first (1925) article on Aboriginal art in *Art in Australia*.¹³² In comparison with Preston’s first-stage advocacy of Aboriginal *designs* while dismissing their *culture-meanings*, some European artists were before her absorbing the impetus of Aboriginal cultural materials more directly, and philologically a little closer to their original ‘sources’ (as discussed in Chapter 1).

¹²⁵ Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting, 1788–1960*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1962 (and later editions).

¹²⁶ Moore, *The Story of Australian Art*, 1934, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 2.

¹²⁷ See Timothy Stroud and Emanuela di Lallo, *Art of the Twentieth Century: 1900–1919, the avant-garde movements* (Vol. 1 of *Art of the Twentieth Century*), Skira, 2006.

¹²⁸ Carl Strehlow’s *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien* was a staged publication, *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien*, Veröffentlichungen des Volker-Museum Frankfurt am Main (Publications of the Volker-Museum Frankfurt am Main), (eds) directors, 7 parts, Baer, Frankfurt, 1907–2121. The *Chanson du Cacadou* and *Chanson du Serpent* were French translations based on German and interlineal (line-by-line) translations in Strehlow volumes (I–III) published in 1910–1911, in Frankfurt.

¹²⁹ See Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, Philip Goad (eds), *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917–1967*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2006, 31–36, pp. 31, 32.

¹³⁰ ‘Tristan Tzara (1896–1963), “Chanson du Serpent” and “Chanson du Cacadou” 1917’; in Stephen et al (eds), *Modernism & Australia: Documents ... 1917–1967*, 2006, op. cit., 31–36, p. 31.

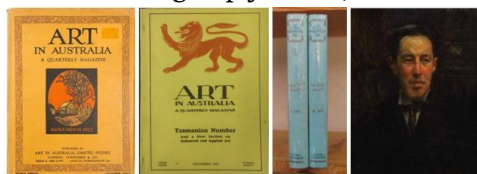
¹³¹ The method of *bricolage* involves utilisation of existing elements within a new artwork that preserves the source-forms’ alterity (as European surrealists often favoured) rather than disguising the assimilation through incorporation of distant cultural sources in new forms of western art (as practiced within early cubist painting and sculpture). The practice of *bricolage* has been perceived as a more politically potent preservation of the *alterity* of borrowed forms from non-western cultures, in contrast to an incorporation that entirely absorbs the incorporated elements and ‘swallows’ their alternative character and cultural source.

¹³² Preston, ‘The Indigenous Art of Australia’, op. cit., 1925.

6.6 Exhibitions and contexts: the 1930s and 1940s

The 1934 publication of William Moore's *Story of Australian Art*¹³³ was an important event in the inter-war years. With sweeping scope (*From the Earliest Known Art of the Continent to the Art of To-day*), this two-volume work provided the first researched history of the development of Australian art. Although a chronicle in style, it provided the first reference work outlining a field of cultural development. Most significant for the present chapter is that Moore's *Story* construed an impressive time-scale in which Aboriginal art exclusively occupied the spaces of both *antiquity* and a *continental scope* of creativity across Australia. Meanwhile Moore highlighted the importance of the 1929 *Aboriginal Art Exhibition* in Melbourne for its impact in projecting the concept of 'Aboriginal art'. Such frameworks would have registered with many readers of Moore's work (perhaps purveying new concepts for some). It would be almost three decades before Bernard Smith's history of *Australian Painting*¹³⁴ appeared in 1962, with an entirely different methodology of explaining Australian art's development (and in which Aboriginal art was categorically excluded).

The main source meanwhile for accessing cultural commentary and new ideas in the earlier-20th century was Sydney Ure Smith's *Art in Australia* quarterly publications, discussed earlier. In Margaret Preston's boisterous advocacy of Aboriginal art's design resources for a national art, she had the influential backing of Ure Smith,¹³⁵ who gave continued support to her work and writings, and (in consequence) also to Aboriginal art's coverage in his publications – especially in *The Home* as well as his flagship journal, *Art in Australia*.



Cover of *Art in Australia*, Third Series (Quarterly), No. 2, Sydney Ure Smith, Sydney 1922; Cover of *Art in Australia*, Third Series, No. 30, Sydney Ure Smith, Sydney 1930; Moore's two-volume *Story of Australian Art*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1934; (R) William G. Moore, Australian art and drama critic, by George Coates (1910s).

However, Preston was not really well-known in Melbourne (as once-remarked in the 1930s by J.S. MacDonald, when he himself had shifted from the AGNSW to the NGV's directorship). And in some respects, Preston's interests in Aboriginal art were actually echoed on a broader scale by various artists in Melbourne, where Baldwin Spencer's public lectures amplifying Aboriginal culture (and his close friendships with leading artists such as Roberts and Streeton) had incurred radiating impacts across art and scientific circles alike. There was also tangible impact in the area of Victorian art education, and a key figure, as indicated above, was Frances Derham. After correspondence with Charles Mountford and Rex Battarbee, Derham visited Hermannsburg in 1938, with a focus on working with Aboriginal children and compiling a significant collection of Aboriginal children's drawings, which she later extended to include a similar gathering of drawings directly from children

¹³³ Moore, *The Story of Australian Art*, 1934, op. cit.

¹³⁴ Smith, *Australian Painting, 1788–1960*, 1962, op. cit.

¹³⁵ Sydney Ure Smith was a trustee of the Art Gallery of New South Wales for two decades (1927–47). His numerous other patronage and promotional roles led Alan McCulloch to estimate decades later that Ure Smith 'did more than any other Australian to publicize Australian art at home and overseas'. (Alan McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, 1st ed., Hutchinson, London, 1968, p. 511.)

on a visit to Aurukun, north Queensland, in 1948.¹³⁶ Derham herself provided materials¹³⁷ and encouraged representation of scenes drawn 'directly from their lives'.¹³⁸ Her total collection of Aboriginal children's art is today a remarkable resource, now in the National Gallery's collection, in Canberra.¹³⁹

6.6(i) *Art of Australia: 1788–1941 (1941)* and its curatorial legacy

Turning to exhibitions as purveyors of ideas as well as experience of Aboriginal culture, two events in 1941 reflected substantial changes in the positioning of Aboriginal art. The most significant was *Art of Australia: 1788–1941*, prepared for export to tour the United States and Canada.¹⁴⁰



Art of Australia: 1788–1941 (1941), mounted for tour of the USA and Canada 1941 ff.]

In the same year the David Jones exhibition, *Australian Aboriginal Art and Its Application*,¹⁴¹ with crucial input from anthropologist Frederick McCarthy who loaned works from the Australian Museum, had a significant impact on many in the Sydney art world. An organising committee (including Margaret Preston)¹⁴² had formed the selection for the David Jones presentation, showing Aboriginal works (principally bark paintings) in company with works by Euro-Australian artists manifesting connecting concepts or influence of Aboriginal art.

Art of Australia: 1788–1941,¹⁴³ by contrast, was a large Carnegie Corporation-sponsored¹⁴⁴

¹³⁶ White, 'Derham, Frances Alexandra', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2007, op. cit.

¹³⁷ Provision of paper and crayons for Aboriginal drawings was now a technique long-established since first used by Daisy Bates and Herbert Basedow (Philip Jones, 'Inside Mountford's Tent: Paint, politics and paperwork', in Martin Thomas and Margo Neale (eds), *Exploring the Legacy of the 1948 Arnhem Land Expedition*, ANU E Press, Australian National University, 2011, online at

<www.press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p116081/html/cho2.xhtml>.

Providing crayons and paper was then adopted by Charles Mountford, and from his example (and publications citing results) was later used by Ronald Berndt and others in Arnhem Land and Central Australia. However, its origins in German ethnographic and even wider art historical practices, including Aby Warburg's legendary (and controversial) example in a Hopi village, has scarcely been noticed by Australian historical commentary – see Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 1970, op. cit., and Farrago, 'Silent Moves: On Excluding the Ethnographic Subject from the Discourse of Art History', 2002, op. cit.

¹³⁸ Philp, 'Life and art? Relocating Aboriginal art and culture in the museum', 2007, op. cit.

¹³⁹ Philp, 'Life and art?', 2007, op. cit., fn. 8, p. 53.

¹⁴⁰ The exhibition, mounted under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation in New York, included 11 bark paintings from the East Alligator River in addition to drawings by Tommy McRae, and bark paintings by an unknown Kakadu artist collected by Sir Baldwin Spencer at Oenpelli in 1912. (See catalogue details below.)

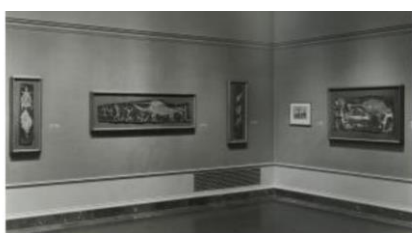
¹⁴¹ *Australian Aboriginal Art and its Application* (David Jones' Art Gallery, Elizabeth Street, Sydney, 11–22 August, 1941); a multi-artist exhibition, included paintings, prints, and ceramics. See F.D. McCarthy, 'Australian Aboriginal Art and Its Application', *Australian Museum Magazine* 1 September 1941, 355–60.

¹⁴² Notes transcribed from display case in exhibition, Deborah Edwards, with Rose Peel et al., Margaret Preston, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2005.

¹⁴³ Full title: *Art of Australia, 1788–1941: An exhibition of Australian art held in the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation*, was published for the Carnegie Corporation by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1941; see <www.trove.nla.gov.au/work/18074433>.

¹⁴⁴ The Carnegie Corporation of New York, initially a philanthropic fund to support education programs, later became international. It supported many programs for the under-funded museums and galleries of Australia in the early-20th century, including the only national report on Australian museums of the period (compiled by visiting UK expertise) in 1933: Sydney F. Markham, W.R.B. Oliver, and H.C. Richards, *A report on the Museums and Art Galleries of Australia*, Museums Association (UK), and Carnegie Corporation, New York, London, 1933 (113 pp.).

exhibition of Australian art prepared as a diplomatic cultural venture linking allies during wartime. The selection had decisive US curatorial input from Yale Art Gallery director Theodore Sizer,¹⁴⁵ when Sizer visited Australia early in 1941 (on behalf of the Carnegie Corporation).¹⁴⁶ And significantly, it was Sizer who advocated strongly for the Aboriginal inclusions to strengthen likely cultural interest abroad, since he regarded Euro-Australian art as less distinctive for foreign audiences. As Ann Stephen has observed, following research of this exhibition's background, Sizer had 'grasped the modernist appeal of Aboriginal art and gave it an unprecedented place in the exhibition' for American audiences.¹⁴⁷ This preference gained ready support from both Margaret Preston and Sydney Ure Smith, and Preston's own Aboriginal art-influenced painting was also a feature of the exhibition (her *Aboriginal Still Life*, of 1941 is depicted above), along with a small essay by her in the catalogue. Preston also travelled to accompany the exhibition at its opening in Washington, and provided further advocacy of Aboriginal art in public talks she delivered there.



Installation of Australian Aboriginal bark paintings in 'Art of Australia 1788-1941', National Gallery of Art, Washington D., 1941. Reproduced in Ruth B. Phillips, 'Aesthetic primitivism revisited: The global diaspora of 'primitive art' and the rise of Indigenous modernisms', *Journal of Art Historiography*, No. 12, June 2015, pp. 1-25, p. 14 (Fig.5).

The *Art of Australia* exhibition (of 134 works) left Australia late in 1941 for initial showings in Washington (National Gallery of Art), New York (Metropolitan Museum of Art), and then Ottawa (at the National Gallery, Canada), after which a cut-down version travelled on a circuit of multiple smaller venues in North America during the War years.¹⁴⁸ For the handsome catalogue, compiled and edited by Sydney Ure Smith, and published in liaison with the Museum of Modern Art, New York (enlisted into a somewhat reluctant management of the exhibition's tour for cultural diplomacy reasons), front and back cover illustrations included Aboriginal motifs in graphic designs by Australian Alistair Morrison. This marked the incorporation of Aboriginal motifs in many branches of design and craft production that was to rise in the 1940s and 1950s – and when 'appropriation' issues were quite unacknowledged in these decades. The exhibition has been much-covered in recent writings concerning Aboriginal art's progressive inclusion in significant exhibitions in the 20th century. It has been noted variously as 'the first exhibition in which non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal

¹⁴⁵ For discussion of Sizer's role, see Ann Stephen, 'Early Inroads: MoMA and Australia', *Art and Australia*, vol. 43, 2006, 582-5, p. 582; for Sizer's astute opinions on the Australian art world of the time, see 'Theodore Sizer (1892-1967), Letter to the Carnegie Corporation, New York, [15 November] 1941', in Stephen, McNamara and Goad (eds), *Modernism & Australia: Documents...1917-1967*, 2006, pp. 404-405. Sizer was mistaken in naming J.S. MacDonald as still NGV director, not having caught up on news of Daryl Lindsay's appointment to this role in March 1941.

¹⁴⁶ For an analysis of the Carnegie Institution's aims in 'soft cultural power', see Louise Ryan, 'Forging diplomacy: The Carnegie Corporation and the Art of Australia, 1788-1941 exhibition', Australian Association for Research in Education, Conference, 2002, online at <www.aare.edu.au/publications/aare-conference-papers/show/3617/forging-diplomacy-the-carnegie-corporation-and-the-art-of-australia-exhibition>.

¹⁴⁷ Stephen, 'Early inroads: MoMA and Australia', 2006, op. cit., p. 582.

¹⁴⁸ Of the 134 works included in the larger version, 11 were the Melbourne Museum's bark paintings from Arnhem Land's East Alligator River District, collected by Baldwin Spencer, and three were late-19th century pen drawings by Kwat-kwat artist Tommy McRae (of rural Victoria).

paintings were hung together' (Ian Mclean),¹⁴⁹ and 'the first exhibition that framed Aboriginal art within the overall development of Australian art' (Benjamin Thomas).¹⁵⁰

Augmenting what has already been published about the *Art of Australia* exhibition, some significant connections can be added. The preparation of the exhibition's selection, with Sizer's input from the United States and Preston and Ure Smith guiding discussions from Sydney, crucially involved Daryl Lindsay representing the NGV in the immediate period prior to his becoming Director in March 1941¹⁵¹ – not in 1942, as various writers have claimed. This process was clearly the precedent for Lindsay's active turning towards indigenous arts the following year, with his new directorial authority, when he invited recently-arrived refugee German ethnologist, Leonhard Adam, to prepare an exhibition on Aboriginal and other 'primitive' arts for the National Gallery of Victoria (as discussed below). Lindsay would also have been tuned to Aboriginal subjects through his close personal friendship with Baldwin Spencer years earlier.¹⁵² However, 1941 can be taken as a decisive year in Lindsay's embracing the significance of Aboriginal art, which began a long and continuing process leading to his affirmative advocacy of Aboriginal art's place in the collecting frameworks for any 'national' gathering of Australian art two decades later, in the 1966 'Lindsay Report' to the Menzies government on the future National Gallery in Canberra.¹⁵³

Finally, Sydney Ure Smith's statement in introducing *Art of Australia: 1788–1941* provided a significant marking of a new consciousness in the frameworks of Australian art and museums. The exhibition, he noted, 'starts with the work of the aborigines and ends with the influence of their work as a basis of a new outlook for a national art for Australia'.¹⁵⁴ Events would prove that this new awareness would enduringly reorient the recognition of Aboriginal culture's distinctiveness within Australian state galleries, in varying degrees, from 1941 onwards.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Ian McLean, 'Aboriginalism: White Aborigines and Australian Nationalism', *Australian Humanities Review*, May 1998, online at <Australianhumanitiesreview.org/1998/05/01/aboriginalism-white-aborigines-and-australian-nationalism/>.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas, 'Daryl Lindsay and the appreciation of indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria', 2011, p. 6.

¹⁵¹ The date of Lindsay's appointment as NGV Director (March 1941) is important to historical interpretation of his actions concerning indigenous art and the 1943 *Primitive Art Exhibition*, but repeatedly cited wrongly as occurring in 1942; even the doctoral dissertation of Benjamin Thomas and his subsequent 2011 publication on Lindsay both misconstrue the date. The error possibly stems from the NGV *Quarterly Bulletin* ('Daryl Lindsay Number'), Vol. 10(1), 1956, with the lead-heading, 'Daryl Lindsay, Director of the National Gallery of Victoria, 1942–1955'. However, Lindsay was raised from Curator to Director on 26 March 1941 (see Leonard Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861–1968: Search for a Collection*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1970, p. 170); see also Joseph Burke's account of Lindsay's planned rise to directorship of the NGV with his first appointment, in Burke's own tribute in the same tributary NGV *Bulletin* issue, n.p.

¹⁵² Spencer had invited Lindsay (an experienced jackeroo in northern Australia in his youth) to accompany him on his last central Australian journey in 1926 (after Spencer's earlier expedition-companion Frank Gillen had died in 1912). But Lindsay had to demur on grounds of time and cost. See Daryl Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree: My Family*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1965, Ch. 7, 'Jackeroo'.

¹⁵³ The National Gallery of Australia's founding document is the 1966 'Lindsay Report' resulting from the *National Art Gallery Committee of Inquiry*, producing a document submitted to the Menzies Government. The Lindsay Report placed emphasis on 'the whole of Australian art [including Aboriginal art]'. See Ron Radford, *A Vision for the National Gallery of Australia*, 2005, online at <www.nga.gov.au/aboutus/ips/pdf/ngavision2005>.pdf.

¹⁵⁴ Ure Smith, *Art of Australia: 1788–1941*, 1941, op. cit., p. 38.

¹⁵⁵ This profiling of Aboriginal culture to lend distinctiveness to the presentation of Australia internationally actually had long-developing threads from the 19th century Intercolonial and International Exhibitions – as instanced in the (changed) presentation of the distinctiveness of Aboriginal culture in the 1855 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris – see Kate Darian-Smith, 'Seize the Day: Exhibiting Australia', in Kate Darian-Smith, Richard Gillespie, Caroline Jordan and Elizabeth Willis (eds), *Seize the Day: Exhibitions, Australia and the World*, Monash University ePress, Melbourne, 2008, pp. 1.1–1.14.

6.6(ii) *Primitive Art Exhibition* (1943); Leonhard Adam and Aboriginal art

Reinforcing various events and individuals raising awareness of Aboriginal art in Melbourne since the early-20th century, Daryl Lindsay's 1942 invitation to German ethnologist Dr Leonhard Adam (recently arrived in Melbourne as a Jewish refugee) produced a third landmark exhibition including Aboriginal art, in 1943.



(L-R) Daryl Lindsay (Director NGV, 1941–56); Leonhard Adam's *Primitive Art* (Pelican Books, UK, 1940 & subsequent editions); Leonhard Adam, author details, rear cover, 1949 edn.; page from Adam's 1943 *Primitive Art* Exhibition catalogue, connecting Aboriginal arts with other cultures worldwide; cover of catalogue for the NGV exhibition (hand-drawn by Adam), 1943.

Leonhard Adam (1891–1960), a gifted linguist who had ‘studied ethnology, law and sinology at the Centre for Oriental Studies at the University and Oriental Seminar in Berlin’,¹⁵⁶ had been a judge and enjoyed a university teaching post in cultural jurisprudence as well as an affiliation with the remarkable collections of the Ethnological Museum/Staatliches Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin.¹⁵⁷ In Victoria, after his negotiated release on 29 May 1942 from detention among other German Jewish refugees confined at the Tatura migrant camp,¹⁵⁸ Adam was attached to Melbourne University's Professor of History, Max Crawford.¹⁵⁹ To enable Adam to exercise his professional expertise as an ethnologist, he was assigned to work at the National Museum of Victoria on cataloguing of the museum's collection of stone implements¹⁶⁰ (which introduced him first-hand to the diverse material gathered by Walter Baldwin Spencer).

During his first weeks at the Museum, in June 1942, Adam was introduced to Daryl Lindsay by the Museum's Director, Daniel Mahony. No doubt engaged by Adam's scholarly background¹⁶¹ and interest in Aboriginal art, Lindsay invited Adam to outline a concept for an exhibition of Primitive Art for the NGV (for which Adam had a researched proposal together within months, in October

¹⁵⁶ Author-provided details (printed on back cover) accompanying Leonhard Adam's publication *Primitive Art* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1949 edition).

¹⁵⁷ See further on Leonhard Adam's background and contribution to the scope of Melbourne University's Herald Chair and Department of Fine Arts in Chapter 4.

¹⁵⁸ See Ken Inglis, Seumas Spark, Jay Winter, and Carol Bunyan, *Dunera Lives, Volume 1: A Visual History*, Monash University Publishing, Clayton, Victoria, 2018; Ken Inglis, Seumas Spark, Jay Winter, and Carol Bunyan, *Dunera Lives, Volume 2: Profiles*, Monash University Publishing, Clayton, Victoria, 2020. Inglis, Ken, Seumas Spark, Jay Winter, and Carol Bunyan (2020).

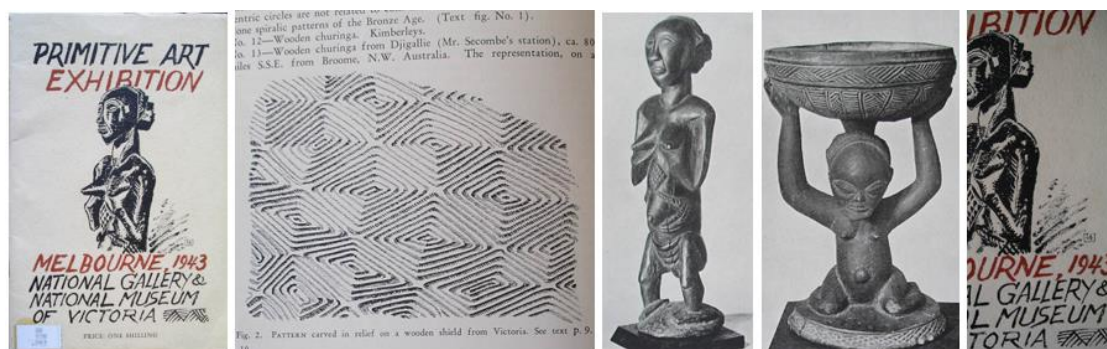
¹⁵⁹ Adam was appointed a ‘research scholar’ in the History Department at the University of Melbourne under the authority of Prof. R.M. (Max) Crawford, from 1942 to 1947, to shield him from any further ‘enemy alien’ status. (See Christine Elias, ‘The Leonhard Adam Collection of International Indigenous Culture’, *Bulletin of the University of Melbourne Archives*, University of Melbourne, no. 10, June 2002, p. 6, and Louisa Scott, ‘The Archives of Dr Leonhard Adam: A Bountiful Collection’, *ibid.*, p. 5.) The Archives of Leonhard Adam's papers (researched by the present author in 2002) are held in the University of Melbourne, while the collections he formed (and taught from at Melbourne University) are now held in the Ian Potter Museum of Art (established 1972), which opened in a new building aligned to the Swanston Street entrance to the campus in 1998.

¹⁶⁰ Greg Denning, ‘Adam, Leonhard (1891–1960)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 13, MUP, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 8–9.

¹⁶¹ While Daryl Lindsay had been raised to the position of NGV Director in March 1941 (as cited above), he had already come to know (as an occasional lecturer) Dr Ursula Hoff, later securing her professional employment (in 1943), as Assistant Keeper of Prints and Drawings, and the first professional and scholarly trained curator to be employed by the Gallery. Lindsay's sister-in-law was Jewish, and he was undoubtedly interested and respectful of Jewish scholars who had fled Nazi Germany.

1942).¹⁶² Rather than an approach anchored in kinship-detailing ethnography, then dominant in Australian anthropology under A.P. Elkin's leadership in the sole department in Sydney, Adam's method preferred to highlight formal comparisons of objects drawn from a diverse range of cultures. He indicated this in his exhibition concepts for Lindsay, specifically addressing both aesthetic values and an art museum context:

The arrangement of exhibits should not follow a geographical order, but be made according to formal similarities, or materials. Social or religious functions may be briefly referred to in the labels as in a catalogue, but should not dominate the exhibition. There are incidentally, cases where a religious significance fulfils some aesthetic function! The principal [sic] should be aesthetic, and by no means ethnological.¹⁶³



Catalogue and illustrations from Leonhard Adam, *Primitive Art Exhibition*, National Gallery and National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, 1943. The pattern on a carved Victorian shield is drawn by Adam, along with the striking cover drawing and design. The two photographed carved figures are from the Belgian Congo.

This institutional exhibition opportunity was a gift to Adam in the fields of his own training and expertise, and his carefully researched and curated *Primitive Art Exhibition* opened the next year, in May 1943, auspiced by both the Gallery and the Museum.¹⁶⁴ The exhibition was concept-shifting in its realisation and presentation, creating long memory-trails afterwards, including in Sydney.¹⁶⁵ In comparison with the *Australian Aboriginal Art* exhibition of 1929, which had utilised the Gallery's Print Room area, Leonhard Adam's exhibition was so substantial in 1943 that it needed a larger space, the Latrobe Gallery,¹⁶⁶ accessed from the rear of the large Library, Museum and Gallery complex to accommodate its extensive contents.

Adam's exhibition included Aboriginal material in company with objects he had located in Australian public and private collections that represented diverse cultures of the world. The project was genuinely – as claimed in the text – the first-ever Primitive Art exhibition by world comparison. This was so because the exhibition took an orbital approach to the world's indigenous cultures. In contrast, for example, all earlier exhibitions in Berlin's Ethnology Museum (before Adam had to flee

¹⁶² Leonhard Adam, 'draft exhibition proposal, *Primitive Art Exhibition*, 9 October 1942', cited in Benjamin Thomas, p. 11, fn. 50. The proposal (by Adam) stated 'This is going to be the first universal show of its kind since primitive art exhibitions in other countries in previous years have been confined to single continents, preferably Africa (Berlin; New York; Paris, and London), in our case [Germany], there was an exhibition of ancient American Art (Berlin 1930).' (Thomas, 'Daryl Lindsay and the appreciation of indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria', 2011, op. cit., p. 11).

¹⁶³ Quoted in Jaynie Anderson, 'The Creation of Indigenous Collections in Melbourne: How Kenneth Clark, Charles Mountford and Leonhard Adam interrogated Australian indigeneity', in *Histoire de l'Art et Anthropologie*, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, 28 July 2009, <www.journals.openedition.org/actesbranly/332>, viewed 27 Oct. 2018.

¹⁶⁴ Leonhard Adam, *Primitive Art Exhibition*, National Gallery and National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, 1943.

¹⁶⁵ As noted below in this chapter, the NGV *Primitive Art Exhibition's* legacy impact was recalled years later by Tony Tuckson in the comprehensive exhibition which he organised for all state galleries, opening in 1960: *Australian Aboriginal Art*.

¹⁶⁶ Thomas, 'Daryl Lindsay and the appreciation of indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne in the 1940's, 2011, op. cit., p. 11.

in 1938 from the Nazi regime) had been focused mainly on African art,¹⁶⁷ as indeed was the tendency throughout Europe and even the United States in the early-20th century. Adam concentrated his new research work in Australia on including Aboriginal art – as *art* – in company with objects from diverse cultures of the world.

Leonhard Adam not only continued to gather collections while publishing, conducting some Australian fieldwork and teaching about ethnological collections in his later research posts at Melbourne University. As detailed in Chapter 4, he was also enlisted in 1948 by newly-arrived Professor Joseph Burke,¹⁶⁸ to give lectures on Primitive Art within the Herald-endowed Department of Fine Arts. Adam's teaching to diverse students at Melbourne university¹⁶⁹ was directly enhanced by the ready availability of his Penguin-published monograph, *Primitive Art*, which was also used by art teachers, design students and others taking University courses in the 1950s.¹⁷⁰

6.6(iii) Leonhard Adam, 'Has Australian Aboriginal Art a Future?' (1944)

Leonard Adam developed dynamic attitudes to the question of Aboriginal arts historically – affirmatively grasping, for example, both the antiquity and diversity of typologies represented in Australian rock art. He also considered that 'primitive art' was intimately tied to the concerns of anthropology rather than an intellectual projection of art museums, stating that: '[P]rimitive art is largely an anthropological subject, as it is inextricably bound up with primitive religion, including magic, ancestor-worship, cosmology, etc.'¹⁷¹

Adam considered how Aboriginal arts might be nurtured to ensure their survival in the 20th century, through cultural-maintenance programs of continuing (and new forms of) tradition-oriented cultural production. He published a highly significant essay, 'Has Aboriginal art a future?', which appeared in a prominent vehicle of new cultural ideas in Australia: the avant-garde journal *Angry Penguins*, published by John Reed in Melbourne, and edited by Max Harris.¹⁷² Most important, and quite differently from Australian colleagues in anthropology, viewing tradition-oriented culture as bound for extinguishment (a position identified with Professor A.P. Elkin's exhortation for

¹⁶⁷ See PhD thesis for the University of Melbourne (2003) by Janice Lally: *The Australian Aboriginal Collection in the Museum of Ethnography, Berlin and the making of cultural identity*.

¹⁶⁸ Report of Prof. Joseph Burke on the first year of teaching to 65 students in 1948: 'Dr Leon[h]ard Adam has generously offered to make his lectures on the art of primitive peoples open to Fine Arts [s]tudents.' (Professor Joseph Burke (Herald Professor of Fine Arts), in 'Report for the Vice-Chancellor', 28 January 1949 [reviewing the first year of operation of a first-year course, 'Fine Arts A', in the fledgling Dept. of Fine Arts]; hand-signed typescript, 5 pp. p.3; University of Melbourne Archives, 'Herald Chair of Fine Arts' file, viewed 2004.

¹⁶⁹ Leon Paroissien, who first studied Fine Arts at Melbourne University while undertaking an art training at RMIT (as also did James Mollison, both of them first becoming art teachers), reported to the present author on the impact of Adam's lectures: 'It was exciting to be introduced to such a large range of remarkable material from different cultures of the world, including Aboriginal art, as a counterpoint to the study of western art. This was reinforced also by the ready availability of Adam's Pelican paperback on *Primitive Art*.' (Interview comments, 20 May 2020.) Some Victorian art teachers still had a copy of Adam's text years afterwards.

¹⁷⁰ Leonhard Adam, *Primitive Art* [1940, repr. 1947], 2nd rev. & enlarged ed., Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, UK, 1949.

¹⁷¹ Leonhard Adam, 'Has Australian Aboriginal Art a Future?', *Angry Penguins*, Autumn 1944, pp. 42–50; reprinted Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, Philip Goad (eds), *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917–1967*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2006, 449–58, citation from p. 449.

¹⁷² Adam, 'Has Aboriginal art a future?', 1944, original version cited above.

energetic documentation 'before it is too late'¹⁷³), Adam was emphatic in maintaining the dynamic, historically contingent, and diverse nature of 'primitive peoples' and the particularity of their various 'arts':

There is no such thing as 'primitive peoples' as a uniform type. ... [T]hey all have a history of their own and have developed distinct cultures, including as many distinct arts.¹⁷⁴

Adam was also explicit about the stylistic differences in the rock art to be found across continental Australia, 'including the remarkable engravings in the Sydney district'. He made a western comparison, pertinent to cross-cultural interaction within densely layered tradition if a little extravagantly cast, to highlight the significance of such differences in terms of cultural creativity:

[T]he great variety of styles in distant areas of the continent is amazing, and the difference between a rock engraving in the Sydney district and a rock painting in North-West Australia is not smaller than that between works of Giotto and Picasso.¹⁷⁵

Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara and Philip Goad, when editing their invaluable collection of Australian 20th century documents on modern art (1917–67), positioned Adam's *Angry Penguins* essay as 'arguing for the aesthetic possibilities of a post-colonial Aboriginal art, inspired by his studies of indigenous post-contact cultures in Australia, Africa and North America'.¹⁷⁶ Yet such a judgment risks an anachronistic projection onto the past: 'post-contact cultures' and the 'possibilities of a post-colonial Aboriginal art' were not germinal concepts with any currency in the 1940s.¹⁷⁷ It would be some decades before the ideological dismantling of *colonialism*, as a trope for incommensurable cultural encounters in all its presumptive judgments and domination of subjugated peoples, would be undertaken. In a more carefully calibrated assessment of Adam's thought in his historical context, through her doctoral study of his achievements at Melbourne University in the 1940s and 1950s, Robyn Sloggett has argued that Adam's progressive position was in not perceiving Aboriginal art as either static or foreclosed by tradition: 'Adam particularly sought to define and defend innovation and agency in Aboriginal art'.¹⁷⁸

In a broader historical perspective, it is again possible to see the various inter-institutional links of key personalities in the teaching of art history as well as broad primary studies of collections in the unusually rich academic and art educational context of Melbourne in the 1940s and 1950s – where Adam's lectures impacted upon artists and art teachers as well as students of history and art history. Adam became a friend of artist and art teacher-training lecturer Frances Derham, and encouraged her interest in Aboriginal children's art. This was part of his own affirmative support for Aboriginal artists' potential in new media, oriented to exploring new directions, support-systems

¹⁷³ A.P. Elkin, 'Before It is Too Late: A Recurrent Challenge', in Ronald M. Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology: Modern Studies in the Social Anthropology of the Australian Aborigines* [Papers presented at Social Anthropology symposium during A.I.A.S. General Meeting, Canberra, May 1968] (University of Western Australia Press, Perth, for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1970) 19–28.

¹⁷⁴ Adam, 'Has Australian Aboriginal Art a Future?' [1944], 2006 (Stephen, McNamara & Goad, *Modernism & Australia: Documents*), p. 451.

¹⁷⁵ Adam, 'Has Australian Aboriginal Art a Future?' [1944], 2006 (Stephen, McNamara & Goad, *Documents*), p. 451.

¹⁷⁶ Stephen, McNamara & Goad, *Modernism & Australia: Documents*, 2006, op. cit., p. 449.

¹⁷⁷ Despite the progressive attitudes throughout Adam's sympathetic and dynamic interpretations of Aboriginal art, there were still structural assumptions constrained by his historical frameworks, as evident in the following statement: 'In primitive cultures, utilitarian art is much more generally employed than in higher civilizations with their wealth of mechanical devices and mass production of implements and practical objects of any description.' (Leonhard Adam, *Primitive Art* [1940], 2nd rev. & enlarged ed., Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, UK, 1949, p. 241.)

¹⁷⁸ Robyn Sloggett, 'Has Aboriginal art a future?' Leonhard Adam's 1944 Essay and the Development of the Australian Aboriginal Art Market', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 18(2), 2015, 167–83, p. 177.

and increased opportunities for tradition-based artists, so that their creativity might evolve in new ways:

Some people think that European art materials should be avoided, and must result in the deterioration and degeneration of primitive art. They forget, however that art is not a static, but a dynamic phenomenon, that it is perpetually changing, and that mutual influences from tribe to tribe, and probably from altogether different peoples also, have been at work for centuries. European influence on primitive art, therefore, is only the latest development in a very long chain of historical events.¹⁷⁹

These examples reveal how much more there is to add beyond the particular picture of source-mining Aboriginal culture for imagery in Margaret Preston's advocacy of Aboriginal art, although her own art's later more innovative adaptation of influences from Aboriginal art was outstanding qualitatively. A more nuanced picture of connections is required to reveal how activated across many scenes of cultural endeavour were the inter-crossing personal circuits of concern to support indigenous art and creativity in the early decades of the 20th century. The advocacy-interests in Victoria can be shown to equal and widen the influence of many similar interests in Sydney of the period. It can certainly be argued that art education was more affirmatively embraced, and pedagogically more advanced, in Melbourne in the 1930s and 1940s; and that interest in Aboriginal art circulated strongly within leadership of ideas about creative learning in Victorian pre-school and primary education, in which Frances Derham had a huge influence through multiple networks (including lecturing to teachers) over many decades.

6.7 Australian Gallery Directors Council/AGDC: support for Aboriginal art, 1948–60

Existing accounts of the inclusion of Aboriginal art in Australian art museums have tended to define historical timelines exclusively through academic art history, often working mainly with the evidence provided by *exhibitions* and associated *catalogues* as they have appeared. However, there are further resources from within museums' own institutional histories that have not been utilised.

When museum archival resources are included, these sources provide a different temporality to many processes of historical development, challenging distortions in some decades of commentary about Indigenous art's acceptance in art museums. Most deficient in many accounts has been a weak understanding of the institutional cultures and timescales of museum practices. Evident in internal dialogues, exhibition planning and related activities that often extend over years, institutional practices form a complex background of evolving ideas, sometimes strongly at variance with a chronology of singular events linked from external records. Archival sources are drawn upon in this section (as noted in footnotes) to illuminate professional purpose, diverse conversations and varying mentalities of museums in the 20th-century post-war period,¹⁸⁰ when state gallery directors began to organise professional co-operation through their combined efforts. Such national collaboration had not been possible earlier – because of minimal resources, restrictive governance, and disconnections among museums resulting from distance, colonial origins and localism (as already brought to

¹⁷⁹ Adam, 'Has Australian Aboriginal Art a Future?' [1944], 2006 (Stephen, McNamara & Goad, *Modernism & Australia: Documents*), p. 455.

¹⁸⁰ The archival records of the Conference of Interstate Directors/CID – later Australian Gallery Directors Conference (AGDC, 1948–1950) – form a significant set of primary resources for this chapter, as cited in footnotes, where specifically utilised. The records of meetings and exhibitions managed through the 32-year history of the AGDC, as this body later became known, are archived at the National Gallery of Australia, while annual meetings records are also often duplicated in various forms in the state galleries' own archival records.

attention in Chapters 3, 4 and 5).

Aboriginal art had a recurrent presence in the records of the Australian state galleries immediately after they first came together in 1948: to plan exhibitions and other shared endeavours, through the mechanism of annual directors' conferences (an initiative led jointly by Daryl Lindsay and Hal Missingham). Aboriginal art also regularly rose to prominence at significant times when Australian anniversaries as a nation were anticipated; and it was always included in directors' planning of commemorative exhibitions, or nationally representative surveys to be sent abroad, as demonstrated below.

6.7(i) Aboriginal art repositioned nationally/internationally (1941 ff.)

Since the success of the long-touring 1941 exhibition, *Art of Australia: 1788–1941*, circulating in North America during the war years, Australian state gallery directors had become more conscious of the role of Aboriginal art in contributing a unique character to any survey of Australian art historically. Indeed, Daryl Lindsay and Hal Missingham embraced Aboriginal art with conviction; and as these two were the leading personalities in bringing the directors together for cooperative planning in 1948, they led support for Aboriginal art among their colleagues – as attested in the records of directors' conferences in the 1950s. It is also significant that Daryl Lindsay had made the first Aboriginal acquisitions for the NGV in 1946, in the form of two fine Hermannsburg watercolours, by Edwin Pareroultja.¹⁸¹

Yale University Art Gallery director TheodoreSizer's decisive support for Aboriginal art in his role of shaping content for the 1941 *Art of Australia* exhibition prepared for the United States and Canada is well covered above. Jaynie Anderson has meanwhile added invaluable research on Kenneth Clark's extensive visit to Australia in 1948,¹⁸² a visit organised by his supported professorial candidate Joseph Burke, by then well-ensconced in the Melbourne Herald Chair of Fine Arts, which had just accomplished the first year of teaching. Clark's strong connections with the new Herald Department, with the National Gallery of Victoria (he was recently-appointed London consultant to the trustees of the Felton Bequest),¹⁸³ and his later support to the careers of Sidney Nolan, Russell Drysdale and other artists in London after seeing their work in Australia, have been well recorded.

Meanwhile, Joseph Burke (in joint-planning of Clark's itinerary with Daryl Lindsay) had also organised for Kenneth Clark to meet local experts to introduce him to Aboriginal art. The first was Leonhard Adam, who (as Robyn Sloggett's research records) enthused Clark comprehensively about

¹⁸¹ The two watercolours were *Mt Sonder from Ormiston*, and *Red wall, Ormiston Gorge*, purchased by Daryl Lindsay with NGV funds from Pareroultja's first exhibition in Melbourne. See Benjamin Thomas's further documentation of this acquisition, in Thomas, 'Daryl Lindsay and the appreciation of indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria', 2011, p. 3; Thomas was guided in early acquisition details by former NGV curator of indigenous art, Judith Ryan, while also citing records of trustee acquisitions in this period.

¹⁸² Anderson, 'The Creation of Indigenous Collections in Melbourne', 2009, op. cit. (published online). Kenneth Clark spent some six weeks in Australia, including interstate visits, taking him through the New Year before he departed for England in early 1949. Clark's memorable meeting with Sidney (and Cynthia Nolan) was in Sydney.

¹⁸³ Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861–1968*, 1970, p. 202, and esp. Ch. 20: 'Sir Kenneth Clark as Consultant', pp. 205–13.

the Spencer-collected bark paintings held in the Melbourne Museum.¹⁸⁴ The resourceful Burke-Lindsay itinerary planning also arranged for Clark's meeting with Charles Mountford later in Adelaide, to ensure guidance by the most enthusiastic expert on the Aboriginal art collections held in the South Australian Museum. This meant that, with fortunate timing, Clark met Mountford at the end of the crucial year of the latter's leadership of the eight-months' Australian-American Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land (AASEAL).¹⁸⁵ Picking up the story thereafter, Jaynie Anderson's study of Clark's papers in London has produced an illuminating account of the impact of Aboriginal bark painting in Clark's impressions of Australia after a six-week visit. As her research has disclosed, Clark later wrote from London (in March 1949) to Italian Renaissance connoisseur Bernard Berenson about his prolonged and pleasurable Australian stay, declaring his 'enthusiasm for the aboriginal paintings' he encountered:

They are extraordinary, and totally unlike African bushman drawings or the Palaeolithic cave paintings. They do not represent a total impression of [a] moment, but an analytic. ... By some freak the Abo[rigine]s had what we call perfect taste – all their objects have pretty, delicate colouring, and their fantasies are gentle, whereas those of the neighbouring Papuans are ugly and violent.¹⁸⁶

There is some echo here of Lindsay's own remarks six years earlier in introducing the *Primitive Art Exhibition* organised by Leonhard Adam: 'Personally, I rate very highly the bark drawings of our own Australian natives, who seem to possess a certain delicacy of line all their own'.¹⁸⁷ Most interesting is Jaynie Anderson's account of Clark's later attempt (sadly unsuccessful, despite his prestige) to prompt the British Museum to present an exhibition of Aboriginal bark paintings,¹⁸⁸ ideally drawn from the historic 'Spencer barks' within the Museum of Victoria – which Clark considered more outstanding than works in Mountford's collection held in Adelaide. However, Clark perceived the National Gallery of Victoria as taking the lead role in such a venture, and his observations – like those of Adam¹⁸⁹ and others separately – lamented that the finest Aboriginal bark paintings in the

¹⁸⁴ Robyn Sloggett, 'Dr Leonhard Adam and his ethnographic collection at the University of Melbourne', unpublished thesis, PhD, University of Melbourne, 2009, p. 74. – quoted by Susan Lowish in her paper on Melbourne University's Indigenous collections, *Mapping Connections: Towards an Art History of Early Indigenous Collections at the University of Melbourne*, 1-16, 2014, p. 6 (available online).

¹⁸⁵ The Australian-American Expedition to Arnhem Land (AASEAL), following funding from National Geographic and an agreement between the Australian Commonwealth and the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, was led by Charles Mountford for eight months (February–October 1948), with base-camps made at three sites: Groote Eylandt, Yirrkala, and Oenpelli (Gunbalanya). By November, Mountford's collection of 484 bark paintings (and other ethnographic material, yet to be divided) was brought by road to the South Australian Museum in Adelaide, and placed in storage. (See Sally K. May, *Collecting Cultures: Myth, Politics, and Collaboration in the 1948 Arnhem Land Expedition*, AltaMira Press, Lanham, Md, 2010, p. 108, and *passim*.) This meant that when Clark reached Adelaide towards the end of his Australian tour, he was able to see the most recent and remarkable collection of bark paintings (and works on paper) then made in Australia, in addition to having Mountford as a guide to their significance. This context also explains why Clark had his greatest experiences of Aboriginal art in Adelaide, after earlier visits to museums in Melbourne and Sydney.

¹⁸⁶ Kenneth Clark, letter to Bernard Berenson, 26 March 1949, quoted in Jaynie Anderson, 'The Creation of Indigenous Collections in Melbourne', 28 July 2009, *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁷ Daryl Lindsay, 'Introduction', *Primitive Art Exhibition*, National Gallery of Victoria and National Museum of Victoria, 1943, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁸⁸ At this time, following Spencer's descriptions, Arnhem Land bark paintings were invariably described as 'bark drawings', which is reflected in Clark's comments to Berenson.

¹⁸⁹ This lends both context and background to Robyn Sloggett's statement that 'Adam argued passionately for Indigenous art to be included in a specially built art gallery or in the National Gallery of Victoria', following his disappointment at the National Museum's general disregard and eventual removal from display of the finest Aboriginal art collected by Baldwin Spencer.

Melbourne collections were by the late 1940s in storage¹⁹⁰ within the Victorian National Museum¹⁹¹ and no longer on display:

I am sure the right thing to do is for the Melbourne Gallery to arrange a loan to the British Museum. There cannot be any objection to lending the British Museum things which are not exhibited in Melbourne, and which are not even accessible to students.¹⁹²

This was strong backing from the recent Director of the National Gallery, London, and by then the most influential art historical connoisseur of western art in Britain. It is clear that Sizer's and Clark's support in the 1940s for the unique *aesthetic character* of Aboriginal art left Australian institutional leaders in no doubt about the calibre of international interest in Australia's oldest cultural traditions; nor that Aboriginal paintings were considered by these fine art historians as 'art', not ethnographic representation. Daryl Lindsay (with whom Clark stayed some days and was introduced to 'three days' motoring in Victoria's Western District'¹⁹³ by Daryl and Joan Lindsay), along with Joseph Burke (his itinerary host and primary guide), would certainly have absorbed Kenneth Clark's high estimation of Aboriginal art at the end of 1948.

This also forms an important contextual background to the state gallery directors' collaborative AGDC meetings, inaugurated in the same year by Daryl Lindsay and Hal Missingham. Support for Aboriginal art was taken into their foundational aspirations, and their long-developed support (in the case of Lindsay) for Aboriginal art's important projection to the Australian public was set on a decisive course. Australian *artists* meanwhile demonstrated their own continuing interests in Aboriginal art in the 1950s, as widely attested by visitors. Czech artist/student of ethnology, Karel Kupka, was one who noticed such impact in local artist-circles at the time, when visiting to collect Aboriginal works for collections in Europe:

This openness of Australian artists to the merits of Aboriginal art as art was apparent to Karel Kupka when he visited Australia in the 1950s and 1960s to familiarise himself with Aboriginal culture and collect bark paintings and other Aboriginal works for the Musée d'Ethnographie in Basle [Basel] and eventually, the Musée National des Arts Africains et Océaniens in Paris.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ The 'Spencer barks' were, however, still definitely on view in 1943, when Leonhard Adam prepared his essay for the *Primitive Art Exhibition* catalogue. Adam advised visitors to the exhibition to supplement their experience of bark painting by visiting 'the large collection in the Spencer Hall of the National Museum (Russell Street front).' (Adam, *Primitive Art Exhibition*, Melbourne, 1943, p. 7.)

¹⁹¹ The invisibility of the Arnhem Land bark paintings collected by Spencer continued throughout the 1950s, to the frustration of visiting specialists (such as German anthropologist and 1937 Frankfurt Frobenius Institute graduate, and Kimberley-cultures ethnographer, Andreas Lommel, as reported years later to the present author during a 1996 visit to Lommel's home in Munich). The Museum's removal of the Spencer-collected artworks by the late 1940s also helps to explain Karel Kupka's impressions when visiting Australia in the 1950s: that only the Queensland Art Gallery displayed Aboriginal works (including the 'Mountford barks') to their advantage as artworks, rather than as adjuncts to natural history collections.

¹⁹² From a letter located in Kenneth Clark papers by Jaynie Anderson, cited in Anderson, 'The Creation of Indigenous Collections in Melbourne', 2009, op. cit., addressee and date details unspecified.

¹⁹³ Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree*, 1965, op. cit., p. 156. The continuing significance of Daryl Lindsay's relationships with both Theodore Sizer and Kenneth Clark over some years is born out in their appearance as authors of texts in the 'Festschrift' volume compiled after Lindsay's NGV retirement: Kenneth Clark, *The Idea of a Great Gallery* [Melbourne, 1949], and Theodore Sizer, 'The Training of a Gallery Administrator' [1964], published in Franz Philipp and June Stewart (eds), *In Honour of Daryl Lindsay: Essays and Studies*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1964.

¹⁹⁴ Catherine De Lorenzo, Joanna Mendelssohn, Catherine Speck, '1968–2008: Curated exhibitions and Australian art history', *Journal of Art Historiography*, No. 4, June 2011, pp. 1–15; published online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/de-lorenzo-et-al_paper-ed.pdf>, p. 13. The observations relate to Karel Kupka's publication, *Peintres Aborigènes d'Australie*, Publications de la Société des Océanistes, No. 24, Musée de l'Homme, Paris, 1972, and comment cited from p. 29.

6.7(ii) UNESCO publication on Australian art (1954): Aboriginal art selected (1950)

UNESCO (founded in 1946)¹⁹⁵ launched a program in 1950 of encouraging production of national art portfolios by each member-state, as part of an early effort of world cultural exchange. Australia's response (as recorded in gallery directors' meetings) bypassed all other options within Euro-Australian art and turned exclusively to Aboriginal art. Aboriginal rock art and bark painting from Arnhem Land were chosen as the themes for an Australian publication,¹⁹⁶ and a visual arts working committee (with Commonwealth backing)¹⁹⁷ was set up in 1950 to guide the selection process and fieldwork necessary to obtain fine photographs.



Australia: Aboriginal paintings, Arnhem Land, New York Graphic Society, New York, by arrangement with UNESCO, 1954
Introduction by Herbert Read.

The committee was placed under the chairmanship of Aboriginal field expert and cultural interpreter Charles Mountford,¹⁹⁸ with membership of artists Margaret Preston and Desiderius Orban, and Sydney state gallery director Hal Missingham.¹⁹⁹ These four met in Sydney in 1950 to decide on selection of subjects, and especially the commissioning of professional photography needed. This task was allocated to Bill Brindle, a photographer employed by the Australian News and Information Bureau (later the Australian Information Service). Brindle travelled to Arnhem Land with Mountford, to achieve the quality of records of Aboriginal rock art needed to link these to bark paintings, and provide a superlative publication that would circulate internationally. Remarkably generous Commonwealth funding of £15,000 (c. \$AUD 800,000),²⁰⁰ and a time-scale of 18 months committed to photography and full preparation of the project, resulted in a handsome, UNESCO-sponsored folio publication in 1954, with an international 'art positioning' Introduction by Herbert Read, in *Australia: Aboriginal Paintings, Arnhem Land*.²⁰¹ The scale of the publication and quality of photography achieved were both outstanding for the time.

6.7(iii) Advocacy of Biennale of Venice pavilion for Australia, and Aboriginal art (1951)

When the state gallery directors began to lobby the Commonwealth government in the early 1950s to build an Australian pavilion within the Biennale of Venice site in the city Gardens/Giardini, it was

¹⁹⁵ UNESCO assumed its operational life at its first General Conference, held at the Sorbonne University, Paris, 20 November–10 December 1946. See Fernando Valderrama, *A History of UNESCO*. UNESCO, Paris, 1995, p. 24.

¹⁹⁶ Conference of Interstate Directors [CID/AGDC#3], QNAG, Brisbane, 4–5 September 1950, Minutes, p. 4/p. 11.

¹⁹⁷ The Commonwealth would have worked directly after 1948 through its National Commission for UNESCO, as a new IGO framework, while informally liaising with the state galleries/AGDC as the NGO counterpart for art museums.

¹⁹⁸ Mountford had recently led the AASEAL expedition to Arnhem Land in 1948, as discussed further below, and his first-hand knowledge of Arnhem Land sites was crucial.

¹⁹⁹ This committee is recorded by the Conference of Interstate Directors [CID/AGDC#3], QNAG, Brisbane, 4–5 September 1950, Minutes, p. 4/p. 11.

²⁰⁰ £15,000 in 1950 is equivalent to c. \$800,000 in 2020 RBA inflation-calculated values, at <www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.html>.

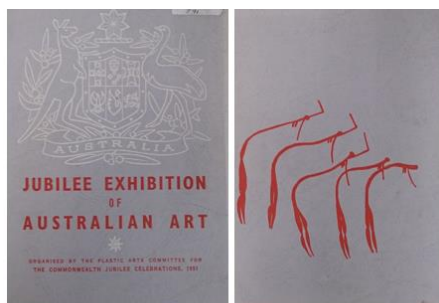
²⁰¹ *Australia: Aboriginal paintings, Arnhem Land*, New York Graphic Society, New York, by arrangement with UNESCO, 1954; Introduction by Herbert Read.

argued (in 1951) that ‘the very best of contemporary Australian works available’ should be accompanied by Aboriginal bark paintings.²⁰² A proposed exhibition for the Tate Gallery, London, discussed by the AGDC meeting in 1950, was also projected to have a desirable component of ‘Aboriginal art’²⁰³ alongside some 60 works by contemporary artists.

Directors advocated that a well-planned exhibition of Australian art could include planning for a representation in Venice as well as an exhibition in London, which might also tour internationally around a desired timing to coincide with the Venice Biennale. However, the story of Prime Minister Menzies’ takeover and manipulation of the Tate exhibition’s conservative selection, as finally realised in 1962–63 through the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board’s direct control (and analysed in Chapter 5), also ensured the exclusion of the state directors’ original concepts – that the Tate exhibition could well include Aboriginal art; and that Australian Aboriginal art should be included in a Venice Biennale presentation as *contemporary Australian art*.

The Commonwealth demurred on both ideas, and favoured only Euro-Australian art. Meanwhile, Bernard Smith had also lobbied from Sydney, in January 1951, for an Australian pavilion in Venice (after his visiting of the Biennale in October 1950, during his first period abroad). As Sheridan Palmer’s biography has detailed, Smith wrote on return to the *Sydney Morning Herald* about his idea for Venice,²⁰⁴ afterwards approaching the Italian Consul General in Sydney.²⁰⁵ However, he then wrote to an AGNSW trustee in 1951, stating his view that, if Commonwealth support had to be selective, then a Venice presence for white Australian artists’ visibility was more important than a proposed UNESCO publication on Aboriginal art – a small intimation of Bernard Smith’s later exclusion of Aboriginal art more broadly.²⁰⁶ The state gallery directors had meanwhile resolved to pursue both objectives.

6.7(iv) Commonwealth Jubilee exhibition (1951)



Jubilee exhibition of Australian art, commemorating 50 years since Federation, front and back catalogue covers, 1951

At the AGDC Conference in 1950, Daryl Lindsay reported to fellow directors on various aspects of the forthcoming ‘Commonwealth Jubilee Celebrations’ to mark a half-century since Federation (and Lindsay clearly had been given the initiative from the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board to steer the project). The AGDC meeting endorsed plans for a substantial exhibition of Australian art to be

²⁰² Conference of Interstate Directors [CID/AGDC#4], AGWA, Perth, 21–23 November 1951, Minutes, p. 4/p. 17. A similar exhibition concept (or perhaps one exhibition mounted for touring) was proposed for an exhibition at the Tate Gallery, with Arts Council of Great Britain sponsorship, at the same AGDC meeting.

²⁰³ Conference of Interstate Directors [CID/AGDC#4], AGWA, Perth, 21–23 November 1951, Minutes, p. 4/p. 17.

²⁰⁴ Sheridan Palmer, *Hegel’s Owl: The Life of Bernard Smith*, Power Publications, Sydney, 2016, p. 153.

²⁰⁵ Palmer, *Hegel’s Owl*, 2016, op. cit., pp. 153–4.

²⁰⁶ This choice by Bernard Smith, and its reasoning, is set out in Palmer, *Hegel’s Owl*, 2016, op. cit., pp. 153–4.

shown in all state capitals in 1951, according to a rationale outlined by Lindsay:

[The exhibition] would contain a number of aboriginal drawings and carvings, early Australian historical works, major works from the Roberts–Streeton–Conder period, paintings to 1925, and contemporary works.²⁰⁷

As things turned out, Laurie Thomas, who had been granted a post as Assistant Director with Daryl Lindsay in the NGV in Melbourne (1950–52) to gain state gallery experience, was appointed to organise the Jubilee exhibition and see through the arrangements for a national touring itinerary,²⁰⁸ which led to Thomas's own state gallery directorships afterwards (in Perth, then later Brisbane).²⁰⁹

The 1951 Jubilee Exhibition, when launched,²¹⁰ provided another instance of Aboriginal art's now-regular inclusion in the state galleries' mental landscape of *national* cultural representation. The exhibition (with Aboriginal art on the back cover) notably had four sections, with the first given to Aboriginal art. Of the 156 works in the exhibition, 26 were carefully-sourced loans of Aboriginal works,²¹¹ reflecting Lindsay's personal support for their inclusion, as also evident in the presence in the catalogue (alongside section-essays by Clive Turnbull, Lionel Lindsay, and Roland Wakelin), of an essay introducing the first section on Aboriginal art, by Leonhard Adam.²¹² A catalogue note details that Laurie Thomas had sourced any information on the Aboriginal art works from the three anthropology-related sources connected to the works' collecting – that is, there was no projection of a merely aestheticised 'art-based' view of the remarkable Aboriginal works included. They were all carefully sourced loans contoured by anthropologists' knowledge of the culture-sources for all works.

Significantly, the 1951 project preceded by nearly a decade the Tuckson-curated *Australian Aboriginal Art* exhibition of 1960 (covered below), and the mid-century Jubilee exhibition also toured

²⁰⁷ Conference of Interstate Directors [CID/AGDC#3], QNAG, Brisbane, 4–5 September 1950, Minutes, p. 2/p. 9.

²⁰⁸ *Jubilee exhibition of Australian art: Aboriginal art, Early colonial art, The art of the middle period, Contemporary art*; Organised by Laurence Thomas under the direction of the Plastic Arts Committee for the Commonwealth of Australia Jubilee, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1951; Foreword by R.G. Menzies; toured TMAG, Hobart, 12 March–AGWA, Perth, closing 10 December.

²⁰⁹ Laurie Thomas was Director of the AGWA, Perth (1952–56), and later Director of QAG, Brisbane (1961–67), which gave him an active role in the annual AGDC directors' conferences in these years. As covered in Chapter 5, he became a major activist critic in 1962 (with AGNSW Director, Hal Missingham) at the height of Prime Minister Menzies' manipulation of the Tate Gallery exhibition of Australian art, opened in January 1963 in London.

²¹⁰ *Jubilee exhibition of Australian art: Aboriginal art, early colonial art, the art of the middle period, contemporary art*; Organised by Laurence Thomas under the direction of the Plastic Arts Committee for the Commonwealth of Australia Jubilee, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1951. The catalogue included a foreword by R.G. Menzies, and essays by Leonhard Adam and others – which provides another example of the conviction behind Lindsay's backing of Adam, since Lindsay's endorsement definitely stood behind the exhibition's realisation and securing of the CAAB financial support it needed.

²¹¹ The works' ownership/loan details reflect the three leading sources of anthropology-determined Aboriginal loans at the time: (a) 7 were 'Spencer barks' from the Victorian Museum, identified generally as 'Kakadu artists' but none named, and all collected in 1913 through Spencer's Cahill-supported commissioning in 1912 at Oenpelli; (b) 5 were works (4 of these carvings) collected by Ronald and Catherine Berndt in Arnhem Land 1946–47, only 2 with named artists, and all owned by the Anthropology Department, University of Sydney; (c) 7 were 'Mountford barks', all 'artist unknown', collected from Yirrkala and Oenpelli during the AASEAL expedition of 1948, and afterwards Commonwealth-owned; 4 were artist-produced 'copies' on masonite (some by Allan Warren) of interiors of important rock art sites in Arnhem Land. However, one work further work was a 'Wondjina' representation, artist unknown, from the remarkable and sadly-neglected Frobenius Expedition to the West Kimberley region in 1937–38, a work borrowed from the WA Museum, Perth. (In 1996 the present author visited German anthropologist, the late Andreas Lommel, in his home in Munich, to learn of this 1930s expedition from a then-surviving leading participant in the Frobenius expedition to Kimberley.)

²¹² This essay is usually missing from Adam-related literature. See Leonhard Adam, 'Aboriginal Art', pp. 5–7, in *Jubilee exhibition of Australian art*, 1951, op. cit. Adam here described himself as an 'anthropologist' rather than an ethnologist. Although he often wrote from a fine arts vantage-point and inclusive values, Adam never described himself as an art historian – as he is often mis-identified by anthropologists today, which also leads to a mis-identification of his significant role at Melbourne University, where he lectured on Primitive Art to Fine Arts students, as also to History students.

all state capitals. This was a careful preparation and abundant projection of Aboriginal art as *national heritage* by the state galleries, which has not been acknowledged to date in the relevant literature on the galleries' roles in supporting Aboriginal art. The ignoring of such persistent commitment by the galleries has also obscured their indubitable efforts since the 1940s on behalf of gathering and positioning Aboriginal art as Australian cultural heritage of national significance. The role of prominent Victorian leaders of both art museums and art history (in Daryl Lindsay and Professor Joseph Burke), and the support of both men for ethnologist Leonhard Adam's work, and in fostering awareness and high valuing of Aboriginal art for many years before Tuckson's championing efforts in Sydney, have also been overlooked in standard historical accounts.

6.7(v) The 1948 'Mountford barks' distributed to galleries (1956)

In addition to inclusions in *exhibitions*, state gallery directors became increasingly interested in being able to represent Aboriginal art in their *collections* – a mission that traditionally had been considered the preserve of the natural history museums. Daryl Lindsay's privileged position in negotiations with the Commonwealth again proved crucial. His dealings with government officers in 1950-51 for the Jubilee exhibition likely caused Lindsay to focus on the extent of Aboriginal artworks owned federally, including the collection of Mountford-commissioned bark paintings still in storage in Adelaide.



Australian-American Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1948, led by (R) Charles Mountford.

In 1952 (after conclusion of the 1951 Jubilee exhibition), Lindsay 'lobbied the minister for the Interior' and sought to borrow 25 works from the Commonwealth so that they might be displayed at the National Gallery of Victoria.²¹³ His written rationale for this request forms a significant historical signpost in changing values and agency.²¹⁴

Although in the past the majority of these have been collected by Natural History Museums for ethnographical purposes, it has long been my view that their artistic merit is such that a number of them should be shown in the Art Galleries throughout Australia, and this theory was borne out by the interest they aroused when shown as part of the Jubilee Art Exhibition, for which incidentally this Gallery was responsible for their framing and preservation.²¹⁵

There were doubtless other conversations and informal contacts not fully recorded at the time, since 1952 was also the year that Lindsay (along with Robert Campbell) was appointed to the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board.²¹⁶ However, Daryl Lindsay's rationale and advice to the federal

²¹³ See Vaughan, 'The Cross-Cultural Art Museum in Australia', 2011, op. cit., p. 266.

²¹⁴ 'In February 1952, Lindsay wrote to the Minister for the Interior requesting a selection of twenty-five indigenous bark drawings for loan to the gallery for display.' (Benjamin Thomas, 'Daryl Lindsay and the appreciation of indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne in the 1940's', 2011, op. cit., online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/thomas-on-daryl-lindsay1.pdf>, p. 2.)

²¹⁵ Daryl Lindsay, February 1952, cited by B. Thomas, 'Daryl Lindsay and the appreciation of indigenous art...', op. cit., 2011, p. 3; see also the NGV archival records of Lindsay's Commonwealth approach in Vaughan, 'The Cross-Cultural Art Museum in Australia', 2011, op. cit., f/note 12, p. 341.

²¹⁶ Reported under 'Other Business' to the 1952 AGDC directors' meeting in Adelaide, along with Laurie Thomas's appointment as Director of AGWA in Perth (Conference of State Gallery Directors [CSGD/AGDC#5], NGSA, Adelaide, 10-11 July 1952, p. 6 (agg. p. 25)).

government is one of the clearest statements on record of his conviction and support for Aboriginal art's role in collections and understanding of Australian art, and the meaning this carried among all directors who had endorsed such positioning in the Commonwealth Jubilee exhibition toured in 1951. Lindsay's statement also highlights the resolution he carried forward over many years in shaping support for the Commonwealth's growing art collections, and the outlines of a collecting policy that he (more than any other individual) framed for an eventual Australian National Gallery, as evident in the so-called 'Lindsay Report'²¹⁷ to the Commonwealth in 1966.

Lindsay in fact achieved not a loan but the *donation* of eight bark paintings to the NGV from the Commonwealth, which came into the NGV's collection by the end of 1952.²¹⁸ Lindsay then likely spearheaded the bid for the remaining corpus of 1948 barks (and associated works in ochres on cardboard) to be distributed to the state galleries. And he had the support of fellow directors Laurie Thomas (AGWA), Robert Haines (QAG), Robert Campbell (AGSA) and Hal Missingham (AGNSW) in advocating this objective in the years from 1952 to 1956, when the general distribution was finally achieved.

Anthropologist Sally May has made an exhaustive study of aspects of the AASEAL expedition of 1948:²¹⁹ in particular, of the gathering of bark paintings, Mountford's commissioning methods, often uneven or absent documentation under expedition-pressures, and the paintings' eventual dispersal in 1956 (or what May has characterised as 'the "second round" of [their] collecting – the final distribution of the artifacts').²²⁰ A missing framework in May's research is an understanding of the state galleries' independent advocacy for the barks – and in particular the role of Daryl Lindsay, his dialogues about Aboriginal art since 1941, and his interest and almost certain interaction with Mountford concerning Kenneth Clark's travel to Adelaide at the end of his 1948-49 summer visit from the UK, rounding out the latter's south-eastern Australian capitals tour.²²¹ Lindsay's own dealings with the Commonwealth in 1952 undoubtedly increased his agency when he was in the same year appointed to the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (which he was later to Chair). All of these contacts preceded by several years Sally May's records of the Frederick McCarthy-instigated moves (of February 1955, through the Australian Museum),²²² which urged the Commonwealth to reclaim the undistributed 1948 barks and related works from Mountford's control in Adelaide and (implicitly) to disperse them to natural history museums.

²¹⁷ 'Summary of Recommendations', *Report of the National Art Gallery Committee of Inquiry*, March 1966, Parliamentary Paper No. 199, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 1967. This report was generally known in subsequent decades as the 1966 'Lindsay Report', and the single most formative document for shaping the collection framework of the later ANG (today National Gallery of Australia).

²¹⁸ Sloggett, 'Has Aboriginal art a future?' Leonhard Adam's 1944...' 2015, op. cit., pp. 178–9, noting personal communications with Judith Ryan, April 2009.

²¹⁹ Sally May's study provides detailed background of Mountford's role in the 1948 AASEAL expedition, and the 'Mountford barks' commissioned and later retained (until 1956) in storage at the South Australian Museum, to which institution Charles Mountford was attached as 'Honorary Ethnologist', since he was not formally trained in anthropology. See May, *Collecting Cultures: Myth, Politics, and Collaboration in the 1948 Arnhem Land Expedition*, 2010, op. cit.

²²⁰ May, *Collecting Cultures: Myth, Politics, and Collaboration*, 2010, op. cit., p. 108.

²²¹ Mountford's well-known demotic character and first-hand familiarity with 'outback Australia' would doubtless have struck chords with Lindsay's own experience through early years as a jackeroo, and familiarity with Aboriginal people encountered in southern Queensland and Northern Territory cattle-station communities – prompting a nostalgic return to such areas and his own painting of Aboriginal cattle-station subjects late in his life (as amply covered in Benjamin Thomas's doctoral study, and subsequent publication in 2011). Lindsay's pre-WW1 period as a jackeroo near Collarenebri and further north occupies a chapter of his autobiography, *The Leafy Tree*, 1965, op. cit., Ch. 7, 'Jackeroo'.

²²² See May, *Collecting Cultures*, 2010, op. cit., p. 110.

Without doubt, Daryl Lindsay's independent advocacy for the AASEAL works to be distributed among the state galleries, as a booster to all state art collections in the field of Aboriginal art (and with this initiative's importance explicitly stated in his letter to the Commonwealth), proved crucial to the final outcome.²²³ The gallery directors' AGDC Conference meeting records in 1954 make clear what Lindsay had negotiated with the government; these records also clarify that any suggestions that Mountford simply distributed the barks to the state galleries at his own behest in 1956 are misleading, or obfuscate the more complex circumstances of his actions than have been generally understood or recorded.²²⁴ Such claims fail to realise the ongoing tangle of events that had taken place behind the scenes, with Mountford initially resisting loss of control of the works (held in Adelaide) which had survived the initial distribution (or formal *partage*) at the conclusion of the AASEAL expedition to Arnhem Land in 1948.

Although the works acquired by the Queensland Art Gallery later gathered the moniker of 'the bastard barks' (by curator Margo Neale, noting their lack of provenance details and non-accessioning until the 1980s),²²⁵ securing this outcome was one of the most significant actions on behalf of Aboriginal art's long-term repositioning by Daryl Lindsay. All state galleries gained Aboriginal material in an unexpected increment, putting them on a collection-footing in one operation involving the works' national distribution, in lots, at the 1956 Directors' Conference in Brisbane.²²⁶

Ironically, after this peak achievement by Daryl Lindsay, the NGV later turned away from continued engagement in collecting or even showing Aboriginal art in the manner Lindsay had supported since 1941, when he had backed preparation of the significant wartime exhibition of Australian art sent to the USA and Canada, and later invited Leonhard Adam to prepare what became his new field-defining exhibition of 1943. In the late 1950s, however, for a constellation of competing factors of policy and focus (some analysed below), Aboriginal art would sadly lapse from the NGV's collection development for two decades, until Patrick McCaughey's directorship reversed this policy

²²³ At the Conference of State Gallery Directors in September 1954, it was noted that '[n]egotiations are taking place to have distributed amongst the State Galleries Aboriginal Bark Paintings now in the possession of the Department of the Interior',²²³ while it was reported at the August 1955 Conference that '[t]he Department of External Affairs had [resolved to] present... to the State Galleries 144 paintings on bark', and '[e]ach Gallery would receive 24 works' – to be composed equally of bark paintings and paintings on paper mounted on cardboard. In neither report was there any mention of Mountford's direct involvement. (Conference of State Art Gallery Directors [CSAGD/AGDC#7], TMAG, Hobart, 15–18 September 1954, Item VIII, 'Aboriginal Bark Drawings. Distribution to Galleries', Minutes, p. 6/ 36 aggreg. record.)

²²⁴ Ian McLean asserts Mountford's 'donation' (McLean, *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art*, 2011, op. cit., p. 26); and Philip Jones also claims that '[Mountford's] subsequent initiative, accepted by the Australian government, to distribute bark paintings and drawings gathered during the expedition to metropolitan Australian art galleries, ensured that Aboriginal art would encounter a new European audience, untutored in its ethnographic context.' (Jones, 'The Art of Contact', in Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, 2011, 22–37; p. 37. Both interpretations do not take account of Daryl Lindsay's independent initiatives.

²²⁵ Margo Neale, 'Charles Mountford and the 'Bastard Barks': A Gift from the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land', in *Brought to Light: Australian Art 1850-1965*, Lynne Seear and Julie Ewington (eds), Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 1998, pp. 210–17. See also Margo Neale, 'Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane', in Susan Cochrane (ed.), *Aboriginal Art Collections: Highlights from Australia's Public Museums and Galleries*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 2001, 54–62.

²²⁶ It had been decided that each gallery would receive 24 works each, and that these would be allocated by ballot – although the distribution seemed finally a little different in Sally May's records-analysis years later. See Conference of State [Gallery] Directors [CSGD/AGDC#8], NAGNSW, Sydney, 10–13 August 1955, Minutes, p. 6/p. 45 aggreg. record; see also Margo Neale, 'Charles Mountford and the 'Bastard Barks': A Gift from the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land', in *Brought to Light: Australian Art 1850-1965*, Lynne Seear and Julie Ewington (eds), Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 1998, pp. 210–17.

in 1984.²²⁷ There is an important recognition to be absorbed in the above process: that institutional cultural achievements should never be treated as solidly *processional* in the direction of progress. Institutional lives are traversed by volatile forces that may advance, consolidate, or completely reverse earlier achievements with the arrival of new personalities in positions of authority or values-control, and changing contexts impacting on policies.²²⁸

6.7(vi) Impact of Eric Westbrook and Bernard Smith arriving in Melbourne (1956 ff.)

January 1956 marked the arrival to key positions in Melbourne of two personalities set to have influential careers in the city – namely, Eric Westbrook and Bernard Smith – whose views and actions in different ways would have the effect of changing values concerning Aboriginal art at a national level by the end of the 1950s. Both men were interested in creating a position of influence in a new city (in English-born Westbrook's case, recently arrived from the Auckland City Art Gallery, also a new country).²²⁹ Although entirely different in their background, temperament and politics, the positions and values that each of these figures upheld in their different institutional settings would long be influential concerning the scope and standards for Australian art promoted in the public sphere in Melbourne.

Eric Westbrook was initially open to Aboriginal art's place, selectively, in the Gallery he had come to direct.²³⁰ However, following renewed insistence by the Museum of Victoria's director (when institutions were still combined on Swanston Street) that Aboriginal art was exclusively the Museum's preserve,²³¹ Westbrook had abandoned envisaging Aboriginal art as having a future in the state gallery in Melbourne. In 1962, in a Canberra seminar, Westbrook advocated instead for a dedicated national institution for Aboriginal art²³² to be realised in the national capital (perhaps

²²⁷ See Patrick McCaughey's contrite experience, as Director, of a 1984 NGV visit by Bathurst Island Aboriginal children, with no evidence of Aboriginal culture on view, which revolutionised his perception of the consequences of such exclusion, in Patrick McCaughey, *The Bright Shapes and True Names*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2003, p. 226.

²²⁸ This observation is made, in a general sense, from the author's personal experience at a senior level in the institutional lives of two major Australian art museums. Through principles of professional ethics and often requisite solidarity to a larger institutional standing in public esteem, it may take decades before dramatic changes in the power structure and internal values-setting of institutions might be researched, reconsidered, and brought into more public historical evaluation.

²²⁹ Eric Westbrook (1915–2005) had a distinguished role as a guide lecturer and later an organiser of touring exhibitions for the British Council in the UK in the post-War period. He moved to New Zealand in 1952, serving as Director of the Auckland City Art Gallery (1952–55), from which he was appointed Director of the NGV upon Daryl Lindsay's retirement (commencing in Melbourne in January 1956). See obituary essay by Peter Perry published by the NGV 29 Jan. 2014 <www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/obituary-dr-eric-westbrook-cb-1915-2005/>.

²³⁰ Eric Westbrook brought his English background and post-War vision of modernising art galleries (through touring exhibition programs) as a progressive impetus in his role as Director in Melbourne. However, his previous four years in New Zealand (as Director of the Auckland City Art Gallery) had been in conditions where there were not yet active links fostered in galleries between tradition-based contemporary Maori and Pakeha art in major public collections (as the present author experienced when first visiting the Auckland City Art Gallery professionally in 1977).

²³¹ Gerard Vaughan's recollection (confirmed in conversation with the present author, 1 May 2021) of a complaint to Eric Westbrook from the Museum of Victoria's Director, over the Gallery's purchase of central desert watercolours, echoes a similar incident involving Daryl Lindsay years earlier, who received a 'territorial rebuke' from his then-fellow-Museum director colleague for acquiring two Hermannsburg works (by Edwin Pereroultja) in 1946. The Museum of Victoria insisted that Aboriginal art was its preserve exclusively to collect. (See the fine article by Gerard Vaughan in the *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, 2011, op. cit., Ch. 20, 261–289, p. 267, and f/note 18, p. 342.)

²³² Westbrook argued for a dedicated institution for Aboriginal art in the national capital. (See Grenfell Ruddock, 'Galleries and museums of art', reporting on a seminar held in Canberra, September 1962, *Architecture in Australia*, vol. 52, no. 1, March, 1963, p. 101; his position was also discussed in Philp, 'Relocating Aboriginal art and culture in the museum', in *reCollections*, 2007, 48–70, p. 51.

anticipating eventual divestment of the Arnhem Land barks, which he seemed to have regarded as artefactual works). Although Westbrook displayed a group of Pukumani funerary poles (or *tatini*) when the NGV opened in its new building in 1968,²³³ it was already determined that the state gallery in Melbourne would not be echoing the position then pursued in Sydney, at Tony Tuckson's initiative, where Aboriginal bark paintings from Arnhem Land and Tiwi funerary sculpture were acquired to become part of a growing collection that would be permanently on view as part of the state gallery's displays.

If this move by Westbrook is contextualised to its being just two years after Tony Tuckson's successful national touring exhibition (*Australian Aboriginal Art*, 1960), and the ongoing Aboriginal collection commitment of Sydney's state gallery being affirmed, it is fair to see Westbrook's advocacy as a way of transferring the focus on Aboriginal art to Canberra, and the Commonwealth, and away from any expectation that the state gallery in Melbourne would be a major collector in this field. While Westbrook advocated displaying Aboriginal works as 'art', his argument was (in some respects) the lowest-value kind of advocacy: that this might 'correct the impressions [the public] could form of Aboriginal art from the ash trays and other "typical Australian souvenirs"' widely available.²³⁴ Westbrook was also (if unintentionally) shifting a collecting emphasis back to anthropology and science (with the Australian Institute of Anatomy and its collections having been founded in 1931 in Canberra as a natural history museum and research institute, and the Institute's collections a likely source for 'national' displays of Aboriginal art). Meanwhile relations with his predecessor, Daryl Lindsay, were deeply alienated by this stage, and Westbrook would have had no dialogue with Lindsay's plans (since the latter's 1952 agency on the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board)²³⁵ for Aboriginal collections to be part of a future 'national gallery' when eventually built in Canberra.

Melbourne University was also to begin turning away from study of Aboriginal art objects, as collected by Leonhard Adam. Bernard Smith in the late 1950s was advancing his research material for what would become his authoritative history of *Australian Painting*,²³⁶ published in 1962, which definitively excluded Aboriginal art (as not art 'in the special sense' of his theoretical schema).²³⁷ Bernard Smith's position would have far-reaching influence in Victoria, and on Victorian primary and secondary education in art, in which Victoria held a nationally leading position in cultivating art as a specialised subject of importance (including its unique national status as a subject for matriculation/HSC-level completion of secondary education). A change of framework-interests was echoed in the Fine Arts Department of the University of Melbourne after Bernard Smith's arrival, where Smith's expert status in Australian art's history (excluding Aboriginal art) meant that the study of Australian art within Australia's sole art history department would not maintain any further connections with Leonhard Adam's support for Aboriginal art or the collection he formed. It is

²³³ Phillip Goad, *The Building: NGV International at St. Kilda Road*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2003, cited in Vaughan, 'The Cross-Cultural Art Museum in Australia', 2011, op. cit., p. 268 and f/note 20, p. 342.

²³⁴ Ruddock, 'Galleries and museums of art' [1962 seminar report], op. cit.

²³⁵ For Daryl Lindsay's 20-year membership of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (1962–1973), and ten crucial years serving as Chairman (1960–69), including his steerage of acquisitions and general policy for a National Gallery of Australia to be realised, see thesis Ch. 5: 'A profession stirs: Australian art museums 1948–1960s'.

²³⁶ Bernard Smith's *Australian Painting, 1788–1960* was published by Oxford University Press in 1962, with Aboriginal art excluded from any presence, and with ongoing reverberations in the Australian cultural imaginary for decades afterwards.

²³⁷ Bernard Smith's theoretical framing of art, and the formative background for his position, are analysed in detail in Ch.7 of this thesis: 'Bernard Smith, art history, the art museum, and Aboriginal art'.

notable that the 36 remarkable painted barks from Groote Eylandt that Adam collected in 1945 for an exhibition in Melbourne, and subsequently donated to the University's collection, are among the most celebrated works today. However, such works were definitely not of interest within the new directional focus on Australian art's history, and 19th century British art and its sources, as brought to Melbourne by Bernard Smith's field-interests and public activities as a well-known critic, who sought to 'make a difference' through the impact of his scholarship, expertise and values.

It is not possible to posit any definite influence of Bernard Smith on the discontinuation of Adam's lectures to Fine Arts students, except to note that Smith's theoretical antipathy to modernist art's interest in arts of non-western cultures (as 'primitive' art) throughout the 20th century was well developed before he arrived in Melbourne. Smith would almost certainly not have favoured Adam's lectures continuing for Fine Arts students being trained in art history; nor would he have endorsed Adam's influence on Victorian art teachers, through Adam's strong friendship with influential figures such as Frances Derham. Without any provable connections, it is the case that Joseph Burke's specific invitation for Leonhard Adam's lecture-contribution to the Fine Arts first-year course for a decade (since 1947)²³⁸ seemed unaccountably discontinued in 1956. By the end of that year, Adam's lecturing at Melbourne University dried up, leaving him in the much-diminished role of 'part-time curator', without further students, which continued until his unexpected death (while visiting Germany) in 1960.



The Leonhard Adam Collection of Indigenous Culture: displays (L & R) at the Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, 2011, and (C) 2013.

These were dismal outcomes, considering Adam's outstanding knowledge of multiple disciplines in world terms, the intellectual field-setting standards he had accomplished and respect of leading scholars he commanded for decades internationally. Such achievements were complemented by the developmental advocacy he had championed on behalf of ongoing creative futures for Aboriginal artists in Australia, and his personal support for bodies working for their social and economic advancement. Meanwhile the remarkable works Adam had collected since 1942 in Melbourne would not be rediscovered and reused as teaching and cultural resources in the University's care until the end of the century. And the Fine Arts Department's art history students no longer had their attention drawn to 'primitive art', nor a topographical introduction to Aboriginal bark paintings and Australia's extensive galleries of rock art, as Adam's rare expertise had long amplified academically in Melbourne.

6.7(vii) Olympic Games Arts Festival exhibitions, Melbourne (Nov. 1956)

The tensions analysed in this chapter between anthropology and art on the one hand, and between

²³⁸ See 'Herald Chair of Fine Arts' file documents, Melbourne University Archives: report by J.T. Burke to Vice-Chancellor Medley on the first year of the Fine Arts Department's operation, 1948 [Jan. 1949]; documents uncatalogued when viewed and note-recorded, 2004.

two different eras marked by leadership changes in Melbourne on the other, provide some background for surprising aspects of the way both the city of Melbourne and Australian culture more broadly were presented to the world for the Olympic Games in November 1956 (in striking contrast to the national Jubilee exhibition Daryl Lindsay had initiated four years earlier).²³⁹



The Arts Festival of the Olympic Games, Melbourne; A Guide to the Exhibition with Introductory Commentaries on the Arts in Australia. Published by the Olympic Civic Committee of the Melbourne City Council for the Olympic Organising Committee MCMLVI (1956). (C) two Oenpelli ('Spencer barks') paintings, of (L) a kangaroo hunt and (R) a pygmy goose. The greeting card (R) is by Eric Maguire, utilising Oenpelli-derived designs in overlays, without attribution.

When the Olympic Games Arts Festival was being planned in Melbourne, three personalities of the previous era who had closely shared a long-range cultural vision (as analysed in Chapter 4) had left their posts: John Medley had retired as Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University in 1951; Keith Murdoch had died unexpectedly in 1952 (while still chairing the NGV board); and Daryl Lindsay had retired from the NGV directorship in December 1955. Melbourne University nevertheless played a strong role in the city's planning and delivery of the Olympic Arts Festival events in 1956, while the University was now led by a new Vice-Chancellor, George Paton – the first Australian-born figure (Melbourne-raised, and later further educated at Oxford in law).

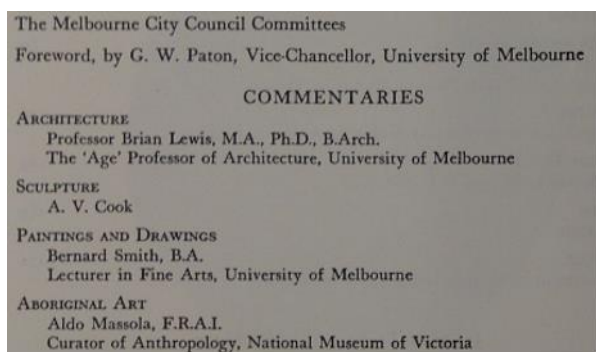
However, Paton was a very different character from the public-minded, liberally inclined (and English-born) John Medley of the post-War years. Medley looked out to the whole of the society in which he played a leading role nationally in its post-War reconstruction period, and he became the most long-serving weekly column-writer on a host of subjects for Melbourne's *Age* newspaper. George Paton, by contrast, was indecisive and reluctant to show leadership²⁴⁰ or needed planning to address post-War expansion. Paton instead turned inwards to a preference for a small-scale English model of a collegiate-style University, while post-War population expansion clamoured extramurally for far-sighted vision of urgent academic planning needed for growth in university education.

Instead of an exhibition of Australian art prepared for Olympic visitors that *included* Aboriginal art, under Westbrook's NGV directorship Aboriginal art was now left to the Museum of Victoria to present – at a quite separate location. And in contrast to Lindsay's commissioning of Leonhard Adam to write an essay on Aboriginal art for the 1951 Jubilee Exhibition of Australian art five years earlier, that role was now allocated to the relatively new Curator of Anthropology in the Museum of Victoria, Aldo Massola (appointed permanently in 1954). Massola provided a short, wooden essay introducing

²³⁹ The 16th Olympiad Summer Games took place in Melbourne 22 November–8 December 1956.

²⁴⁰ See for an understanding of George Paton's disabling lack of leadership of Melbourne University, in comparison to his far-sighted predecessor, John Medley: J. R. Poynter, 'Paton, Sir George Whitecross (1902–1985)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 18, Melbourne University Press, 2012, online at <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/paton-sir-george-whitecross-15033/text26230>>.

‘Aboriginal Art’ in an exhibition presented at Melbourne University’s Wilson Hall,²⁴¹ divorced physically from the presentation of Australian art at the National Gallery of Victoria on Swanston Street.



Olympic Arts Festival exhibitions guide, Melbourne, 1956, Contents (detail).

When the Olympic Games were finally opened to an international audience in November, George Paton introduced Australian culture to the world like one of the older ‘native born’, harking back to the Heidelberg school and Federation sentiments in his Foreword to the Arts Festival catalogue. Paton observed that: ‘A culture is normally of slow growth not the less so when a European people has to adapt itself’ to very different conditions, noting that ‘only quite late in last century did an art of native vigour begin to establish itself’. Paton definitely was not referring to Aboriginal culture, as his next remarks clarified:

The bush stories of Henry Lawson, Furphy’s yarning philosophical *Such is Life*, the landscapes of Roberts, Streeton, and McCubbin, helped to make us at home in Australia. ... We are, however, a remote and scattered people drawn mainly from one stock.²⁴²

Somewhat later in the same Arts Festival Guide, after the introduction of Architecture by Brian Lewis (Professor of Architecture in the University’s *Age* chair since 1947),²⁴³ Euro-Australian art was introduced in an essay by Bernard Smith, who highlighted how the conditions of patronage in the 1880s had made ‘the rise of a native school of Australian art possible’.²⁴⁴ The text was entitled ‘Paintings and Drawings’, which framed the exhibition presented at the National Gallery of Victoria. Bernard Smith introduced Australian art as ‘the story of Europeans seeking to accommodate themselves to [the country’s] physical character, its climate, and its natural productions and therefore ... the story of an endeavour to reconcile two worlds’. From this point, the essay shifted from a pluralised narrative into the fashioning of a singular persona, with an uncharacteristic touch of Heidelberg school fancy colouring Smith’s prose also:

The Australian artist, we might say, is a migratory bird who owns not one home but two... He is a permanently displaced person whether he sits under the gum tree or walks upon the Pont Neuf. And his dilemma is no passing

²⁴¹ Aldo Massola, ‘Aboriginal Art’, in *The Arts Festival of the Olympic Games, Melbourne: A guide to the exhibitions with introductory commentaries on the arts in Australia*, The Olympic Organising Committee and Olympic Civic Committee of Melbourne City Council, Melbourne, 1956, pp. 26–28.

²⁴² *The Arts Festival of the Olympic Games, Melbourne: A Guide to the Exhibitions with Introductory Commentaries on the Arts in Australia*, Olympic Civic Committee of Melbourne City Council, Melbourne, 1956 (for Olympic Arts Festival, Games of the XVI Olympiad, 22 November–8 December 1956, Melbourne). Introduction by G.W. Paton, Vice-Chancellor, University of Melbourne, vii–viii, p. vii.

²⁴³ Neil Clerehan, ‘Lewis, Brian Bannatyne (1906–1991)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 2016, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lewis-brian-bannatyne-21872/text31932>.

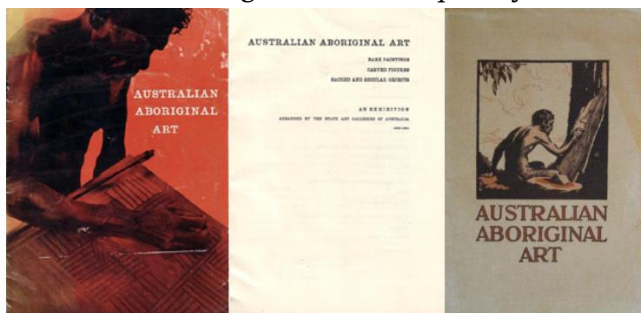
²⁴⁴ Bernard Smith, ‘Paintings and Drawings’, in *The Arts Festival of the Olympic Games, Melbourne: A guide to the exhibitions*, 1956, 18–25, p. 20.

phase. It has been the continuing experience of Australian writers and artists of consequence for almost one hundred years.²⁴⁵

Bernard Smith then elaborated on his sense of the Australian artist's 'dilemma', destined to 'live continually between two worlds and be divided between two loyalties'.²⁴⁶ He was already deepening this concept of physical separation as a geo-cultural fault-line in the 'Antipodean' artist's mentality, an anticipation of the later *Antipodean Manifesto*, drafted in 1959 (which is examined further in thesis Chapter 7).

6.7(viii) *Australian Aboriginal Art for national tour (1960)*

The radical changes of direction and values within the NGV after 1956, described above, left the Art Gallery of New South Wales – and Tony Tuckson's resolute commitment internally – providing the leading institutional support for Aboriginal art within the state galleries thenceforward. The 1955, Lindsay-led Commonwealth decision favouring the state galleries' representation of Aboriginal art in their collections was nevertheless catalysing in the gallery directors' mission concerning the exhibition of Aboriginal art subsequently.



(L) *Australian Aboriginal Art: Bark Paintings, Carved Figures, Sacred and Secular Objects*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1960; (R) Cover of *Australian Aboriginal Art* (image by Percy Leason), National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, 1929 – exhibited in the Print Room of the National Gallery of Victoria.

The galleries now resolved to prepare a substantial exhibition of Aboriginal art for national tour, and possibly as the basis for a later international loan exhibition within the Asia-Pacific region.²⁴⁷ Successive decisions by the gallery directors in the 1950s, crystallising a process gathering momentum over some years, signalled the galleries' interest in providing their own continuing agency and research efforts for the selection, presentation and interpretation of Aboriginal art for public experience. Ultimately, this was to produce a very different approach to Aboriginal art from the frameworks of archaeology, ethnography, and the more scientific structure of representation in natural history museums. However, this would not be realised quickly or in simplistic terms. Subsequent directors' conference meetings (in Brisbane in 1956, and Adelaide in 1957) recorded the resource-difficulties and prolonged research time that would be needed to achieve the quality of exhibition desired for tour to a national audience.

²⁴⁵ Smith, 'Paintings and Drawings', *The Arts Festival of the Olympic Games*, 1956, p. 18.

²⁴⁶ Smith, 'Paintings and Drawings', *The Arts Festival of the Olympic Games*, 1956, p. 18.

²⁴⁷ At the 1955 AGDC conference in Sydney, summarising the decision on distribution of Mountford barks, two new intentions were recorded under an agenda item, 'Exhibition of Aboriginal Art': that 'a major exhibition be planned for 1957/58 and that each State Director, before the next Conference, investigate the sources of the material available in his State and report on specific items to be included' (State Gallery Directors [CSGD/AGDC#8], NAGNSW, Sydney, 10–13 August 1955, Agenda item (23) b), 'Exhibition of Aboriginal Art', Minutes, p. 6/45 aggreg.); furthermore, 'that some items might later be used for a travelling exhibition in Asiatic and Pacific Countries' (State Gallery Directors [CSGD/AGDC#8], Sydney, 10–13 August 1955, Minutes, p. 6/45 aggreg.)

In 1958, Tony Tuckson was placed in charge of the exhibition project for the last two years of extensive research, travel, and selection of works required for an opening and national tour now scheduled for 1960. At the same meeting it was reported by Hal Missingham that 'Tuckson had already visited Melbourne for one week and Melville Island for two weeks',²⁴⁸ and that 'the Trustees of the N.S.W. Art Gallery', which had been purchasing Tiwi sculptural objects and Arnhem Land bark paintings steered by Tuckson with the support of collector Dr Scougall,²⁴⁹ 'had arranged to form a small collection of Aboriginal art [which] could form the nucleus of an exhibition for showing in 1960'.²⁵⁰ At the October 1959 meeting, it was noted that Tuckson had 'visited Adelaide and Perth for one week each and had also [on two separate visits] been to Melville Island and Yirrkala in the Northern Territory', with final intentions to 'visit Hobart and Brisbane in 1960, completing his planned visits to all State Galleries'.²⁵¹

*Australian Aboriginal Art: Bark Paintings, Carved Figures, Sacred and Secular Objects*²⁵² was finally catalogue-prepared, installed and ready for its national tour. The exhibition was opened at the AGNSW by Sydney University's Professor A.P. Elkin, on 17 August 1960²⁵³ – both an historical and institutional gesture expressing an interest in bringing the different vantage-points of anthropology²⁵⁴ and art museums together in support of the exhibition's aims of reaching a broad public. Tuckson was explicit about his own sense of an earlier history framing his actions, later writing that Leonhard Adam's 1943 *Primitive Art Exhibition* had, 'more so than anything else' since that event, 'aroused the interest of artists and art critics in Aboriginal art' and stimulated the state galleries' interest in presenting such material, since after Adam's exhibition, '[i]t was only a matter of time before the art galleries in Australia began to form collections of Aboriginal art'.²⁵⁵

Launched (perhaps unconsciously) under the same lead-title as Melbourne's historic exhibition three decades earlier,²⁵⁶ the 1960 exhibition of *Australian Aboriginal Art* formed a centrepiece of the gallery directors' conference of the same week (15–19 August) at the Sydney gallery, with an agenda of business that had grown since 1948 from a day's length to occupy a whole week. The AGDC conference was buoyant when it reconvened the morning after the exhibition opening:

All State Gallery Directors were unanimous in their praise of the high quality, display and presentation. They also very highly commended the catalogue and the whole of the organisational details carried out by Mr. Tuckson on

²⁴⁸ State Gallery Directors [CSGD/AGDC#11], AGWA, Perth, 14–17 October 1958, Minutes, p. 5/ p. 82.

²⁴⁹ See Daniel Thomas, 'Tuckson, John Anthony (1921–1973)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 16, Melbourne University Press, 2002, online at <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/tuckson-john-anthony-11888/text21291>>.

²⁵⁰ State Gallery Directors [CSGD/AGDC#11], AGWA, Perth, 14–17 October 1958, Minutes, pp. 7–8/ 88–85. This decision by the AGNSW marks the first instance of a state gallery forming an *acquisitions policy* direction for inclusion of Aboriginal art, while all state galleries had already been impacted by their receipt of the Mountford-collected Arnhem Land barks, following their balloted distribution by the directors at the Brisbane Conference in 1955.

²⁵¹ State Gallery Directors [CSGD/AGDC#12], TMAG, Hobart, 26–30 October 1959, Minutes, pp. 91, 95.

²⁵² *Australian Aboriginal art: Bark paintings, carved figures, sacred and secular objects; an exhibition arranged by the state art galleries of Australia, 1960–1961*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1960; Introduction by Frederick D. McCarthy.

²⁵³ AGDC #13 Minutes, Sydney 15–19 August, 1960, pp. 103–4,

²⁵⁴ Tuckson's sense of collaborative venture with anthropology was also evident in his inviting Frederick McCarthy, of the Australian Museum, to contribute and introduction to the catalogue.

²⁵⁵ Tony Tuckson, 'Aboriginal Art and the Western World', in Ronald Berndt, *Australian Aboriginal Art*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1964, p. 63.

²⁵⁶ As noted earlier, Elkin had lectured 30 years earlier, on the evening of the launch of the first *Australian Aboriginal Art* exhibition, opened in the print room of the NGV in 1929. Elkin was later invited by Leonhard Adam to open the *Primitive Art Exhibition* in 1943, but had to send greetings instead, as he was committed in Sydney. Elkin's officiating at the Sydney opening in 1960 marked the galleries' acknowledgement of his position as Australia's only Professor of Anthropology over a long period.

behalf of the combined State Galleries.²⁵⁷

Some historical contextualisation needs to be brought to the exceptional effort committed to Aboriginal art by the galleries in this sustained venture over several years, which finally produced a first-ever touring of a *monographic exhibition* on Aboriginal art to all state galleries from 1960 to 1961.²⁵⁸ Despite the wealth of their collections, no such exhibition had ever been mounted by the natural history museums for the Australian public.

As examined in Chapter 3, the 1950s was a period when all state galleries still had minimal staffing, physical resources or budgets to support their professional responsibilities. However, the AGNSW, in particular, had made the Aboriginal exhibition a key project for some years, and it had consumed scarce resources. It was noted in the 1960 directors' conference that, since 'important overseas exhibitions had been set aside by the State Galleries to enable this first important showing of Aboriginal art', a representation should be made to the Commonwealth, pleading that 'the Prime Minister's original guarantee towards the costs of importation of overseas exhibitions be altered to include this particular local exhibition' – with Hal Missingham to seek '£2,000²⁵⁹ as a grant towards the costs of the exhibition', but also to note 'the possibility that the present *Aboriginal Art Exhibition* or one very similar [could] be sent overseas'.²⁶⁰

This decision underlines a broader framework: that the state gallery directors always considered their advocacy for Aboriginal art ultimately had an international as well as national dimension. In fact, selected works from Tony Tuckson's exhibition were later sent (with CAAB support) in a cut-down version that represented Australia at the Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil, in 1961²⁶¹ – the first time Aboriginal art formed an official representation of Australian culture at a contemporary international biennial.²⁶²

6.7(ix) *Australian Aboriginal Art* publication (1964) and the Tuckson-Berndt fracture

The contending approaches to Aboriginal art in the early 1960s between anthropologist Ronald Berndt and gallery Assistant Director (and artist) Tony Tuckson simmered behind their very different texts as authors in the important monograph *Australian Aboriginal Art*. This publication arose as a group of essays stimulated by the 1960 exhibition curated by Tuckson, and released as a handsome volume by Ure Smith in 1964.

As detailed earlier in this chapter, Tuckson had worked long and carefully over two years on the gathering of loans, with detailed descriptive and documentary information (much sourced from anthropologists) in his preparation of the 1960 exhibition. It has never been suggested that

²⁵⁷ State Gallery Directors [CSGD/AGDC#13], AGNSW, Sydney, 15–19 August 1960, Minutes, pp. 103–4.

²⁵⁸ As indicated above, the unique aspect of the Tuckson-curated exhibition's achievement was its *monographic attention* to Aboriginal art, and indeed its size. It was not, however, the first time the state galleries had provided major attention to Aboriginal art, and in a nationally touring exhibition, as the 1951 Jubilee exhibition above reveals – and which would occur again in the Melbourne Arts Festival exhibition(s) mounted for the Olympic Games in 1956.

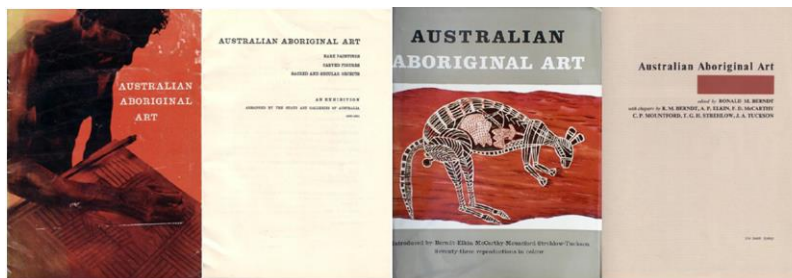
²⁵⁹ £2,000 in 1960 would in RBA-inflation-adjusted figures of 2020 be equivalent to just under \$61,000.

²⁶⁰ State Gallery Directors [CSGD/AGDC#13], Sydney 15–19 August 1960, Minutes, op. cit., p. 104.

²⁶¹ See Alan McCulloch and Susan McCulloch, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Art*; 3rd (rev. ed., with Susan McCulloch) Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994 – 'Exhibitions' entry, under '1960', p. 791.

²⁶² The first representation of Aboriginal artists in the Biennale of Venice was of Rover Thomas and Trevor Nickolls (in 1990), prepared by Michael O'Ferrall – at that time the first curator of Aboriginal and Asian art (since 1984) at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth.

Tuckson's exhibition curatorship was superficial or lacked attention to contextualising the cultural background or complexity of socially-encoded meaning encompassed within the works exhibited.



(L) *Australian Aboriginal Art: Bark Paintings, Carved Figures, Sacred and Secular Objects; An exhibition arranged by the state art galleries of Australia, 1960–1961*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1960; (R) Ronald M. Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Art*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1964; texts by R.M. Berndt, A.P. Elkin, F.D. McCarthy, C.P. Mountford, T.G.H. Strehlow, J.A. Tuckson.

Yet although Tuckson's relations with Ronald Berndt in 1960 had remained cordial, tensions clearly increased afterwards, during compilation of the subsequent Berndt-edited volume of essays published in 1964.²⁶³ The fracture between their different vantage-points (a 'heated exchange'²⁶⁴ as later construed by Howard Morphy) deepened during the book's development, prompting Berndt finally to write an Epilogue,²⁶⁵ contesting the approach taken in Tuckson's essay.

Berndt's publication (issued when he had now risen to hold a new Chair in anthropology in Perth)²⁶⁶ was weighted towards anthropologists' views, leaving Tuckson's 'art'-advocacy standpoint isolated in a solid anthology of texts that prioritised interpretations anchored in the kinship-oriented values of ethnography. Tuckson stated his vantage-point that:

Appreciation of Aboriginal art has widened immeasurably because the general public and the artist have been given a greater opportunity to see it as art, not as part of an ethnological collection.²⁶⁷

In response, Berndt asserted a contesting position in the Epilogue he provided to the varied essays, a strategic way of giving the last word to anthropology. In the process, Tuckson's position was subjected to caricature (without right of reply):

Tuckson's contention is based on the universality of all art, irrespective of provenance. It is important for us to know here exactly what this means. The cultural background is not, here, seriously taken into account; the function or use of the object or painting, even the identity of the artist, may be completely unknown. ... Its decorative qualities, its design, its treatment, its overall appeal, are what matters; we like its lines, its curves, its sense of boldness, its balance and so forth. We are evaluating it in our own idiom, within a climate of our own aesthetic traditions.²⁶⁸

The Berndt-Tuckson stand-off provides a cornerstone of Howard Morphy's extended essay opening a challenge to state galleries in 2001 for their alleged exclusion of Aboriginal art;²⁶⁹ the debate further

²⁶³ Ronald M. Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Art*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1964; contributions by A.P. Elkin ('Art and Life'); C.P. Mountford ('The Art of Arnhem Land'); F.D. McCarthy ('The Art of the Rock Faces'); T.G.H. Strehlow ('The Art of Circle, Line and Square'); J.A. Tuckson ('Aboriginal Art and the Western World'); R.M. Berndt (Preface, Epilogue, and full description of plates).

²⁶⁴ Morphy, 'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery', 2001, op. cit. p. 40.

²⁶⁵ Ronald Berndt, 'Epilogue' in Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Art*, 1964, op. cit., 69–74.

²⁶⁶ Ronald Berndt spent the last part of his professional life (with his partner-anthropologist Catherine Berndt) anchored at the University of Western Australia, after he was appointed (in 1959) Reader, and finally (in 1963) founding Chair of Anthropology at UWA, Perth. The collections of Ronald and Catherine Berndt today form the main contents of the Berndt Museum within the University of Western Australia.

²⁶⁷ Anthony Tuckson, 'Aboriginal Art and the Western World', in Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Art*, 1964, op. cit., f/note 13, p. 63.]

²⁶⁸ Berndt, 'Epilogue'. in Berndt, *Australian Aboriginal Art*, 1964, op. cit., p. 71 (quoted also in Howard Morphy, *Becoming Art*, 2008, op. cit., p. 182).

²⁶⁹ Morphy, 'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery', 2001, op. cit.

appears (mainly restated from 2001) in Morphy's expanded monograph, *Becoming Art*, published in 2008;²⁷⁰ and again, with considerable modification and more careful detailing of position, in Morphy's more sympathetic interpretation of Tuckson forming a chapter of *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art* published in 2011.²⁷¹ Meanwhile Terence Maloon revisited 'Tuckson and Tradition' from an art historian's and curator's vantage-point, in a catalogue essay for the monographic exhibition of Tuckson's art by the National Gallery of Australia, presented in 2000.²⁷²

6.8 Disciplinary divergences: <anthropology>—<art museums>—<art history>

The incommensurability of different knowledge systems and intellectual orientations brought to the study of Aboriginal cultural expression lies at the heart of the values rift in the Tuckson-Berndt 'fracture' of 1964, aired above. This stand-off was repeated in a similar recycling of opposing vantage-points throughout the next decades.

In a historical perspective, the contest surfaced recurrently, and regrettably, as a struggle about disciplinary authority in the institutional domain of museums. This was evident in an (unexplained) editors' statement in 2008, in a monograph on Australia's natural history museum collections, of 'the rise of Aboriginal art' in the later 20th century as being characterised by an 'effort of many outside anthropology to wrest art from the anthropologists, and the ethnographic museum, and to relocate it in the art gallery'.²⁷³ A few years later such division was recapitulated by Philip Jones – by now a half-century after the rupture between Tuckson and Berndt. Philip Jones, a fine anthropologist and historian, regrettably stated in 2011:

[T]he greatest advances in understanding and analysing Aboriginal art have come from anthropologists documenting the social bases and discrete circumstances of the art's production, rather than from art curators, who have been, as a rule, more concerned with the art's subsequent visual impact and its universal qualities.²⁷⁴

The attentions of 'art' viewers – as evident again in this statement – have typically been characterised as confined to an aesthetic response divorced from framing social contexts; anthropologists have repeatedly claimed a stronger, fieldwork-based grounding of their knowledge, anchored in the more detailed attentions of ethnography to social structure, mores, kinship and belief-systems framing cultural expression of first peoples. Perhaps the most persistent champion of this disciplinary contest from anthropology's viewpoint has been Howard Morphy, Australia's most distinguished contemporary anthropologist, based at ANU, with a world-leading position in the field of publications on Aboriginal art and the methodologies of anthropology in interpreting indigenous peoples' creativity.²⁷⁵ His position and arguments have steadily evolved over many years, becoming much more varied in their referential and conceptual range. Yet a presumptive and inaccurate oppositional division is still maintained between the art gallery and museum contexts (and their

²⁷⁰ Morphy, *Becoming Art*, 2008, op. cit.

²⁷¹ Howard Morphy, 'Coming to Terms with Aboriginal Art in the 1960s', in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2011, Ch. 12, 153–167.

²⁷² Terence Maloon, 'Tuckson and Tradition', in *Painting Forever: Tony Tuckson*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2000.

²⁷³ Peterson, Allen and Hamby (eds), *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*, 2008, p. 6.

²⁷⁴ Jones, 'The Art of Contact: Encountering an Aboriginal Aesthetic from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries', 2011, p. 35.

²⁷⁵ Howard Morphy, *Ancestral Connections: Art and an Aboriginal System of Knowledge*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991; Morphy, 'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery', 2001, op. cit.; Morphy, *Becoming Art: Exploring Cross-Cultural Categories*, University of New South Wales, 2008, op. cit.

histories) that in a sense reworks the dichotomy staked out a half-century earlier in Berndt's stand-off with Tuckson. Howard Morphy contends:

[A]rt galleries have been associated with connoisseurship and have developed as privileged venues for viewing fine art and the appreciation of objects on the basis of their form. Museums have provided less privileged and more crowded viewing places for material culture including ethnography, and have tended to emphasise an interpretative perspective that places the object in its social and cultural context.²⁷⁶

Two rejoinders are merited here, to intimate the corrosive assumptions in such a continuing dichotomous division that has distorted museological understanding in Australia since the 1950s. First, the evolution of natural history museums shares a similar history to the evolution of art museums, dating back at least to the *Wunderkammer* collections²⁷⁷ at the threshold of the Renaissance, in which all manner of objects, from shells and weapons to coins, navigational instruments, natural history treatises, drawings and paintings, were displayed and studied in adjacent spaces under co-ordinating patronage. Moreover, the close interconnection of the fine arts with scientific studies (including anatomical dissection and astronomy) were also seminal to the rise of *art academies* during the Italian Rinascimento: ('The late sixteenth-century art academy stands out as an exceptional educational setting which brought together practitioners of art and science under the same roof.')²⁷⁸ Such interconnected histories proceeded in mutual influence throughout the 18th-century Enlightenment and the 19th-century rise of evolutionary science, when independent museum institutions were then constellated that physically separated the domains of science and art.

Second, art history emerged as a university discipline in the 19th century, and sought the self-regulating principles of a 'science' in the German-speaking world, specifically to contest and move beyond a reliance on mere *connoisseurship* in the interpretation of art works (as was the favoured disposition in Britain). Art history's gestation in Europe sought to build disciplinary tools of interpretation that enabled an understanding of art and artworks in their original physical settings, interpretive contexts (including source-languages), and accompanying literature, secondary interpretations and genealogies that such works acquired over time. In short, artworks have their own *ancestral histories* and generative meanings (including sometimes direct religious significance in the minds of their makers), which have become more complex as they have moved through time in differing forms of presentation, and changing physical and institutional settings.

However, in historical overview of the colonialist formation of museums in Australia – as analysed variously in Chapters 1, 2 and 5 of the present thesis – such interconnection of science and art knowledges (except in the case of Baldwin Spencer) were sparsely evident. In some science-based state museums in the 20th century, collection 'exhibits' remained static for (variously) five, six, even

²⁷⁶ Howard Morphy, 'Moving the body painting into the art gallery – knowing about and appreciating works of Aboriginal art', *Journal of Art Historiography*, Number 4, June 2011 [20 pp.], p. 2; published online at <www.arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/moving-the-body-images-_formatted_01dec1.pdf>.

²⁷⁷ For understanding of both art history's and museology's disciplinary beginnings in Vienna, and the intellectual range of one of the most significant founders, Julius von Schlosser (teacher of Franz Philipp, who transmitted Schlosserian textual analysis of diverse textual sources for art history at Melbourne University in the 1950s and 1960s, covered in thesis Ch. 4), the recent accomplishment of the first English translation of Schlosser's key work on *Wunderkammern* of the late Renaissance has been invaluable – see Julius von Schlosser, *Art and Curiosity Cabinets of the late Renaissance: A Contribution to the History of Collecting* [Leipzig, 1908], ed. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, transl. Jonathan Blower, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, 2021.

²⁷⁸ Bjørn Okholm Skaarup, 'Applied Science in the Renaissance Art Academy', in Camilla Skovbjerg Paldam and Jacob Wamberg (eds), *Art, Technology and Nature: Renaissance to Postmodernity* [2015], Routledge, UK, 2016, 105–115, p. 105.

seven decades,²⁷⁹ while such displays framed Aboriginal people, their technologies and expressive forms as part of natural history rather than cultural development. Sometimes even the most basic information was absent in natural history museums – one of the worst cases being at the Queensland Museum, which had a long history of development as an adjunct to the Royal Society of Queensland (formed in 1884); and the museum had acted as a tool of state authority while witnessing the brutal treatment of Aboriginal peoples, including silence on massacres and collection of human remains in the cause of physical anthropology's investigation of different 'races'. In 1925, when Margaret Preston first published an article in Sydney advancing Aboriginal art as having '[a] definite place in the making of a national art',²⁸⁰ Queensland Museum's Director, Heber Longman, in the same year gave a public lecture reported favourably in *The Brisbane Courier*, declaring that '[t]he Australian Aboriginals are devoid of art'.²⁸¹ The Brisbane museum's indifferent documentation, stemming from such attitudes by its early leaders, was frankly diagnosed recently from within:

Until the mid-1970s, few artefacts in the Queensland ethnography collections had a maker's name, the maker's language name or the language (s) they spoke, their age or gender, their genealogical affiliations or other social relations. Details of the manufacturing methods or the raw materials used [were] absent ... [and] no audio or film records accompanied collections.²⁸²

It also merits mention that the now much-valued and admired bark paintings collected by Baldwin Spencer in 1912, and presented by him in the Melbourne museum's 'Ethnology' hall, were later dismantled after his retirement and departure from Australia in the 1920s. The Oenpelli bark paintings were not on display when Kenneth Clark visited Australia late in 1948, and (as he reported later) most could only be seen in museum storage. However, Leonhard Adam was on hand to excite Clark with supportive information about Aboriginal art and the barks' relationship to Arnhem Land rock art, which had formed a background to Baldwin Spencer's commissioning (via local identity Paddy Cahill) and influenced the imposing scale of some of the Oenpelli works.

Without a single anthropology curator on staff in Melbourne until Aldo Massola's appointment in 1954, many items were badly neglected by the National Museum of Victoria and subject even to abusive neglect (with some of the largest bark paintings employed as makeshift trestle tables in dismal storage conditions).²⁸³ After the 1920s, it was only in the state museums in Adelaide and Sydney that cultural anthropology was maintained throughout the greater part of the 20th century. And only in those two museums was Aboriginal culture continuously displayed in installations that could suggest something of its diversity – despite the terrible loss of south-eastern Aboriginal cultural material in the fire that consumed Sydney's Garden Palace building from the 1879

²⁷⁹ Nicolas Peterson, Lindy Allen and Louise Hamby (eds.), *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*, Melbourne University Press, 2008, pp. 3–4.

²⁸⁰ Preston, 'The Indigenous Art of Australia', 1925, reprinted in Stephen, McNamara & Goad, *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917–1967*, 2006, op. cit., p. 156.

²⁸¹ Edwards and Peel with Mimmocchi, *Margaret Preston*, 2005, op. cit., in-text fn. 133, p. 107.

²⁸² Richard Robins, 'Reflections in a Cracked Mirror: What Collections Representing 'Them' Can Say about 'Us' and the Role of Museum Collections', in Peterson, Allen & Hamby, *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*, op. cit., 61–75, p. 63.

²⁸³ See John Mulvaney's account of conditions encountered years later, when Aldo Massola was temporarily appointed in 1952, then became Curator of Anthropology in 1954: Massola found 'jumbled collections which had been largely neglected since 1927' – such that 'cupboards contained rubbish, artefacts littered the floor', and 'Massola located invaluable Oenpelli bark paintings which had been used as trestle-tables'. (D. J. Mulvaney, 'Massola, Aldo Giuseppe (1910–1975)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 16, Melbourne University Press, 2000, online at <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/massola-aldo-giuseppe-11083/text19729>).

International Exhibition, destroyed one fateful morning in 1882.²⁸⁴

6.8(i) The art museum's vantage-point

When Australia's state galleries moved to exhibit and later collect Aboriginal art, and ensure Aboriginal art's inclusion within any *national* cultural framing from the 1940s onwards, they were spurred in part by a critical attitude to the didactic displays in natural history museums. Art curators were often alienated by the immobility of these presentations, with cultural objects introduced by classifying texts or labels that carried an objectified voice of authority framing Othered peoples interpreted. Even Ronald Berndt had acknowledged in 1964 the *relegative* treatment of Aboriginal art in early museum displays: 'Once it was relegated to the ethnological section of a museum, and treated along with the artefacts and material culture of other non-literate peoples.'²⁸⁵

Some grasp of the complex history of Australia's science and natural history museums needs to be brought to an interface with the kind of critique that Tony Tuckson applied to anthropology's framing of Aboriginal art and culture, and his aims in shaping the 1960 exhibition for state galleries, which led to Berndt's corrective 'Epilogue' in 1964. To an art/artist-trained visual understanding – that is, an experienced perception of the multiple possibilities of art as a complex intellectual and sensory process of rendering ideas in all human groups – it was possible to perceive sophisticated differences of content and style in Aboriginal artworks. Such perception, far from being an endpoint (as caricatured by Berndt), fuelled speculative engagement at a deeper level with the diversity of artists' percepts and concepts underlying their rendition of complex visual forms and ideas.

There was a quest to know artists' interrelationships, historical background and names (as shaped the knowledge resources of art museums); and through these paths of introduction, to grasp something of the cultural formation and intentions manifested through the evidently complex iconography and systems of meaning that Aboriginal works revealed. In ethnographic displays, by contrast, it was often disturbing to see the individual character of expressive objects ignored, repressed as a collective social production, or displayed within frameworks of natural history. Put bluntly, ethnographic displays tended to obfuscate the power of art as an intellectual and sensory complex at work within a larger cultural system of communication.

6.9 Conclusion

Art historian Susan Lowish has recently examined the relationship between rock art and art history, especially to highlight the situation in Australia, as part of her ongoing investigation of the history of inclusion (or mostly, absence) of Aboriginal art within Australian art's early history. Lowish's 2015 historical overview published in *Rock Art Research* proposes that there was a longstanding lack of

²⁸⁴ Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones has regularly lamented the significance of this loss to his own corpus of historic heritage locatable in New South Wales. His intellectual response to the scientific discourses that surrounded such erasure in other ways has provided the dynamics of many of his art installations that have rearranged the narratives shaping such outcomes, with a counter-agency of local Aboriginal elders and knowledge systems reactivated through the particular contents and discursive currents he brings into a changed present in successive projects. His reactivation of a reinterpreted history was most evident in the 2016 John Kaldor Art Project, *barrangal dyara (skin and bones)*, a huge sculptural installation encompassing the 1979 Garden Palace's footprint, spreading across 20,000 metres of the Sydney Royal Botanical Gardens.

²⁸⁵ Ronald Berndt, 'Epilogue', in R.M. Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Art*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1964, 69–74, p. 69.

awareness of rock art in Australian art's history after the important place it was given, if briefly, at the beginning of William Moore's two-volume history of Australian art in 1934. A purported loss of art historical memory is proposed by Susan Lowish in these terms:²⁸⁶

Sadly, since [William] Moore, rock art in Australia has been largely un-noticed and unacknowledged by art historians. It appears as though there was no further mention of it in Australian art surveys until the beginning of the 1970s.²⁸⁷

Such judgment cannot be maintained against contrary historical evidence, as extensively demonstrated by numerous pathways demonstrating rock art's prominent attention in the present chapter. Leonhard Adam always connected his discussions of Aboriginal art to rock art, which he described extensively on numerous occasions: in his first Australian exhibition for the NGV, Melbourne, in 1943;²⁸⁸ again the next year in his 1944 essay for *Angry Penguins*, 'Has Aboriginal Art a Future?';²⁸⁹ in the 1949 revised and enlarged edition of his highly successful *Primitive Art*;²⁹⁰ and once again in the essay on 'Aboriginal Art' that he was commissioned to provide for the catalogue of the 1951 *Jubilee Exhibition of Australian Art*, which toured nationally.²⁹¹ Moreover, Adam had looked to rock painting in his own fieldwork, as noted by Jaynie Anderson: 'Like many other scholars Adam moved from barks to rock painting.'²⁹²

For the Olympic Arts Festival catalogue in 1956, Museum of Victoria anthropologist (Aldo Massola) briefly discussed 'cave painting' and 'rock carvings' across geographically disparate regions, including Victoria.²⁹³ Daryl Lindsay was well aware (from Baldwin Spencer in the 1920s, from Leonhard Adam in the 1940s, and through his negotiation for distribution of the 1948-collected, AASEAL-expedition 'Mountford barks' in 1956) of the direct relationships of the bark paintings to rock art. Tony Tuckson's later visits to Arnhem Land in the 1950s with Dr Stuart Scougall, and Tuckson's own experience of rock art, guided his detailed research and selection of portable works for the 1960-61 national touring exhibition (*Australian Aboriginal Art*). The 1964 Ronald Berndt-edited volume on *Australian Aboriginal Art*, directly framed around Tuckson's 1960 exhibition, included a chapter on Rock Art by Australian Museum curator, Fred McCarthy;²⁹⁴ and a chapter by Charles Mountford traversed the connections between rock art and bark painting in

²⁸⁶ Moore, *The Story of Australian Art*, 1934, op. cit.

²⁸⁷ Susan Lowish, 'Rock Art and Art History: Exploring Disciplinary Perspectives', *Rock Art Research*, Vol. 32(1), 2015, pp. 1-12 (uploaded version), p. 8; online at <www.academia.edu/11827728/Rock_art>; see also Robert Gunn & Susan Lowish, 'Australian Rock Art in the Expanded Field: History, Meaning, and Contemporary Context', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, 19:2, 2019, pp. 139-141.

²⁸⁸ Leonhard Adam, catalogue introduction to the NGV's *Primitive Art Exhibition* in 1943.

²⁸⁹ Adam, 'Has Australian Aboriginal Art a Future?' [1944]; reprinted in Stephen, McNamara & Goad, *Modernism & Australia: Documents...1917-1967*, 2006, op. cit., pp. 449-58.

²⁹⁰ Leonhard Adam, *Primitive Art*, Penguin Books (Pelican series) [1941], 3rd (rev. and enlarged ed.), UK, 1949. In his chapter on Australia, Adam extensively discussed 'the various "aboriginal art galleries" in [many] parts of Australia', from rock engravings at Ku-ring-gai Chase and 'the Sydney district' (p.175) to the 'paintings in the rock shelters of Northern Kimberley' (pp. 176-178).

²⁹¹ Adam, 'Aboriginal Art', in *Jubilee Exhibition of Australian Art*, 1951, pp. 5-7, op. cit. Adam extensively profiled rock art in various parts of Australia in his three-page essay for the *Jubilee* catalogue, mentioning multiple regions (from the Kimberley to the 'Sydney district', regional New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania), while including mention of both rock engravings (petroglyphs) and wall paintings. Adam's essay also distinguished different styles and media, praising some of the art strongly.

²⁹² Anderson, 'The Creation of Indigenous Collections in Melbourne...', in *Histoire de l'Art et Anthropologie*, Musée du Quai Branly (online), 2009, op. cit.

²⁹³ Massola, 'Aboriginal Art', *The Arts Festival of the Olympic Games*, 1956, op. cit., pp. 26-28.

²⁹⁴ F.D. (Fred) McCarthy, 'The Art of the Rock Faces', in Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Art*, 1964, 33-43.

Arnhem Land, while Mountford also covered north-western Kimberley rock art in a section ‘The Wandjina Painting’.²⁹⁵ However, the most decisive demonstration of the state gallery directors’ high regard and continuing consciousness of rock art had been affirmed decades earlier, in the AGDC-organised UNESCO publication on Aboriginal art, which produced the finest-quality images ever published at that time of rock paintings (in *Australia: Aboriginal paintings, Arnhem Land*, of 1954) – and raised to world consciousness of Aboriginal art through UNESCO networks.



Australia: Aboriginal paintings, Arnhem Land, New York Graphic Society, New York, by arrangement with UNESCO, 1954
Introduction by Herbert Read.

This brief sampling of extensive evidence in the present chapter of continuing and detailed interest in rock art throughout the 20th century suggests that Susan Lowish’s probing work on earlier histories of Aboriginal art’s awareness and interpretation (up to 1929) needs some adjustment in her understanding of the later 20th century. Regrettably, the field of art museums, and especially exhibitions development and publications instigated by the Australian state galleries from the late 1940s onwards, are again neglected in such projections of Australian art’s history, and an allegedly poor awareness of Aboriginal art’s ancient evolution and 20th century continuity at important sites across the country that is presumed. Such judgments have forgotten that in the catalogue for the influential 1941 exhibition to the USA and Canada (which travelled for 2 years during wartime), the catalogue introductions included Margaret Preston’s statement:

Australia is the only country in the world in which rock painting still flourishes as the normal expression of its aborigines.²⁹⁶

In 1978, at the height of negotiations for the second of an ambitious series of four-stage (two-way) art museum exchanges with the Soviet Union, the Australia Council’s Visual Arts Board (established under Prime Minister Gough Whitlam) made sure that visiting representatives of the Russian State Hermitage Museum, from one of the greatest museum collections in the world, would realise the multiple heritages and antiquity of art sites in Australia. This is evident in a visual record of a visit by a leading Hermitage curator and delegate for the exhibition agreements, when she was conducted to visit the high-ridge rock art galleries at Ku-ring-gai Chase, flanking the Hawksbury River north of Sydney.



Caption: ‘Leon Poroissen, Director of the Visual Arts Board, who negotiated the formal agreement for a series of exchange exhibitions between Australia and the Soviet Union during a visit to the USSR in 1977, shows Aboriginal rock engravings at Ku-Ring-Gai Chase National Park to Mme Svetlana Vsevolozhskaya, Curator from the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, who visited Australian museums in 1978 to discuss curatorial aspects of the exchanges.’ (AGDC: *Report and Review 1978*, Australian Directors Council Limited, Sydney, 1978, p. 33.)

These rock art site-visits, shared by other visiting Russian curators in 1977 and 1978, go in some way

²⁹⁵ Charles Mountford, ‘The Art of Arnhem Land’, in Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Art*, 1964, pp. 20–32.

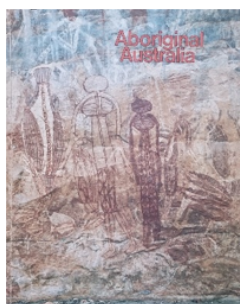
²⁹⁶ Margaret Preston, in ‘Survey of Australian Art’, section ‘1: Aboriginal Art of Australia’, in catalogue introductions to *Art of Australia, 1788–1941*, New York, 1941, 16–17, p. 16.

to explain why the final stage of the 4-part Australia-USSR exchanges eventually took on a very special form in the planning by Russian hosts. In 2000, the NGA's remarkable *Aboriginal Memorial* (realised in 1988 by Djon Mundine and Yolngu members of the Ramingining community) was the centrepiece of an Aboriginal art exhibition sent to St Petersburg and displayed in 'the prestigious Nicholas Hall' of the Hermitage Museum. The exhibition which received a warm reception from Russian critics, one of whom recorded a remarkable tribute to Australian Aboriginal art:

This is an exhibition of contemporary art, not in the sense that it was done recently, but in that it is cased in the mentality, technology and philosophy of radical art of the most recent times. No one, other than the Aborigines of Australia, has succeeded in exhibiting such art at the Hermitage.²⁹⁷

Director of the Hermitage Museum, Mikhail Piotrovsky, made a broader statement: 'For me it is the mainstream of Australian art. I don't call it Aboriginal, I call it just Australian art.'²⁹⁸

Perhaps the capstone demonstration of the state galleries' commitment over decades to the importance of tradition-based Aboriginal art in all its portable forms, and their diverse legacies from rock art, was demonstrated in the monographic exhibition prepared through the AGDC, in collaboration with anthropologists: *Aboriginal Australia* (Australian Gallery Directors Council, 1981), for which the cover was reserved for an image by Robert (Bob) Edwards of rock art images layered over aeons in Deaf Adder Gorge, Kakadu National Park, Arnhem Land. In this project's preparations the professional antinomies that had long divided the vantage-points of art and anthropology were at last overcome in a careful, collaborative production. What remained still missing, was the voices of Aboriginal custodians leading and guiding the interpretation of their culture for external audiences, and being present in all situations that introduced their culture in institutions with a public interface. This was a development about to be championed in the 1980s and 1990s by the art museums, with some of the most remarkable exhibitions and performances of Aboriginal art's multiple creative resources about to become a leading contemporary art movement with world-wide impacts.



Cover of *Aboriginal Australia* (Australian Gallery Directors Council, 1981).

('Presented by the Australian Gallery Directors Council in association with the National Gallery of Victoria, and with the cooperation of the Aboriginal Arts Board and the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, and the Department of Home Affairs and the Environment.')

This chapter has demonstrated that there are resonant needs for Australian art history to include more field-knowledge of the activities of Australia's state and National galleries, and their wider achievements among museums nationally and internationally on behalf of engagement with Australia's diverse art traditions. There are narratives to be retrieved of the art museums' always-

²⁹⁷ Reported by Sasha Grishin, 'Aboriginal art makes it to the top', *The Canberra Times*, 15 April 2000.

²⁹⁸ Eleanor Hall, 'The World Today', program transcript, ABC radio networks, broadcast 3 February 2000; <www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/stories/s97633.html>

active orientation to artists as interpreters of human experience, and of their 20th century attention to networks of continuing Aboriginal art activities and their multiple sources in tradition.

Restoration of museological history and the long-maintained acknowledgment of rock art in art museums is important in re-establishment of the state and National galleries' heritage responsibilities today. Through such perspectives our public galleries can be understood as the beneficiaries and awareness-raisers of one of the most ancient gallery networks displaying human art systems in the world. It is from these remarkable diverse image-galleries, and their kinship networks of engravings across rock art sites on a continental scale, that all ancient traditions of art in Australia may be traced. Such transformative culture-maps lead eventually to the diverse expressions of art forging new pathways of cultural imagination and reanimated connections today.

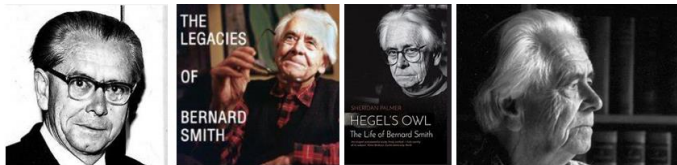
The conclusions above lead to an important question: How did such forgetting occur? How was a continuous consciousness of Aboriginal rock art's continental scale, antiquity and importance, proved in so many activities of the state and national galleries and their directors over decades, gradually forgotten to the point of an entire occlusion of attention, and falsification of history, in the domain of *Australian art history*? To answer this question, it is necessary to turn to the work of the leading historian of Australian art across six decades of the 20th century, Bernard Smith. It becomes compelling to examine his field-shaping role, to understand how he came to exclude (and categorically so) any coverage of Aboriginal art in his 'canonical' history of Australian art, which constrained the attentions of colleagues who accompanied and succeeded him over decades, continuing even in their published assessments of his continuing impact recently. These questions frame the investigations in the following and concluding thesis chapter: **Ch. 7: Bernard Smith, art history, the art museum, and Aboriginal art.**

* * * * *

End of Chapter 6

Ch.7: Bernard Smith, art history, the art museum, and Aboriginal art

- 7.1 The framing of Australian art's history
 - 7.2 The exclusion of Aboriginal art – and the absorption of Namatjira
 - 7.3 The beginning of Australian *history painting*: Benjamin Duterrau's *The Conciliation* (1940)
 - 7.4 Bernard Smith's idea of *tradition* framing Australian art's development
 - 7.5 The 1961 Whitechapel exhibition critiqued (Smith's Macrossan Lectures)
 - 7.6 The Power Institute's ambitious mandate in Sydney
 - 7.7 Positioning art history within Sydney University's faculties
 - 7.8 The 1980 Boyer Lectures - '*The Spectre of Truganini*'
 - 7.9 Divided socius, split subjects: a dichotomous cultural history
 - 7.10 Resetting Australian art history's bearings in the 21st century
 - 7.11 Conclusion
-

Chapter 7**Bernard Smith, art history, the art museum, and Aboriginal art**

The present chapter focuses on Bernard Smith's overarching status in Australian art's history, and his influence as an art critic. While he had for a decade in Melbourne guided the historical study of Australian art and its sources and connections with British art of the 19th century, he also had an influential record in the practice of art criticism, especially through his acting as art critic for *The Age* in the 1960s, until he recommended that this role be given to the emerging critic, Patrick McCaughey. This was a generous baton-passing to a much younger figure whose interests and taste in the current critical landscape were clearly captivated by American art's recent achievements, and therefore very different from Smith's own long-held critical position on modernist art and the languages of abstraction.

The investigation below examines the wide-ranging impacts both of Bernard Smith's publications and framing of a national tradition, and his influence (as a critic) in promoting its significant patterns of development. In particular, this analysis concentrates on Smith's exclusion of Aboriginal art from any place within his framework of national cultural history or the historiography of Australian art. The chapter traces how this arose both through Bernard Smith's theoretical concepts of art and art history, and his particular determination of what constituted a *national tradition* in Australian art. The analysis finally charts Smith's impact on others' interpretations of this history, built upon the foundations he set in place, and ends with a questioning of Australian art history's orientation today, in a greatly changed context.

7.1 The framing of Australian art history

During his decade of teaching at Melbourne University (1956–66),¹ Bernard Smith's continuing research² on Australian art's history had resulted in his most significant work since the publication of *Place, Taste and Tradition* in 1945.³ Focused on a single medium, *Australian Painting, 1788–1960*,⁴ was published by Oxford University Press in 1962. This established an authoritative framework for understanding Australian art's evolution since just prior to and after the first Port Jackson colony (although for decades all significant artists had been born in the northern hemisphere). The exposition then provided a history covering the whole of the 19th century and first six decades of the 20th century. Bernard Smith had built his research into thematic sections that set Australian art's history within a certain exegetical structure of interpretation for the remainder of the 20th century.

Recent judgments since Bernard Smith's death have reinscribed *Australian Painting's* legacy effects – with Australian art historians still regarding it as 'canonical and canonising':⁵ 'It remains without doubt the most influential single book ever produced on Australian art.'⁶ And while considered as 'the platform on which Australian art history was built',⁷ it has also been positioned as 'the seminal work of contemporary Australian art theory'. In its far-reaching impacts, *Australian Painting* has been appraised as the vehicle that secured 'Smith's wish to be an influential shaper of Australian art' in respect of its enduring theoretical concepts, configuring practices and continuing criticism since his founding historical concepts promulgated in his first book in the 1940s.⁸

Australian Painting was reprinted in 1965, three years after first publication, and without change. Bernard Smith then extended his history by a decade to 1970 (published in 1971).⁹ Further chapters were later added by colleagues enlisted to the task of updating the coverage, as Smith's own familiarity with contemporary art had waned. A 1991 edition¹⁰ contained three new

¹ The years lecturing at Melbourne University were 1955–66 (stated in biographical notes for Smith's 1980 Boyer Lectures, in which Smith must have included his preparatory guest lecturing in 1955). However, the move to live in Melbourne, and begin teaching in the Fine Arts Department, was in January 1956.

² See Bernard Smith, *Pavane for Another Time*, Macmillan Art Publishing, Melbourne, 2002, Ch. 4: 'My first book and what followed', 123–158.

³ Bernard Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study of Australian Art since 1788*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1945. See for the background and impact of his earlier monograph, Bernard Smith, *Pavane for Another Time*, Macmillan Art Publishing, Melbourne, 2002, Ch. 4: 'My first book and what followed', 123–158.

⁴ Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting, 1788–1960*, Oxford University Press, London, Melbourne, New York, 1962.

⁵ Rex Butler and Sheridan Palmer, 'Introduction', in Rex Butler and Sheridan Palmer (eds), *Antipodean Perspective: Selected Writings of Bernard Smith*, Monash University Publishing, Melbourne, 2018, ix–xxiv, p. 12.

⁶ Heather Barker and Charles Green, 'Australian Painting 1788–1960 (1962)', in Butler and Palmer (eds), *Antipodean Perspective*, 2018, op. cit., 130–136, p. 130.

⁷ Barker and Green, 'Australian Painting 1788–1960 (1962)', 2018, p. 130.

⁸ Barker and Green, 'Australian Painting 1788–1960 (1962)', 2018, 131.

⁹ Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting, 1788–1970* [1962]; 2nd edition (with a new chapter up to 1970), Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 51.

¹⁰ Bernard Smith, with Terry Smith, *Australian Painting, 1788–1990* [three additional chapters on Australian painting since 1970 by Terry Smith], Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991; reprinted 1992.

chapters by Terry Smith, bringing the history forward to 1990 (and for the first time providing a chapter on Aboriginal art). A further updating was made by Christopher Heathcote in 2001¹¹ (providing a chapter on painting in the century's last decade). However, the four added chapters were always supplementary to the foundational structure established by Bernard Smith in 1962. The organisation of *Australian Painting's* narrative architecture remained unchanged, though the floorboards and rafters creaked louder with the years.

7.2 The exclusion of Aboriginal art – and the absorption of Namatjira

The implications of Bernard Smith's exclusion of Aboriginal art, people and culture within the structure of his national history is a major concern of the present thesis chapter, and explored in various ways throughout.

There was one exception in Smith's narrative. Albert (Elea) Namatjira (with two Pareroultja kinsmen, Otto and Edwin) had a minor place,¹² but only through ignoring their Aboriginal background entirely. Hans Heysen was accorded 'pioneer' status, in Smith's estimation, for a creative vision of the central Australian landscape,¹³ with the journeyman watercolourist Rex Battarbee extending this vision later, and Namatjira and his kinsmen placed as mere 'followers'. Smith's account here was wholly a narrative of assimilation:

[W]here Heysen pioneered, others followed. Rex Battarbee, for example, whose work and enthusiasm has helped to create a Central Australian group of painters grounded upon Heysen's vision: the most notable painters of the group, apart from Battarbee himself, being Albert Namatjira, and the two brothers, Edwin and Otto Pareroultja.¹⁴

Despite his huge fame as an Aboriginal artist since he began exhibiting in 1938,¹⁵ Namatjira's Arrernte identity was ignored within a white Australian art's narrative. His watercolour renditions of the central deserts were accounted only as a product of Battarbee's teaching, without any heritage in ancestral tracts of Country influencing their outcome.¹⁶ Also unrecognised was the vast network of tribal connections compiled by Walter Baldwin Spencer's studies of this same Aboriginal cultural geography decades earlier, no matter how confined Spencer's writings might have been by then-emergent anthropological science at the beginning of the 20th century. Through his expeditions with Gillen, and copious publication of results (as analysed in Chapter 2), the Arrernte, forming Namatjira's kinship history, had become the most studied of all Aboriginal people by the early-20th century. However, Bernard Smith's historical attention had been blinkered by the general extinguishment frameworks about Aboriginal tradition that prevailed in his formative years intellectually. In his later life, he felt some self-

¹¹ Bernard Smith, with additional chapters by Terry Smith and Christopher Heathcote, *Australian Painting, 1788-2000*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2001.

¹² Smith, *Australian Painting* [1962], 1971, p. 115.

¹³ On Heysen's discovery of the interior via the Flinders Ranges, see Smith, *Australian Painting*, op. cit., pp. 113–114.

¹⁴ Smith, *Australian Painting, 1788-1970*, 1971, Ch. 4, 'Genesis', 71–124, p. 115 and fn. 32.

¹⁵ '[In 1938] Namatjira [1902-1959] held his first solo exhibition at the Fine Art Society Gallery, Melbourne', and '[w]ith Battarbee's assistance as teacher, dealer and mentor, a school of artists developed around [him]'. Sylvia Kleinert, 'Namatjira, Albert (Elea) (1902-1959)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 15, MUP, 2000, online at <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/namatjira-albert-elea-11217>>

¹⁶ Philip Jones, *Ochre and Rust: Artefacts and Encounters on Australian Frontiers*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, South Australia, 2007; Ch. 8: 'Namatjira and the Jesus plaque', 305–335.

reproach about his interpretation of Namatjira, reporting in an interview with Sylvia Kleinert in 1992 that 'he could not accept Namatjira's paintings because they seemed to fall within the conservative landscape tradition', although he later 'felt ambivalent and guilty about his failure to applaud Namatjira's achievements'.¹⁷

However, the problem was more profound than this adjustment conceded. Namatjira and his kinsmen painters were unrecognised as bearers of prior intellectual concepts in the rendition of a culturally-constructed landscape. These were the very territories of conceptual analysis that Bernard Smith had applied in the methodology of his *European Vision and the South Pacific*¹⁸ framework: in his tracing of variations of imagery through new scientific and intellectual interests of the 18th and 19th centuries, and new encounters that impacted on artists' visual recording. Yet he remained unable to recognise when the methodology reversed in a truly remarkable way. This occurred through Namatjira's Aboriginal appropriation of a conceptual process – adopting a novel system for renditions of Country – and acquired at virtuosic speed in a new medium (as noted by Batterbee about Namatjira's intensive learning skills in the 1930s).¹⁹ In fact, Namatjira achieved a remarkable conversion to his own local purposes of techniques and visual tropes brought from afar, but now structured through his Arrernte perceptions.

In the 1990s Bernard Smith returned to Namatjira, restoring his 'Arunda' identity. However, the continuing editions of Smith's *Australian Painting*, in most secondary schools and in public libraries throughout the country, had perpetuated Namatjira's cultural erasure through decades.

7.3 The beginning of Australian *history* painting: Duterrau's *The Conciliation* (1940)

A further significant topic for an understanding of Bernard Smith's historiography of Australian art, and his exclusion of any Aboriginal contribution to such history, is the question of how he understood Australian history itself in matters of interrelations between 'settlers' and Aboriginal subjects. In his field-defining monograph of 1962 Smith introduced the significant beginnings of *history painting* in Australia with a striking work owned and long-exhibited in the state museum and art collection in Hobart: Benjamin Duterrau's *The Conciliation*, painted in 1840.²⁰

Bernard Smith first reminded his audience of the importance of the typology of history painting in the history of art. He emphasised that not only its conventions but also its subjects

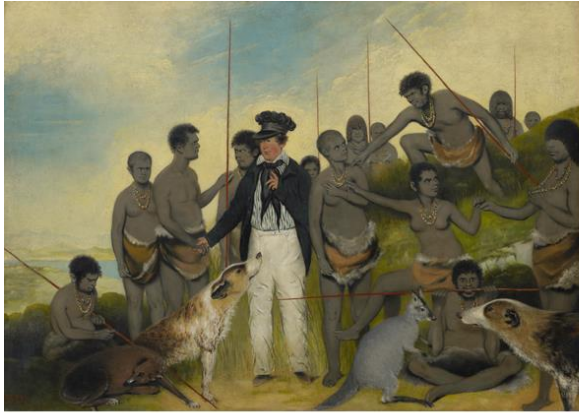
¹⁷ Sylvia Kleinert, 'The Critical Reaction to the Hermannsburg School', in Jane Hardy, J.V.S. Megaw and Ruth Megaw (eds), *The Heritage of Namatjira*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1992, 217–48; p. 227.

¹⁸ Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768-1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1960.

¹⁹ Anthropologist/ethnologist Leonhard Adam had also noted that in addition to innate skills in drawing, 'Australian Aborigines have ... an astonishing learning ability as far as art is concerned'. (Leonhard Adam, 'Has Australian Aboriginal Art a Future?', *Angry Penguins*, Autumn 1944, pp. 42–50; reprinted Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara, Philip Goad (eds), *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917–1967*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2006, 449–58, p. 453.)

²⁰ The comprehensive examination of this picture's history and its relationship to a 'National Picture' project by Duterrau, was the subject of a monographic exhibition mounted by the National Gallery, Canberra, in 2018: *The National Picture: The art of Tasmania's Black War* was shown at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (12 May–29 July 2018), the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart (17 August–11 November 2018), and the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston (24 November 2018–17 February 2019).

were significant: often depicting ‘events from the Bible and classical antiquity’, or even more recent subjects, but still requiring ‘a dignified presentation of heroes noble of bearing and expression ...[as] considered essential to this elevated form of art’.²¹



Benjamin Duterrau (1768–1851), *The Conciliation* (1840) – acquired 1945 (TMAG, Hobart)

However, the analysis of the arrestingly staged scene in Duterrau's painting, which has for decades (with companion studies) had a dramatic presence in Tasmania's combined Museum and Art Gallery collection displays, was confined to the following statement:

It shows George Robinson, the Methodist bricklayer who became a protector of Aboriginals, conversing with a group of Tasmanian Aboriginals to pacify them and induce them to leave their wild life and go with him.²²

This sentence construed a Biblical simplicity of narrative about complex, and by any glance mystifying, human interrelations conjured in *the first history painting* from colonial Australia – a judgment actually adopted from William Moore's first chronicle of Australian art endeavour, *The Story of Australian Art* (1934).²³ Yet there were stark 19th-century historical accounts published that would have contradicted the simplicity of Bernard Smith's fable of the 'imaginary treaty'²⁴ outcome of George Augustus Robinson's successive expeditions to round up Aboriginal bands and bring the Black War to an end.²⁵ For example, a Tasmanian narrative of 1870 by historian James Bonwick, compiled within memory of historical events referred to, described white settlers' treatment of the 'last of the Tasmanians' as having exhibited:

... a demoniacal propensity to torture the defenceless, and an insatiable lust, that heeded not the most pitiable appeals, nor halted in the execution of the most diabolical acts of cruelty, to obtain its brutal gratification.²⁶

There are of course literary tropes, not least from the Gothic novel, circling behind such descriptions. However, the elaboration of horror at an infinitude of human suffering, with

²¹ Smith, *Australian Painting, 1788–1970* [1962], 1971, p. 51.

²² See Smith, *Australian Painting, 1788–1970* [1962], 1971, pp. 51–52.

²³ William Moore, *The Story of Australian Art: From the Earliest Known Art of the Continent to the Art of To-day* [sic], 2 vols., Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1934.

²⁴ Daniel Thomas, 'Spirit of Place', exhibition essay, *The Partnership Project*, Burnie Regional Art Gallery, Tasmania, 9 November 2018; expanded 2019 (copy provided to author, July 2019).

²⁵ See Greg Lehman's fine discussion of the entire background to *The Conciliation* as well as interpretation of its contents in his essay, 'Regarding the savages', in Tim Bonyhady and Greg Lehman, *The National Picture: The art of Tasmania's Black War*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2018, 23–70; esp. p. 54. See also Gareth Knapman, 'The art of conciliation', posted National Portrait Gallery website, Canberra, 25 July 2017, <<https://www.portrait.gov.au/image/88272/88230/>>.

²⁶ James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians; or, The black war of Van Diemen's Land*, Sampson Low, Son and Marston, London, 1870; Ch. 3, 'Cruelties to the Blacks', p. 57.

abundant testimony in historical records, has a raw force that cannot be dispelled. Bonwick characterised the historical dispossession of an entire people with a rhetorical sweep that predated by 122 years the more secular cadences of Prime Minister Paul Keating's Redfern Speech of 1992:

Who could adequately picture the story of the wrongs of the Tasmanians? ... We came upon them as evil genii, and blasted them with the breath of our presence. We broke up their home circles. We arrested their laughing corrobory. We turned their song into weeping, and their mirth to sadness.²⁷

In 1855, surveyor and explorer James Calder²⁸ walked south from Hobart to Oyster Cove, still known for the old convict station that had marked the penal history of British confinement and punishment in the vicinity of the d'Entrecasteaux Channel. Among other experiences on his walk, Calder visited the small remnant group of Palawa people living in huts at Oyster Cove, relocated there from the drastically depleted Robinson-mustered groups placed on Flinders Island at Wybalenna (which was finally closed by Governor Denison in 1847 as a response to the devastating mortality rate and Aboriginal population collapse that occurred there).²⁹ The enfolding of British banishment and convict revenge violence towards Aboriginal bands in Van Diemen's Land has rebarbative symbolism in the last place chosen for Palawa confinement at Oyster Cove, where British convicts had once been confined.

James Calder had published numerous parliamentary survey reports in Tasmania, while also writing various articles later collected in one volume dealing with Aboriginal 'habits', 'languages and dialects'.³⁰ Such study attested to Calder's ethnographic interests. His own views were influenced by extinguishment frameworks of the period, and he perceived such an outcome as impending in Van Diemen's Land. However, along with some other contemporary writers familiar with historical records of his time, there was no doubt in Calder's overview as to the outcome of settlers' treatment of the colony's first peoples: 'Extirpation' was a framing term he employed.³¹

Among the conflicted sentiments after his Oyster Cove visit, James Calder let some insight escape upon the enormity of recent history in Tasmania. He reflected that the hut's occupants he

²⁷ Bonwick, 1870, op. cit. p. 56. Paul Keating's rendition of such events is now more famous: 'We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice.' Redfern Speech (Year for the World's Indigenous People) – delivered in Redfern Park, Sydney, by Prime Minister Keating, 10 December 1992, <https://antar.org.au/sites/default/files/paul_keating_speech_transcript.pdf>.

²⁸ Jack Thwaites, 'Calder, James Erskine (1808–1882)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, online at <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/calder-james-erskine-1865/text2173>>, accessed 12 September 2018.

²⁹ Of the originally 134 Aboriginal people rounded up by Robinson's 'Friendly Mission' and placed on Flinders Island, only 47 remained to be transferred to Oyster Cove when Wybalenna 'settlement' was finally closed by Governor Denison in 1847. See <www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/W/Wybalenna.htm>

³⁰ Calder's *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c., of the Native Tribes of Tasmania* (Hobart, 1875) is noted in the Thwaites' ADB biography; also noted is Calder's later compilation, *Language and Dialects Spoken by the Aborigines of Tasmania*, published as a parliamentary paper in 1901. (Thwaites, 'Calder...', ADB, 1966, op. cit.)

³¹ Thwaites, 'Calder...', ADB, 1966, op. cit.

encountered were ‘all who remain of a once formidable people, whom a thirty years war with our countrymen have swept into captivity and their relatives to the grave.’³²



Francis Nixon, *Aborigines at Oyster Cove, Tasmania, 1858* (printed 1890s from glass plate negative), National Portrait Gallery, Canberra.

Without knowing whom Calder encountered on the day of his visit, one detail is on record: among the few individuals confined at Oyster Cove at the time, close to her traditional country on Bruny Island/*Lunawanna-alonnah*, was Truganini.³³ She appears among her surviving people in the 1858 glass plate record-photograph above, now in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, in Canberra.

These two contemporary accounts, from Bonwick and Calder, highlight that there were significant individuals in colonial society who perceived the enormity of what had occurred in frontier warfare in Tasmania’s history, and that they grasped the outcome for Aboriginal people in moral and cultural terms, not merely as a defeat in the contest over land and resources. Although later conjecture arose about the precise identities represented in Duterrau’s 1840 painting of Robinson’s ‘Conciliation’ arrangements, it had always been known – after the picture came to be a permanent collection feature at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in the 1950s – that one was Truganini, along with her equally famous husband, Woureddy/Woorady³⁴ (both also subjects of the much-reproduced portrait bust casts of 1835–36 made by Benjamin Law,³⁵ and also regularly displayed in Hobart in close company with *The Conciliation*). Bernard Smith well knew the Benjamin Law casts when writing his Australian history.

Yet in 1962, and again in the 1971 edition of his *Australian Painting* (and perpetuated in subsequent unchanged versions of his history), Bernard Smith had been unable to engage with the circumstances or any aspect of the charged contents in Duterrau’s remarkable portrayal of the ending of the Black War following a decimated population’s surrender in 1831.³⁶ After his assertion of its role as bearer of a significant new typology in Australian art – the ‘beginning of history painting’³⁷ – interpretation fell silent, save for the settler fable about Robinson’s mission.

³² Quoted in Cassandra Pybus, *Community of Thieves*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1991, p. 5. See also Richard Flanagan, *A Terrible Beauty: History of the Gordon River*, Greenhouse, Melbourne, 1985.

³³ See ‘Aboriginal Historical Places putalina / Oyster Cove’, online at <www.aboriginalheritage.tas.gov.au/cultural-heritage/aboriginal-historical-places-putalina-oyster-cove>, viewed 28 April 2019.

³⁴ See Lyndall Ryan and Neil Smith, ‘Trugernanner (Truganini) (1812–1876)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 6, Melbourne University Press, 1976, online at <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/trugernanner-truganini-4752/text7895>>, accessed 6 October 2015.

³⁵ See website of National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, for history of the Benjamin Law casts it owns of ‘Truganini’ and ‘Woureddy’: <www.portrait.gov.au/people/benjamin-law-1807/>.

³⁶ See Greg Lehman’s detailed discussion of the entire background to *The Conciliation* as well as interpretation of its contents in his essay, ‘Regarding the savages’, in Bonyhady and Lehman, *The National Picture*, 2018, op. cit., 23–70; esp. p. 54.

³⁷ B. Smith, *Australian Painting, 1788–1970* [1962], 1971, p. 51.

Smith's response to Duterrau's compelling painting, within his history still judged as 'canonical and canonising' today,³⁸ could only fall back on 'settlement fable' for commentary.

The art historian's basic skills seemed unable to grapple with this imposing painting, densely packed with interacting figures and arresting gestures, including well-known Aboriginal identities (Truganini,³⁹ Woureddy, Mannarlagenna and others, as also identified in the numerous independent portrait studies of each by Duterrau that had been displayed in the Hobart state collection since the beginning of the century).⁴⁰ Although understandably challenging to unravel in many respects, especially in the depth of its ethnographic details based on first-hand studies of numerous Palawa individuals included, *The Conciliation* nevertheless presents an intricate orchestration of well-known historical figures gathered in the tensely negotiated conclusion of the Black War – a 'settler'-coined term that acknowledged the violent racial interrelations that had transformed Tasmania's long Aboriginal history into a deformed public memory in a mere half-century. However, Bernard Smith would come to think about Truganini again in 1980, when deciding on the theme for his Boyer lectures for the ABC, as discussed later in this chapter.

7.4 Bernard Smith's idea of *tradition* framing Australian art's development

In view of the analysis (in 7.3) above, concerning Bernard Smith's distance from Tasmanian history, and his ignoring of multiple signs of a distinctive Aboriginal culture that differed from mainland communities, it becomes important to establish how such a position had arisen in his historical analysis of visual culture in Australia. It is necessary to consider how his framework for 'Australian art' represented not simply a confined chronology but a theoretical exclusion of Aboriginal art from Australian tradition. Such understanding is also needed to illuminate some important aspects of how Bernard Smith later interpreted his mission in establishing the Power Institute at the University of Sydney.

First it is relevant to indicate, in briefest outline, the intellectual strands of Bernard Smith's formation as an art historian. The four principal influences shaping his ideas about European history by the 1940s–1950s were made clear in his own writings over many years, and especially in the second of his two autobiographical works, *Pavane for Another Time*.⁴¹

³⁸ Rex Butler and Sheridan Palmer, 'Introduction', in Rex Butler and Sheridan Palmer (eds), *Antipodean Perspective: Selected Writings of Bernard Smith*, Monash University Publishing, 2018, ix–xxiv, p. xxii.

³⁹ Trukanini is the Palawa-preferred spelling mostly today – and similarly Manalagenna. The older version of Truganini is simply maintained here for consistency with an earlier period and the most widely-known rendition of her name in publications.

⁴⁰ See Tim Bonyhady chapter, 'The Art of Pacification', in Bonyhady and Lehman, *The National Picture*, 2018, op. cit., 73–126; esp. pp. 100–101.

⁴¹ Bernard Smith, *Pavane for Another Time*, Macmillan Art Publishing, Melbourne, 2002.

Bernard Smith's most decisive historical frameworks for interpreting the 20th century were developed early through his readings of G.W.F. Hegel,⁴² Oswald Spengler,⁴³ Arnold Toynbee,⁴⁴ and (extending from Hegel's sense of directionality within history) an historical-materialist analysis of economic relations determining social development, as systematised by Karl Marx.⁴⁵ By at least 1940, Smith had absorbed Marx's analysis of Europe's internal class conflicts since industrialisation: exerted through Kapital's division of labour, its commitment to production of excess (in profit, in exhaustion of human and natural resources), and its hostility to the social bonds of community.⁴⁶ Marx and Engels' 1846 manuscripts forming *The German Ideology* (including the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*) provided his grounding in 'the perspective of historical materialism',⁴⁷ an abiding conception of history disclosing the ideological underside of a modernity that presents an inverted image (as in a camera obscura, a resonant analogy that Marx used) of the social reality it exploits.

Through his absorption of these authors, and their shared structuring of era-spanning historical interpretation, including the theme of wastage and decline of civilisations through their own fault-lines, Bernard Smith's thinking became anchored in a convening idea of 'the European tradition'⁴⁸ as shaping any modern philosophy of history, and of art. His emphasis on the need for a rational system of human endeavour and social purpose, in which art should be embedded, proved abiding in his reading of European history and his framing of art's distinctive developments within that history.

The boundaries Bernard Smith maintained about art's own special character derived from his distinction of 'art in the special sense' (derived from ancient Greek philosophy),⁴⁹ as not to be confused with the more general meanings of 'arts' including craft or applied arts (based on the Greek concept of *ték^hne/techne*, or skill, which flowed through Plato's interpretation of Socrates' dialogues about the possible conditions of knowledge and truth in a world of dissembling appearances). Smith was also influenced by the requirements of systematic reason (rather than subjectivity) underlying the ultimate purposes of human action and objective understanding of the world (as he gathered via Hegel from Kant).⁵⁰ These strands of a deeply absorbed conception

⁴² See GWF Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* [1824], Dover Publications, New York, 1956. Without consulting Smith's library, it is impossible to cite the English publication of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (from his Berlin students' annotated notes) that was the major source for Smith's reading, but the 1956 Dover edition is a fair guide to the context of the 1950s in English translation.

⁴³ Oswald Spengler and Charles Francis Atkinson, *The Decline of the West*, A.A. Knopf, New York, 1934.

⁴⁴ Arnold Joseph Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Oxford University Press, London, 1934.

⁴⁵ Smith cites his absorption of historical materialism from Marx and Engels' *German Ideology*, in his memoir, *Pavane for Another Time*, 2002, p. 124.

⁴⁶ Smith, *Pavane*, 2002, op. cit., p. 124.

⁴⁷ Smith, *Pavane*, 2002, op. cit., p. 124.

⁴⁸ For Smith's anchorage in an idea of Europe as the foundation for culture, see Ian McLean, 'Reverse perspective: Bernard Smith's worldview and the cosmopolitan imagination', *Art Historiography*, no. 4, June 2011, 1–17.

⁴⁹ Bernard Smith's insistence on 'art in the special sense' derives from Plato's representation of Socrates' dialogues and the testing of art's forms, status and scope as knowledge. Smith could only ever consider customary (or tradition-based) Aboriginal art, in his brief acknowledgments of its existence over decades, as belonging to a broad general sense of art as skills, or a version of craft or applied arts.

⁵⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* [1785]; *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, tr. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, NY, 1949; various later editions in English.

of the political shape of history, and of the special conditions defining art, furnished a framework that guided the whole of Bernard Smith's political attentions to culture – while also fuelling his hostility to modernist art – throughout his life.

Returning to events in Sydney in the 1940s: In the context of a NSW Teachers' Federation series of public lectures on western art held at Federation House in Phillip Street (in 1940 and 1941),⁵¹ a colleague had prompted Bernard Smith to inquire into his own country's art. This caused him for the first time, during the war years, to start researching historical records of Australian art's early development in the Mitchell Library. This also provides context for Bernard Smith's remark years later, that his first book was developed against the background of World War 2; and that it was a direct product of the political climate of the period (marked by the persuasive attractions of both Communism and Marxism for many colleagues, artists and intellectuals, reacting fiercely against proto-fascism and Nazism since the 1930s). Reviewing this context decades later, Smith noted

Place, Taste and Tradition was very much a wartime publication. It was, after all, the presence of American GI's in Australia that first suggested its publication.⁵²

There are some interesting parallels with Manning Clark and his early development as an Australian historian. Smith and Manning Clark were almost the same age; both were born and experienced school education in New South Wales (Clark's family finally settled in Victoria from the early 1930s). Clark was influenced at the University of Melbourne by the history school of the influential Professor Max Crawford, who sought to bring greater attention to understanding Australian history as not simply an offshoot of British history. Both Clark and Smith were later friends and colleagues with young families at ANU in the 1950s. Each had their careers professionally supported through the linguistic skills and intellectual capacities of the remarkable women they married (and insufficiently credited).⁵³ In addition to their concerns to cultivate an understanding of Australian history and cultural history through new narratives they created, both men were absorbed lifelong in advancing public recognition of their position and personae as historians. Sheridan Palmer, in her biography entitled *Hegel's Owl*, has noted that, '[l]ike his contemporary Manning Clark, Bernard Smith was intent on 'documenting the self, as [much as] documenting Australia's past'.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Smith, *Pavane*, 2002, op. cit., pp. 123–4. 'A long planned [home] for Federation House opened in Phillip Street in 1938.' See also history of NSW Teachers federation, founded 1918, at <<http://dehanz.net.au/entries/new-south-wales-teachers-federation-part-1-the-first-50-years/>>.

⁵² Smith, *Pavane*, 2002, p. 132.

⁵³ Hilma Dymphna Lodewyckx (Dymphna Clark, when married), whose Melbourne education was urged on to outstanding achievement-levels by her Belgian parents, was the multi-lingual anchoring partner in Manning Clark's life (see Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2012). English-born Kate Adeney, later renamed Kate Challis (Kate Smith, when married), played a crucial role as translator-on-hand for Latin and French texts, and other accompanying research assistance, when Bernard Smith conducted crucial research in British libraries (see Bernard Smith, *A Pavane for Another Time*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 2002 - passim).

⁵⁴ A comparison later made by Bernard Smith's commissioned biographer, Sheridan Palmer, citing Mark McKenna, *Notes from the Underground: Writing the Biography of Manning Clark*, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 2007, p. 26.

Manning Clark had an almost apostolic sense of cultivating a new disciplinary field in establishing Australian history. As cited by one of his biographers, Clark later recalled: 'In the late forties and early 50s, the historical map of Australia was almost a blank: I had to set out on a journey without maps'.⁵⁵ Clark was to become first Professor of Australian History in any university (at ANU in 1971); Bernard Smith had occupied similar territory, without a Chair so precisely named for the country's art history, when he lectured at Melbourne University in the decade of 1956–66 and published his two books to have the greatest influence in his field (*European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768–1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, in 1960; and *Australian Painting, 1788–1960*, in 1962). Clark's first volume of his monumentally-tuned *A History of Australia* was published in the same year Smith's *Australian Painting* appeared (1962). And both men would later deliver an ABC Boyer Lectures series (Clark in 1976, and Smith in 1980).

Manning Clark meanwhile had accomplished pioneering work gathering primary documents in support of his fieldwork: his two-volume *Select Documents in Australian History* (published in 1950 and 1955)⁵⁶ became 'the bedrock of university courses in Australian history for more than two decades'.⁵⁷ This provided a direct model for Smith's own *Documents on Art and Taste in Australia: The Colonial period 1770–1914* two decades later, published in 1975.⁵⁸ In public personae and lecturing styles, however, the two men were utterly different, with Bernard Smith adhering strictly to the content of a written text, even-toned and without flourish.

Yet there is one further parallel of interest to be drawn between these two field-defining historians: and this is their comprehensive lack of knowledge of Aboriginal history or culture when formulating their seminal 'Australian' histories. This parallel draws in the early university training of a further towering figure, in his eventual pioneering of a third pivotal field in the understanding of Australian history: and that is John Mulvaney (who also emanated from an intellectual crucible at Melbourne University and later moved to Canberra). In Melbourne, and later at ANU, John Mulvaney inaugurated the discipline of Australian archaeology, especially through his shift beyond the surface stone-gatherers of the 19th century and his pioneering of stadal excavations⁵⁹ that transformed and established a sense of the antiquity of Aboriginal

⁵⁵ Cited by Mark McKenna, 'Clark, Charles Manning (1915–1991)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, published online 2015 <www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clark-charles-manning-225/text29719>, accessed 2 August 2019.

⁵⁶ C.M.H. Clark, with the assistance of L.J. Pryor, *Select Documents in Australian History*, 2 vols., Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1950 and 1955 (respectively).

⁵⁷ McKenna, 'Clark, Manning...', *ADB*, op. cit.

⁵⁸ Bernard Smith, *Documents on Art and Taste in Australia: The Colonial period 1770–1914*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1975.

⁵⁹ Mulvaney's 1956 excavation at Fromm's Landing on the Murray River, with Geoffrey Blainey then assisting as 'cook and wood hopper', was revelatory: with results that then 'pushed the time [of Aboriginal occupation] back 5,000 years'. (Geoffrey Blainey, *Before I Forget*, Hamish Hamilton/Penguin Random House, 2019, pp. 224–227.) Mulvaney's third excavation, at Kenniff Cave (1960–63) 'pushed back the antiquity of Aboriginal occupation of Australia ... into the Pleistocene era'; and further excavations at Ingalladi, NT (1963–66) 'produc[ed] some of the first ages for rock art in Australia'. (Tribute to John Mulvaney, Australian Academy of the Humanities, 2019), online at <www.humanities.org.au/News/News/tabid/109/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/2019/Archaeology-Sections-Tribute-to-John-Mulvaney.aspx>. See also Tom Griffiths, 'John Mulvaney (1925–2016)', *Museums Galleries Australia Magazine*, Canberra, Vol. 25 (2), Autumn-Winter 2017, pp. 54–58.

occupation of the Australian continent. Yet in his formative years, as noted by Billy Griffiths in his *Deep Time Dreaming*, while Mulvaney was impressed when hearing Clark's lectures on Australian history, he 'was especially intrigued by the mention of Aboriginal people in Clark's continental narrative, although they usually appeared as helpless passive onlookers'.⁶⁰ Griffiths goes on to point out that Manning Clark was later rueful about his lack of knowledge in this area, lamenting: 'My generation was told the Aborigines were silly children doomed to disappearance in the presence of a vastly superior power.'⁶¹

In his 1943 work on the lectures that became a draft for *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study of Australian Art since 1788*,⁶² Bernard Smith owed much to extensive research gathered by William Moore a decade earlier for his 1934 two-volume publication, *The Story of Australian Art*.⁶³ It is notable that while Moore produced a chronicle rather than a thematically structured history, he had a broader conception both of Australian art's scope of inclusion (which incorporated Aboriginal art), and of the temporal reach of Australian history ('From the Earliest Known Art of the Continent to the Art of To-day', as his subtitle announced). Art historian Susan Lowish has well placed the importance of Moore's discussion of rock paintings and engravings in his first five pages, while also noting that this concluded his attention to Aboriginal art, leaving it thereafter in 'the past' of settler art's development.⁶⁴

In contrast to Moore, Bernard Smith's more sophisticated framework for *Place, Taste and Tradition* (finally compiled as a unified exposition in the summer of 1943–44)⁶⁵ organised Australian art's development into three main periods (Colonial, Impressionist, Modern), and set its parameters more tightly. Smith took his inaugural marker for Australian painting's development from the date of British conquest in 1788, while excluding consideration of any prior forms of Aboriginal painting or engraving (on bark, on sacred items, on rock promontories or on the interior of cave walls – all of which were extensively studied by Baldwin Spencer and others by the beginning of the 20th century, and since that time further documented by anthropologists trained through Sydney University, ANU, and elsewhere). Some early Aboriginal images had even appeared often in externalised visual records within the colonial archive that Bernard Smith used – and also in the earlier well-known Victorian drawings of Tommy McCrae (Yackaduna or Warra-euea people, c.1835–1901), exhibited since the late-19th century (as emphasised in Chapters 2 and 6 in this thesis).

Yet in his own later formulation of visual traditions in Australian art, Bernard Smith was exclusively interested in how early images of *Aboriginal people* performed service as *types* to the European gaze (the *noble savage*, and later the obverse concept of the *ignoble savage*, which he

⁶⁰ Billy Griffiths, *Deep Time Dreaming: Uncovering Ancient Australia*, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2018, p. 16.

⁶¹ Manning Clark, quoted in Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2011, p. 619, cited in Griffiths, *Deep Time Dreaming*, 2018, op. cit., p. 16.

⁶² Smith, *Pavane*, 2002, Ch. 4: 'My first book and what followed', 123–158.

⁶³ Moore, *The Story Australian Art*, 1934, op. cit.

⁶⁴ See Susan Lowish, 'European Vision and Aboriginal Art: Blindness and Insight in The Work of Bernard Smith', *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 82, no. 1, 2005, 62–72; uploaded at <<http://hdl.handle.net/11343/34625>> pp. 1–7, p. 4.

⁶⁵ Smith, *Pavane*, 2002, p. 124.

believed he was the first to formulate).⁶⁶ These 18th- and early-19th century images were resourcefully interconnected into a field-setting system of interpretation from the British records Smith examined when researching on a British Council scholarship in London in 1949-50. This research also brought into focus the early-drawn records of Aboriginal people that were swept into the multiple transformations of European science's ordering and artists' visioning (the subject matter of his 1960 field-defining monograph, *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768-1850*).

The date 1788 deepened as the emblematic historical groove for Bernard Smith, becoming the *terminus post quem* that defined Australian art's history as beginning with British colonisation. By contrast, William Moore's looser 1934 'Story' structure had signalled, in its subtitle, that Aboriginal people had both art *and* a long history of continental occupation through which diverse cultural forms had been developed. In 1962, Smith's framework for Australian painting's history was however forcefully asserted as a *European tradition* exclusively. This framework implied that the establishment of art in Australia was a process *ex nihilo*, installed as coeval with colonisation alone, while excluding Aboriginal culture's presence altogether.

Bernard Smith was explicit about both the youth of Australian art and its structural-semantic condition as a 'variation' of a European heritage, while also charting its hemispherical transferral to a new location:

The study of Australian art is the study of an art in its beginnings. ... For the Australian artist there are two traditions of special importance, the European tradition itself and the local Australian tradition which is itself a variant of the European tradition. ... Indeed, in one sense, it may be said that Australian art is a European art flourishing in the South-East Asian world.⁶⁷

It is clear from the above analysis how Bernard Smith conceived of tradition shaping Australian art in a very particular way: with 'the local Australian tradition' as 'itself a variant of the European tradition'; and both being installed through a dual process of cultural imagery and concepts transplanted from the northern hemisphere, while then naturalised in a new location. However, 'the European tradition' had a further connotation for Smith. For by this term he principally meant the broad streams of art developed from the visual art of the Renaissance in the 15th and 16th centuries, and the accompanying humanism that had shaped its revival of the long-winding strands of classical literature, philosophy, history and art, in visual and other records stretching back to Graeco-Roman antiquity.

During his British Council-assisted studies in London, in late 1948-50, the European tradition intensified for Smith, through his absorption of this framework as the decisive background and intellectual inquiry environment of the founding Warburg Institute scholars

⁶⁶ Smith, *Pavane*, 2002, p. 372.

⁶⁷ Smith, *Australian Painting, 1788-1970* [1962], 1971, 'Introduction', p. vii. In 1940, under Professor R.M. Crawford at Melbourne University, effort was made to compile a history textbook with the help of local history teachers, for Australian history teaching in Year 10 (in Victorian schools). The purpose was to develop an understanding of Australian history as the history of a country located in the Pacific region. What resulted was R.M. Crawford [compiler & ed.], *Ourselves and the Pacific*, MUP in association with Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1941, in use as a (Year 10) textbook in Victorian schools at least until well into the 1960s. This book was already in use when Bernard Smith began researching Australian art's history, resulting in his *Place, Taste, and Tradition*, op. cit., published in 1945, and before he began his own later research (in London) resulting in *European Vision and the South Pacific*, op. cit., 1962.

(exiled in 1933 from Hamburg to London, and later joined by other exiles from Vienna and Berlin). These scholars' formidable intellectual range, and philologically-based capacities in cultural analysis, he encountered when conducting his own researches on the sources of Australian art.⁶⁸

The Warburg Institute's German-speaking intellectual heritage balanced the Anglicised character of the Courtauld Institute, which provided the initial portal for Smith's engagement with English art historical scholarship (under Director Anthony Blunt) along with the Courtauld's more anglicised background in *connoisseurship*.⁶⁹ Art historian Robert Gaston has adroitly demonstrated the sub-currents of intellectual differences between the two Institutes, while the 'German scholars' often privately despised the narrower class-based intellectual foundations of English art history,⁷⁰ lacking multiple-language documentary sources while anchored in connoisseurial approaches to single objects. These tensions (as Gaston's analysis subtly suggests) were not always recognised by Bernard Smith during his London lecture-auditing and researches, or even in some of the memories he carried in his intellectual development afterwards. Yet despite his Australian knowledge-formation having been so different, the intellectual stature and impressive topical scope of the Warburg scholars strengthened forever Bernard Smith's faith in the importance of the European tradition as the model for Australian scholarship. This tradition he came to summarise loosely as 'the Renaissance tradition' – more of a portmanteau term than an actual designation of Renaissance-focused scholarship, in which he had not been directly engaged at the level of primary-source research.

7.5 The 1961 Whitechapel exhibition critiqued (Smith's Macrossan Lectures, Brisbane)

In 1961, when the first edition of *Australian Painting* would have been almost finalised by the end of that year,⁷¹ Bernard Smith managed to include coverage in its pages of the recent Whitechapel Gallery's exhibition of Australian art, *Recent Australian Painting*, which had opened in London in June – a subject in which he had long had a personal interest (having unsuccessfully advocated to director Bryan Robertson his own leadership of an *Antipodeans* exhibition instead).⁷² The full background to this exhibition's focus and realisation was covered in Chapter 5.

⁶⁸ Smith, *Pavane*, 2002, Ch.5, 'And so to London', 159–191; p. 159.

⁶⁹ What 'connoisseurship' meant in an English context is analysed in Chapter 4, including a key description of the method and attitudes applied, by Kenneth Clark, in his autobiography (Kenneth Clark, *Another Part of The Wood: A Self-Portrait* [1974], Ballantine Books, New York, 1976, p. 153).

⁷⁰ Robert W Gaston, 'My greatest debt': Bernard Smith, the Warburg Institute, and the evolution of *European Vision and the South Pacific*, in Jaynie Anderson, Christopher R. Marshall and Andrew Yip (eds), *The Legacies of Bernard Smith: Essays On Australian Art, History And Cultural Politics*, Power Publications, in association with the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2016, 39–70.

⁷¹ This date is given at the conclusion of Smith's 'Introduction', dated December 1961 (for the 1962 edition), which was unchanged in the extended 1970 version, for which the new Acknowledgments are dated January 1971.

⁷² See Simon Pierse, 'Bryan Robertson, Abstract Expressionism and Late Modernism in "Recent Australian Painting" (1961)', in Simon Pierse, *Australian Art and Artists in London, 1950-1965: An Antipodean Summer*, Ashgate Farnham, England, 2012, Ch. 11, 154–167.



Recent Australian Painting catalogue, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 1961; Bryan Robertson, Director, and Australian artists in the London installation; Brett Whiteley, one of the emerging stars of the show RHS.

When realised, the Robertson Preface, and Introduction by the young critic Robert Hughes accompanying the Whitechapel showing, so enraged Bernard Smith – because of their interpretation of Australian tradition as little influenced by Europe – that he took the subject of this tradition as a central theme in later accepting an invitation to deliver two Macrossan memorial lectures in Brisbane, only months after the Whitechapel's London opening.

Aboriginal art had not been included in the final selection made by Bryan Robertson for the exhibition of works he had chosen largely in 1960. But its presence and significance in artists' minds as he travelled in Australia were explicitly highlighted in his catalogue Preface:

Australian artists feel a special bond with the aboriginal art of their country for it is the nearest thing to a tradition close at hand.⁷³

This would have inflamed Bernard Smith as simply demonstrating the 'primitivist' underside lurking within modernist art's interest in the art of indigenous and tribal cultures outside the western tradition, while – in his analysis – failing to critique those connections with colonialism on the one hand and modernism's reprehensible abstraction and retreat from current social realities on the other. However, in his concern to dispatch 'the myth' of Australia's cultural isolation from European art and assert its secure connections to the Renaissance tradition, Bernard Smith seemed to lapse into some stereotyping of his own. In a startling aside (from the first of the two Macrossan lectures in Brisbane) emerged a disturbing observation about Australia's own colonial relations, then still politically in place in New Guinea:

But total cultural isolation is, of course, a thing of the past. The penetration of the central highlands of New Guinea brought, perhaps, the last primitive community within the orbit of European culture.⁷⁴

A colonialist cultural vision of a surprising kind surfaces here. It is also evident that 'European culture' remained the convening framework for all values in Bernard Smith's theorisation of culture and tradition in art, even within a more proximate geography of his own region.

In reality, Bryan Robertson's claim about the importance of Aboriginal art, as he had noticed while visiting studios in Sydney and Melbourne, was responsively capturing the long reordering of values around Aboriginal art's presence and influence on Australian *artists* (as analysed in Chapter 6). When Robertson had visited Australia in 1960, with AGNSW director Hal Missingham a key personal contact and guide before he arrived,⁷⁵ he would have had extensive exposure to the rising importance of Aboriginal works being regarded as *art* in local art museum discussions.

⁷³ Bryan Robertson, *Recent Australian Painting*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, June–July 1961 (exhibition by Bryan Robertson, director); catalogue essays by Kenneth Clark, Bryan Robertson and Robert Hughes, p. 11.

⁷⁴ Bernard Smith, 'The Myth of Isolation', based on the two Macrossan lectures first published by the University of Queensland, 1961; republished in *The Antipodean Manifesto: Essays in Art History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1976, pp. 57–69; p. 62.

⁷⁵ Australian Gallery Directors Conference, AGDC#12, 12th annual conference at TMAG, Hobart 26–30 Oct. 1959, Minutes, p. 92

Tuckson's *Australian Aboriginal Art*⁷⁶ (opened at the Sydney state gallery in August 1960, and touring nationally until June 1961) was a highly topical subject; and the Gallery had already been collecting Aboriginal art purposefully for at least two years, which Missingham would have explained. A significant earlier event in London marking this changing awareness (as Robertson recalled in his own Preface) would have been provided by the 1957 exhibition of Charles Mountford's bark paintings at the ICA/Institute of Contemporary Art. The exhibition was declaratively titled *Bark Paintings: Aboriginal Art of Australia*, with an Introduction by Herbert Read.⁷⁷

However, Bernard Smith's critique of the 1961 Whitechapel show was sharpened in a quite personal way, given the failure of his alternative proposal for an *Antipodeans* exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery. Even a most supportive recent interpreter of Smith's achievements, sociologist Peter Beilharz, has acknowledged that 'Smith's [Macrossan] paper was part of the backwash against the failure of the Antipodean show to make it to London' and his resentment of 'the Whitechapel show organised by Bryan Robertson instead'.⁷⁸ Yet in demonstration of how ideologically and personally invested Smith could be, at times, in his role as an art historian, he resolutely re-mounted his thwarted case for an Antipodeans-exhibition proposal in his history of *Australian Painting* afterwards, when the narrative came to this period. Smith renewed his attack on Robertson's curatorship and encompassing of works in different styles (including abstract art) to represent Australian contemporary art in 1961:

The decision to make the Whitechapel Exhibition a comprehensive show of Australian 'bests' ... was a naïve manner of introducing an unknown art to the English public.⁷⁹

This is factually incorrect and misleading art history. Art historian Simon Pierse has meticulously researched records of Australian art and artists' reception in London in the 1950s–1960s period, and presents a contrary picture, commenting on 'the strong sense of identity that Australian painting benefited from in London during the early 1960s'.⁸⁰ Sidney Nolan had achieved an outstanding position long before the Whitechapel exhibition, and Russell Drysdale had gained critical interest subsequently; in 1960, Arthur Boyd's first commercial exhibition was an instant success and gained him a one-man exhibition at the Whitechapel 'on the spot';⁸¹ and already '[Charles] Blackman was exhibiting in Bond Street'.⁸² Most significant, *Twelve Australian Artists*, an exhibition shown at New Burlington House in 1953, had included strong works by Drysdale and Dobell as well as Nolan's *Ned Kelly* series – and this exhibition had particularly impressed

⁷⁶ McCulloch, Alan and Susan McCulloch (1994). *The Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, [1st ed. Hutchinson, London, 1968]; 3rd (rev. ed., with Susan McCulloch) Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994, p. 791: '[*Australian Aboriginal Art*, 1960] had a profound and lasting effect in promoting understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal bark painting.'

⁷⁷ C.P. Mountford, *Bark Paintings: Aboriginal Art of Australia*. Preface by Herbert Read, ICA/Institute of Contemporary Art, London, August, 1957.

⁷⁸ Peter Beilharz, *Imagining the Antipodes: Culture, Theory, and the Visual in the Work of Bernard Smith*, Cambridge, New York, 1997, p. 124.

⁷⁹ Smith, *Australian Painting* [1962], 2nd ed. 1971, p. 346.

⁸⁰ Simon Pierse, 'Australian artists in London: The early 1960s', in Carl Bridge, Robert Crawford, David Dunstan (eds) *Australians in Britain: The Twentieth-Century Experience*, Monash University ePress, Melbourne, 2009, 13.1–13.17; p. 13:6.

⁸¹ Pierse, 'Australian artists in London: The early 1960s', 2009, op. cit., 13.1–13.17; p. 13:3.

⁸² Pierse, 'Australian artists in London: The early 1960s', 2009, op. cit., 13.1–13.17; p. 13:6.

Tate Director, John Rothenstein, influencing his later favouring of an Australian exhibition for the Tate (as covered in Chapter 5).

Bernard Smith returned decades later to attack the Whitechapel exhibition again, in 1998, in a memoir for Russell Drysdale, insisting that ‘the British representation of Australian art [in 1961], as masterminded by Mr Bryan Robertson ... was a myopic vision that disastrously misrepresented modern Australian artists’. However, his interpretation had become more extreme with the years, as he now resorted to caricature, alleging that Australian artists ‘were presented as white noble savages who possessed no knowledge whatever of the Renaissance tradition from which in fact our art had sprung’.⁸³ Here Bernard Smith’s long-construed nexus of modern art and its purported ‘primitivist’ regard for Aboriginal art, while he counter-argued ‘the Renaissance tradition’ as the fountainhead from which to build an ‘Antipodean’ Australian art, had deepened into two permanently entangled figures of critical opposition in his thought over four decades. Meanwhile, both loops had become detached from a more searching grasp of Australian art’s multiple and quite new critical impulses in the later-20th century.

In fact, Bernard Smith’s Antipodean critical cause for Australian art had an ever-narrowing base in reality. He was prepared at times – though always warily – to argue for a ‘modern’ art for Australia, but with two exclusionary clauses in any such scoping. First, he saw no future in abstract art that abandoned ‘a figured shape or symbol’⁸⁴ – ‘the non-figurative arts can express moods and attitudes, but they are not capable of producing a new artistic language’.⁸⁵ However: ‘[i]n defending the image we [Antipodeans] are not seeking to return to naturalistic forms of painting and sculpture’.⁸⁶

So ‘modern art’ had a potential for Australia; but not in the direction of abstraction, nor a return to naturalism. And definitely not harbouring influences tainted by ‘primitivism’ or ‘surrealism’ of the early-20th century, which had strayed too far, respectively, from the western tradition, or (in entertaining inner-psyche states) from social reality. Meanwhile it was not desirable to move towards Aboriginal art, which remained in a separate, ‘applied art’ category and could not contribute to an Australian ‘fine art’ tradition. The base narrowed inexorably through each of these repetitive contractions in Smith’s critical schema for an *Antipodean* position, returning inevitably to the anchorage he had formulated for Australian art’s future in the 1950s. The modelling of an Australian art’s development was always steered recursively back to figurative art and a desired extension of *social realism* (the style in which Smith himself had worked when briefly pursuing the practice of art in the 1940s).

⁸³ Bernard Smith, ‘Sir Russell Drysdale (1912-1981): A Memoir’, *Art Monthly*, Melbourne, no. 110, June 1998, p. 29 – quoted in Sheridan Palmer, *Hegel’s Owl: The Life of Bernard Smith*, Power Publications, Sydney, 2016, Ch. 5: ‘The Lone Antipodean’, 150–189, p. 188.

⁸⁴ Bernard Smith, *The Antipodean Manifesto* [1959], reprinted as ‘*The Antipodean Manifesto*’ (1959), in Rex Butler and Sheridan Palmer (eds), *Antipodean Perspective: Selected Writings of Bernard Smith*, Monash University Publishing, 2018, 54–7, p. 55.

⁸⁵ Smith, *The Antipodean Manifesto* [1959], in Butler and Sheridan, 2018, p. 55.

⁸⁶ Smith, *The Antipodean Manifesto* [1959], in Butler and Sheridan, 2018, p. 55.

7.6 The Power Institute's ambitious mandate in Sydney⁸⁷

Bernard Smith's overarching national identity as *the* historian of Australian art's history, a position established while in Melbourne, later travelled with him when returning to Sydney University in 1967,⁸⁸ as recently-appointed head of the Power Institute of Contemporary Art (as the Institute was first known).⁸⁹ He arrived with a record of influential teaching for a decade at Melbourne University, which by then had also been the principal stimulus and training ground for art history in Australia for a generation (as analysed in Chapter 4).

As founding Power Professor of Contemporary Art, head of a new Department of Fine Arts and Director of the Power Institute (including a Power Gallery of Contemporary Art, to build an international collection of art),⁹⁰ this appointment seemed to provide Bernard Smith a configuration of responsibilities that drew together the interests and achievements of a lifetime.⁹¹ He was to inaugurate the academic enterprise of art history, occupying only the second Chair established in the country, while returning to Australia's oldest university – his own *alma mater* where he had first embarked on the study of English literature, history, and (for a year) ancient Greek archaeology in 1941.⁹² However, the Power Chair at Sydney University, while launching art history in Australia's second most influential city, was uniquely named as also having a focus on *contemporary art*.

⁸⁷ See for the archivally researched background and history of the establishment of the Power Institute, not reintroduced in this thesis: Bernice Murphy, *Museum of Contemporary Art: Vision & Context*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1993, esp. Ch. 2 ('The Vision of John Power', 37–38), Ch. 3 ('John Power (1881–1943): Artist and Benefactor', 39–52), Ch. 4 ('The Formation of a Patron: John Power's Family', 53–57), Ch. 5 ('The J.W. Power Bequest', 58–64), Ch. 6 ('Arts Endowment in Sydney and Melbourne: Three Benefactors', 65–82) and Ch. 7 ('Establishment of the Power Institute', 83–93).

⁸⁸ Bernard Smith took up the appointment on 9 January 1967, and remained until his retirement in 1977. (Jaynie Anderson, 'Bernard Smith 1916–2011' [obituary], in *Australian Academy of the Humanities*, 2012, *Annual Report*, 39–42; p. 41); online at <www.humanities.org.au/Fellowship/Obituaries.aspx>.

⁸⁹ It soon became a mission for Bernard Smith, in heading the Power Institute of Contemporary Art, to change its title. Understandably concerned at the need for some foundational historical studies to inform the contemporary emphases in John Power's will, Smith's aim was to ensure a wider anchorage of the Institute in art's past history, at least back to the European Renaissance, which he firmly maintained throughout his life as the basis of – and for – the history of art, and upon this base, the history of Australian art. Bernard Smith achieved the awkward name-change for the Institute to 'Fine Arts' (doubtless echoing the Melbourne Herald Chair's nomenclature and status) – with 'Contemporary Art' reserved exclusively for the Power Gallery's collection and activities. These designations persisted long after Smith's departure. More recently, in the 21st century, further changes produced the designations Power Professor of Art History and Visual Culture (for the academic Chair's role, along with acting as Director of the Power Institute). This marked a long journey of renaming, with designation of responsibilities for 'Contemporary Art' now finally removed from any masthead acknowledgment in the Institute of today.

⁹⁰ Bernard Smith was appointed (by a University of Sydney Senate resolution of September 1965) which established the Power Institute's tripartite structure: the Power Department of Fine Arts, the Power Gallery of Contemporary Art, and the Power Research Library of Contemporary Art. (See Bernard Smith, 'The Establishment of the Power Institute of Fine Arts', in *Dr John Power & the Power Bequest, The Power Institute and the Power Foundation, An Illustrated Survey*, Power Institute of Fine Arts, University of Sydney, [1975], p. 8.)

⁹¹ Palmer, *Hegel's Owl: The Life of Bernard Smith*, 2016, op. cit., p. 224; see the full chapter on the Power Institute years, the difficulties that developed in Smith's leadership, and the unhappy period this became in his life: Ch. 7: 'The Construction of Power', in *Hegel's Owl*, pp. 225–261.

⁹² Smith, *Pavane for Another Time*, 2002, p. 146.

The Power Chair's 1967 inauguration was through the outstanding benefaction of distinguished expatriate artist John J. Wardell Power (d. 1939 in German-occupied Jersey) – the bequest having been received by the University after the death of Power's widow in 1961.⁹³ The resources of the Power Bequest's endowment were the largest in the history of the University of Sydney – today equivalent to some \$AUD 60 million dollars in value. Yet the University's Vice-Chancellor and Senate struggled publicly in the early 1960s to formulate clear plans to utilise such an astonishing endowment. The Bequest had emphasised 'the latest ideas and theories ... [and] lectures and teaching',⁹⁴ while John Power also directed that his endowment be used to build a collection of *contemporary art*. Both the university's academic commitment and Sydney's wider art circles were to be stimulated through Power's expansive vision of 'lecture halls', 'museums' and a major capital-city collection with an international focus – for 'the purchase of the most recent contemporary art of the world'. Meanwhile *Australian art's* development and place in the contemporary world were to be heightened by the Bequest's remarkable resources.⁹⁵ It was clear that John Power sought not only academic training but a national outreach and even broad social impact: 'to bring the people of Australia in more direct touch with the latest art developments in other countries'.⁹⁶

7.7 Positioning art history within Sydney University's faculties (1960s–1970s)

Some wider context about Sydney's academic fields is significant. The University of Sydney had been the first in Australia to establish a Chair in Anthropology, with the appointment of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown in 1925,⁹⁷ who brought to the social sciences, from Cambridge, a figure with a distinguished reputation and international position in the theoretical development of anthropology (as analysed in Chapter 2). Although himself more interested in theoretical work than field-studies, Radcliffe-Brown's greatest legacy in Australia was that he inaugurated a generation of younger anthropological fieldworkers, beginning with A.P. Elkin (who succeeded him as next Chair), and the remarkable W.E.H. 'Bill' Stanner among those who started out on significant careers from the 1930s. Donald Thomson and Ronald and Catherine Berndt became similarly notable figures who led the next generation of fieldwork-based ethnographies and

⁹³ Phrases are taken from the framing terms of the bequest of artist John Wardell Power. For a study of the JW Power Bequest, and the background to the Power Institute's founding, see Bernice Murphy, *Vision and Context: The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney*, MCA, Sydney, 1993. For a recent study of Power's own work and contexts internationally, see A.D.S. Donaldson, Ann Stephen, with Virginia Spate and Gladys Fabre, *J.W. Power: Abstraction Création, Paris 1934*, Power Publications in association with the University Art Gallery, University of Sydney, 2012.

⁹⁴ All quotes are from Dr. JW Power's (1939) will, made on the Island of Jersey, at the outbreak of WW2.

⁹⁵ The Bequest had been noted (correctly) by Jaynie Anderson as 'a \$2 million establishing bequest'. However, when updated by RBA financial calculations, the sum is equivalent to almost \$AUD 60 million in 2020 values, a staggering sum for Sydney University to have received in 1961 – although later greatly depleted through University mis-investments and a conflict of interest by the then-Chairman of the Finance Committee of the University's Senate, who managed the insurance company in which John Power's fortune (in MLC Ltd shares) had been bequeathed (see Murphy, *Vision and Context*, op. cit., 1993, pp. 57–61).

⁹⁶ Sydney University was first advised of the Bequest after the death of Power's widow, late in 1961; the Bequest was announced publicly by the Vice-Chancellor in April 1962.

⁹⁷ Ian Hogbin, 'Radcliffe-Brown, Alfred Reginald (1881–1955)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 11, Melbourne University Press, 1988; available online at <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/radcliffe-brown-alfred-reginald-8146/text14233>>, viewed 31 Jan. 2018.

publications on Aboriginal society and culture that emerged from Sydney University's training crucible. Their work and publications in the 1950s and 1960s were crucially influential in drawing attention to Aboriginal art and culture at a national level.

There is some irony in the fact that Bernard Smith's *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768–1850*, drew the early interest and attention of anthropologists after its 1960 publication (especially in England), while its reception internationally among art historians grew more slowly. However, while he greatly appreciated his book's impact on anthropologists concerned with cross-cultural impacts of colonisation in the Pacific, Smith himself remained uninterested in anthropology as an academic field. Despite the intellectual architecture of his *European Vision* and his crucially extending work subsequently with German colleague, Dr Rudiger Joppian, on the artists associated with Cook's voyages,⁹⁸ Smith's interests were not drawn further into processes of understanding cross-cultural impacts upon the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific, nor their own *interpretive responses* to the 'discovering' Europeans. Smith always explicitly left these questions for anthropologists to deal with.⁹⁹ And it was anthropologists and Pacific historians who eventually brought these ongoing histories to life in the later-20th century, which leading scholars such as Nicholas Thomas,¹⁰⁰ Greg Denning,¹⁰¹ and others so insightfully accomplished in extending the voyage-opening 'entanglements' traced among Pacific-island nations after the late-18th century. And with Māori scholarship and multiple Polynesian vantage-points included, some compelling historical counter-interpretations shaped new research.

On launching his vision for the new Power Institute's tasks in 1967, it was soon evident that Bernard Smith had kept many evolving disciplinary paradigms at a distance from his own interests or field-definition of Australian art's history. 'Aboriginal art' would not be a concern in the new teaching of Australian art at the University of Sydney, nor intrude upon the post-1788 framework of Smith's national art history that took all its reference-points from a British founding, a settler history, and a wider European past.

When he delivered his inaugural lecture as the Professor of Contemporary Art on 11 June 1969,¹⁰² after outlining the scope of art history's international tasks at the Power Institute, and ensuring 'not [to] neglect the grass-roots of our own culture',¹⁰³ Bernard Smith indicated that in addition to Australian art and architecture, links would be built also to 'Asian and Oceanic art'.¹⁰⁴ Aboriginal art was not mentioned, and it was clear that no new cross-disciplinary links were considered relevant to his domain-setting of art's history within the Power Institute.

⁹⁸ Rudiger Joppian, Bernard Smith (and the Australian Academy of the Humanities), *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1985.

⁹⁹ This was Bernard Smith's position in *Place, Taste and Tradition*, in 1945, and he did not really change this position throughout his life.

¹⁰⁰ Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1991, and other publications.

¹⁰¹ Greg Denning, *Beach Crossings: Voyaging across Times, Cultures, and Self*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004.

¹⁰² Palmer, *Hegel's Owl*, 2016, p. 235.

¹⁰³ Palmer, *Hegel's Owl*, 2016, p. 235.

¹⁰⁴ Palmer, *Hegel's Owl*, 2016, p. 235.

Aboriginal identity was meanwhile diffused within an expanded regional geography of the cultural Other. All the distinct indigenous peoples and cultural histories of Joseph Banks's 'Pacific'¹⁰⁵ had become resituated in the spatial panorama of Bernard Smith's 'Oceania'. Australian Aboriginal peoples' vastly extending continental and island geographies, interconnecting identities, and cultural continuities were occluded in this inescapably 'Anglicised history'. Despite Bernard Smith's long-standing Marxist insights about history's exclusions, an existing system of restrictive values within his own interpretative architecture shaped the narrative framework for so many events or situations before they were described – a prefiguring contraction analysed so insightfully by Paul Carter in *The Road to Botany Bay*.¹⁰⁶

Turning to relationships with art museums: being now long-distant from the state gallery in Sydney where he had once worked, Bernard Smith was detached from the Gallery's commitment to Aboriginal art's *collecting and exhibiting* led by AGNSW Assistant Director Tony Tuckson since 1959 (as covered in Chapter 6). He remained similarly disengaged from any legacy-impact of the 1941 exhibition, *Art of Australia, 1788–1941*, despite his first publisher, AGNSW trustee and energetic art patron Sydney Ure Smith (d.1949) having then framed an enduring lesson from that exhibition. In Ure Smith's opinion (in the catalogue's introduction): the 1941 exhibition had 'start[ed] with the work of the aborigines and end[ed] with the influence of their work as a basis of a new outlook for a national art for Australia'.¹⁰⁷

Through his 1967 direction-settings for the new Power Institute, not only were art history students at Sydney University for years deflected from any attention to Aboriginal cultural history, or significant changes to creative production and 'art' within that history; on the other side, local anthropologists were not drawn into any connections they might have made (even vigorously debated) through some encounters with the methodologies of art history. Yet there is always a tripartite structure of loss in such disciplinary ravines. For ultimately, Aboriginal art's invisibility in the Power Institute programs had far-reaching consequences of prolonged delay and denial within Australian art history at an academic level (given Smith's leadership of the discipline), and correspondingly in the cultural imaginary of nation that it still configured through a 'national' narrative of exclusion.

Such separation deferred recognition for decades of a resurgence of Aboriginal agency and voice in self-interpretation of a fully-'owned' and internally affirmative cultural history that would have challenged Australian art's history to its foundations. It also separated Sydney's new Chair and academic department from steadily-building changes within *Australian art museums*

¹⁰⁵ It was the wealthy and aristocratic Joseph Banks who had been the most avid collector of botanical specimens and also ethnographical items representing the cultural diversity of peoples encountered in the Pacific when travelling with Cook. But it was also Banks, rather than Cook, who afterwards recommended colonisation of Australia – as Bernard Smith himself emphasized: '[Banks's] testimonials to the House of Commons between 1778 and 1780 and again in 1785 pivotal to colonization.' (Palmer, *Hegel's Owl*, 2016, p. 126.)

¹⁰⁶ According to Carter's analysis, the scansion structure of such history ensures that a 'panoramic figure of speech' or perhaps a particular 'theatrical description' of a situation may outline 'the selective blindness' of a specific 'cultural discourse', which he identifies as the operational mechanisms of imperial history (Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1987, p. xx).

¹⁰⁷ Sydney Ure Smith (comp. & ed.), *The Art of Australia: 1788–1941*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1941, p. 38.

nationally – significant changes since the late 1940s that were strengthening an awareness of the continuing presence of Aboriginal creativity and culture, and their significance for Australian artists and other cultural figures (as analysed in Chapter 6). These changes were already conveying ideas of Aboriginal art's continuity and adaptive forms towards the domain of *contemporary art* – the capstone responsibility Bernard Smith carried in his own professorial title and commitment to creating a new Institute and movement of ideas that embraced 'the latest ideas and theories' in the contemporary world. A suggestive impression of the connections that might have been opened up if the Power Institute had turned any attention to Aboriginal art can be suggested by the later judgments of one of Bernard Smith's finest young academic colleagues of the period, who matured into one of the Departments leading teachers and historians. Following the outstanding AGNSW exhibition for 2000 organised by Hetti Perkins, *Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius*,¹⁰⁸ Joan Kerr wrote in 2001 of the paradigm-changing impact this exhibition had on her understanding of Aboriginal art's achievement and status within Australian art:

I never dreamt that Papunya Tula could be convincingly claimed as Australia's greatest contemporary art movement, of comparable importance to any in the world. It seemed ludicrous to compare paintings made only since 1971 by a small group of men (and later a few women) in one of the poorest and most remote settlements in Australia with European cubism or American abstract expressionism. This exhibition and book convinced me that such comparisons are completely justified, indeed unavoidable.¹⁰⁹

7.8 The 1980 Boyer Lectures – and 'The Spectre of Truganini'

When invited to deliver the ABC's 1980 Boyer lectures,¹¹⁰ Bernard Smith had wondered about his theme until he was stirred by hearing an interview with H.C. (Nugget) Coombs¹¹¹ about the long-deferred cause of a treaty with Australia's First Peoples. In his eventual suite of five lectures, entitled *The Spectre of Truganini*, Smith had decided to build on anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner's theme and Boyer lectures before him: *After the Dreaming: Black and White Australians – An Anthropologist's View*,¹¹² delivered in 1968. However, he would also have been conscious of his lectures coming after the Boyer series by Manning Clark in 1966,¹¹³ and this would likely have summoned his thoughts towards an encompassing national overview of Australian cultural history, in a broader perspective than any 'art topic' would likely to provide.

¹⁰⁸ See Hetti Perkins and Hannah Fink (eds) *Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius*, Art Gallery of New South Wales in association with Papunya Tula artists, Sydney, 2000. It is also notable that an essay within this catalogue, 'Sacred geography: Western Desert traditions of landscape art', pp. 288–267, gathered a contribution from one of the finest writers on Aboriginal art in the later 20th century, Marcia Langton.

¹⁰⁹ Joan Kerr, 'Papunya Tula: A great contemporary art movement', *Art Asia Pacific*, No. 31, Fine Arts Press, Sydney, 2001, pp. 31–33.

¹¹⁰ Bernard Smith, *The Spectre of Truganini; 1980 Boyer Lectures*, Bernard Smith and the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney, 1980.

¹¹¹ Ian McLean gives the date of Smith's hearing the Coombs broadcast as June 1979. (Ian McLean, 'Bernard Smith's Blind Spot: Aboriginal and Australian Art', in Anderson et al. (eds), *The Legacies of Bernard Smith*, 2016, op. cit., 338–351, p. 346.)

¹¹² W.E.H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming: Black and White Australians – An Anthropologist's View*, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney [1968], ABC, Sydney, 1969.

¹¹³ Manning Clark, *A Discovery of Australia*, Australian Broadcasting Commission (The Boyer Lectures series), Sydney 1976.



L-R: Benjamin Duterrau, *Truggernana*, oil on canvas, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart; Benjamin Duterrau, *Truggernana*, a native of the southern part of V.D. Land, 1835, etching [detail], National Portrait Gallery, Canberra; Benjamin Law, *Truganini, Wife of Woorady*, 1836, painted plaster, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra; Francis Nixon, *Aborigines at Oyster Cove, Tasmania*, 1858 [detail] (printed 1890s from glass plate negative), National Portrait Gallery, Canberra; Charles Woolley, *Truganini*, photographed 1866 (printed 1890s), National Portrait Gallery, Canberra; cover of Bernard Smith's Boyer Lectures, *The Spectre of Truganini*, 1980.

Bernard Smith decided that his own lectures would be an examination of Australian society's treaty-failure as 'haunted' by Truganini, positioning her as an emblematic figure of Aboriginal dispossession. Yet the title was a monocultural misjudgment. Truganini was described – and startlingly so, to any contemporary grasp of the adaptive survival of Palawa people – as 'the last of the original Tasmanian Aborigines': '[I]t was a complete victory. None of the original Tasmanians survived'.¹¹⁴

This assertion revealed Bernard Smith's continuing lack of attention to Tasmania's distinctive Aboriginal history as very different from continental mainland experience. Fanny Cochrane-Smith, born at Wybalenna Aboriginal settlement, lived until 1905,¹¹⁵ was well-known, and had some of her songs recorded on wax cylinders (today held in TMAG, Hobart); she long outlived Truganini, whom she had also looked after in Truganini's last years. However, only in a continuing 'racialised' construct of Aboriginal ancestral heritage that has no basis in genetics could Truganini's death be accorded such finality. Bernard Smith's framework as an historian remained circumscribed by the 'logic of elimination'¹¹⁶ which falsely overcast Tasmanian Aboriginal people of multiple lineages with a diminished and terminal status in Australian history. Although now claiming her as a symbolic figure to amplify his own thoughts on Aboriginal history at a national level, Bernard Smith still failed (almost two decades after his 1962 *Australian Painting*) to grasp the reverberance of Truganini's history and Palawa cultural identity.¹¹⁷ She could only have been positioned as a 'spectre' by a white historiography self-absorbed in the burden of guilt. Bernard Smith was either unaware of the militant voices two years earlier, when the Tasmanian Aboriginal community reacted with outrage at the release of Tom Haydon's 1978 film and especially its title, *The Last Tasmanian*;¹¹⁸ or else he was culturally deaf to their protests. He failed to grasp Truganini's continuing vibrance as a 'living' historical figure and multi-layered ancestral personality in Tasmanian Aboriginal history on its own terms.

Bernard Smith's social justice conviction in selecting his theme for the Boyer Lectures is not under question. He had sought to give recognition to Aboriginal people's abused treatment in the nation's history since the 1940s, when his first book, *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study of Australian Art since 1788* was published in 1945.¹¹⁹ His deep-seated socialism – at that time, enlisted communism, until he later left the ACP – genuinely urged attention to the fate of

¹¹⁴ Smith, *The Spectre of Truganini*, 1980, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ See J. Clark, 'Smith, Fanny Cochrane (1834–1905)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 11, MUP, 1988, online at www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/smith-fanny-cochrane-8466/text14887.

¹¹⁶ See Greg Lehman, 'Regarding the savages', in Bonyhady and Lehman, *The National Picture*, 2018, op. cit., 23–70; p. 42.

¹¹⁷ See Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People: A Radical Re-examination of the Tasmanian Wars*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1995.

¹¹⁸ Tom Haydon (director) *The Last Tasmanian*, Artis Film Productions, Sydney, 1978.

¹¹⁹ Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study of Australian Art since 1788*, 1945, op. cit.

Aboriginal people under colonialism, and the need to ‘arrest’ what he had identified as ‘the slow physical extermination of the aborigines by our own predatory culture’.¹²⁰ Yet he relegated solutions to anthropology and government administration – and, in the end, could not (in 1945) see further than an ‘assimilation’ outcome, outlined in awkwardly remote sentences:

This problem is one for trained anthropologists, the Commonwealth and all those who are prepared to see the aboriginal, not as an idealized figure symbolic of the perfect cultural amity of man and environment, but as a contemporary of our own with very real problems who has never had even the semblance of a fair deal. If we can arrest its extermination, there will then be sufficient time to talk about assimilating the aboriginal culture with our own.¹²¹

Introducing the Boyer Lectures in 1980, Bernard Smith framed the subject of racism towards Aboriginal people as formed in ‘a conflict of attitudes and feelings exist[ing] between Aborigines and convicts from the very first days of settlement at Sydney’, and reported that this was a topic that occurred to him while researching ‘early drawings and paintings associated with Australia ... some thirty years ago’.¹²² He then described the impulse that had framed his ideas for the Boyer lecture series:

It seemed to me therefore worthwhile, in these lectures, to give some thought to the effects of the continued existence and presence of the Aborigine in Australia upon the emergence and character of our own Australian culture.¹²³

Several currents of thought here remain arresting for their formulation as late as 1980. Smith’s introduction is very different from Stanner’s in 1968, who had spoken of his ‘deep uneasiness about the past, present, and future place of Aborigines in Australian society’.¹²⁴ Smith’s language, by contrast, reverted to the Othering constructs of ‘settlement’ history. Racism as an historical subject (at least in the early passages of the first lecture) is removed from its origins in Empire and the superstructure of imperialism, being demoted to a conflict between Aboriginal people and the lower social stratum of transported convicts in the colonial period. Manifold peoples were condensed to a radical singularity: ‘the Aborigine’; and rendered as a social ‘presence’ without prior history, contesting voices, or agency.

The depth and variety of Aboriginal history since its ancient continental occupation was unrecognised – although by 1980 many different peoples’ and language names were becoming known, diminishing the portmanteau term ‘Aboriginal’. Anthropologist Norman Tindale’s work since the 1930s on the complex mapping of Aboriginal territorial boundaries had established ‘the kinship network as the generative basis of Aboriginal society, in all its different forms across the

¹²⁰ Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition*, 1945, op. cit.; see Ch. 7: ‘Aestheticism and Nationalism in Australian Art and Criticism’, 152–170; p. 166.

¹²¹ Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition*, 1945, op. cit., p. 166.

¹²² Bernard Smith, “‘On the Frontiers Within’ (1980)”, first of the Boyer lectures, *The Spectre of Truganini*, 1980, op. cit.

¹²³ See excerpted reprint version, *‘On the Frontiers Within’ (1980)*, reprinted in Butler and Palmer (eds), *Antipodean Perspective*, 2018, op. cit., p. 193.

¹²⁴ See Jeremy Beckett and Melinda Hinkson, “‘Going More than Half Way to Meet Them’: On the Life and Legacy of WEH Stanner”, in Jeremy Beckett and Melinda Hinkson (eds), *An Appreciation of Difference: WEH Stanner and Aboriginal Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Australia, 2008, p. 2.

continent’;¹²⁵ and Tindale’s work had been well-absorbed in Charles Mountford’s championing of Aboriginal culture and art since the 1940s (well-known personally and supported by Daryl Lindsay and Joseph Burke in the 1950s and 1960s, as documented in Chapter 6 – but which Bernard Smith seemed to ignore). Smith’s Boyer Lectures still addressed Aboriginal history through an abbreviated settler-chronography, sketched within the hollowed-out language of *terra nullius* as ‘the continued existence and presence of the Aborigine in Australia’. A final construct in one short sentence declared the Boyer Lectures’ divided social imaginary and intended audience. His lectures, Smith explained, were conceived to examine ‘the effects ... upon the emergence and character of our own Australian culture’. Aboriginal people seemed relegated outside this boundary, and not construed as listeners or readers of the always-published lectures.

The ordering structure of a monocultural voice addressed to an exclusively white audience was striking in introducing a series on Aboriginal people’s historical treatment delivered in 1980 – especially since the Aboriginal Arts Board, within the Australia Council, had been supporting exhibitions and delivering affirmative Indigenous cultural support programs, funding rural art advisers and substantial exhibitions since 1973.¹²⁶ The better passages of the Boyer lectures emerge when Bernard Smith traced changing images of Aboriginal people within literature by white Australian authors – these passages (with some quite lengthy quotations at times) would likely have been engaging to a mainstream audience. However, they are experiences that belong to a white *socius*, and would have had little relevance to Aboriginal historical experience of the scenes projected.

In the 4th lecture, when referring to ‘other potentially talented individuals of their race’,¹²⁷ the Boyer lecturer faltered, forgetting that he shared the same race as Aboriginal people – *Homo sapiens sapiens*, the human race. The 5th and final Boyer lecture, querulously titled ‘A Cultural Convergence?’, concluded a position that was clear politically in its support for a treaty and legislative protections for Aboriginal people’s futures, including affirmative action in government policies. Yet the arguments for intercultural solutions were distanced and ponderous formulations. They were bereft of personal experience, up-to-date knowledge of Aboriginal people’s own resistance history, or any contact with the people spoken of. There was some reference to Aboriginal writers; but with the exception of Namatjira (who was again understood only in terms of western imitation of watercolour techniques) Aboriginal visual art was absent.

Regrettably, since his field-establishing *European Vision and the South Pacific* two decades earlier, Bernard Smith had not himself shown interest in the first peoples or their cultures as impacted by colonialism. He had stayed distant from Aboriginal art, refusing it any status or dialogue within Australian art as a whole. And he had paid no attention to anthropology’s

¹²⁵ Philip G. Jones, ‘Norman B. Tindale, 12 October, 1900–19 November, 1993, An Obituary’, in *Records of the South Australian Museum*, vol. 28, no. 2, December 1995, 159–176; online at <www.anu.edu.au/linguistics/nash/aust/nbt/obituary.html>.

¹²⁶ See Tim Rowse, ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board (ATSIB)’, in Sylvia Kleinert & Margo Neale (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, pp. 516–17; Nicolas Peterson, ‘Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Pty Ltd: A brief history’, in Peter Loveday & Peter Cooke (eds), *Aboriginal Arts and Crafts and the Market*, North Australia Research Unit, Australian National University, Darwin, 1983, pp. 60–5.

¹²⁷ Smith, *The Spectre of Truganini; 1980 Boyer Lectures*, op. cit., p. 38.

radically revised methodologies or new narratives of cross-cultural exposition. Within the discipline of art history, Bernard Smith contracted conceptually in later years, in a steady refusal of interdisciplinary demands for openness to new inquiries and frameworks. By the end of the century, his defence of art history had become a dogmatic reductivism as he laid out what he presented as a basic disciplinary toolkit:

A discipline has to hold all its tools together and keep them in use in order to survive. I have been doing art history for more than half a century ... [and] I would single out four [tools] for special mention, namely, identification, classification, evaluation and interpretation.¹²⁸

However, it is not possible to classify, evaluate or interpret objects if they emanate from cultural systems never paid any attention. Even the first tool, *identification*, will not work without any prior bearings on how to apply it to a culturally unrecognisable object from an unknown field of semiotic relations.

By the time of writing the Boyer Lectures in 1980 (when he had retired, returned to Melbourne, and assumed an honorary academic relationship with Melbourne University), there was widespread evidence of the exponential changes occurring in Aboriginal art, producing vibrant new forms and expansion throughout the preceding decade. It was 20 years since state gallery directors had backed the realisation of the Tuckson-curated *Australian Aboriginal Art* exhibition, which toured nationally, cementing the art museum system's recognition of Aboriginal art's status and continuity within a long history. Urban Aboriginal artists had been strengthening a variety of practices since the 1960s. Contemporary rural imagery continued to emerge (in a long tradition dating back to Tommy McCrae's eloquent late-19th century drawings);¹²⁹ Koori art had become a rapidly-developing category in Sydney in the 1970s;¹³⁰ Arnhem Land bark paintings had been gathering in state galleries, echoed in the National Gallery's acquisition of a remarkable corpus of Yirawala's and other compatriot bark painters' works; and Central Australia's varied desert-iconography forms since Namatjira's first solo exhibition in 1938¹³¹ had continued and changed – eventually producing the revolutionary configurations on board and canvas encapsulated as 'Papunya painting' after 1971.¹³²

¹²⁸ Bernard Smith, 'In Defence of Art History' [Part 1], *Art Monthly Australia*, 2000, no. 131, 5–7, p. 6.

¹²⁹ As covered in Ch. 2, Tommy McCrae's drawings had been shown in the 19th century, but were never recognised in Smith's later history as Australian visual art.

¹³⁰ The widespread surfacing of urban forms and cross-overs with older artforms were brought together in *Koori Art '84*, at Artspace, Surry Hills, Sydney, in 1984, curated by Vivien Johnson and Tim Johnson, which presented 25 artists (including some artists from the central deserts and Arnhem Land).

¹³¹ Philip Jones, *Ochre and Rust: Artefacts and Encounters on Australian Frontiers*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, SA, 2007; esp. Ch.8: 'Namatjira and the Jesus plaque'; see also Sylvia Kleinert, 'Namatjira, Albert (Elea) (1902–1959)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/namatjira-albert-elea-11217/text19999>>, published first in hardcopy 2000, accessed online 16 October 2017.

¹³² Geoffrey Bardon instigated local elders' design and production of the historic school mural at Papunya in 1971; Papunya Tula Artists' cooperative was formed in 1972. See Hetti Perkins and Hannah Fink (eds), *Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2000; Ian McLean, 'The Gift that Time Gave: Myth and History in the Western Desert Painting Movement', in Jaynie Anderson (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 180–192; Ian McLean, *Rattling Spears: A History of Indigenous Australian Art*, Reaktion Books, London, 2016.

Yet in 1980, Bernard Smith still could not find a place in his Boyer Lectures to articulate any of these diverse developments within his ideas for Australia's cultural heritage or Aboriginal peoples' future. Apart from noting the Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and the Aboriginal Arts Board's 'broad spectrum ... includ[ing] those aspects of Aboriginal art which are seeking to develop a fruitful relationship with our own European-derived art,'¹³³ he was almost silent on the subject of contemporary Aboriginal creativity. And despite his genuine social justice concerns for a treaty, his cultural concepts – through divorce from studies in the social sciences – remained brittle and exclusionary.

The *assimilation* social framework of 1945 (enunciated in *Place, Taste and Tradition*) had shifted to a new concept of *convergence* in 1980. But since Bernard Smith admitted he had taken this term from poet Les Murray (whom he quoted in a long paragraph),¹³⁴ such terminology was bereft of personal experience. Smith lacked any contact with Aboriginal people, or experience of indigenous social realities that might have informed his meaning. This was very different from the years of commitment to Aboriginal advancement shown by W.E.H. Stanner and Nugget Coombes, whom Bernard Smith sought to stand alongside in his choice of a Boyer lectures theme.

However, as thesis Chapter 6 has analysed, by 1980 colleagues in art museums had for years been working through associated issues through a variety of art exhibitions, catalogues and museums' collecting – haltingly, sometimes awkwardly, but incrementally advancing – during all of the decades since the 1940s. Bernard Smith had remained distant from these efforts, because of his deterministic association of Aboriginal art with the 'primitive art' intersection that (in his unyielding theoretical framework) formed the darker alter-ego of a modernism he censured and rejected.

It would be many more years before Bernard Smith started to perceive that resurgent contemporary forms – especially the burgeoning of Aboriginal painting from central Australia and its western deserts (the 'Papunya movement') – required some rethinking, extension and adjustment of his 'canonical' history of the nation's art. Ian McLean has written sympathetically and perceptively about the difficult relationship Bernard Smith had with Aboriginal art – which he casts as the 'blind spot' in Smith's work as an Australian art historian.¹³⁵ McLean notes that a sense of omission exercised Smith's reflection when he wrote an introduction to a Bibliography of his own publications,¹³⁶ compiled by others in 2000, so that the whole corpus of his writings would be comprehensively disclosed and available for research. McLean observes:

Towards the end of his life, Bernard did admit to a blind spot. Summing up his achievements in his eighty-fourth year, he wrote: 'During my professional career I had said virtually nothing about Aboriginal art'.¹³⁷

¹³³ Smith, *The Spectre of Truganini*, 1980, p. 51.

¹³⁴ Les Murray, 'The Human-hair Thread', *Meanjin* [Aboriginal Issue], vol 36(4), Melbourne University Press, December 1977, p. 569, quoted Smith, *The Spectre of Truganini*, 1980, p. 50.

¹³⁵ Ian McLean, 'Bernard Smith's blind spot: Aboriginal and Australian art', in Jaynie Anderson, Christopher R. Marshall, Andrew Yip (eds), *The Legacies of Bernard Smith: Essays on Australian Art, History and Cultural Politics*, Power Publications, in association with the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2016, 338–351.

¹³⁶ See Bernard Smith, 'Introduction: A Bibliographical Memoir', in John Spencer and Peter Wright (eds), *The Writings of Bernard Smith: Bibliography 1938–1998*, Power Institute: Foundation for Art and Visual Culture, Power Publications, Sydney, 2000.

¹³⁷ B. Smith, 'Introduction: A Bibliographical Memoir', 2000, op. cit., p. 12.

Interviewing Bernard Smith (in this reflective mode), Ian McLean queried his omission of Aboriginal art in the Boyer Lectures, which elicited the following reflection: 'I had little to say about Indigenous visual art [in the lectures] because I was not sure what to say.'¹³⁸ McLean adds: 'Indeed, he was relatively ignorant. There is no evidence in the Boyer Lectures that he knew of Papunya Tula or Geoffrey Bardon, whom he would soon come to admire.'¹³⁹

At the beginning of the 1990s, Bernard Smith attempted to retrieve a modified position and category location for some contemporary Aboriginal art, admitting that the striking emergence of Papunya painting proposed to him that this work be understood within his category of 'art in the special sense'. However, he did so by judging the Papunya works as in part produced by Geoffrey Bardon (whereas Bardon was a vehicle for Aboriginal cultural expression, not its producer); and in their sudden appearance on portable materials (boards or canvas) and connection to a western medium (acrylic painting) deciding that these works were a form of 'late modern art'. This, again, was a deeply faulted judgment, ignoring the entirely independent origins of Papunya Tula paintings:¹⁴⁰ formally, conceptually, and above all culturally.

Bernard Smith failed to recognise the continuity of Aboriginal religious belief determining all contents, expressed through iconomorphic practices anchored in songlines and kinship, mapping ancestral clans and title to Country.¹⁴¹ In general, the paintings had nothing to do with western art. Yet they claimed a comparable *status* for their own culture's independent sources in the song-cycles and continuities of knowledge-systems they variously instantiated. From a philosophically tuned vantage-point, Robyn Ferrell has observed that 'painting the *jukurrpa* was first and foremost a collective strategy for cultural survival and spiritual integrity, in country turned hostile'.¹⁴² The works strove for entirely contrary objectives to western modernism. They instead valorised the interdependence between personal subject matter and a collective iconography of social community, articulated through intercrossing clan histories and reasserted title to Country.

7.9 Divided socius, split subjects: a dichotomous cultural history

In recent years, acknowledgment of Bernard Smith's Boyer Lectures, heightened by the traction of the title bearing the eponymous figure of Truganini, have led to an uncritical assumption in Australian art history-writing that the 1980 lectures cemented Smith's alliance with the cause of Aboriginal art's inclusion in Australian art history. As the previous section analysed, there is too much evidence to the contrary for this assumption to be justified.

¹³⁸ Ian McLean, 'Bernard Smith's blind spot: Aboriginal and Australian art', in J. Anderson et al., (eds), *The Legacies of Bernard Smith* 2016, op. cit., 338–351, p. 347.

¹³⁹ McLean, 'Bernard Smith's blind spot', 2016, op. cit., p. 347, citing Bernard Smith, 'Creators and Catalysts: The Modernisation of Australian Indigenous Art', in *Australian Cultural History*, vol. 26, 2006, p. 16.

¹⁴⁰ Papunya Tula Pty Ltd was formed as a collective company, based in Alice Springs, N.T., in 1971 to manage the newly emergent works produced at Papunya.

¹⁴¹ See especially on Pintupi culture in the 1970s within the Papunya movement, Fred Myers, *Painting Culture: The Making of an Aboriginal High Art*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002.

¹⁴² Robyn Ferrell, *Sacred Exchanges: Images in Global Context*, Columbia UP, New York, 2012, p. 38.

However, the problems underlying Bernard Smith's 1988 Boyer Lectures, and intensified in their disturbing title, run deeper. The lectures' subsequent evaluation by colleagues indicates the continuing legacies of Smith's bifurcated historical schema for Australian art's attention. This has been compounded by a repeatedly demonstrated failure of Smith's strongest interpreters to *historicise* his work and thought critically – one of the fundamental requirements of the Marxist position Bernard Smith himself maintained throughout his life. Peter Beilharz's interpretation of Smith's Boyer lectures compounds the errors of Smith's own misrepresentation of Tasmanian history to a national audience. Beilharz claims:

Smith reminds us that in 1876 there ended another Australian war; it was the only war that, unaided, white Australians could claim, one-sidedly, to have won completely. It was the war against Tasmanian Aborigines.¹⁴³

This is a serious misinterpretation of Australian history. In the first instance, there was vivid evidence in the 19th century (cited in this chapter) of some 19th century Tasmanians' recoil at the violent treatment towards Palawa people – and these individuals never 'waged a war' against Aboriginal clans in either their own actions or interpretation of outcomes. Peter Beilharz's assessment, based on extensive interviews, reveals that Bernard Smith had thought no further about the Van Diemen's Land colony's history than two decades earlier, when he was so silent about the subject matter of Duterrau's *The Conciliation* (of 1840).



Benjamin Duterrau, *The Conciliation* [details], 1840, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart.

The entire organisation of Duterrau's 'history painting', with its presentation of George Augustus Robinson and known Aboriginal figures, animals and weapons in a complex inter-cultural exchange, clearly represented a colonial artist's resolute efforts to portray the 'surrender' outcome of the Black War, through exhaustion of a depleted and starving Aboriginal population by 1831. Duterrau's orchestration of ideas and observations are detailed and searching, even if constrained by aspects of his drawing and contemporary constructs of the depicted history. Yet Bernard Smith could not discern any historical impetus behind Duterrau's efforts, based on numerous 'life studies' of the people involved and prolonged preparation for a larger (lost) work, *The National Picture*, in the artist's concern for careful portrayal of Robinson's purported *Conciliation* role in bringing black resistance to an end.

Meanwhile, adding to the injury of factual ignorance about Truganini's complex history, the 'complete victory' falsification (by Smith, and Beilharz after him) only deepens the monocultural distortion of Truganini's memory as a '*spectre*' of a mainstreamed Australian history. Both have misrepresented a purportedly terminal condition of Palawa people with her death. Beilharz's

¹⁴³ Peter Beilharz, *Imagining the Antipodes: Culture, Theory, and the Visual in the Work of Bernard Smith*, Cambridge, New York, 1997, Ch. 3, 'Imagining the Pacific', 63–96, p. 90, and fn. 50.

judgments that Bernard Smith's Boyer Lectures 'anticipated the discourse of reconciliation ... and anticipate something of the spirit of the debate after Mabo' are startling, uninformed claims. Such judgment ignores the contrary histories of Indigenous peoples' own narratives of struggle, and the articulate agency of their independent voices and achievements in national campaigns for justice, including through the history of the Boyer lectures themselves.¹⁴⁴

It was audacious of Bernard Smith to seek to stand alongside William Stanner and H.C. (Nugget) Coombes in taking up the Aboriginal justice 'cause' in his Boyer Lectures in 1980, when he had never been interested in Aboriginal culture, studied Aboriginal history, mixed with Aboriginal people or campaigned on behalf of their place in national political recognition.¹⁴⁵ And sadly, he had nothing to say to the nation about Aboriginal art. The Boyer Lectures seem on reflection to be one of the least admirable episodes of Bernard Smith's intellectual career.¹⁴⁶ Truganini meanwhile remains a powerful ancestral presence in Palawa consciousness, while she continues to arouse creative responses involving her descendants today.



7.10 Resetting Australian art history's bearings in the 21st century

The abundance of publications and essays honouring Bernard Smith since his death has produced a concentration of assessments that honour the huge extent of his work as the major historian of Australian art. However, the panoply of tributes, in different volumes and colloquia, has also seemed to overcrowd the spaces of critical reflection that an assessment of his diverse achievements really merits, and by his own lights, requires. For instance:

Smith is undoubtedly Australia's greatest art historian and arguably one of Australia's greatest humanities scholar[s] altogether.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ There have been multiple Indigenous speakers commissioned to present their experience in the Boyer Lectures series since 1980 (in 1993 seven speakers took a single lecture each – see *Voices from the Land: 1993 Boyer Lectures* [Mandawuy Yunipingu, Dot West, Ian Anderson, Jeannie Bell, Getano Lui (Jnr), Helen Corbett, Noel Pearson], Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney, 1994). Three lecturers (Noel Pearson in 1993, Marcia Langton in 2012, and Rachel Perkins in 2019) have referred back to William Stanner and the importance of his vision and advocacy for Aboriginal justice in his 1968 Boyer Lectures. None of the nine Indigenous speakers since 1993 has referred to the 1980 lectures or mentioned Bernard Smith.

¹⁴⁵ For a small glimpse of the huge output entailed in campaigning for Indigenous justice, Rachel Perkins provided a detail in her 2019 ABC Boyer Lectures of the immense physical as well as personal efforts involved in her father's lifelong work: 'In 1995, my father [Charlie Perkins] chaired 34 meetings with Indigenous people across 17 regions, to discuss what was referred to as 'the social justice package'. (Rachel Perkins, Boyer Lectures 2019, available online at: <www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-16/boyer-lecture-rachel-perkins-echoes-uluru-statement/11696504>).

¹⁴⁶ A decade later Bernard Smith took an important step that would produce a more productive and lasting initiative – in recognising and supporting young Aboriginal artists through the annual RAKA awards program: the Ruth Adeney Koori Award, named to honour the memory after her death of his wife, Kate Challis, who was known in her youth as Ruth Adeney. The RAKA awards now rotate a \$20,000 cash prize annually, awarded to young Aboriginal artists for their achievements in creative prose, poetry, script writing, drama or visual arts. The Awards are not signalled in the text of this chapter, since they arose in 1991, in a period not covered by the thesis scope. However, they are mentioned here in important recognition of Bernard Smith's generous decision in his later life.

¹⁴⁷ Rex Butler and Sheridan Palmer, 'Introduction', in Rex Butler and Sheridan Palmer (eds), *Antipodean Perspective: Selected Writings of Bernard Smith*, Monash University Publishing, 2018, ix–xxiv, p. xxii.

This is a judgment stated in a volume of commissioned commentaries and reprinted essays gathered in tribute in 2018 (after Bernard Smith's death in 2011); and it has substance in many respects of Smith's broad field-endavours and the expansive legacy of his significant publications over a lifetime. Yet in view of structural occlusions in many frameworks of his cultural vision, topical attentions and historiography, it becomes important to ask what Australian art history today is saying *about itself* in some extravagant assertions that tie its future to a ruptured and distorting past. One of the most startling examples of such fault-lines is laid out in a single sentence, near the end of the introduction to the recent *Antipodean Perspective* anthology of Bernard Smith tributes and essay-reprints in 2018:

It is here that we might think Smith's meditation upon the 'spectre of Truganini' as the ultimate condition for Australian history and what it would mean to speak for her.¹⁴⁸

No-one may speak *for* Truganini. Meanwhile the broader history of Palawa people and their continuities today merit careful reflection in any speaking about her. However, the idea that Bernard Smith's refusal of Aboriginal art while spectralising Truganini might provide a signpost for 'the ultimate condition for Australian history' is one of the most profoundly disturbing proposals to emerge recently in a significant anthology reviewing Australian art history's narratological past. Yet this assessment of Australian art history's directional 'logic' and 'structure' conferred through Bernard Smith's 'national' legacy reached even further:

[T]he reason why Smith will live on, what is truly incontestable about his work, what he in a way invented, a[t] least for this country, is a certain logic or structure. It is a logic or structure – and we have already hinted at this – of Antipodality or the Antipodean perspective.¹⁴⁹

As this chapter has sought to argue, through diverse evidence and historical reflection, the time is long overdue for Australian art history to question such investment in the upside-down world of Antipodality enfolded within Antipodeanism.¹⁵⁰ A bipolar identity of foundational inversion was always a skewed prospectus for Australian art's development, while deforming its history within a complex setting of changing local, regional, national and global relationships throughout the 20th century. There are abundant reasons to question an exegetical structure for Australian art's history that asserted a categorical exclusion – a kind of ethnological dichotomy – which reserved the recognition of 'art' in Australia for works derived from 'the European tradition' while denying Aboriginal cultural expression the same capacities or status.

As touched on in the previous chapter, in 1956 Bernard Smith introduced Australian art to an international audience (in the Melbourne Olympic Games *Arts Festival* catalogue), moving from an account of 'the rise of a native school of Australian art' to a characterisation of 'the Australian artist' as a singular persona:

¹⁴⁸ Butler and Palmer, 'Introduction', in Butler and Palmer, *Antipodean Perspective*, 2018, op. cit., ix–xxiv, p. xxii.

¹⁴⁹ Butler and Palmer, 'Introduction', in Butler and Palmer, *Antipodean Perspective*, 2018, op. cit., pp. xxii–xxiii.

¹⁵⁰ As noted in Chapter 6, the first draft of 'the Antipodean identity' as conceived by Bernard Smith was set down in his essay for the Olympic Arts Festival catalogue in Melbourne, in 1956: 'The Australian artist, we might say, is a migratory bird who owns not one home but two... He is a permanently displaced person whether he sits under the gum tree or walks upon the Pont Neuf. And his dilemma is no passing phase. It has been the continuing experience of Australian writers and artists of consequence for almost one hundred years.' (Bernard Smith, 'Paintings and Drawings', in *The Arts Festival of the Olympic Games, Melbourne: A guide to the exhibitions*, 1956, Melbourne Olympic Committee and City Council, Melbourne, 18–25, p. 18.)

The Australian artist, we might say, is a migratory bird who owns not one home but two... He is a permanently displaced person whether he sits under the gum tree or walks upon the Pont Neuf. And his dilemma is no passing phase. It has been the continuing experience of Australian writers and artists of consequence for almost one hundred years.¹⁵¹

He then etched deeper his vision of a permanent dilemma for the Australian artist, destined to 'live continually between two worlds and be divided between two loyalties'.¹⁵² Here could be discerned Bernard Smith's first draft of a split personality for the Australian artist, which he would shift three years later into a different register of displacement: in the figure of the geo-critically divided 'Antipodean artist', as introduced in the *Antipodean Manifesto*.

Within days of the *Antipodean Manifesto*'s launch in 1959, Bernard Smith's formulation had alarmed most contributing artists (to the accompanying exhibition), who had been shepherded into a declaration that radically constrained and misrepresented the diverse impulses of their own work. Reviewing the impact of the Manifesto and exhibition decades afterwards, artist and critic Ronald Millar considered that: '[S]ome of the artists changed their minds rapidly when they realised that Bernard was galloping along on a hobby horse of his own.'¹⁵³

The *Antipodean Manifesto* does not gain lustre through its revisiting as an historical episode, nor re-reading as a cultural text. It seems more disordered in structure, and alienated in its contents and position, the longer it is subject to re-reading. So many passages can only be ascribed to the distorting projections of its wordsmith:

For Europeans this country has always been a primordial and curious land. To the ancients the antipodes was a kind of nether world, to the peoples of the Middle Ages its forms of life were monstrous, and for us, Europeans by heritage (but not by birth), much of this strangeness lingers. It is natural therefore that we should see and experience nature differently in some degree from the artists of the northern hemisphere. ... We live in a young society still making its myths.¹⁵⁴

For Australian art history today to keep reprising its intellectual lineage (its 'Antipodality or the Antipodean perspective') in the language and constructs in which the Antipodean Manifesto mapped a febrile posture to defeat abstract art six decades ago can only suggest a deep-seated disorientation at a disciplinary level. Yet others among our most senior art historians still seem drawn to the idea of locating the decentering methodologies of poststructural and postcolonial critique as descendant forms of antipodeanism – maintaining the currency of a prior convening term and vantage-point that precludes recognition of late-20th century cultural diversity, or movements of critical thought and inquiry in radically different and diverse directions.

¹⁵¹ Bernard Smith, 'Paintings and Drawings', *The Arts Festival of the Olympic Games, Melbourne: A Guide to the Exhibitions with Introductory Commentaries on the Arts in Australia*, Olympic Civic Committee of Melbourne City Council, Melbourne, 1956, p. 18.

¹⁵² Smith, 'Paintings and Drawings', *The Arts Festival of the Olympic Games*, 1956, p. 18.

¹⁵³ Ronald Millar, 'The Antipodean Manifesto' [1959], (a reflection on the Manifesto and its 1959 context) in Butler and Palmer, *Antipodean Perspective*, 2018, op. cit., 50-57; p. 51.

¹⁵⁴ "The Antipodean Manifesto" (1959) [signed by] Charles Blackman/Arthur Boyd/David Boyd/John Brack/Bob Dickerson/John Perceval/Clifton Pugh/Bernard Smith', reprinted in Butler and Palmer, *Antipodean Perspective*, 2018, op. cit., 54-57; p. 56. Bernard Smith later stated that he was the main author of the Manifesto.

Terry Smith maintains that 'Contemporary antipodeans are deeply indebted to Bernard's lifelong enterprise';¹⁵⁵ and further asserts that: 'almost everywhere you look, you find that Bernard has been there before you'.¹⁵⁶ This mapping of Bernard Smith's ubiquitous presence and proprietorship across an entire disciplinary topography is echoed in Ian McLean's elaboration of the same concept – proposing that Bernard 'ha[s] always been there before, shoring up his defences and laying a few booby-traps for the unwary intruder'.¹⁵⁷ Such is the enveloping sense of several professors of Australian art's history (now spanning three generations): that all key questions for the enterprise of this history have been laid out in Bernard Smith's work, and he has even anticipated the rejoinders or further issues for those who come after him.

Terry Smith continued with some conceded qualifications in reviewing Bernard Smith's achievement in 2016: that 'Indigenous art, much art by women, and increasingly, for more obvious reasons, contemporary art, were the exceptions'.¹⁵⁸ If one adds Bernard Smith's career-long hostility to modernism, his explicit convictions against abstract painting and sculpture, and detachment from the conceptually critical and performatively re-navigating art movements from the 1970s onwards, this amounts to a significant weighting on the 'exceptions' side for Australia's most history-shaping art historian. Meanwhile, the disciplinary legacy-claims celebrated in recent years could never successfully include Aboriginal critics or historians – when *Aboriginal art* was so long an excluded category in Bernard Smith's fence-lines for Australian art. Neither could Antipodean categories encompass the multiple historical impulses of Euro-Australian art's changing history, nor new topics that have bristled and surged in so many artworks of First Nations artists of the late-20th century through to the present.

7.11 Conclusion

There are important, reformative vantage-points on Australia's cultural history to be pursued in the 21st century. Cultural diversity and *intercultural transformations*, gathered through the impact of a panoply of immigrant arrivals since 16th century Dutch mariners made contact with Australian shores, and Macassans in their *praus* began catching trade winds from Sulawesi to Arnhem Land in the 17th century,¹⁵⁹ open out multiple pathways in the 20th century beyond the purview of this inquiry. As analysed in many thesis chapters, inheritors of Aboriginal heritage today are themselves bearers of interconnecting narratives, and *intercultural experience* through their own earlier histories, that cannot fail to contest founding colonial conquest stories, or protest histories of ripped social fabric and oppression, while they also demonstrate resurgent, transcultural continuity and creativity.

Australia's first peoples can never be 'Antipodean' to their own histories of prior occupation, ownership of country, or continuing ancestral heritage. They can have no meaningful cultural connections to Antipodality, to obversity, or to a split personality anchored in a narratology of

¹⁵⁵ Terry Smith, 'Bernard Smith: The Art Historian as Hero', in Anderson, Marshall & Yip, *The Legacies of Bernard Smith*, 2016, 109–128; p. 126.

¹⁵⁶ T. Smith, 'Bernard Smith: The Art Historian as Hero', 2016, op. cit., 109–128; p. 125.

¹⁵⁷ McLean, 'Bernard Smith's Blind Spot', in J. Anderson et. al., *The Legacies of Bernard Smith*, 2016, op. cit., 338–351, p. 339.

¹⁵⁸ T. Smith, 'Bernard Smith: The Art Historian as Hero', in *The Legacies of Bernard Smith*, 2016, op. cit., pp. 125–6.

¹⁵⁹ See Denise Russell, 'Aboriginal-Makassan interactions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in northern Australia and contemporary sea rights claims', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, No. 1, AIATSIS, Canberra, 2004, 3–7.

bifurcated origins. They cannot be extrapolated from their own immanence in culture, community and Country, whether ‘remote’, rural or urban-dwelling. Indigenous cultures occupy a foundationally unique position in the scoping of social relationships that extend behind all performative ceremonies today of what it means to be in extended kinship and ‘on Country’.¹⁶⁰ This recognition publicly refigures understanding of cultural location and a changing social imaginary in Australia. It asserts a transformative potential of new interrelations, attachments to place and history, and a wholly restructured understanding of an interconnecting history of nation.

These conditions propose, indeed require, a reconceived *habitus* for Australian art’s history. A reconsidered emplacement of the fullness of Aboriginal heritages and subsequent layering of multiple traditions imported from elsewhere is long overdue. A more supple and reflexive orientation is needed to renovate multiple disciplinary pathways of inquiring and interpreting the nature and evolution of art from a particular location, while scoping new topics, tasks and territories in a transforming global environment. Meanwhile Indigenous cultures will continue to re-entexture *locality* as a counter-construct to *globality* in insightful, transformative ways.

* * * * *

End of thesis

¹⁶⁰ Neil MacGregor, former Director of the British Museum, commented during a plenary address to the national Australian museums conference in Alice Springs in May 2019 that one of the most distinctive experiences Australian Indigenous culture offers to the wider world today is the concept of being ‘on Country’.

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