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Flesh + Blood

Appropriation and the Critique of Australian Colonial History
in Recent Art Practice

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Declaration

Except where acknowledged otherwise, this thesis is entirely the work of the author.



Anna Lawrenson

12/10/07

Date

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Abstract

In the final two decades of the twentieth century Australian society was preoccupied with its own history. So ubiquitous was this interest, that bookshops were crammed with popular histories and historical fictions, TV networks aired historical re-enactments and devoted whole series to its exploration and re-creation. In part, this increased awareness of history was stimulated by the 200-year anniversary of white settlement simultaneously celebrated by many non-Indigenous Australians and condemned by Indigenous protestors. Throughout the 1990s the debate over historical fact and its place within society – or the 'history wars' – took centre stage moving beyond academic circles and into political and public discourse. At the heart of this debate was what Bain Attwood called the 'new history', which incorporated the hitherto absent perspectives of Indigenous Australians. This new version of history examined discrepancies between dominant settler accounts of historical events and those provided by Indigenous people, often in the form of oral testimony. A more vocal Indigenous population also forced these new perspectives on Australian history into being, as increased calls for land rights recognition and social justice became prominent.

The debate was so prominent that it permeated many areas of Australian society, the visual arts provides one such example. This thesis is concerned with how the popularisation of history was contended in the visual arts. I argue that Australian artists have used appropriation as an effective means of engaging in a discourse on colonialism; of communicating with the past, and of ensuring that that past remained a highly visible concern of the present. Through its reliance on existing images, appropriation enables artists to condense the space between the quoted image and their new work. It therefore demands that the quoted image be seen as a concern of the present. This strategy was implemented by a significant number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian practitioners during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, it provides an important point of intersection between the artistic practice of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists. Rather than seeking to document the history of appropriation in Australia, this thesis is concerned with highlighting how appropriation has become the basis of a critical commentary on historical narratives of colonialism.

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List of Abbreviations

Art Gallery of New South Wales	AGNSW
Art Gallery of South Australia	AGSA
Art Gallery of Western Australia	AGWA
Art Monthly Australia	AMA
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies	AIATSIS
Australian National University	ANU
Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation	ANTaR
Centre for Cross-Cultural Research	CCR
Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation	CAR
Institute of Modern Art	IMA
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory	MAGNT
Museum of Contemporary Art	MCA
Museum of Sydney	MoS
National Gallery of Australia	NGA
National Gallery of Victoria	NGV
National Library of Australia	NLA
National Museum of Australia	NMA
National Portrait Gallery	NPG
Powerhouse Museum	PHM
Queensland Museum	QM
State Library of New South Wales	SLNSW
State Library of Queensland	SLQ
State Library of Victoria	SLVIC
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery	TMAG

Introduction

Appropriation and the critique of Australian colonial history

We need histories that create a sense of moral engagement with the past in the present.¹

The past is not a foreign country.² In Australia during the last two decades of the twentieth century, the past was very firmly positioned within the present. This highly visible status of the past related in part to the history of colonisation and subsequent treatment of Australia's Indigenous people. At the end of the twentieth century politicians, such as the Prime Minister John Howard, tried to distance themselves from the policies of previous governments, which were increasingly seen as racist and paternalistic, in order to absolve themselves of any responsibility. At the beginning of the new century, Indigenous activists such as Mick Dodson, publicly denounced this view and demonstrated that the past that Howard shied away from was in fact still within living memory of the many people that those policies affected.³ The past, which both Howard and Dodson were concerned with, was the history of colonisation in Australia beginning on 26 January 1788 with the arrival of the British. It was this period that the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation argued had to be acknowledged in the present through the "appropriate teaching of the truth of Australia's history" which would include Indigenous perspectives and address racism.⁴ As the council put it, "the past not dealt with" would remain as "a troubling shadow on the present".⁵

The sentiment of Dodson and the Council was echoed in many arenas. The focus of this thesis is on how representations of a shared Australian history, of the past within the present, were manifested within artistic realms. As the Sydney curator Ace Bourke attempted to demonstrate in an exhibition at the height of this period, history is not abstract. History is, indeed, flesh and blood.⁶ The very premise of Bourke's exhibition was to personalise the past through an exploration of family history connecting its curator with a web of hitherto distant figures from the annals of Sydney's archives that were enlivened by his intimate and idiosyncratic portrayal. The artworks and objects he amassed for this show included historical and contemporary material; artworks, family mementos, objects from

¹ Bain Attwood & Stephen Foster, "Introduction", Attwood & Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2003, p.26.

² David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985.

³ Mick Dodson, "The Truth About Our Generation", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May 2000, p.17.

⁴ Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, "Roadmap for Reconciliation", *Reconciliation – Australia's Challenge: Final Report of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation to the Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Parliament*, Commonwealth of Australia, December 2000, p.110.

⁵ Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, "The Challenge of Going Forward", *Reconciliation – Australia's Challenge*, 2000, p.xiv.

⁶ Ace Bourke, *Flesh + Blood: A Sydney Story 1788-1998*, exh.cat., Museum of Sydney, Sydney, 1998.

anthropological collections and ephemera. Of the contemporary artworks that Bourke included, personalisation of the past, and the compression of the distance between past and present, was effectively achieved by the use of appropriation. Appropriation is an artistic strategy with a very specific history, associated with postmodernism, by which artists employ existing images as the basis of new artworks. It is an aim of this thesis to demonstrate that, through its reliance on existing images, appropriation uniquely condenses the space between that image and the newly created work. Therefore it demands that the quoted (in many cases historical) image be seen as a concern of the present. This strategy was implemented by a significant number of artists in Australia during the last two decades of the twentieth century. I am specifically concerned here with those who have used it as the basis of a critical discourse on historical narratives of colonialism.

From the 1980s onwards it is possible to identify a number of artists, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who fit within these parameters. Yet, to date there has been limited scholarly documentation of this art as a phenomenon reflecting a particular period in Australian art, the circumstances of its exhibition, and its relationship with broader social and political trends. Some of these artists, such as Imants Tillers, Gordon Bennett and more recently Richard Bell, have been well documented and are very clearly identified with appropriation.⁷ Other artists, such as Fiona MacDonald, Geoff Parr, Narelle Jubelin, Stephen Bush, Fiona Foley, Brook Andrew, r e a, Tracey Moffatt, Ross Moore, Destiny Deacon, Clinton Nain and Geoff Lowe, have not necessarily had their work analysed solely in relation to its use of appropriation and rarely have they been analysed together. Yet all of these artists have employed appropriation within their art practice and all of them have done so in a manner that calls into question the history of this nation. It is important to note that these artists have not necessarily acted collectively, with the intent of creating a unified body of work. Rather their artistic output reflects a contemporaneous societal preoccupation with notions of history, colonialism, Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity.

Australian art in the late twentieth century was under the influence of the overarching logic of both postmodernism and postcolonialism. Postmodernism, which began to dominate art discourse in the early 1980s, was characterised by a collapsing of high art and popular culture, a preference for pastiche and disdain for originality. It privileged a nihilistic position in which originality was impossible and the idea of a singular author was redundant. Fredric Jameson has outlined this attitude as follows:

The writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds – they've already been invented; only a limited

⁷ For Imants Tillers see Graham Coulter-Smith, *The Postmodern Art of Imants Tillers: Appropriation En Abyme 1971-2001*, Fine Art Research Centre, Southampton, 2002. For Gordon Bennett see Ian McLean & Gordon Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1996. Richard Bell's work is analysed by Rex Butler and Morgan Thomas, "'I Am Not Sorry': Richard Bell Out of Context", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, vol.4 #1, 2003, pp.29-40. Also see Michael Eather, *Shoosh! The History of the Campfire Group*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2005.

number of combinations are possible; the most unique ones have been thought of already.⁸

It is this perceived inability to create something new and original, Jameson continued to argue, that resulted in a penchant for pastiche and parody. This certainly found expression in the art under discussion here – evidenced primarily through the use of appropriation. He also argued that the result of this image-saturated world would be an art that was explicitly concerned with the very nature of art production. Jameson's postmodern attitude toward the image and originality is an extremely pessimistic one; the artists under investigation in this thesis are far less self-reflexive about art and the possibility of originality than they are about making a social/political comment. Therefore, while postmodern strategies have been employed, the majority of the work produced is not *about* postmodernism. It is for this reason that it has been essential to look beyond the art world context when analysing it.

Postcolonial theory provided one such alternative. By the 1990s, postcolonialism gained currency as it validated the speaking position of individual subjects and personal perspectives. Those previously marginalised were given greater voice, and authority with which to speak, as a result of the writing of a number of postcolonial authors. As Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin argue, a definition of postcolonialism can be found in two separate but interrelated 'archives'. The first is described as the cultural production (often literature) of those whose "subjectivity has been constituted in part by the subordinating power of European colonialism."⁹ The second archive that they identify, and that which is most pertinent to this investigation, is defined by its emphasis on resistance. Resistance, they argue, occupies a number of levels including "*resistance* to colonialism, colonialist ideologies, and their contemporary forms and subjectificatory legacies."¹⁰ It is this emphasis on resistance that is evident in the artworks under investigation here. Though they are not all created by Indigenous artists, and thus would not fall under the first definition of postcolonialism, all demonstrate a resistance to, or challenging of, the colonial ideologies that informed the development of Australia. Moreover, straight colonial / postcolonial divides are complicated in Australia by its status as a settler nation which, as Nicholas Thomas has maintained, is characterised by the fact that settlers disposed Indigenous people and remain dominant despite Indigenous resistance.¹¹ Consequently appropriative history paintings, while being seen as both postmodern and postcolonial, also exceed the boundaries of such categorisations, and it is for this reason that it is important to consider the socio-political environment out of which they developed, and the history of appropriation in Australian art before it became a postmodern phenomenon.

⁸ Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Culture", in Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Bay Press, Washington, 1983, p.115.

⁹ Ian Adam & Helen Tiffin (eds), *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*, Harvester Wheatsheaf (a division of Simon & Schuster International), Hertfordshire, UK, 1991, p.vii.

¹⁰ Adam & Tiffin (eds), *Past the Last Post*, 1991, p.vii.

¹¹ Nicholas Thomas, *Possessions: Indigenous Art / Colonial Culture*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1999, p.11.

The timeframe that this thesis considers parallels great change for Indigenous Australians in relation to the political environment. While examples of appropriative artworks are mainly drawn from the last two decades of the twentieth century, the socio-political circumstances that informed their creation stretch back further. As activist Roberta Sykes¹² and her colleague Barbara Nicholson argue:

A 'new era'... began very slowly in 1967 when Constitutional change, carried by Referendum, acknowledged Aboriginal citizenship and permitted the inclusion of Aboriginal people in the national census. The process did not gather momentum, however, until... the Australian Labor Party swept into power on a platform which included opportunities for Aborigines.¹³

This moment marked the beginning of a period of strong leadership by Australian Labor Party governments under Gough Whitlam,¹⁴ Bob Hawke¹⁵ and Paul Keating.¹⁶ During this time government policy on cultural identity changed significantly. Assimilation had been the principal attitude toward migrants and Indigenous Australians in the aftermath of the Second World War and was characterised by monoculturalism in which the dominant culture and language would override all others. In the 1970s this gave way to policies of integration and multiculturalism that became entrenched through the 1980s.¹⁷

Also coming into public view in the 1960s, and continuing to parallel this shift in governmental policy, was the nascent Aboriginal land rights movement. Yolngu artists of north-eastern Arnhem Land created one of the earliest public expressions of the desire for acknowledgment of Indigenous rights in their Yirrkala Bark Petition presented to the House of Representatives in 1963 [Plate 1]. In it they called for land rights recognition in the face of encroaching mining interests that threatened their traditional lands. The innovation of the

¹² Sykes was an extremely important activist during the 1970s civil rights movement in Australia known for her militancy. She attained an MA in education from Harvard University and continued on to complete her PhD there. She is the author of *Snake Cradle*, *Snake Dancing* and *Snake Circle* – her autobiography in three parts. In 1998 her Indigenous genealogy was publicly challenged by the Birrigubba Juru-Bindal people (the local Indigenous people of Townsville where Sykes grew up), who claimed that her heritage was not Aboriginal but African American. This attack was augmented by criticism from Indigenous leaders such as Pat O'Shane who wrote a public letter to the *Australian* imploring Sykes to correct the misconception of her Aboriginality. Despite the questions around her heritage, Sykes has been an important figure who has consistently pushed for better rights and opportunities for Indigenous Australians. See Pat O'Shane, "Sin of Omission", *Australian*, 7 November 1998, p.29; Jon Marsh, "You Fella Snake, Dr Sykes? Prove It", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 October 1998, p.17.

¹³ Barbara Nicholson & Roberta Sykes, "True Black: True Blue – Aboriginal Influence on Australian Identity", Livio Dobrez (ed), *Identifying Australia in Postmodern Times*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1994, p.166.

¹⁴ Whitlam was in power from 05.12.1972 to 11.11.1975. Following Whitlam's dismissal the Liberal-National Coalition gained government under the leadership of Malcolm Fraser who was in power from 11.11.1975 to 11.03.1983. Fraser's defeat marked the beginning of the Labor Party's domination for the next thirteen years.

¹⁵ Hawke occupied the leadership from 11.03.1983 to 20.12.1991.

¹⁶ Keating was Prime Minister from 20.12.1991 to 11.03.1996. The Labor Party's reign ended with the defeat of Paul Keating by John Howard who, after ten years in office, remains the leader of the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister of Australia.

¹⁷ Helen Andreoni, *"Outside the Gum Tree": The Visual Arts in Multicultural Australia*, National Association for the Visual Artists, Sydney, 1992.

petition was found in its presentation – painted on bark with clan designs from the region – making an explicit connection between artistic traditions and land ownership.¹⁸ Another major and highly publicised assertion of land rights in the 1960s came in the form of a strike. Gurindji workers on the Wave Hill cattle station in the Victoria River District of the Northern Territory walked off the job on 23 August 1966. They initially sought better wages and working conditions but ultimately increased their demands to encompass the acknowledgement of their ownership of traditional lands.¹⁹ Their claim was eventually successful and on 16 August 1975, after a nine year battle, the then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam symbolically returned the title of traditional Gurindji lands by pouring a handful of sand into the hands of traditional owner and leader of the strike Vincent Lingiari [Plate 2].²⁰

Concurrently civil inequalities were being called into question and campaigns for equal rights were launched. The late Charles Perkins, now remembered for his activism was, at the time, a student at Sydney University when he organised a Freedom Ride throughout regional NSW to raise awareness of racist discrimination towards Aboriginal people in 1965.²¹ As one participant remembers, the Freedom Ride "revealed an ugly side to Australian social relationships of which many Australians were unaware or about which they had not been concerned to enquire. The Freedom Ride changed that."²² One of the major changes, on a national level, to follow was the Referendum of 1967 in which a vast majority of the nation voted to alter the constitution by eliminating racially discriminatory references to Indigenous Australians.²³ Agitation for such a Referendum began a decade earlier and immediately prior to the ballot a strident campaign for the 'yes' vote was mounted.²⁴ Attwood and Markus argue that the actual change brought about by the referendum was less substantial than is often proclaimed however, within the larger context of land and civil rights activism it has been remembered as an important turning point.²⁵

After this constitutional change land rights, and specifically the rights of Indigenous Australians as sovereign owners of the land, continued to be promoted. An Aboriginal

¹⁸ See Howard Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, Phaidon Press, London, 1998, pp.254-255.

¹⁹ See Lyn A. Riddett, "The Strike That Became a Land Rights Movement: A Southern 'Do-Gooder' Reflects on Wattie Creek 1966-74", *Labour History*, #72, May 1997, pp.50-65; Bain Attwood, "The Articulation of 'Land Rights' in Australia: The Case of Wave Hill", *Social Analysis*, vol.44 #1, April 2000, pp.3-39.

²⁰ This symbolic gesture was followed by legislative change in the form of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* discussed below.

²¹ See Ann Curthoys, *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2002.

²² J.J. Spigelman, "The Future of Reconciliation: The Charles Perkins Memorial Oration", *Quadrant*, March 2006, p.36.

²³ This would mean that the Commonwealth, rather than the states, could make laws in regards to Indigenous affairs and that Aboriginal people would be included in the national census.

²⁴ See Bain Attwood & Andrew Markus, *The 1967 Referendum, or When Aborigines Didn't Get the Vote*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, 1992; Kitty Eggerking, "Revitalising Citizenship: Lessons From the Margins", *Culture and Policy*, vol.8 #3, 1997, pp.77-96.

²⁵ Attwood & Markus, *The 1967 Referendum*, 1992.

Embassy was established on the lawns of Parliament House on Australia Day, 26 January 1972 with its protagonists, Michael Anderson, Bill Craigie, Bertie Williams, Tony Coorey and Gary Williams, demanding recognition of the prior Indigenous occupation of the land before British settlement.²⁶ The Embassy was an exceptionally high profile protest site where violent clashes occurred and it has continued, in various incarnations, to the present. Also in 1972 the Australian Labor Party, under the leadership of Gough Whitlam, promised to facilitate lands rights as part of their election campaign. They won government and, as Prime Minister, Whitlam ordered a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Land Rights in 1973 to be conducted by Mr Justice Woodward. Woodward was engaged to advise on the best way to grant land rights to Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. In 1976, four years after the Aboriginal Tent Embassy's establishment, the Australian parliament passed the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*.²⁷ As Nicholas Peterson has argued, the Act made way for "the return of over 40 per cent of the Northern Territory to Indigenous people"; further "it also set in place structures and access to financial resources that have given Indigenous people in the Territory considerable autonomy."²⁸

Another Royal Commission was conducted in the 1980s with James Muirhead engaged to investigate an increasing number of Indigenous deaths while in protective custody. The Committee to Defend Black Rights successfully campaigned for the investigation which was announced in 1987. The extent of the issue proved far greater than originally perceived. An interim report, including 56 recommendations, was handed down on 28 December 1988²⁹ with a subsequent 339 recommendations contained in its final report presented in 1991. It made recommendations on reducing incarceration rates and on providing a greater duty of care while in custody but it also maintained that larger social change was necessary including the need for Indigenous self-determination³⁰ and reconciliation between

²⁶ See Bain Attwood, "Tent Embassy" in Sylvia Kleinert & Margo Neale (eds), *Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture (OCAAC)*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, p.712.

²⁷ The *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* was a Commonwealth act pertaining specifically to the Northern Territory. It provided a mechanism for Indigenous people to claim crown or vacant land once their connection to that land was established. An Aboriginal Land Commissioner was appointed to adjudicate over claims that were brought forward by newly established Land Councils on behalf of the claimants. Once a claim was granted the Act provided Indigenous owners with the provision to prevent unauthorised access, protect sacred sites and if desired prevent mining on their lands provided that mining was not considered to be in the national interest. See Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians: Black Responses to White Domination 1788-2001*, 3rd edition, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2002, pp.193-4.

²⁸ Nicholas Peterson, "Land Rights", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, p.623.

²⁹ "More Frustration, Anger Facing Aboriginal Australia", *Financial Review*, 29 December 1988, p.8.

³⁰ Self-determination has been the overarching Federal government approach to Indigenous policy development since the Whitlam government of the 1970s. However, from the late 1990s the Howard government has favoured terms like self-management and self-empowerment over self-determination reflecting a questioning of its success as a policy direction – Indigenous leaders have also echoed this questioning. See William Jonas, "Self-Determination – The Freedom to 'Live Well'", *Social Justice Report 2002*, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Sydney, 2002, pp.7-56. Self-determination has also been seen to be under threat since the dismantling of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, which was seen as an important emblem of self-governance, despite its internal problems. See Thalia

Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.³¹ Art was once again used as a political tool during this decade to draw attention to a range of issues including land rights, a treaty, recognition of customary law and self-determination. This was achieved through the creation of a petition in June 1988, the Barunga Statement [Plate 3], which incorporated paintings by artists from Arnhem Land and central Australia. The then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, was presented with the petition while he was in Barunga, south east of Katherine (NT). As a result he promised its makers that there would be some sort of treaty between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.³² This promise went unfulfilled by Hawke's government and it still remains to be acted upon.³³

In the 1990s land rights gained an even higher profile as a result of the High Court's rulings in the Mabo and Wik cases in 1992 and 1996 respectively. Native title was recognised in the Mabo decision which affirmed the fact that the land was occupied at the time of settlement by the British in 1788. The Labor government passed the *Native Title Act 1993*, in response to the Mabo decision, which took up its recommendations and implemented processes to facilitate land claims. The Wik decision further recognised that Native Title could co-exist with other forms of land tenure, such as pastoral leases. The *Native Title Amendment Act 1998* was the Liberal-National Coalition's response to this finding. Amongst the amendments the *Act* required Indigenous people to satisfy more stringent tests to acquire the right to negotiate with leaseholders and limited what they could actually negotiate on.³⁴ The Liberal-National Party Coalition had returned to government in 1996 with the election of John Howard as the Prime Minister. Also in 1996 Pauline Hanson, an independent Federal Member of Parliament representing Ipswich in Queensland, began voicing her opinion on many issues including multiculturalism and social welfare for Indigenous Australians. Her maiden speech in parliament summarised her position in relation to Aboriginal social welfare. She stated:

Anthony, "Aboriginal Self-Determination After ATSIC: Reappropriation of the 'Original Position', *Polemic*, vol.14 #1, 2005, pp.4-7, 9-12, 14-16

³¹ This Royal Commission is discussed in Chapter Five. See also Chris Cunneen, *The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody: An Overview of its Establishment, Findings and Outcomes*, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Canberra, n.d.

³² See Andrew McMillan, "That Painting Business", *Northern Perspective*, vol.20 #2, 1997, pp.99-106.

³³ The issue of a treaty has been a contentious one. Currently Reconciliation Australia is sponsoring research into the possibility of a treaty between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is also engaged in the treaty debate. They are currently hosting an online exhibition that provides electronic copies of archival material relating to treaties. See Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, "AIATSIS Library Treaty Material", accessed 30/12/06, [<http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/treaty/hm.htm>].

³⁴ See Garth Nettheim, "The Search for Certainty and the Native Title Amendment Act 1998 (Cth)", *University of New South Wales Law Journal*, vol.22 #2, 1999, pp.564-584.

I am fed up to the back teeth with the inequalities that are being promoted by the government and paid for by the taxpayer under the assumption that Aboriginals are the most disadvantaged people in Australia.³⁵

In relation to land rights she went on to add, "I am fed up with being told, 'This is our land.' Well, where the hell do I go?"³⁶ Hanson gained much attention in the media which sustained debate on racism and Indigenous rights in Australia.³⁷ The treatment of Indigenous Australians was questioned via a National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families which scrutinised past government policies on child removal and resulted in the report *Bringing Them Home*, published in 1997. Also throughout the 1990s reconciliation between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people was promoted through the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. The Council was established in 1991 with a limited life span and conducted grassroots campaigns raising awareness around Indigenous issues and the need for greater understanding and recognition.³⁸ The general visibility of these issues is significant when considering the focus on Australian colonial history that was evident in the art of this period.

The politics of identity pervaded this two-decade period up until 2001 and was manifested in many instances beyond governmental policy. It was punctuated in 1988 by the two hundred year anniversary of the establishment of a British penal settlement on the shores of Sydney Cove. Predictably this anniversary provided much cause for introspection as Australians evaluated the previous two hundred years. A similar pause for evaluation occurred in 1999 when Australians were asked, via a referendum, whether the time was right to sever the last remaining ties to Britain and become a republic. The response was negative and the constitution remained unchanged. Australians measured themselves on the international stage in 2000 when all eyes were on Sydney for the Olympic Games. The final opportunity for reflection on Australian identity examined in this study was the centenary anniversary of the federation of the Australian states into a nation, celebrated in 2001. These were moments in 'official history' that were countered by unofficial events like protests, challenging public discourse and, important for this study, exhibitions, all of which disrupted the official rhetoric championed by government authorities.

Beyond nationalistic concerns for identity and reflection the very facts of Australian history, or indeed Aboriginal history, were being questioned. This contention came to be known as the history wars and, as has been appositely documented by Stuart Macintyre and Anna

³⁵ Pauline Hanson, [Maiden Speech], Commonwealth of Australian Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives Official Hansard, Thirty-Eighth Parliament, First Session – First Period, 10 September 1996, p.3860.

³⁶ Pauline Hanson, [Maiden Speech], House of Representatives, 1996, p.3861.

³⁷ In many ways this debate about racism was *enabled* by her inflammatory comments that others responded to. See Geoffrey Gray & Christine Winter (eds), *The Resurgence of Racism: Howard, Hanson and the Race Debate*, Monash Publications in History, Clayton Vic. in association with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies & the Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1997.

³⁸ Details of the activities the council promoted will be discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Clark, it was a war that was fought in political, academic and popular arenas.³⁹ It was a polemical war comprised of those following either a 'black armband' or a 'white blindfold' view of history.⁴⁰ The historian Geoffrey Blainey coined the term 'black armband' to, according to Macintyre, "characterise what he thought was an excessive emphasis in recent historical writing on past wrongs."⁴¹ The most vociferous opponent of this black armband view of history in the 1990s was Keith Windschuttle, who published articles in the conservative journal *Quadrant*. This was a position supported by Prime Minister John Howard when, in parliamentary debate, he openly rejected "the black armband view of Australian history" adding, "amongst the nations of the world we have a remarkably positive history."⁴² Those accused of being black armband supporters retorted with their own claims that Windschuttle and his supporters were obstructed by a white blindfold that prevented them from accepting any opinion other than their own.⁴³ A number of issues were at the core of this contention including frontier conflict, and the impossibility of ascertaining the number of Indigenous people killed in the process of colonisation. Also at issue were the stolen generations, and debates around whether the concerted effort to assimilate Indigenous Australians, through child removal policies, amounted to a form of genocide. Moreover, the investigation into the separation of Indigenous children from their families, *Bringing Them Home*, served to validate oral testimony as a legitimate form of historical evidence.⁴⁴ Windschuttle rejected such oral testimony, particularly in relation to frontier conflict, deeming it "completely unreliable".⁴⁵ In the background were concerns about land rights, compensation and social justice more generally as discussed above. The history wars form a backdrop to this thesis in part because the so-called war drew attention to the fact that history was a matter of perspective. Despite the calls by conservatives to tell the 'truth' about history, it was possible, by looking at the same evidence from a different perspective, to tell a

³⁹ The term history wars, as Stuart Macintyre also has indicated, gained currency recently in the United States of America in relation to an exhibition at the Smithsonian Institute's National Air and Space Museum in Washington. The show was conceived to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

⁴⁰ The term 'black armband' was first employed by Blainey in a 1993 lecture that was reprinted in the journal *Quadrant*. See Geoffrey Blainey, "Drawing Up A Balance Sheet of Our History: Sir John Latham Memorial Lecture", *Quadrant*, vol.37 #7-8, July-August 1993, pp.10-15. Attwood and Foster attribute the counter phrase 'white blindfold' to Henry Reynolds. See Attwood & Foster (eds) *Frontier Conflict*, 2003, p.16.

⁴¹ Stuart Macintyre, *The History Wars*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003, p.3.

⁴² John Howard, [Racial Tolerance – Commonwealth Parliamentary Debate], House Of Representatives Official Hansard, Thirty-Eighth Parliament, First Session – Second Period, 30 October 1996, p.6158.

⁴³ See Bain Attwood & S.G. Foster's discussion "Black Armbands and White Blindfolds" in Attwood & Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict*, 2003, pp.13-17.

⁴⁴ As one of the Report's authors, Ronald Wilson, explained, "Most official inquiries are directed to the ascertainment of facts and the drawing of conclusions... in the case of the stolen children, the Report was different. Much of it is expressed in the words actually spoken to is by those who suffered personally from the process of separation." Ronald Wilson, "Preface", in Carmel Bird (ed), *The Stolen Children; Their Stories: Extracts From the Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, Random House Australia, Milsons Point, NSW, 1998, p.xiiv.

⁴⁵ Keith Windschuttle, "Doctored Evidence and Invented Incidents in Aboriginal Historiography", in Attwood & Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict*, 2003, p.106.

different story of the colonisation of this nation. What is important to take from this revision of Australian historical accounts is that historians were engaged in a similar project to that of the artists working with appropriation. They too were attempting to better understand the past by bringing it into the focus of the present, by analysing it from different perspectives and in turn giving a voice to many who had previously been denied expression.⁴⁶

...

Although it is evident from the outline above that the interest in Australian history permeated many disciplines of academia and areas of society, it is artworks that comprise the primary subject matter in this investigation. The identification of appropriative artworks that critique the history of colonisation within Australia, and the way in which they have been exhibited, has been the primary research undertaken. I am concerned to examine how artworks function in the public domain and in so doing the thesis makes broader observations about Australian society through these visual examples. The interpretation of a work of art operates on a number of levels depending on the type of mediation to which it is subjected. As Paul Carter notes there is often an incongruity between the "preferred meaning" of an artwork – or its "primary coding" – "whereby the artist produces a text which can have a precise meaning", and its "secondary coding or mediation".⁴⁷ This occurs once the artwork has been released into the public sphere, and is seen in relation to other works of art, and interpreted with current affairs in mind. Ultimately this secondary coding can "deflect or totally transform the nature of the preferred meaning."⁴⁸ So, the meaning of an artwork is not fixed, rather it shifts depending on the context in which the work is experienced. It is for this reason that this thesis is divided into three discrete parts, all of which consider how artworks function within differing contexts. The first part is devoted to an analysis of the art historical context, the second views these works within the public domain via exhibitions, and the third considers these artworks as a distinct group of work reflecting a socio-political period.

To adopt Carter's nomenclature further, I have selected artists on the basis of their grouping via secondary codings. This thesis is concerned with how the period is reflected in the public record. It is not a work of oral history and therefore does not rely on recollections of the past by those who experienced it.⁴⁹ The process of selecting artists and artworks for inclusion began by consulting the archives of the National Gallery of Australia and the National

⁴⁶ It is not an aim of this thesis to provide an exhaustive account of the socio-political context in which Indigenous affairs developed, and Indigenous history was acknowledged. This brief outline of the socio-political landscape has been driven by the themes that artists have been concerned with in the last three decades of the twentieth century.

⁴⁷ Paul Carter, *Framing Art: Introducing Theory and the Visual Image*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1990, p.159.

⁴⁸ Carter, *Framing Art*, 1990, p.160.

⁴⁹ Where possible I have used contemporaneous interviews with artists/curators and so forth to enhance my arguments but I have not sought to conduct my own interviews. The primary evidence for this thesis are the works of art that form its core – in order to ascertain how these works of art function within this historical period, the public record has been the main determinant.

Library of Australia. This initial research sought to uncover examples of appropriative history painting by consulting exhibition catalogues, as primary sources, rather than relying on secondary accounts.⁵⁰ Within this archival research it became clear that despite the fact that the analysis of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists remained relatively separate within art historical writings, this was not reflective of the way their work was being exhibited. The most radical exhibitions of appropriative history paintings juxtaposed multiple perspectives, historical and contemporary, Indigenous and non-Indigenous within the one arena. As such, one of the aims of this thesis is to redress the imbalance of Australian art history which has previously segregated the examination of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists' work regardless of the fact that the public often experienced these works together. In a similar way, I consider both historical and contemporary works – this multiperspectival approach is evident in the artworks, and the exhibitions, I examine and in turn it is reflected in the structure of this thesis.

This process has uncovered the fact that many Australian artists, some of whom are not known for their use of appropriation, have employed this strategy as a means of critical social commentary at some stage in their careers. Given that there was disparity between the analysis of the period as an art historical epoch and the social setting in which the works were viewed, this thesis is concerned to present an art historically focused, object based, analysis of works within a socio-political context. I have not focused on individual artists, seeking out their biographies or personal motivations. This has been something which others have done.⁵¹ Rather, I am concerned to achieve an overview of the period in order to highlight the wide reaching use of historical imagery as a means of commenting on contemporary circumstances. With this in mind I have been careful to focus my attention on the historical archive and contemporaneous criticism rather than seeking out individual accounts. One of the pitfalls of art historical accounts of this work, as I will go on to demonstrate, is that they do not adequately consider the social and political landscape outlined above. My approach is has been drawn from art historical investigations into politically tumultuous eras of the past. Art historical writing on modernism, by authors such as T.J. Clark and Griselda Pollock, paid considerably more attention to the societal context in which the art under analysis was produced.⁵² While the period under investigation here is not

⁵⁰ See Appendix One for a list of exhibitions that were examined in the primary research stage.

⁵¹ For example see: Ian McLean & Gordon Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, Craftsman House, Roseville East, NSW, 1996; Benjamin Genocchio, *Fiona Foley: Solitaire*, Piper Press, Annandale, NSW, 2001; Wynstan Curnow, *Imants Tillers and the 'Book of Power'*, Craftsman House, North Ryde, NSW, 1998; Guy Brett & Roger Benjamin, *Juan Davila*, Miegunyah Press, Vic. in association with Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2006; Ulli Beier, *Dream Time - Machine Time: The Art of Trevor Nickolls*, Robert Brown & Associates in association with the Aboriginal Artists Agency, Bathurst, NSW, 1985; Margo Neale (ed), *Urban Dingo: The Art and Life of Lin Onus 1948-1996*, Craftsman House in association with Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2000; Natalie King, *Destiny Deacon: Walk & Don't Look Blak*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2004.

⁵² See T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1985. For a response to Clark that goes beyond his class-based analysis to consider modernism as a gendered discourse see Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity", *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, Routledge, London, 1988, pp.50-91.

nearly as violent or bloody, it did represent a change in attitude that may have resulted, in the eyes of the optimist, in a society more reconciled with its Indigenous people and more accepting of past injustices. As Janet Wolff has effectively highlighted, "everything we do is located in, and therefore affected by, social structures."⁵³ While her consideration of art as no different to any other form of production under a capitalist regime may be extreme,⁵⁴ her insights into the interconnected nature of art and society are of crucial importance to this investigation. Wolff argues that artists are "entirely dependent on the existence of the structures and institutions of artistic practice" deeming therefore that "the individual act of creation is manifestly a social act."⁵⁵ It is with this in mind that this thesis draws on a broader art historical archive, including not only art objects but also exhibitions at public and private galleries, and responses to those exhibitions. For the artwork functions on a number of levels depending on how it is mediated.

Part One of this thesis examines the history of postmodern appropriation as it developed in Australia in the 1980s and juxtaposes this against instances of appropriation within Australian art practice before this time. I argue that, while postmodern appropriation was an important influence on the appropriative artworks created in Australia in the late twentieth century, it was not the only influence. I begin this section by charting the international theory which informed early Australian experiments with appropriation in order to ascertain the theoretical structure behind its development. I argue that the theory of appropriation, as it developed in America (influenced by French theory), did not address broader artistic or social developments but instead was extremely insular and art world oriented. When it was transposed to an Australian context this theory required adaptation in order to take into account local conditions. The rise of Indigenous art, in particular the work of urban-based Indigenous artists whose work was overtly political, and the growing concern for postcolonial theories also had significant impact on the type of art produced.⁵⁶ As such I turn my examination to the development of appropriation as a practice in Australia by considering the early writing on, and exhibitions of, appropriative works. This discussion of

⁵³ Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, 2nd ed, Macmillan, London, 1993, p.9.

⁵⁴ On this point there have been major criticisms of her work. See Ian Heywood, *Social Theories of Art: A Critique*, Macmillan, London, 1997.

⁵⁵ Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, 1993, p.119.

⁵⁶ This thesis does not consider artists working out of remote communities, not as a point of division but rather because they have not employed appropriation in the same way as other artists considered here have, that is, as a mechanism for historical critique. It is acknowledged that many artists have been concerned with the representation of history: Rover Thomas, for example, has created works on the subject of Aboriginal history, and in particular frontier conflict and violence but appropriation, or historical referencing, has not been employed as the mode of delivery. Some critics, such as Eric Michaels, have claimed that artworks produced in remote communities do in fact employ appropriation and therefore should be considered postmodern. He argued that this was the case because they engage in a counter-appropriation of western art by deploying its technologies and responding to market trends however the subject of this thesis is artists who have *explicitly* engaged in the appropriation of existing images, or *historical referencing*, as an artistic strategy by which to critique narratives of colonisation and therefore the work that Michaels considered remains outside of its scope. See Eric Michaels, "Postmodernism, Appropriation and Western Desert Acrylics", in Sue Cramer, *Postmodernism: A Consideration of the Appropriation of Aboriginal Imagery*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 1989, pp.26-34.

historical instances of appropriation in Australia, prior to its postmodern incarnation, serves to highlight the impact of local circumstances upon an international art tendency. I argue that postmodernism facilitated a renewed interest in strategies such as appropriation within an artistic arena but that ultimately, artists in Australia continued to grapple with issues common to Australians since settlement including their position within the greater western world and its history and identity as a colony and subsequent nation. Finally I maintain that in order to analyse these works adequately it is imperative to consider both their colonial legacy and postmodern influence. I look to theories of cultural appropriation in order to highlight the importance of power relations in any discussion of appropriation involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in a colonial and postcolonial environment. To see appropriation as simply a strategy reflecting postmodern trends in Australian art is to oversimplify its significance. Ultimately I suggest that it may be more useful to consider these works as contemporary history paintings, related both to their depiction of history and their engagement in a didactic project aimed at illustrating a different perspective to the one figured in the original image. Such a shift in nomenclature reduces the emphasis on appropriation as merely a postmodern strategy and allows all of the other influences to become visible.

In Part Two I consider the various ways in which these contemporary commentaries on Australian history have been exhibited and how this related to the social and political events of the day. I argue that, although there has been no devoted art historical account of these historically focused appropriations, exhibitions and catalogue essays have advanced our knowledge of the practice and collectively they provide a history of its development. The last two decades of the twentieth century were also characterised by an interest in new curatorial strategies for portraying multiple perspectives.⁵⁷ Appropriative artworks fit within this curatorial rationale for, within the one artwork, at least two perspectives could be expressed, that of the original, quoted work, and that of the artist creating the new work. This was further amplified by the juxtaposition of historical and contemporary works, and, in some instances, the original work and its appropriation. The power of the appropriative work to engage with the past, in the present, was augmented when such contemporary artworks were exhibited alongside their historical counterparts. This section of the thesis is loosely structured around moments in Australian history. I begin by examining official and overtly unofficial exhibitions around the bicentenary of white settlement in 1988. I argue that the exhibitions which demonstrated counternarratives to the official 'celebration', or which incorporated multiple perspectives on what the anniversary meant to individuals, formed a model that was followed by curators in later years. Thus in the 1990s there was a clear move towards examining counternarratives of history through juxtaposition, both in terms of the use of appropriation, and through the physical juxtaposition of works that demonstrated a different perspective on the same subject. By the late 1990s it was clear that the world's eyes

⁵⁷ The idea that the museum should be regarded as a forum for presenting multiple perspectives, especially different cultural perspectives, gained currency at this time. See Ivan Karp & Stephen D. Lavine (eds), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington & London, 1991.

would be on Sydney for the Olympic games and there was much potential to raise international awareness around land rights, the stolen generations, reconciliation, sovereignty and treaties. This period, between the Sydney Olympics and the Centenary of Federation celebrations, saw a marked amount of self reflection, similar to that of the bicentenary celebration, in which Australia's past was questioned in the light of contemporary concerns. I conclude this section by examining exhibitions of appropriative histories in an international context. The purpose of this investigation is to examine the multifaceted ways in which Australian history and identity has been portrayed in different situations.

Part Three details the various ways in which appropriative artworks have brought issues from the past into the present by closely analysing the artworks themselves. I argue that the artworks produced in this period, from the beginning of the 1980s to 2001, were very obviously appropriative. Despite the fact that the viewer may not have been able to name the original work being cited, it was evident that there was a citation involved. So, where a knowledge of the original may have enhanced the viewer's experience of the work, it was not necessary to know of the original in order to gain an understanding of the issues put forward by these works. The section is thematically based around groupings of appropriative histories which utilise similar tactics. I begin by analysing works of art that incorporate western conventions of image-making, including perspectival diagrams, grids, techniques of mapping, measuring and surveying arguing that they are used symbolically to represent colonisation and western hegemony. I then go on to consider appropriative portraits, arguing that portraiture enables a unique and personal examination of shifting identities resulting from the peculiarities of the Australian colonial experience. Appropriative portraiture has not only been used by Indigenous artists as a means of re-inserting an Indigenous perspective into the annals of history (though this has been important) but has also been employed by non-Indigenous artists exploring their own identity and sense of belonging in relation to an Indigenous past. Kitsch reproductions and craft objects are the subject of the final chapter in this part. I argue that craft techniques and kitsch representations provide an accessible means of mediating on a discourse of dispossession that is evident in historical accounts, oral history and importantly, the original images and objects which are the basis of appropriation for the works discussed. It is the very accessible nature of these everyday mediums which provides their effectiveness.

...

This thesis initially developed out of an art historical interest in the work of artists who employed appropriation as a means of critiquing discourses on colonialism.⁵⁸ As such, it was with the art historical archive that my investigations began. In the following pages I outline two of the major writers, Joan Kerr and Rex Butler, whose work forms a backdrop to this

⁵⁸ This thesis is largely restricted to an investigation of appropriation as it is utilised by Australian artists as opposed to the appropriation of fine art objects by others for commercial gain. It is simply beyond the scope of this project and there has been much excellent work in this area already. See Vivien Johnson, *Copyrites: Aboriginal Art in the Age of Reproductive Technologies*, exh.cat., National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association & Macquarie University, Sydney, 1996.

investigation. This initial review is further developed in the following chapters but, for the moment, it serves to chart the development of this thesis, in relation to existing literature, and position it as distinct from that literature.

The work of the late Joan Kerr (1938-2004) provided the initial point of departure for this investigation. Kerr produced a series of papers across a number of years examining the appropriation of historical imagery by Australian artists beginning with a catalogue essay in 1988.⁵⁹ Following this catalogue essay, Kerr's contributions to the subject can be found in three essays between 1996 and 2001. What was significant about her work for this study was that she was interested in how Australian artists had drawn on the archive of Australian art in the process of making new work. By examining such local instances of appropriation Kerr established a lineage of Australian art history that was independent and self-assured, which looked within for inspiration and not to the centres of Europe or America.

Kerr's first paper on the subject, titled "Other Voices: More Stories" (1988), appeared in the catalogue accompanying the show *Stories of Australian Art* which was seen in the United Kingdom during Australia's bicentenary year. The exhibition itself is closely examined in part two of this thesis but for the moment it is relevant to consider Kerr's catalogue essay. After outlining the uneasy relationship between Australian art and its British counterpart Kerr went on to focus her discussion on examples of Australian artworks that have taken other Australian artworks as their basis. Kerr argued that this art historical cross referencing, within the antipodean archive, demonstrated a growing maturity within Australian art and indicated that audiences were now familiar enough with their own history to be able to identify these local appropriations. She argued that:

Martens and Michelangelo, Roberts and Raphael, Glover and Gauguin, von Guerard and van Gogh are not eccentric conjunctions when conjured up in the antipodes; nor is the local reference necessarily secondary.⁶⁰

Kerr then systematically listed examples of Australian artists who had engaged in this form of visual juxtaposition. Her list, which included Imants Tillers, Geoff Lowe and Narelle Jubelin, was expanded upon in 1996 in an article published in *Art & Australia* titled "Colonial Quotations" [Plate 4].⁶¹ Part of the innovation of this essay was Kerr's attempt to position art historical referencing, or appropriation, within the trajectory of world art history. That is, she argued that appropriation was not a peculiarly postmodern phenomenon but rather a long tradition by which artists could align themselves with their forebears. The difference with more recent appropriations of the 1970s and 1980s, she argued, was found to

⁵⁹ Joan Kerr, "Other Voices: More Stories" in Jonathan Watkins, *Stories of Australian Art*, exh.cat., Commonwealth Institute & Australian Studies Centre; London, 1988, pp.45-56. She also noted in 1996 that she developed this topic in a series of lectures she gave in Fine Arts at the Australian National University beginning around 1987. See Joan Kerr, "Colonial Quotations", *Art and Australia*, vol.33 #3, 1996, pp.376-387.

⁶⁰ Kerr, "Other Voices", in Watkins, *Stories of Australian Art*, 1988, p.50.

⁶¹ Kerr, "Colonial Quotations", *Art and Australia*, 1996, pp.376-387.

be in the ambivalence that these mainly non-Indigenous artists felt towards the colonial history from which their appropriations were drawn. She explained this ambivalence thus:

The fact that an image is 'colonial' defines it as belonging to a national oppressor who is internationally oppressed – simultaneously coloniser and colonised – a paradox which doubtless encourages love/hate quotation.⁶²

According to Kerr, it was the fact that these artists produced work that simultaneously revered and parodied their sources that set them apart from artists of earlier epochs. The material presented in "Colonial Quotations" was also included in a conference paper in that same year which would later be published in a collection of papers in 1999.⁶³ The conference out of which this paper grew was devoted to the work of Australian art historian Bernard Smith.⁶⁴ The purpose of Kerr's paper was to analyse the nature of art historical quotation by "seeing which images have been stolen from the past [and] have that theft recognized and question the motives behind it."⁶⁵ Kerr argued that during the 1980s many artists chose only to appropriate the most iconic images from the history of Australian art.

Kerr's final treatise on Australian appropriation art was found in *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture* (2000) in an article simply titled "Appropriation Art".⁶⁶ As is obvious from the location of this article, Kerr focused on the use of appropriation by Indigenous artists highlighting how it has been employed as a means of subverting oppressive colonial ideologies. In this article Kerr lamented the fact that most viewers of the works she discussed would recognise the American references within them before they would be able to identify those from Australian art history or Indigenous culture.⁶⁷ Kerr has argued throughout her work for the privileging of Australian art history as an entity worthy of examination as opposed to being seen as merely a colonial and derivative practice which pales in comparison to the broader western art historical model. She also argues that because there has been a lack of focus on Australian art history within educational sectors there is a general lack of knowledge on the subject. She questions whether appropriative works are thus beyond the comprehension of those who do not recognise the original work. Part of her project has been to bring to light some of these more obscure art historical references by way of providing a point of entry for the unfamiliar viewer.

In addition to Kerr's very specific investigation into the appropriation of historical imagery Rex Butler has been the other major Australian theorist to maintain an interest in appropriation over a sustained period of time. Butler's first major essay on appropriation

⁶² Kerr, "Colonial Quotations", *Art and Australia*, 1996, p.378.

⁶³ Joan Kerr, "Past Present: The Local Art of Colonial Quotation" in Nicholas Thomas & Diane Losche (eds), *Double Vision: Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp.231-51.

⁶⁴ "Reimagining the Pacific: A Conference on Art History and Anthropology in Honour of Bernard Smith", National Library of Australia, 1-4 August, 1996 convened by Nicholas Thomas and Diane Losche.

⁶⁵ Kerr, "Past Present" in Thomas & Losche, *Double Vision*, 1999, p.232.

⁶⁶ Joan Kerr, "Appropriation Art", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, pp.483-488.

⁶⁷ Kerr, "Appropriation Art", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, pp.483-488.

came in the form of an introduction to the anthology *What is Appropriation? An Anthology of Critical Writings on Australian Art in the '80s and '90s* (1996) [Plate 5]. This edited volume is comprised of a number of journal articles and catalogue essays which, cumulatively, chart the development of appropriation as an art practice in Australia. In addition, the rise of Indigenous art, and a focus on identity politics is also more generally documented. The reprinted essays span a twenty-year period from 1974, with the publication of Terry Smith's "The Provincialism Problem" to the mid 1990s. The second half of the book contained a series of commissioned essays and interviews which reflect back on this period and indicate possibilities for future developments.

Beyond merely introducing these essays, Butler presented his own contribution to the field in a lengthy and detailed summation of the period and analysis of the nature of appropriation within an art historical framework. Butler began by drawing the reader's attention to the very ambiguous, paradoxical nature of appropriation by considering the relationship between what is appropriated and the new work. He stated:

The copy at the same time restates the original *and* usurps it, repeats it *and* takes its place. It both makes the originality of the original possible and destroys it. And we could never have one without the other.⁶⁸

This uncertain relationship between the original and the copy, Butler argued, is played out in Australian art of the 1980s whereby it was possible to discern a shift in attitude. This shift moves from a position of seeing the appropriated work "as different from the original" towards being "the same as the original" and finally becomes "at once the same as and different from the original."⁶⁹ It is this change in perception that Butler argued was played out in the art of the 1980s in Australia. He identified three phases of appropriation in Australia, all with requisite examples of exhibitions and critical writings, related to this relationship between the original and the copy. The first phase, was characterised by:

A complete denial of the specificity of Australia and the originality of the work of art, the assertion that it is the context and the productive activity of the spectator that give the work of art its meaning and not the intentions of its creator.⁷⁰

This is an overtly postmodern, nihilistic attitude and, in response to its iconoclastic nature, the second phase of appropriation was, as Butler argued, characterised by a certain reverence for the original and the status of the art object.

The second [phase] was iconic, spoke of the work of art in terms of quality, rules and tradition, did not see the image as merely a 'text' to be decoded or translated.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Rex Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation? An Anthology of Critical Writings on Australian Art in the '80s and '90s*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane and Power Institute, Sydney, 1996, p.15. Original italics.

⁶⁹ Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.15.

⁷⁰ Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.30.

⁷¹ Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.37.

Subsequently Butler came to his third and final stage of appropriation in Australia which he argued is characterised by "banality". The third stage of appropriation was demarcated by a collapsing of the first and second phases; by an acknowledgement that the appropriation is both like and unlike the original. After outlining these phases of appropriation in detail, Butler concluded his essay with a brief discussion of Aboriginality and ethnicity and their relationship to appropriation. This section serves more as an opportunity for Butler to raise issues rather than investigate them, pointing to some of the articles in the anthology for further elucidation. The ultimate question that he builds up to is "whether 'appropriation'... is of any actual help to aborigines in pursuing social and cultural equity."⁷² This is a question which remains unanswered in Butler's essay but provides one of the only points at which his dissertation extends beyond the confines of the art world to consider social issues. Through its focus on the socio-political context, this thesis attempts to address Butler's question.

This myopic concern for art theory was slightly broadened, though still not considerably so, in 2005 with the release of *Radical Revisionism: An Anthology of Writings on Australian Art*, also edited by Butler, as a companion piece to his earlier anthology. Unlike *What is Appropriation*, this collection of papers included a more diverse sample of articles reprinted from as long ago as 1960. Like *What is Appropriation*, it too comprised specially commissioned articles, extracts from books, journal articles and exhibition catalogue essays.⁷³ In his introduction, Butler argued that the period from the mid 1990s until 2005, when the volume was published, was characterised by a radical desire to revise the canon of Australian art.⁷⁴ In particular this revision was conceived of from the perspective of the present in order to create new histories. Butler writes of this new history:

It is a history that is interested in the art of the past only insofar as it is rewritten from the perspective of the present. It is a history that is explicitly constructed from the point of view of this present, that is understood to arise as an effect of what comes after it.⁷⁵

The arguments set forth in this thesis; that history was a major preoccupation of the period, and that artists effectively reinterpreted Australian history through a use of appropriation, are reinforced by Butler's essay.⁷⁶ What Butler's text is lacking, and what this thesis addresses, is an analysis of that art historical material within a broader social and political context. For this interest in historical revisionism, as Butler terms it, was not created in isolation, rather it was the product of radical revisionism across many areas of Australian society – as briefly outlined above. Butler argues that there is a move from, but connection between "post-modern appropriation (with its death of the subject) and post-colonial revisionism (with its 'return of the subject'). In both, there is a kind of reversion from the margin to the centre,

⁷² Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.41.

⁷³ One of these journal articles was Kerr's "Colonial Quotations", *Art and Australia*, 1996, pp.376-387 discussed above.

⁷⁴ This is not an exhaustive account of Butler's contribution to this field but these two essays provide an excellent overview of his position. Others will be discussed in the following pages.

⁷⁵ Rex Butler (ed), *Radical Revisionism: An Anthology of Writings on Australian Art*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2005, p.9.

⁷⁶ *Radical Revisionism* was published after the major research for this thesis had been completed.

from the present to the past."⁷⁷ Butler highlights two aspects of revisionism that he sees operating in Australia. In the first the viewer observes historical events in a nostalgic manner – taking on the view of "some mythical naïve spectator... to look on at events in the past as they actually occurred, bracketing the effects of the history that separates us."⁷⁸ This is contrasted with the view that:

We do not seek to suspend the effects of history but admit we are only part of them, [we] cannot attempt to know the past in itself but only from the vantage point of the present.⁷⁹

This second aspect, Butler argues, enables a connection with the past that is theatrically based, involving the embodiment of a historical figure in order to experience the past. In outlining these approaches to revision within the visual arts, Butler argues that ultimately one of the aims of this revision has been to acknowledge the Indigenous presence within this history of art either "as the true mainstream or to rewrite the history of Australian art from an Indigenous perspective."⁸⁰ This is the point at which Kerr and Butler converge – in that both attempt an analysis of Australian art as discrete from, as opposed to being merely derivative of, international art histories. This has been made possible, in the criticism of the both, through an examination of Indigenous presence and the perspective from which it has been viewed, interpreted and revised.

The work of Kerr and Butler provides the art historical platform for this thesis. They are the two authors who have maintained, through their critical writing, an interest in appropriation within Australia. This is not to deny the importance of other writers, and their contribution to an understanding of appropriation in Australia, but their work will be analysed in later chapters of this thesis. What is evident from the work of Butler and Kerr is that both have been concerned to find a place for appropriation within Australian, and indeed world, art history. Neither was necessarily concerned to delineate how, or whether, this art responded to greater social conditions and it is on this point that the present study goes beyond their initial analysis. It extends their theses firstly by connecting an examination of Australian appropriation with a broader political and social framework. Moreover, this thesis examines a greater cross section of work, through the consideration of exhibitions in Part Two, and the in depth analysis offered in Part Three. It highlights the fact that appropriation, as a strategy, has provided a vital point of intersection between the practices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists that enables a rare opportunity to present a cross-cultural analysis of contemporary Australian art. It is therefore possible to demonstrate that, in addition to being an art world trend, appropriation was deployed in very effective and unique ways in Australia to comment on local circumstances. It did so by bringing the past into the present at a time when an overarching preoccupation with history and identity, as outlined in the first half of this introduction, was discernable. This was a time when debates around Australian history ceased to be contained within the vacuous ether of "the past" and became the subject

⁷⁷ Butler (ed), *Radical Revisionism*, 2005, p.12.

⁷⁸ Butler (ed), *Radical Revisionism*, 2005, p.20.

⁷⁹ Butler (ed), *Radical Revisionism*, 2005, p.20.

⁸⁰ Butler (ed), *Radical Revisionism*, 2005, p.27.

of passionate and impassioned debate. For what was at stake were more than academic or artistic reputations it was the very flesh and blood of the Australian nation – past, present *and* future.

Part One

The art historical context

Part One of this thesis examines the history of postmodern appropriation as it developed in Australia in the 1980s and juxtaposes this against instances of appropriation within Australian art practice before this time. I am concerned to investigate how appropriation developed and why. I argue that, while postmodern appropriation was an important influence on the appropriative artworks created in Australia in the late twentieth century, it was not the only influence.

Chapter One begins by illustrating very early examples of postmodern appropriation in Australia before moving into a discussion of the theories which were used to underpin this new work. I argue that the theory of appropriation, as it developed in America (influenced by French theory), did not address broader artistic or social developments but instead was extremely insular and art world oriented. Nonetheless certain aspects of this theory provide a useful foundation for analysing appropriation in an Australian context.

In Chapter Two I consider how postmodern appropriation was assimilated into an art historical narrative in Australia. I argue that local conditions, such as the intervention of Indigenous and minority voices and a preoccupation with antipodean identity, necessitated a local analysis of the practice which drew on international theories but was not limited to them. The rise of Indigenous art, in particular the work of urban-based Indigenous artists whose work was overtly political, and the growing concern for postcolonial theories also significantly impacted on the type of art produced.

As such, in Chapter Three, I turn my examination to a discussion of historical instances of appropriation in Australia, prior to its postmodern incarnation, which serves to highlight the impact of local circumstances upon an international art tendency. I argue that postmodernism facilitated a renewed interest in strategies such as appropriation within an artistic arena but that, ultimately, artists in Australia continued to grapple with issues common to Australians since settlement – that is, Australia's position within the greater western world and, related to this, its history and identity as a colony and subsequent nation. I maintain that in order to analyse these works adequately it is imperative to consider both their colonial legacy and postmodern influence. I look to theories of cultural appropriation in order to highlight the importance of power relations in any discussion of appropriation involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in a colonial and postcolonial environment. To see appropriation as simply a strategy reflecting postmodern trends in Australian art is to vastly oversimplify its significance.

Ultimately, in Chapter Four, I suggest that it is more useful to consider these works as appropriative history paintings, related both to their depiction of history and their engagement, in a didactic project aimed at illustrating a different perspective to the dominant one figured in the original image. Such a shift in nomenclature reduces the emphasis on appropriation as merely a postmodern strategy and allows all of the other influences, illustrated in this part of the thesis, to become visible.

Chapter One

Introducing postmodern appropriation

Underneath each picture there is always another picture.¹

The young of today belong to the Post-Modern age, for whom, it is said, no step is new, every thought is second-hand, re-creation is the norm.²

Such was the rhetoric of postmodernism in the 1980s. A number of tendencies characterised this postmodernist attitude which could be traced back through the philosophical writings of a number of theorists. These included a lack of faith in grand narratives of society (such as the Enlightenment), as espoused by Jean Francois Lyotard, and manifested in the fracturing of knowledge into more localised narratives that did not seek ultimate, universal, truth.³ The role of the author was also challenged by structuralists who argued that texts were not the product of a single author but rather were composites of many already existing texts reformulated within a "new" work. Julia Kristeva called this "intertextuality"⁴ whereas Roland Barthes declared this phenomenon to be the "Death of the Author".⁵ Drawing attention away from the role of the author, as singular producer, allowed for a myriad of interpretations of any given text and a shift in focus to that of the reader, or viewer, who possessed the ability to create unique meanings for texts in relation to their own perspective. Decoding the meanings of multi-layered texts became the work of poststructuralists such as Jacques Derrida in his form of analysis termed deconstruction.⁶ Poststructuralism pivoted on the fact that observers are always implicated in the very structures that they are attempting to objectively observe. Thus to venture into the realm of interpretation meant acknowledging that it is impossible to be outside of the system. For students of the visual arts this shift in philosophical attitude resulted in a crisis of representation – no originality was possible anyway so there was no need to strive for it – reproduction and simulation were the end results. Within this intertextual web of postmodernism, the sociologist Jean Baudrillard argued, there was in fact no source, or original, and copies were in fact copies of non-

¹ Douglas Crimp, "Pictures", *October*, vol.8, Spring, 1979, p.87.

² Nick Waterlow, "Origins, Originality + Beyond", *Origins Originality + Beyond: The Sixth Biennale of Sydney*, exh.cat., The Biennale of Sydney Limited, Sydney, 1986, p.11.

³ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1979, Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi (trns), University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

⁴ Kristeva first coined the term "intertextuality" within an analysis of Mikhail Bakhtin. See Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel", 1969 reprinted in Toril Moi (ed), *The Kristeva Reader*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1986, pp.34-61.

⁵ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", *Image – Music – Text*, Fontana Paperbacks, London, 1977, pp.142-148.

⁶ For a discussion of how deconstruction has been employed in the analysis of artworks see: Peter Brunette & David Wills (eds), *Deconstruction in the Visual Arts*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.

existent originals; simulacrum representing a hyperreality.⁷ What is significant from this discussion is the emphasis on the inability to create new images, a nihilistic sense that there is nothing original and all that remains is quotation and interpretation.

This is the backdrop to early instances of appropriation in Australia to be examined in the first part of this chapter before moving onto a discussion of the international framework within which Australian appropriation has been viewed. This first chapter seeks to determine what appropriation is, how it came into being and how it was theorised in relation to postmodernism. I argue that Australian appropriation developed in response to local conditions but that international theory provided an important framework for Australian theorists to begin to analyse such work.

Early Australian appropriation

According to one account of postmodernism and appropriation "the debut of Australian appropriationists took place in 1982 on the occasion of an exhibition curated by the late Paul Taylor at the National Gallery of Australia, Melbourne."⁸ The exhibition was *Popism* and it included the work of fourteen artists / collaborators [Plate 6].⁹ Of these artists, Juan Davila and Imants Tillers would go on to make important contributions both visually and textually, to debates on appropriation in Australia – ultimately linked to debates around postmodernism, provincialism and national identity.¹⁰ Both artists had come from migrant backgrounds and issues of place and identity pervaded their work. Tillers' was born in Australia to Latvian parents who had migrated from a Displaced Persons camp following the Second World War.¹¹ Davila had come to Australia from his homeland of Chile in 1974, then ruled by the Pinochet dictatorship. He continued to travel between the two countries and his work demonstrates this hybrid cultural identity. While other artists in the exhibition such as Maria Kozic and Jenny Watson employed appropriation, their work was not concerned with history and identity in the same way that Tillers' and Davila's work was. Nor did they remain as committed to a practice founded on the premise of appropriation.

At the time of *Popism* contemporary art was seen as challenging, even obscure. In the exhibition catalogue for this show, Patrick McCaughey, the director of the NGV, preempted the audience's response and encouraged them to accept the challenges presented by this new work. He stated that:

⁷ Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations", (1981) in Michael Poster (ed), *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 1988, pp.166-184.

⁸ Coulter-Smith, *The Postmodern Art of Imants Tillers*, 2002, p.77.

⁹ The show displayed the work of Howard Arkley, David Chesworth, Ian Cox, Juan Davila, Richard Dunn, Paul Fletcher, Maria Kozic, Robert Rooney, Jane Stevenson, The Society for Other Photography, Imants Tillers, Peter Tyndall, Jenny Watson and ↗↑↗.

¹⁰ Both artists drew on their multicultural heritage in the creation of their works. Both artists also had retrospective exhibitions in 2006. See Deborah Hart (ed), *Imants Tillers: One World Many Visions*, exh.cat., National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2006; Guy Brett & Roger Benjamin, *Juan Davila*, exh.cat., Miegunyah Press, Carlton, Vic. in association with Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2006.

¹¹ Curnow, *Imants Tillers and the 'Book of Power'*, 1998, p.9.

One crucial function of a public gallery is to provide a bridge between the living artist and the community which is frequently baffled by the experimental edge of art. Discovering contemporary art can be a challenge.¹²

The works in the show were executed in a variety of media including Super 8 films, sound recordings, performances, photographs and paintings. Within the catalogue essay Taylor highlighted two areas of commonality amongst the artworks on display – their use of quotation and the influence of photography and reproducibility.¹³ This was seen in Juan Davila's *Hysterical Tears* (1979) [Plate 7] where fine art was one of the subjects of appropriation. In this large-scale, nine panel painting, Davila catalogued his sources by providing an index of them for the viewer's convenience (in which he also included an entry for himself). As Taylor explained:

Everything is apparent: the sources of all images, an easily understood arrangement (following the methods of comic-strips and photo-novels) and a very direct mode of address. Davila's paintings aren't hiding anything; it's all there, offering itself shamelessly to our gaze.¹⁴

This was blatant appropriation with instructions. Davila's practice was grounded in the disruption of dominant mythologies, such as the history of art, by the incursion of incommensurable elements like pornographic imagery. He pillaged the annals of modern art and recontextualised its stars by placing them in compromising, often sexual, positions. But his art also levelled the playing field; Lichtenstein, Miro, and Hockney were placed in the same context as pornographic, comic book and mass-media images – all alongside the artist's own contributions.

This was also a strategy that Imants Tillers would employ, appropriating from modern masters and lesser-known artists alike, and positioning them alongside each other within his canvas board system.¹⁵ In *Suppressed Imagery* (1981) [Plates 8 & 9], displayed in *Popism*, some of his sources included drawings of illustrations from a Latvian children's book alongside details from a postcard of the Basilica of St Francis at Assisi which Tillers had purchased while there in 1979.¹⁶ The use of Latvian illustrations was also a personal reference related to his multicultural heritage as the son of Latvian immigrants displaced by war. His *52 Displacements (Of Image, Of Time, Of Water, Of Feeling, One Year's Work)* (1979-80) also relied on appropriation highlighting the second-hand nature of international art images within Australia. Tillers copied reproductions of original paintings by the

¹² Patrick McCaughey, *Popism*, exh.cat., National Gallery of Victoria, 1982, front cover.

¹³ Paul Taylor, *Popism*, 1982, p.1.

¹⁴ Paul Taylor, "Introduction" in Paul Taylor (ed) *Hysterical Tears: Juan Davila*, Greenhouse Publications, Richmond, Vic., 1985, p.7.

¹⁵ The canvas board system refers to Tillers' 'Book of Power' in which all his works are sequentially numbered according to their order of production. Most often they are executed on readymade canvas boards which are hung to form paintings or stacked and exhibited as sculptural pieces. This system is marked by its open ended nature and the possibility of an infinity of combinations. Tillers began this project in 1981 with *Suppressed Imagery*, the work exhibited in *Popism*. See Curnow, *Imants Tillers and the 'Book of Power'*, 1998 and Coulter-Smith, *The Postmodern Art of Imants Tillers*, 2002.

¹⁶ Curnow, *Imants Tillers and the 'Book of Power'*, 1998, pp.75-6.

American artist Frederick Waugh which were published in a book on painting techniques.¹⁷ This uneasy relationship between international arenas of art and their appropriation was also a point of criticism directed at Taylor.

The art critic Memory Holloway accused Taylor of creating a "false unity" between these works arguing that, through his catalogue essay, he drew on international theories of appropriation not necessarily relevant to the works themselves. This, she claimed, had resulted in "a mystification of difficult ideas"¹⁸ gleaned from other sources and pastiched together in an incongruous manner. Holloway argued against Taylor's reliance upon the theories generated by international writers primarily because she saw the artworks as "a response to localised conditions."¹⁹ Holloway did not however, expand upon how these works were specifically 'local' rather than international – and this is a question that this thesis will pursue in later chapters.

Perhaps this criticism is one that Taylor accepted, for he wrote a follow-up article, "Popism – The Art of White Aborigines",²⁰ in which he argued much more clearly for the Australian accent of these works. Taylor began this later essay by recounting how the idea of the show came into being – an Australian anecdote – suggesting not that the show was about photography or quotation (as the first essay had suggested) but rather "as a celebration of surveillance as a public reality in Australia."²¹ This anecdote was used to draw attention to the place of the individual within the globalised, image-saturated world of the mass media – "of seeing and being seen."²² To begin with such a parable also drew attention to fact that this issue of mass-media domination and surveillance was not merely a local one but one that was relevant internationally. He went on to note the alienation of Australian culture, both spatially and conceptually, from more established cultural centres resulting in the proliferation of "mediated" images and reproductions rather than originals. Rather than seeing this mediation as negative Taylor suggested that the artists he amassed in *Popism* "sought to reverse the shame of earlier generations concerning cultural alienation and instead to exploit that alienation."²³

This uneasy nexus between the external influences of global concepts such as postmodernism, and their relationship to localised practice has been a preoccupation of Australian art and art writing for many years. The subheading of Taylor's later essay, "The Art of White Aborigines", recalls an essay by Tillers published in *Art & Text* in the same

¹⁷ Curnow, *Imants Tillers and the 'Book of Power'*, 1998, p.17.

¹⁸ Memory Holloway, "Review of Popism", *Art Network*, #7, 1982 in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.92.

¹⁹ Holloway, "Review of Popism", 1982 in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.92.

²⁰ Paul Taylor, "Popism – The Art of White Aborigines", *On The Beach*, #1, 1982 reprinted in Butler, *What Is Appropriation*, 1996, pp.85-7.

²¹ Taylor, "Popism – The Art of White Aborigines", 1982 in Butler, *What Is Appropriation*, 1996, p.85.

²² Taylor, "Popism – The Art of White Aborigines", 1982 in Butler, *What Is Appropriation*, 1996, p.85.

²³ Taylor, "Popism – The Art of White Aborigines", 1982 in Butler, *What Is Appropriation*, 1996, p.85.

year.²⁴ Tillers' article primarily responded to Terry Smith's essay "The Provincialism Problem" in which he argued that peripheral regions were always fixed in a subservient bind to cultural centres where taste and innovation were conceived.²⁵ I will return to discuss these articles in more detail in Chapter Two but for the moment it is important to note that Taylor's reference to Tillers, and by implication Smith, suggests a concerted effort to position himself, and the artworks he gathered together, within this international/local discourse. From this we may return to Holloway's criticism in order to ask; what was, and perhaps still is, the relationship between international theories of appropriation and their application within an Australian context?²⁶ To ascertain the answer to this question we must first consider how appropriation was employed elsewhere and what was written about it.

The impact of international theories and practices of appropriation on Australian art

To peruse the comprehensive bibliography which accompanied Taylor's essay reveals three major influences; American postmodern writers, French structuralist and post-structuralist theorists, and Australian writers – many of whom were published in, or associated with *Art & Text* – the journal that Taylor started in 1981. Taylor's influential position as editor of this magazine between 1981 and 1983 also meant that his interests were easily disseminated through its pages. As Adrian Martin has highlighted, Taylor clearly identified his theoretical allegiances through his editorial comments.²⁷

One of these interests was in a group of American postmodern writers, including Rosalind Krauss, Hal Foster, Douglas Crimp and the late Craig Owens²⁸ – all associated with the journal *October* – who were writing on issues of originality, authenticity and reproducibility at the time of *Popism*. These theorists have contributed a major body of literature on appropriation and it is worth diverging from Australia at this point to examine their contributions. Their writing can be seen as an alternative, almost parallel, body of literature to that produced in Australia which, while it may not have impacted on the art produced initially, certainly provided a framework for critical responses to that work at the time and subsequently. As Graham Coulter-Smith has argued:

The theoretical frameworks used [by New York theorists] to analyse appropriationism in the early 1980s can be understood as parallel texts that have no direct input into the production of early appropriationist art. Yet these parallel texts are extremely important because they provide highly

²⁴ Imants Tillers, "Locality Fails", *Art & Text*, #6, Winter, 1982, in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, pp.139-144.

²⁵ Terry Smith, "The Provincialism Problem", *Art Forum*, vol.13 #1, September 1974 reprinted in Rex Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation*, 1996, pp.131-138.

²⁶ This was also a question that was asked by Coulter-Smith in relation to Tillers' work which he argues, despite being based on appropriation, is "highly original" and distinct from appropriation elsewhere. Coulter-Smith, *The Postmodern Art of Imants Tillers*, 2002, p.2.

²⁷ See Adrian Martin, "Before and After *Art & Text*", *Agenda* 2, 1988, reprinted in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.110.

²⁸ By no means were these the only critics concerned with these issues at the time. Others including, but not limited to, Benjamin Buchloh and Abigail Solomon Godeau, also made important contributions to this discourse. It is not, however, my intention to provide a minutely detailed account of the theoretical underpinnings of postmodern appropriation in terms of international art history. Rather I am concerned to situate Australian appropriation within an international context.

coherent and theoretically sophisticated conceptual frameworks for understanding appropriationism.²⁹

Moreover, they provided theoretical fodder for Australian writers, like Taylor, who were themselves in the position of interpreting this new art practice which was based around the recontextualisation of existing images.³⁰ By analysing this literature it is also possible to establish the postmodern/international art historical framework within which the appropriative works discussed in subsequent chapters can be viewed.³¹

These *October* writers were concerned with addressing the work of a select group of artists who were seen as pioneering appropriation in New York.³² Most notable of these artists were Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, Richard Prince and Barbara Kruger.³³ Often exhibiting together, they were associated with Metro Pictures gallery in New York. Their work was quite different, aesthetically and theoretically, from the Australian work that has been discussed so far. As we have seen both Davila and Tillers drew on the archives of fine art, as well as their own personal image bank, in creating paintings that commented on their place, as Australians, within the larger schema of art history. Their work prefigured the larger Australian preoccupation with identity (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, as well as migrant) and place which unfolded as the decade progressed. The Metro Pictures artists predominantly employed photography, and photographically based mediums, and appropriated images from mass media and popular culture – critiquing their overarching influence in determining cultural norms. Cindy Sherman produced highly constructed photographs that appropriated the aesthetic of film stills depicting women in generic poses [Plate 10]. This early work critiqued the stereotypical role of women, as depicted in this media, by at once presenting the images as generic but strangely familiar alerting the viewer to the fact that these roles are precisely that – stereotypical. Barbara Kruger provided a feminist critique of mass culture images by employing punchy advertising-like slogans which were sometimes ambiguous such as "You have **searched** and **destroyed**" and in some

²⁹ Coulter-Smith, *The Postmodern Art of Imants Tillers*, 2002, p.51.

³⁰ While Taylor's essay is being used as an example of the way that Australian writers on appropriation were assimilating the ideas of international theorists within their analysis it is certainly not the only example that could have been chosen. The ways that international theories on postmodernism were dispersed were many and varied. For example, excerpts from essays by Craig Owens and Hal Foster were cited in the artist pages of the 1984 *Biennale of Sydney* catalogue, and in the 1986 *Biennale of Sydney* excerpts from essays by Rosalind Krauss and Hal Foster were reprinted in the main text as part of the theoretical framework for the show.

³¹ This is particularly important for the unique tripartite structure of this study which is concerned to situate these works within the different environments in which they function. That is, collectively as an art historical phenomenon, socio-politically as components of exhibitions which present a particular argument and finally as individual works that, when seen in light of the first two parts of this thesis, exhibit their own patterns and connections.

³² Of course these 'pioneering' artists are actually part of what John C. Welchman has called the "second horizon of appropriation". The "first horizon" was comprised of post Second World War artists associated with neo-Dadaism and Pop art who rejected the "gestural and formalist painterly values of European-type modernism and American Abstract Expressionism". John C. Welchman, *Art After Appropriation: Essays on Art in the 1990s*, G + B Arts International, Amsterdam, 2001, p.9.

³³ While these were the central artists some others operating within this group included, Louise Lawler, Martha Rosler, Jenny Holzer, Troy Brauntuch and Robert Longo.

cases extremely direct - "It's a **small world** but not if you have to clean it" [Plate 11].³⁴ These were printed over appropriated photographs of triumphant (male) moments in science and art. Richard Prince also used images from the realm of mass culture, in his case advertising images [Plate 12]. By enlarging or cropping the images they became devoid of their original purpose and the subjects depicted, rather than the products advertised, became the focus of the work. Finally, Sherrie Levine boldly re-photographed advertising images as well as the work of iconic American photographers such as Walker Evans and Eliot Porter and presented the resulting images as her own, thus calling into question the originality of her images as well as those of the photographers whose work she appropriated [Plate 13].

It was the theoretical motivation purported to be behind the work of these artists, however, that theorists like Taylor took on board and it is worth exploring their central arguments in order to ascertain how they relate to Australian postmodern appropriation. Douglas Crimp was one of the first of these theoreticians to engage with strategies of appropriation in the catalogue essay for an exhibition reprinted, in an expanded and updated form, in the journal *October* in 1979.³⁵ In the reprinted essay Crimp argued that the most prominent feature of the new and innovative work he was seeing in New York was its use of "recognizable images."³⁶

This tendency gained momentum and Crimp continued his interest in appropriation, and this group of artists, in subsequent years with his article "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism"³⁷ and another catalogue essay "Appropriating Appropriation".³⁸ It was in the later essay that Crimp presented his thesis on appropriation in a more cohesive form. He compared what he called progressive and regressive appropriation, or, what could equally be called postmodern appropriation and influence. The main distinction that he outlined between the two was that regressive appropriation looked to the past and appropriated *style* whereas progressive appropriation, which he equated with postmodernism, directed its attention towards the present and appropriated *media*. One of the examples he used to argue his case was a comparison between the photographers, Sherrie Levine (progressive) and Robert Mapplethorpe (regressive). In this comparison, Crimp argued that Mapplethorpe's photographs drew on many sources to create "a synthetic 'personal' vision" that did not

³⁴ Interestingly in 2001 Kruger was actually taken to court over her use of the photographic background in the work *Untitled (It's a small world but not if you have to clean it)* (1990). The original photograph was taken by a German photographer Thomas Hoepker and depicted Charlotte Dabney. Both Hoepker and Dabney sued Kruger for copyright infringement and violation of privacy respectively. The case was dismissed in light of changes to the USA's copyright laws which came into effect too late to protect Hoepker's copyright. See David Ebony, "Kruger Case Explained", *Art in America*, November 2002, vol.90 #11, pp.45-7.

³⁵ The exhibition, *Pictures*, included the work of Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo and Philip Smith and was on display at the Artists Space gallery in New York in 1977. Crimp, "Pictures", 1979, pp.75-85.

³⁶ Crimp, "Pictures", 1979, p.75.

³⁷ Douglas Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism", *October*, #15, Winter 1980, pp.91-101.

³⁸ Douglas Crimp, "Appropriating Appropriation", D. Crimp & P. Marincola, *Image Scavengers: Photography*, exh.cat., Institute of Contemporary Arts, Philadelphia, 1982 reprinted in D. Crimp, *On The Museum's Ruins*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Massachusetts, 1993, pp.126-137.

disrupt the history of photography but rather slotted itself into, and built upon, that very history.³⁹ On the contrary, Levine did not synthesise past styles but rather called into question the very characteristics of the medium within which she worked. Crimp argued that in her photographs of Edward Weston's photographs, where she simply re-photographed his works and presented them as her own under the title *Untitled (After Edward Weston)* (1980), she challenged the accepted conventions of artistic creativity as well as reflecting on appropriation itself. Levine's appropriation was thus seen as a postmodern commentary on the notion of originality and authorship "through her refusal to reinvent an image."⁴⁰ In fact, Crimp and others would argue that she *could not* reinvent an image: that, in the highly image-saturated world of 1980s postmodernity, it was impossible to create any new images. This was in line with Barthes' proposed "Death of the Author", which had a profound influence on art theory by, among other things, calling creativity into question. Barthes argued that a text, and the same could be said of an artwork:

is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations.⁴¹

Levine was merely truncating the process by revealing her sources rather than concealing them. The artist was dead too.

One critic who took issue with Levine's work, and its deconstructive interpretation offered by Crimp, was Linda Andre.⁴² Andre argued that, rather than commenting on the image saturated nature of society, this work in fact ostracised its viewers. She took Crimp's own example, the photographs of Sherrie Levine, to substantiate this argument and prove their inaccessibility. She set up a scenario in which three viewers observe these works. The first viewer is not familiar with poststructuralist theories and simply views Levine's works as originals. The second viewer recognises the work of the original photographer and sees Levine's works as copies but does not understand the motivation. The third viewer is well versed in theory, familiar with Levine's work and sees them as a comment on the constructed nature of the original image in a world where there is nothing but copies. Andre in turn argued that the third viewer is seen as superior to the first two who are positioned within a "hierarchy of looks." As such, this limited the impact of the critique presented in the work to "a tiny elite already in sympathy with its message."⁴³

This "hierarchy of looks" which Andre presented is important for a consideration of appropriation here – what are the implications of an art which, contrary to other art perhaps, has a 'correct' way of viewing it. And, how (or indeed is) this art effective when it is not

³⁹ Crimp, "Appropriating Appropriation", 1982 in Crimp, *On The Museum's Ruins*, 1993, p.129.

⁴⁰ Crimp, *On The Museum's Ruins*, 1993, p.6.

⁴¹ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", *Image – Music – Text*, Fontana Paperbacks, London, 1977, p.146.

⁴² Linda Andre, "The Politics of Postmodern Photography", *Afterimage*, vol.13 #3, October 1985, p.15.

⁴³ Andre, "The Politics of Postmodern Photography", 1985, p.15.

viewed in the prescribed manner? This is a point that has also been made by Joan Kerr – that appropriative works require an educated audience to understand the pun⁴⁴ – and it is clear that in the case of Levine this is a problematic situation. However, as we have seen in the work of Davila [Plate7], his use of extremely recognisable images, and the fact that he labelled each of his sources, negates this argument and in turn reinserts a sense of parity amongst viewers – it is difficult not to recognise a Roy Lichtenstein image, for example, when it is clearly labelled as such on the canvas. While Australian appropriators may not all be as forward as Davila in acknowledging their sources, few artists are as ambiguous as Sherrie Levine. Moreover, because much of the imagery discussed in this thesis is sourced from historical 'originals', and because it has been the intention of the artists to illustrate some shift between that past image and the present appropriation, it is more obvious that the new work references an existing image. This is intensified by the fact that, unlike in America where images from the mass media formed the core of images appropriated by contemporary artists, in Australia it was the realm of art history that was pillaged. This trend of the 1980s, which saw more Australian artists appropriating from the realm of fine art "than was the case in New York or London", has also been noted by Coulter-Smith.⁴⁵

Despite the mass media origins of much American appropriation, two theorists who took the canon of art history into account – to a far greater degree than Crimp – were Craig Owens and Rosalind Krauss. Both situated their analysis of this then current work (they discuss many of the same artists as Crimp) within a historical trajectory and, in a sense, it becomes an orthodox part of the historical progression of art. Each did so with a different focus; for Krauss it was the discussion of originality and repetition, and for Owens the place of allegory in contemporary art.⁴⁶

Owens came to appropriation through a broader formulation of his theory of postmodernism in his essay "The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism."⁴⁷ Within this piece he systematically outlined the characteristics of allegory that he saw as evident in contemporary art – "appropriation, site specificity, impermanence, accumulation, discursivity, hybridization" – in order to argue that it was possible, through the use of allegory, to identify "a single, coherent impulse" within postmodernist art.⁴⁸ Moreover, he argued that allegorical impulses were evident within Modernist art and that it was in art's interpretation that allegory was suppressed. While allegory was his main subject, Owens' insights into appropriation are extremely significant here. In aligning allegory with appropriated imagery he argued that allegory is characterised by "its capacity to rescue from historical oblivion that which threatens to disappear."⁴⁹ As such it is the unique ability of

⁴⁴ See Kerr, "Colonial Quotations", 1996, p.380.

⁴⁵ Coulter-Smith, *The Postmodern Art of Imants Tillers*, 2002, pp.8-9.

⁴⁶ Benjamin Buchloh's "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and montage in contemporary art" *Artforum*, vol.21 #1, 1982 responded to Owens' discussion of allegory as a resurgent quality of postmodernist art practice.

⁴⁷ Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a theory of postmodernism" *October*, #12, Spring 1980, pp.67-86 and #13, Summer 1980, pp.59-80.

⁴⁸ Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse", 1980, p.75.

⁴⁹ Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse", 1980, p.68.

allegory, and within that appropriated images, to bring the past into the present. This was an important part of his analysis – Owens' actually began his paper with a quote from Walter Benjamin which stated that; "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably."⁵⁰ So the appropriative artworks that he considers were ascribed even more importance because of the fact that they were engaged in preserving images of the past. Moreover, allegorical imagery was seen as interpretative – playing a crucial role in the interpretation of meaning for contemporary audiences – "allegory becomes a model of all commentary, all critique, insofar as these are involved in rewriting a primary text."⁵¹ When this "commentary" occurred in visual arts it was manifested as appropriation – for the appropriationist "interprets" images by "confiscating" them. This point provided an intersection of sorts with the work of Krauss, for in it we see the renunciation of originality; the artist / allegorist / appropriator is merely an interpreter of already existing images.

For Krauss, the importance of postmodernism lay in originality, and the fact that much postmodern work played on, or undercut, this very concept of originality. She certainly did not, however, confine her discussion to an examination of postmodernism. Krauss also wrote on the nineteenth century Orientalist Jean August Dominique Ingres as well as the sculpture of Rodin and on movements such as Surrealism and Minimalism. The essay for which she is perhaps most famous is "The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition."⁵² In this piece she did not write a theory of postmodernism but rather a theory of art based around notions of originality and repetition.⁵³ She showed that repetition had always been an integral component of avant-garde art but that this aspect of the work had been repressed due to the perception that it was the antithesis of originality. Krauss' central argument is that the 'discourse of the copy' is generally repressed in art, despite the fact that it has remained ever present. After setting up this discourse on originality and its relation to repetition, she turned her attention toward the then present and posited the following question: "What would it look like to not repress the concept of the copy?"⁵⁴ It comes as no surprise that the answer was Sherrie Levine who was part of the "group of younger artists"⁵⁵ discussed by both Crimp and Owens. In a similar way to Crimp, Krauss argues that the Weston photographs which Levine rephotographed are already complicit in the discourse of the copy by their relation to (or copying of) Greek historical sculptures. Levine therefore is merely continuing, and most importantly making explicit, this discourse.

⁵⁰ Walter Benjamin cited in Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse", 1980, p.67. Coincidentally, Rex Butler also uses this quotation as the opening of his introduction to *Radical Revisionism*.

⁵¹ Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse", 1980, p.69.

⁵² Rosalind Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition", *October*, #18, Autumn 1981, pp.47-66.

⁵³ Roger Benjamin has also considered the place of copying in western art history. See Roger Benjamin, "Recovering Authors: The Modern Copy, Copy Exhibitions and Matisse", *Art History*, vol.12 #2, June 1989, pp.116-201.

⁵⁴ Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde", 1981, p.64.

⁵⁵ Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde", 1981, p.64.

It is no coincidence that Levine keeps recurring in these authors' analysis of appropriation and postmodernism. Indeed, the fact that their criticism was extremely self-referential was a point made by Andre. Within this body of literature, there is no broad analysis of how appropriation was employed by different artists in different circumstances.⁵⁶ Rather than continuing this myopic vision of appropriation, the present study aims to take a particular type of artistic production – that which uses appropriation to interrogate narratives of colonialism – and fully examine its use across a range of examples the majority of which occur over a twenty-year period from the early 1980s up until 2001. Moreover, I will endeavour to ascertain how this art practice has been influenced by wider socio-political concerns in order to come to a fully integrated analysis of this form of appropriation within Australian society.

Conclusion

It has been useful to analyse these American discourses on appropriation for, in addition to providing an art historical framework in which to view examples of Australian appropriation, this discussion has also been used to illustrate what is absent from such an art historical model. Within the writing of these theorists there was no concern for present day affairs and this is, in part what this thesis seeks to amend within its own examples.

In this chapter I began by citing early examples of appropriation found in the exhibition *Popism*. It was noted that this show's curator, Paul Taylor, relied heavily on the theoretical analysis of appropriation in journals such as *October*. On closer investigation of these influential articles it has been found that while there are elements of their analysis that are pertinent to a discussion of appropriation in Australia, and as we will see in more detail in the following chapter, the way artists in Australia employed appropriation was quite different to their New York counterparts. This in turn necessitated a more localised theoretical investigation into appropriation as an antipodean practice.

A number of important points from the theorisation of appropriation in America do transcend borders and apply to the underlying framework of appropriated imagery. From Owens, we take that the appropriated image, through its reference to an existing work, is afforded the unique opportunity of bringing the past (original) and the present (appropriation) into focus within the one frame. Thus the appropriation always draws attention to the original image which has been appropriated, prompting the viewer to ask why that particular work was chosen and is there a shift between original and appropriation. Moreover, broader philosophical critiques also became important for an analysis of appropriation in the 1980s and will be elaborated upon in the following chapter with a specific focus on their influence on Australian appropriative theory. In addition, in returning our attention to Australia, notions of originality and repetition must be seen in relation to the long history of

⁵⁶ For example the work of Jimmie Durham or David Salle, who have each been discussed for their use of appropriation, but this has been isolated from this dominant *October* discourse. Later studies, such as Welchman's *Art After Appropriation*, brings together some of these artists in a more comprehensive summation of the type of appropriation that was occurring in the USA at the time.

provincialism, and mimicking international art styles, that Terry Smith set out as "The Provincialism Problem" in 1974 — this is our point of departure for the following chapter.

Chapter Two

Theorising and practicing appropriation in Australia

One of the most ironic problems in Australia for anyone studying art is that of the 'original'. Art History is taught almost exclusively from slides and reproductions.¹

By the time the appropriation debate was raging in international arenas, Australian artists and theorists had already begun to recognise that imitation had underpinned its cultural production for much of its history – a fact clearly articulated in the 1970s by Terry Smith in his seminal essay "The Provincialism Problem" (1974).² In this chapter I add to the review of literature from the previous chapter by examining early Australian literature on postmodern appropriation with a particular focus on wider local concerns for provincialism and as such emulation and the original. It is an aim of this chapter to highlight the particularly local inflections that Australian artists brought to their work through the practice of appropriation. Moreover this local inflection is also evident in the theorisation of appropriation.

Terry Smith positioned Australian artists within a perpetual process of imitation and aspiration as a result of their provincial status – subordinate to art 'centres' like New York – in "The Provincialism Problem". Smith argued that Australian art had been characterised by its "variations on the theme of dependence" through which original art styles developed elsewhere had found their way to Australian shores where they were subsequently simulated.³ Thus provincial regions were found to be always outside of, but aspiring to be like, the actual centre.⁴ Smith went on to chart the relationship of exchange and emulation that had occurred between Australia and its dominant international influences. For Smith, New York was the art centre in the mid-1970s to which Australian artists aspired, however, he also highlighted the fact that within New York itself, all but a few artists were similarly regarded as provincial. By this he meant that most artists operating out of that city were outside the core group who, at any given time, were considered the height of the avant-garde.⁵ Smith's article has a great bearing on any discussion of the art produced in Australia

¹ Judy Annear, *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, exh.cat., George Paton Gallery, Melbourne, 7-28th July, 1982 reprinted in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation*, 1996, p.97.

² Smith, "The Provincialism Problem", 1974 in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation*, 1996, pp.131-138.

³ Smith, "The Provincialism Problem", 1974 in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation*, 1996, p.131.

⁴ It is important to note, and Smith does so in a later article, that he was writing from the very centre that was the subject of his article. Smith was based in New York at the time where he was involved in the Art & Language group. Terry Smith, "Provincialism Refigured", *Australian and International Art Monthly*, #13, August 1988, p.4.

⁵ The machinations of which were exposed in the previous chapter whereby a small group of artists were promoted by an influential group of critics.

during this period for it articulates the underlying and tense situation that Australian artists experienced whereby:

Their worlds are replete with tensions between two antithetical terms: a defiant urge towards localism (a claim for the possibility and validity of 'making good original art right here') and a reluctant recognition that the generative innovations in art, and the criteria for standards of 'quality', 'originality', 'interest', 'forcefulness', etc., are determined externally.⁶

By the 1980s, under the influence of postmodernism and theorists such as Roland Barthes, and with the demise of modernist notions of originality outlined in the previous chapter, Smith's 'problem' was inverted. Australia, as far removed from the art world centre, became a blank canvas onto which reproductions and second-hand revisions were eagerly assimilated into a local practice. This demonstrated a major shift from Smith's argument – that hybridised art forms made for a "weaker" practice⁷ – to an embracing of that hybrid identity made possible through a use of appropriation and the eschewal of originality.⁸

Imants Tillers responded directly to Smith's article in the form of artworks such as *Conversations with the Bride* (1974-5) [Plate 14], which combined appropriated imagery of the Australian landscape painter Hans Heysen with aspects of Marcel Duchamp's *The Large Glass* (1915-1923). He also responded to this 'problem' in articles like "Locality Fails" (1982) and "In Perpetual Mourning" (1984).⁹ In particular he argued that Australian art at the time was characterised by the primacy of regionalism "over the formerly popular and derogatory expression 'provincialism'."¹⁰ This elevation of the idea of regionalism was predicated on the fact that Indigenous Australian art was beginning to make inroads into the mainstream art world via its exhibition in major survey shows such as the *Biennale of Sydney* and *Perspecta*. Tillers did not, however, present a simple argument for the originality of Australian art based on this local content. Rather he took on board Smith's concept of the transmission of ideas, in Smith's case from the centre to the periphery, and argued for the potential of the periphery to influence the centre in subtle yet significant ways. He did so by employing Bell's Theorem, a theory borrowed from quantum mechanics, which disproved the theory of local causes – whereby there is an identifiable pathway of cause and effect (ie: ideas are transmitted through people, journals etc. from metropolitan centres to peripheral outposts where those ideas are taken up). Instead Bell's Theorem posited that:

There can be unexplained connectedness between events in different 'space-like separated' places and that this connectedness allows, for example, an experimenter (e.g., an artist) in one space to affect the state of a system in another remote (apparently unconnected) place.¹¹

⁶ Smith, "The Provincialism Problem", 1974 in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation*, 1996, p.132.

⁷ Smith, "The Provincialism Problem", 1974 in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation*, 1996, p.135.

⁸ Hybridity and hybrid identities became an identifiable focus of art, and in particular exhibitions, during the nineties. See Nikos Papastergiadis (ed), *Art and Cultural Difference: Hybrids and Clusters* a special issue of *Art & Design*, Profile 43, vol.10 #7/8, 1995.

⁹ For a detailed discussion of *Conversations with the Bride* see Coulter-Smith *The Postmodern Art of Imants Tillers*, 2002, pp.119-135; Tillers, "Locality Fails", in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, pp.139-144; Imants Tillers, "In Perpetual Mourning", *Art & Text/ZG*, Summer 1984, pp.22-3.

¹⁰ Tillers, "Locality Fails", 1982, in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.141.

¹¹ Tillers, "Locality Fails", 1982, in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.142.

What Tillers essentially argues here is that influence can be two ways and that there does not necessarily need to be an identifiable pathway for that influence to have taken place. This then undermines the notion of an art 'centre', out of which all avant-garde ideas flow, and towards which all aspiring artists turn. It would then be possible to argue that artists in Australia had actually influenced art making elsewhere.¹² Tillers articulated this idea of valuing the circumstances of local production more clearly in his later article in which he called for Australian artists to "exaggerate our natural tendencies towards mimicry, to emphasise rather than hide our provincialism, even to bathe ostentatiously in it."¹³ This is certainly what he did in his own practice which became more evident as the canvas board system progressed and all of his imagery became based on a use of appropriation.

The relationship between Australia and the international art world, or the provincialism problem, continued to be one that was philosophised. At the heart of this discourse was the relationship between the original and the copy, the imitator and the imitated and as such this debate permeates any consideration of appropriation in Australia. These debates were interrogated in journals such as *Art Network*, *Lip*, *Tension*, the short-lived *On the Beach*, and *Art & Text*, all of which provided space for the analysis of international theory and contemporary art and culture within an Australian context.

Art & Text, which started in 1981 under the editorship of Paul Taylor, was perhaps the most prolific of these journals.¹⁴ Initially operating out of Melbourne, it subsequently moved to Sydney where it was edited by Paul Foss from 1984. Foss continued on as its publisher for the rest of the journal's life.¹⁵ *Art & Text* published contributions from artists, critics, academics and curators and engaged in debates around critical theory and cultural studies through writers who were aligned with media studies, such as Meaghan Morris, critical theory, including Foss himself, and other areas of inquiry like feminism, film theory and popular culture. This diversification allowed the journal to move away from the elitist notion of art as an institutional activity and instead move towards taking up its own claim for bricolage¹⁶ – that is, the piecing together of seemingly incongruous parts to form a new and innovative whole.¹⁷ The heavy influence of international, and in particular French theory, which occupied the pages of *Art & Text* provided a more diverse appraisal of postmodernism

¹² Rex Butler cautions against interpreting Tillers' argument too literally and instead suggests that "it is not that Tillers is saying this [transmission of ideas via Bell's Theorem] is actually so, but that the provincial artist is always able to *read* it this way" that is it is possible to retrospectively read the art of the centre in light of that of the periphery. Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.29-30.

¹³ Tillers, "In Perpetual Mourning", 1984, p.23.

¹⁴ Anthologies such as Butler's *What is Appropriation?*, through the sheer number of essays reproduced from early *Art & Text* issues, is a testament to the innovation of this journal.

¹⁵ *Art & Text* was jointly published by the College of Fine Arts (UNSW), Sydney and an American institution. The journal then moved completely offshore to Los Angeles and has subsequently ceased to exist. Foss is now the publisher of a new bimonthly magazine *artUS* also based in the USA.

¹⁶ Martin, "Before and After Art & Text" in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.108.

¹⁷ As a term, bricolage is French in origin. Its use in English is attributed to the field of anthropology through the writing of Claude Lévi-Strauss. According to David Macey, "because of the difficulty of finding a strict equivalent, the French term has been retained by the translators of Lévi-Strauss, who uses *bricolage* to describe a characteristic feature of mythical thought." David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Penguin Books, London, 2001, p.52.

as a cultural, rather than simply artistic, movement through the writing of non-art theorists. Many of the most important Australian essays on appropriation were published in *Art & Text* beginning with Taylor's own inaugural contribution, "Australian 'New Wave' and the 'Second Degree'". As a precursor to *Popism*, this article highlighted a turn toward quotation in recent Australian art and examined the challenge to originality that that entailed. He in turn argued for the activation of the viewer whose role was "newly influential" in devising "meaning" from the relationships that are formed when seemingly disparate images are brought together in this new practice which he called the "Second Degree".¹⁸

This new attitude toward the viewer was also a position highlighted by Judy Annear who examined the impact of mechanical reproduction in an exhibition contemporaneous to *Popism* held at the George Paton Gallery, an exhibition space within the University of Melbourne.¹⁹ Like Taylor's exhibition, Annear emphasised the theoretical structure that united the artworks on exhibition, taking Walter Benjamin's well known article "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" as its cohesive base.²⁰ In this article Benjamin argued that the 'aura' of a work of art, "its presence in time and space" was diminished each time that work was reproduced via mechanical means.²¹ However Benjamin also went on to note that reproduction "can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself" thus aiding the "desire of the masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly."²² This, it seems, is the particular power of appropriation, to bring original and reproduction into new and distinct circumstances in which a new audience can experience heretofore unavailable works. Annear suggested that, while the works she gathered in this show employed mechanical reproduction, and in many cases appropriation, their uniqueness was determined by the audience's experience of the work. Echoing Barthes' "Death of the Author", Annear placed emphasis on the capacity of the viewer to "activate" the work which would thus provide an original experience each time it was viewed by a different spectator. Annear's essay provided one means of analysing appropriative works within an art historical discourse in which originality was privileged – by shifting focus from the author to the spectator. Thus the originality lay with the spectator and their experience of the work. She also provided an explicitly local context for this show when she highlighted the fact that the concept of the original was highly problematic in Australian art whereby students of art learnt, not from 'original' artworks, but rather from reproductions in the form of slides and books.²³

¹⁸ Paul Taylor, "Australian 'New Wave' and the 'Second Degree'", *Art & Text*, #1, 1981 reprinted in Paul Taylor (ed), *Anything Goes: Art in Australia 1970-1980*, Art & Text, South Yarra, Vic., 1984, p.158. Interestingly, this book of collected essays featured an image from Imants Tillers' *Conversations with the Bride* (1974-5) on the front cover.

¹⁹ Annear, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 1982, in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, pp.95-99.

²⁰ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illumination*, Fontana Press, London, 1979, pp.217-251.

²¹ Benjamin, "The Work of Art ", 1979, p.220.

²² Benjamin, "The Work of Art ", 1979, p.220-221.

²³ Annear drew this argument from Imants Tillers, "Tom Roberts – Some Impressions", *Art & Australia*, vol.18 #3, Autumn 1981, p.272.

This 'problem' of the original in Australian art education was determined by Australia's lack of proximity to cultural centres in which the dominant history of Western art could be viewed in situ. Again, in a process of reversal, Paul Foss attempted to overcome the negative connotations of distance, which determined Australia's provincial status for Smith, by arguing that it was Australia's distance from the rest of the world which made it important in a world-wide context. As Rex Butler summarises:

Foss's argument is a brilliant inversion of the historian Geoffrey Blainey's famous thesis that the history of Australia is a progressive overcoming of the 'tyranny of distance': on the contrary, for Foss, it is just in this 'void of distance or difference that Australia was created and is still maintained'.²⁴

What Butler highlights is the fact that for Foss, Australia had always been strategically important *because* of its distance from the rest of the world. Foss argued that it was initially seen by the British as a "granary" or supply point for trade with the East. It was also a strategic military post which continued through the 1980s, when he was writing, with American military installations like Pine Gap and North-West Cape still occupying Australian deserts for the purposes of world-wide surveillance and a military presence in the southern hemisphere. Thus Australia was not on the periphery but central in terms of global surveillance. Foss challenged Blainey's thesis that distance has been a tyrannical burden for Australian and instead posited that it was actually part of what made Australia uniquely important in terms of world politics. But it was the overarching argument of Foss' text that is important here – the fact that "the whole of Australia is pure invention" that the concept of Australia, and all that that entailed (antipodean, peripheral and so on), was a simulation, or imagining, of a place which in reality did not exist.²⁵ From this point Foss argued that "Australia" as a concept is a simulacra – an imitation of a nonexistent original. In a similar way to Annear, Foss took the notion of an original out of the equation completely – like Annear's emphasis on the fact that Australia had always known art through the copy, Foss argued that Australia itself was without an original existence. Foss was influenced by the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum. Baudrillard argued for three phases of the image; in the final postmodern phase, the image "bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum" an imitation of imitations.²⁶

Foss, along with Paul Patton and Philip Beitchmann, translated Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulations* from French into English in 1983.²⁷ In 1984 Baudrillard visited Australia for the conference *Futur*Fall* held at the University of Sydney where "he was mobbed by admiring audiences of several hundred people."²⁸ This hype was captured in the pages of *Art & Text*, which featured English translation of his articles, and in publications like *Seduced and*

²⁴ Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation*, 1996, p.22.

²⁵ Paul Foss, "Theatrum Nondum Cognitorum", *Foreign Bodies Papers*, Local Consumption Publications, 1981, reprinted in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.120.

²⁶ Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations", 1981, in Mark Poster (ed), *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, Polity Press, Stanford, USA, 1988, p.170.

²⁷ Jean Baudrillard (1981), *Simulacra and Simulations*, Trans, Paul Foss, Paul Patton & Philip Beitchmann, Semiotext(e), New York, 1983.

²⁸ Charles Green, *Peripheral Vision: Contemporary Australian Art 1970-1994*, Craftsman House, Roseville, NSW, 1995, p.70.

Abandoned, which documented his renown in this country.²⁹ Edward Colless has suggested that the embracing of Baudrillard represented yet another example of Australia's provincialism whereby "Baudrillard's work is reduced to his name and a vocabulary of key words: these become tags or brand names, no longer critical but simply consumable."³⁰ He went on to note the liberating effect that an acknowledgement of this fact had on Australian theorists and artists – if it was accepted that Australian was in a perpetual state of influence, dominated by art world centres – why not exploit it?

Colless' comments give us an insight into the popularity of Baudrillard in Australia. Baudrillard theorised society in the age of mass communication whereby media images were seen as mere simulations which had no relationship to actual events.³¹ This resonated with Australians who were slaves to the media for their knowledge of the international world – Baudrillard merely articulated a situation which had been operating in Australia since settlement in which myths of the antipodes, circulating outside of Australia, bore no resemblance to the actual place of Australia. This was also the case in reverse – the international world, of art movements and social trends more generally, could only ever be known through mediation. The form of this mediation changed over time, from the expatriate Australians returning from abroad with 'new' ideas ready for dissemination, in Smith's terms, to the art journals arriving in planes as highlighted by Tillers.³² What remained a constant, however, was the fact that the ideas and styles that *were* imported into Australia did not necessarily bear any relationship with the 'original' they were attempting to imitate.

Does locality fail?

Mediated or not, and despite Tillers' argument for the failure of local causes, there have been a number of very clear pathways by which international tendencies found expression in Australia. One of these sites of dialogue was, and continues to be, large-scale international survey shows which became increasingly prominent in Australia during the 1980s. The largest and arguably most important of these surveys in Australia was the *Biennale of Sydney* which began in 1973 and continues to be a valuable opportunity to view contemporary international art alongside the work of Australian artists. Other exhibitions such as *Australian Perspecta*³³ and the *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*³⁴ were also important

²⁹ See Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra", *Art & Text*, #11, 1983; André Frankovits (ed), *Seduced and Abandoned: The Baudrillard Scene*, Stonemoss Services, Glebe, NSW & Semiotext(e), New York, 1984.

³⁰ Edward Colless, "forcefield", *Fieldwork: Contemporary Australian Art in the NGV 1968-2002*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2002.

³¹ See Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations", 1981 in Poster (ed), *Jean Baudrillard*, 1988.

³² Tillers, "Locality Fails", 1982, in Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.142.

³³ *Australian Perspecta* began in 1981 and was a biennial exhibition funded by the AGNSW in Sydney with the intent of surveying contemporary Australian art. The last exhibition under this title was held in 1999. *Perspecta* was a partially acquisitive exhibition – facilitated by the provision of private funds. In the 1985 show components were made available for touring to regional galleries and in Sydney the exhibition was presented not only at the AGNSW but also at the following independent galleries: Artspace, The Performance Space, The Irving Sculpture Gallery and Mori Gallery. This trend continued with the final *Perspecta* taking place across a number of venues. Edmund Capon, director of the AGNSW claimed that the exhibition was "the most important and wide-ranging regular

forums for presenting contemporary Australian art in public institutions which had previously been dedicated to the exhibition of 'master-works'.

In addition to the general aims of the *Biennale of Sydney*; to provide a unique opportunity to bring together Australian and international artists, this show also promoted the exchange of ideas via contributions by international theorists within the often substantial exhibition catalogues. Debate around appropriation within the Biennales began to surface in two exhibitions; *Private Symbol: Social Metaphor* (1984) [Plate 15] and *Origins Originality + Beyond* (1986) [Plate 16].³⁵ In the first of these two shows the debate was evident in the catalogue essays as well as in the exhibition of work by Barbara Kruger, and Cindy Sherman alongside burgeoning Australian appropriators such as Juan Davila.³⁶

Interestingly, the appropriative works of Davila were illustrated in the catalogue but not exhibited in the show, highlighting the potential of the exhibition catalogue itself as a site of dialogue.³⁷ The work illustrated, *Gulf*, (1983) [Plate 17] demonstrates (as did much of Davila's work) the adaptation of appropriation for an Australian audience which is perhaps more indebted to Terry Smith's theorisation of provincialism than French theory and deconstruction. In this work Davila positions Australian artistic icons like Sidney Nolan alongside those of international artists. But they are not arbitrarily positioned. Davila and Nolan, the provincials, are firmly grounded within the landscape where the main character is depicted as condemned – the hand maiden who is only able to imagine the German artist Jörg Immendorf and the American Allan D'Arcangelo who float above him.³⁸ Thus Davila creates a gulf between these internationals and the locals highlighting the physical and

review of recent Australian art." Edmund Capon, *Australian Perspectives '85*, exh.cat. AGNSW, 1985, p.4.

³⁴ The *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art* did not begin until 1990 but still continues to this day with the view to "showing some of the most interesting, vital and challenging aspects of recent art." Ron Radford, "Foreword", *Beyond the Pale: Contemporary Indigenous Art. 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*, exh.cat., Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2000, p.7.

³⁵ Appropriation is also a primary concern for the journal *Art & Text* which began in 1983. So this debate was not just occurring within exhibition practice but also journals and, as we have seen, it was already well theorised outside of Australia.

³⁶ Davila was already well known for his explicit imagery after the 1982 Biennale where his multi-panelled piece *Stupid as a Painter* (1981) was removed from exhibition by the NSW vice squad after complaints from the public and well known right wing conservatives including the Reverend Fred Nile. The painting was then returned to Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery by order of the then Premier of NSW Neville Wran and was eventually exhibited at the Power Institute Gallery. See Juan Davila & Paul Foss, *The Mutilated Pieta*, Artspace, Sydney, 1985. Almost ten years later it was displayed in a Paddington eatery, the Landmark Brasserie, which again incited debate. This time the debate was around the fact that such a momentous painting was diminished by this domestic setting and ultimately would be more suited to a public institution. See Brian Phipps, "Bold As Brass", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 July 1991, p.16.

³⁷ The works exhibited were *On Sexuality and Politics*, 1984, acrylic on cibachrome and *I am Hungry* (with Martin Munz), 1984, video, colour, sound.

³⁸ Jörg Immendorf is a German artist, contemporary to Davila whose work was also on display in the 1984 Biennale. In fact, the motif that Davila appropriates from his oeuvre, a stylised swastika, is illustrated in the entry for Immendorf in the catalogue – see *Reichssache* (1983). Allan D'Arcangelo (1930-1998) was an American artist associated with Pop Art and known for his aesthetic preoccupation with the representation America's motorways.

cultural divide which separates them. This gives the audience an insight into the way Australian artists viewed their international counterparts – distant and of the imagination. Biennale chairman, Leon Paroissien, also seemed to question the applicability of blanket assumptions about the nature of appropriation. He stated that:

It is currently a popular critical thesis that artists dubbed 'image scavengers' maintain a disengaged conceptual position in their plundering of elements of popular and mass culture. To what extent is this the case? To what extent does such an approach disguise or deny various forms of direct personal or social engagement by artists who employ a complex recycling of given images?³⁹

Paroissien, it appears, challenged the assumed deconstructive nature of postmodern appropriation and instead posited that artists may engage in the practice for different reasons. Perhaps Davila is one of those artists who presents a more complex recycling of images in order to engage with the social concerns of a country deemed provincial.⁴⁰

Essays on other art centres including New York, Germany and Latin America were included in the catalogue for this show. Carter Ratcliff outlined the importance of America in his essay on the art of New York after the war, beginning with Jackson Pollock and the abstract expressionists. The essay charted the crucial period in which the art world directed its attention to New York. Ratcliff attempted to acknowledge the links between the abstract expressionists and the then current move towards "image-appropriation".⁴¹ He also discussed in detail some of the artists exhibited in the show. Between these essays the centre / periphery dualism is implicit. Ratcliff discussed New York as a hub of artistic activity beyond which is irrelevant whereas Nelly Richard began her essay on the art of Latin America by describing it as being from the periphery which she then brought into an international context via this exhibition. Richard pointed to the loss of local context when transferring artworks to an international arena:

Coming from peripheral regions to appear in international events therefore involves bearing the cost of this transference; but it also gives the work an opportunity of confronting other circumstances, to new cross-roads of experience.⁴²

If Latin America was peripheral, and the Sydney Biennale constituted an international event, then Australia was thus placed in a void between the centre and the periphery – aware of international debates but not positioned within those debates. Apart from Paroissien's "Director's Introduction" there was no essay devoted to an Australian art scene. This was in

³⁹ Leon Paroissien, "Director's Introduction", *Private Symbol Social Metaphor: The Fifth Biennale of Sydney*, exh.cat., 1984, n.p.

⁴⁰ Davila has, over the course of his career, been extremely outspoken on social issues both within Australian and abroad including the status of Australia as a constitutional monarchy, colonialism, sexuality, the treatment of refugees, consumerism, war to name a few. For a discussion of some of these issues, and the sources of his appropriations, see Roger Benjamin, "The Mesh of Images", in Guy Brett & Roger Benjamin, *Juan Davila*, Miegunyah Press, Vic. in association with Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2006, pp.26-63.

⁴¹ Carter Ratcliff, "Tactics and Strategies: An Abbreviated Guide to Art in New York After the War", *Private Symbol Social Metaphor*, 1984, n.p.

⁴² Nelly Richard, "Latin America: Cultures of Repetition or Cultures of Difference?", *Private Symbol Social Metaphor*, 1984, n.p.

spite of the localised content of much of the work of Australian artists. This lack of critical attention to the Australian situation was addressed in the next Biennale – generally this catalogue included more critical writing and, importantly, it also incorporated local contributions.

The 1986 Biennale, *Origins Originality + Beyond*, brought together the ideas of many international postmodern theorists by reprinting seminal essays and also commissioning new pieces. Writers featured in the catalogue included Rosalind Krauss, Hal Foster and Jean-François Lyotard, alongside local contributions by Australians Tim Johnson, Judy Annear and Nick Waterlow. The inclusion of international contributions served to highlight debates around postmodernism in a broad sense. Krauss was represented by her important essay "The Originality of the Avant Garde" in which, as we have seen, she formulated a theory of postmodern art around an investigation of originality and repetition. Foster's contribution was comprised of excerpts from his publication *Recodings* in which he painted a very grim picture of the art world under modernism's reign but which was being challenged by new artists, Richard Prince and Sherrie Levine, through their use of "purloined and montaged images."⁴³ Lyotard's article was an excerpt taken the final chapter of his seminal study *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979)⁴⁴ in which he drew attention to the genealogy of postmodernism as a series of responses to challenges set forth within modernism.

Douglas Crimp's division of appropriation into the categories progressive and the regressive in his article "Appropriating Appropriation" was discussed by other authors such as Roberta Smith whose essay "What's New? Originality, Appropriation and So Forth"⁴⁵ was also published in the second part of the catalogue devoted to "Specialist" interests. This second section included essays discussing local scenes in various locations; New York, London, Madrid, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Australia and France.⁴⁶ Local contributions included an introduction by Nick Waterlow and essays by Suzanne Davies, Tim Johnson and Judy Annear. Both Johnson and Annear discussed concepts of place, Johnson in relation to the "Renaissance" in Aboriginal art which he illuminated.⁴⁷ Annear was more circumspect, discussing provincialism and the search for an Australian identity.⁴⁸ Suzanne Davies also examined the desire to forge local practices and identities, which she argued, had occurred through the assimilation of international styles. She also took care to highlight, however, that this assimilation was characterised by its eclectic nature. Importantly, Davies was one of the

⁴³ Hal Foster, "Recodings", Bay Press, Port Townsend, Washington, 1985 reprinted in *The Sixth Biennale of Sydney*, 1986, p.26.

⁴⁴ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (1979), Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi (Trans), University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

⁴⁵ Roberta Smith, "What's New? Originality, Appropriation and So Forth", *Origins Originality + Beyond*, 1986, pp.41-3.

⁴⁶ Interestingly this is the order in which these articles appeared in the text – New York is tellingly first.

⁴⁷ Tim Johnson, "Theoretical Force (State of the Art) in the Sacred Land", *Origins Originality + Beyond*, 1986, pp.64-66.

⁴⁸ Judy Annear, "Dust of Dreams", *Origins Originality + Beyond*, 1986, p.66.

first writers to situate Australian appropriation within a historical trajectory that included, if only briefly, references to the appropriative works of Margaret Preston – a historical continuum that will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.⁴⁹ Within the catalogue, now a historical document of the period, we can see the juxtaposition of international and local perspectives on appropriation, but, how were those biases manifested in the artworks themselves?

Major Australian artists synonymous with appropriation, and included in this show, were Imants Tillers and Tim Johnson. Through their work, the uniquely Australian debate around the appropriation of Indigenous cultural heritage became evident. Imants Tillers had become known for his appropriation of Indigenous Australian imagery within his eclectic postmodern canvas board system. One of the artists that he had appropriated imagery from was Michael Jagamara Nelson, a Walpiri artist from central Australia, whose work was also included in the biennale.⁵⁰ Through the illustrations in the catalogue, a direct relationship between Tillers' *Nine Shots* (1985) [Plate 18], in which he appropriated aspects of Nelson's painting [Plate 19], was evident.⁵¹ By juxtaposing these artists and their source images the problematic nature of appropriation in an Australian context became highly evident.⁵²

Appropriation as a site of dialogue – or, the local context

It was during the 1980s that a concern for contemporary (postmodern) art practice began to coincide with an interest in Aboriginal art. This was an unavoidable fact as the decade progressed and Aboriginal art gained unprecedented levels of acclaim within international arenas.⁵³ In part this interest in Indigenous art signalled a coming to terms with it – if Aboriginal art was the quintessential expression of Australian identity where did this leave non-Indigenous artists? As Roger Benjamin argued in the early 1990s, emerging Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists were essentially operating within a competitive arena in which the prices achieved by "tribal" Indigenous artists "might be twice those accorded beginning white artists."⁵⁴ Urban-based Indigenous artists who were not receiving the same amount of attention as their more traditional (remote) compatriots also felt this predicament.⁵⁵ At the time, urban Indigenous artists were denied an expression of their cultural heritage which was

⁴⁹ Suzanne Davies, "Repressed/Memory", *Origins Originality + Beyond*, 1986, pp.63-4.

⁵⁰ For an account of this artist see Vivien Johnson, *Michael Jagamara Nelson*, Craftsman House, Roseville, NSW, 1997.

⁵¹ According to the catalogue for the Biennale, Tillers' *Nine Shots* was not displayed but only reproduced in the catalogue. His work that was displayed was *Lost, Lost, Lost* (1985).

⁵² The juxtaposition was only evident to those who perused the catalogue of course. It is the catalogue, however, that remains as the primary record of these exhibitions in the present day.

⁵³ I am referring here to Indigenous Australian art more broadly, not just Indigenous art which incorporated appropriation. This broad conception of Aboriginal art is significant to this study for, as I will discuss, some Indigenous artists created works that were the subject to postmodern appropriation while on the one hand other Indigenous artists also utilised appropriation within their own practice.

⁵⁴ Roger Benjamin, "Aboriginal Art: Exploitation or Empowerment?", *Art in America*, vol.78 #7, July 1990, p.79.

⁵⁵ Benjamin went on to note in his article that the market for "emerging urban artists" was beginning to develop at this time as a result of the wider "commodification of Aboriginality". Benjamin, "Aboriginal Art: Exploitation or Empowerment?", 1990, p.79.

perceived as inauthentic by institutions including galleries and art schools. Reflecting on this period, Gurindji curator and artist Brenda L. Croft has noted that:

As the materials used [by urban Indigenous] artists were not natural pigments on bark, or the more readily accepted medium of acrylic dots on stretched canvas... the majority in the mainstream art arena felt compelled to reject this new work, labelling it 'second-rate white art' (ie: black artists wanting to be white), 'a passing fad', of momentary 'novelty' value.⁵⁶

While urban-based artists may not have received the critical attention they desired there were certainly a number of written responses to the burgeoning Aboriginal art market⁵⁷ and many non-Indigenous artists also made this a theme of their work. They included Tim Johnson – promoter, and appropriator, of Indigenous art – and Imants Tillers, whose entire artistic oeuvre, as we have seen, pivoted on his use of appropriation. Both nurtured an interest in the intercultural structure of Australian settler society from very different perspectives. Johnson and Tillers were both associated with conceptual art in the late 1970s and both took a markedly different path in their interest in Indigenous Australian art in subsequent years.

Tim Johnson set about immersing himself in Aboriginal culture after seeing an exhibition of Papunya painters at the Aboriginal Artists Gallery in Sydney in 1977. From seeing that show Johnson describes how he "got obsessed with them straight away... The paintings worked as modernist art, but there was a cultural content with its own language – a sort of conceptual narrative."⁵⁸ Subsequent to this exhibition he began visiting artists and working in the Indigenous community of Papunya north west of Alice Springs.⁵⁹ From these visits he developed very strong relationships with artists such as the now late Clifford Possum Tjapaltjari and Michael Jagamara Nelson. Initially Johnson documented these artists with their paintings, or, in the process of executing work [Plate 20]. He photographed these encounters which he later worked from to create his own paintings – copying the actual compositions of the photographs he took of artists in the act of painting. Johnson's new works directly referenced (appropriated) actual works of art that he photographed in the field, but they also represent the artists and their surrounds – the artworks he depicted were not presented as Johnson's own work but rather as components of the landscape.

Eventually, his bond with some artists was such that he collaborated on paintings with them and was given permission to use a number of motifs that were within their repertoire. As a

⁵⁶ Brenda L. Croft, "From Little Things Big Things Grow: Indigenous Artistic, Political and Cultural Development in the New South Wales Region of Australia from 1984-1994", MA Thesis, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 1994, p.14.

⁵⁷ See: Juan Davila, "Aboriginality: A Lugubrious Game?", *Art & Text*, vol.23/4, March-May 1987, pp.53-5; Tony Fry & Anne-Marie Willis, "Aboriginal Art: Symptom of Success?" *Art in America*, vol.77 #7, July 1989; Benjamin, "Aboriginal Art: Exploitation or Empowerment?", 1990, pp.73-81; Tim Johnson, "Paying the Rent" 1988, in Jonathan Watkins, *Stories of Australian Art*, exh.cat., Commonwealth Institute & Australian Studies Centre; London, 1988; Eric Michaels, "Post-Modernism, Appropriation and Western Desert Acrylics", in Sue Cramer (ed), *Post-Modernism: A Consideration of the Appropriation of Aboriginal Imagery*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 1989.

⁵⁸ Tim Johnson cited in Merryn Gates, *Tim Johnson: Across Cultures*, exh.cat., The University of Melbourne Art Museum, Ian Potter Gallery, 1993, p.4.

⁵⁹ Tim Johnson, "Tim Johnson Interviewed by Nicholas Zurbrugg", *Art and Australia*, vol.29 #1, Spring 1991, p.44.

result Johnson produced works, both collaborative and otherwise, that depicted the designs of these Central Australian artists [Plate 21]. Michael Jagamara Nelson explained the terms of their exchange:

I gave him permission to try that painting out. I gave him permission to do the Snake Dreaming. I didn't give him the story... I gave him design. We can do that between black and white, you know. But there are some other white artists, they don't ask permission, they just steal our design. That's wrong. If a white artist steals a painting from an Aboriginal, and he sells it, he should send some money back to the Aboriginal. He should share it. Now when Tim made this painting, he shared some money with [me]. Good money, you know.⁶⁰

This quotation illustrates that there were clear boundaries in the sharing of designs; it was a particular design, not the story that was shared with the understanding that profit from that design would be shared with the owner of the design. But the boundaries were not always this clearly set.

Johnson classified his works into three categories: "1) Painting with Papunya artists as an assistant or collaborator; 2) Painting about Papunya; 3) Painting in a style that is influenced by Papunya."⁶¹ It was the last category that was to cause the most debate. Johnson's appropriation, when painting "in a style that is influenced by Papunya", illustrates the fraught nature of any definition of the act. While he had been given permission to use certain motifs in his own paintings, and obviously had been a collaborative artist in some instances, in further works he has also reproduced Central Desert paintings wholesale. Moreover, Johnson utilised the aesthetics of Central Desert paintings in his later works where he applied a dot screen over the image covering the entirety of its surface. A dot, in and of itself, cannot carry copyright but the combination of a screen of dots across the surface of a painting marks it unmistakably as related to the tradition of Indigenous art from Central Australia.⁶²

I will return to discuss some of the complexities of this appropriation later but for now it is useful to turn to the work of Imants Tillers, as a point of comparison with Johnson. Imants Tillers took quite a different tack. Working from his studio in Sydney, Tillers incorporated Indigenous motifs in his work alongside other images that he had appropriated from western art sources. Tillers did not only appropriate from Indigenous Australian art but also quoted extensively from the international art world. In fact, his whole practice was based on the possibilities of appropriation to such a degree that "each painting derives wholly or partially from reproduced images found in magazines and catalogues".⁶³

⁶⁰ Michael Jagamara Nelson cited in Ulli Beier, "Opera House Mural: Michael Nelson Tjakamarra with Ulli Beier", *Australian and International Art Monthly*, #11, June 1988, inside back cover.

⁶¹ Tim Johnson, 'Statement: Exhibition Notes', Richard Pomeroy Gallery, London, 1988 in Gates, *Tim Johnson*, 1993, p.10.

⁶² Johnson discussed his use of "dots" in a lecture: Tim Johnson, "Re-Appropriation", in Sue Cramer, *Postmodernism: A Consideration of the Appropriation of Aboriginal Imagery*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 1989, pp.11-13.

⁶³ Imants Tillers, [artist statement], *Origins Originality + Beyond*, 1986, p.270.

At the time there were many comparisons between the different approaches evident in the work of Tillers and Johnson.⁶⁴ Like Johnson, Tillers appropriated motifs from Indigenous art, in particular, the work of Michael Jagamara Nelson, one of the most prominent Indigenous artists of the day. Unlike in Johnson's case however, there was no clear understanding between the two artists.⁶⁵ Nelson's painting, *Five Dreamings* (1984) [Plate 19], described by Roger Benjamin as being in contention for "the most reproduced and internationally disseminated work of Australian art of the 1980s"⁶⁶ provided some of the motifs in Tillers' *Nine Shots* (1985) [Plate 18]. Tillers has been criticised for the fact that his use of Indigenous motifs was indifferent. Whereas he aspired to be like the European artists he appropriated, there was no desire to be like the Indigenous artists that he referenced. This criticism came from fellow artist Juan Davila who stated that Tillers "takes a dominant role with regard to Aboriginal culture; he quotes their iconographies, but there is no aspiration to belong to that world."⁶⁷ This was also a criticism made by Bob Lingard in a forum held at the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane.⁶⁸ This forum, *Postmodernism: Is it right to appropriate Aboriginal imagery?*, convened in 1988 and later published in 1989, considered many interrelated issues of appropriation and Indigenous people including appropriation within fine arts arenas, the commercial sector and the appropriation of less tangible components of cultural heritage.⁶⁹

Lingard specifically compared the appropriative tactics of Johnson and Tillers. He noted that, even though Johnson was "progressive" on an individual level, gaining permission and participating in collaborative works, within the wider context of Australian society's

⁶⁴ Comparisons were evident in exhibitions such as *Two Worlds Collide: Cultural Convergences in Aboriginal and White Australian Art* curated by Tim Johnson with a catalogue essay by Vivien Johnson. The show was seen at Artspace in 1985 and exhibited the work of six non-Indigenous artists, including Tillers and Johnson, alongside works by fourteen Indigenous artists. Prior to this exhibition, cultural convergence between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians had also been the theme of one of Bernard Smith's Boyer Lectures given during 1980. Bernard Smith, "A Cultural Convergence", *1980 Boyer Lectures: The Spectre of Truganini*, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney, 1980, pp.44-52.

⁶⁵ In one sense it seems that Tillers' choice to appropriate Nelson's painting was advantageous, given the high profile of Nelson and Indigenous art more broadly at the time. Tillers' new work could be seen to feed off that reputation. The tables were turned in 1990 when Indigenous artist Gordon Bennett appropriated Tillers' painting in his own *The Nine Ricochets (Fall Down Black Fella, Jump Up White Fella)* (1990) which, as Tillers noted, won Bennett the Moët & Chandon Prize. Imants Tillers, "Imants Tillers and Positive Value: A Conversation With Ian North", *Artlink*, vol.21 #4, December 2001, p.39. More recently again, Indigenous artist Richard Bell began a series of paintings that directly engaged with Tillers' work specifically and appropriation more generally, via his own use of appropriation and critical writing. One of Bell's works from this series, *Scientia E Metaphysica (Bell's Theorem)* (2003), won the 20th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award in 2003.

⁶⁶ Benjamin, "Aboriginal Art: Exploitation or Empowerment", 1990, p.77.

⁶⁷ Davila, "Aboriginality: A Lugubrious Game?", 1987, pp.53-5.

⁶⁸ Lingard's paper was an adaptation of an earlier publication: Colin Symes & Bob Lingard, "From the Ethnographic to the Aesthetic: An Examination of the Relationship Between Aboriginal and European Culture in Australian Art 1788-1988", in Paul Foss (ed), *Island in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australian Culture*, Pluto Press, Leichhardt, NSW, 1988, pp.188-215.

⁶⁹ Others whose papers were published in 1989 included Henrietta Fourmile, Tim Johnson, Vivien Johnson and Eric Michaels.

treatment of Indigenous people his work was problematic.⁷⁰ Lingard also noted that Johnson used imagery from other countries within his paintings as well.⁷¹ It is important to ask whether these images are authorised in the same manner? He questioned Johnson's use of these other motifs because he saw it as universalising Aboriginal artistic / cultural practice by placing it in the context of other non-western peoples' art practice.⁷²

Turning to a discussion of Tillers' work, Lingard highlighted that Tillers had no connection with, or interest in, Aboriginal politics and he appropriated it as he would any other international art. This raised the question of Tillers' own position – should he treat Indigenous art differently to international artists? Again, it is within the context of the more general treatment of Indigenous Australians, in the face of colonisation, that his appropriations must be viewed. Lingard went on to argue that the difference between Tillers' appropriation of International art and Aboriginal art was that he aspired to be seen in the same league as these international artists. However, Lingard continued by drawing on Davila's earlier thesis that Tillers was solely concerned with the aesthetics and not the ideologies of Aboriginal art.⁷³ Unlike Johnson, Tillers does not display sensitivity to, or "political awareness" of, the conditions under which Indigenous Australians were living and making art. Lingard concluded that the questioning of white appropriation of Aboriginal imagery must be seen in relation to the white treatment of Aboriginal people; in the 1980s there was still a great disparity between the two in terms of education, health and social welfare. As such the appropriation of Indigenous imagery required special attention as opposed to appropriation in general.

The forum also considered the commercial appropriation of Indigenous art that had become rife throughout the 1980s. As the decade progressed and the bicentenary of white settlement approached, there was an increasing emphasis on the ethics of appropriation and in particular how this related to Indigenous Australians. In part this was also a result of the fact that Indigenous art had gained a much greater level of recognition throughout the decade thanks to the work of a dedicated few.⁷⁴ Artistic forays into the appropriation of Indigenous motifs within the fine arts were exacerbated by a number of instances of the appropriation of Aboriginal designs for commercial gain in the trade and souvenir industries. The work of Aboriginal artists was exploited in a number of instances for commercial purposes through the unauthorised reproduction artworks. As Vivien Johnson, sociologist and avid advocate of Indigenous copyright, has noted:

⁷⁰ Bob Lingard, "Appropriation of Aboriginal Imagery: Tim Johnson and Imants Tillers", in Sue Cramer (ed), *Postmodernism: A Consideration of the Appropriation of Aboriginal Imagery*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 1989, p.21.

⁷¹ For a discussion of the sources that Johnson has appropriated see Nicholas Zurbrugg, "Tim Johnson Interviewed by Nicholas Zurbrugg", *Art and Australia*, vol.29 #1, Spring 1991, pp.44-51.

⁷² Lingard, "Appropriation of Aboriginal Imagery", in Cramer (ed), *Postmodernism*, 1989, p.22.

⁷³ Lingard, "Appropriation of Aboriginal Imagery", in Cramer (ed), *Postmodernism*, 1989, p.23.

⁷⁴ See discussions in later chapters on the establishment of Indigenous arts organisations in Sydney like Boomalli which paralleled the development of art centres in remote regions. These centres took on the role of coordinating art production and disseminating that art through the provision of exhibitions, and commercial environments in which to sell work.

By the mid 1980's, T-shirts had replaced tea towels as the most popular item on which to reproduce Aboriginal designs without authorisation – and they were to be found everywhere, in department stores and shopping malls as well as tourist and Australian shops.⁷⁵

In part this infringement of copyright was facilitated by the increased interest in Indigenous art within the fine arts arena. Johnson pointed to the fact that high quality reproductions of artworks in exhibition catalogues often provided source material for "copyright infringers".⁷⁶ Such was the case with the work of Yangarriny Wunungmurra whose *Long-necked freshwater tortoises by the fishtrap at Gaanan* (1975), was reproduced in the catalogue for a 1981 exhibition *Aboriginal Australia*. Wunungmurra's painting was subsequently reproduced on fabric by Peter Stripes Fabrics without the permission of the artist. This resulted in the first court case to be heard in Australia in which the copyright of an Indigenous artist was defended.⁷⁷ This was a landmark case because it directly challenged the accepted understanding of Indigenous creativity. Where it was previously held that no copyright existed on Indigenous artworks, because these works were based on communally owned designs which were not considered original works of art, this case determined that Wunungmurra fulfilled the criteria of a creative and original work of art.⁷⁸ Many other court cases were to follow this initial precedent.⁷⁹ However issues around copyright remain important.⁸⁰ Attempts are currently being made to recognise Indigenous communal moral rights through an amendment to the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth).⁸¹ The draft Bill, which was circulated in 2003, seeks to accommodate the moral rights of groups of people who collectively own intellectual property. It has, however, been met with criticism. Jane Anderson has described the draft Bill as imposing "serious conditions upon how and when

⁷⁵ Johnson, *Copyrites*, 1996, p.16.

⁷⁶ Johnson, *Copyrites*, 1996, p.9.

⁷⁷ Johnson, *Copyrites*, 1996, pp.15-16.

⁷⁸ *The Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) provides limited recognition for communal ownership of artworks stating, as Jane Anderson has highlighted, "the *author* of an artistic work is the *owner* of the copyright" she highlights that the two, author and owner are "implicated in each other" meaning that only the person who has executed the work of art (author) can be considered as the owner of that work of art. This is in contrast to the idea that designs or stories may be owned by a group of people but can be depicted in the work of an individual artist. Jane Anderson, "The Politics of Indigenous Knowledge: Australia's Proposed Communal Moral Rights Bill", *UNSW Law Journal*, vol.27 #3, 2004, p.595.

⁷⁹ Some of these cases have been documented by Johnson in her exhibition and catalogue, *Copyrites* 1996. In addition Johnson has created a website, *The House of Aboriginality*, that provides similar documentation and instructs users on "How to Be a Copyright Detective" and encourages them to report any copyright infringements via the website. See Vivien Johnson, *The House of Aboriginality*, Macquarie University, Sydney, 1999 (updated 2002), accessed 21/05/05, [http://www.mq.edu.au/house_of_aboriginality/]. Also see Christine Nicholls, "New Media Scan 2002: Indigenous New Media Arts. Part 1: Digital Strategies", *Realtime*, #51, October / November 2002, p.6.

⁸⁰ The National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association attempted to introduce a Label of Authenticity for Indigenous art to protect producers and consumers against "rip-offs". The Label was criticised. For example, Brenda L. Croft saw it as yet another example of Indigenous artists being required "confirm our status yet again" – to prove their "authenticity". Brenda L. Croft, "Labelled Buyer Be Aware", *Artlink* vol.20 #1, 2000, p.85.

⁸¹ Moral rights for individual creators already protect artists against the false attribution of their works and the use of their works in inappropriate circumstances.

Indigenous communal rights will be recognised within the law – to the extent that it is very unlikely any infringement would ever arise."⁸²

In contrast to these legislative attempts to protect copyright and moral rights to a greater extent, there was also a move to amend the laws to *allow* appropriation within the fine arts. This was posited primarily on the basis that this type of appropriation had positive outcomes for all parties concerned. In 1988 William Morrow, writing for *Artslaw*, suggested that there were "good arguments in favour of permitting the appropriation of work for artistic purposes."⁸³ It is important to note that "artistic purposes" were considered to be distinct from any appropriation of work for commercial purposes, where great profit was involved, as outlined above.⁸⁴ Morrow's reasons are worth quoting at length as they indicate the type of debate that was occurring at the time:

- 1 Society benefits from artistic investigation and interrogation of the world. It increases the flow of ideas, extends our culture and expands our understanding of ourselves.
- 2 The right of people to inform themselves should not be restricted without good reason. In a real sense artistic practice involves artists informing themselves about all manner of things and in turn informing their audience through their work.
- 3 Works created using appropriated work do not directly compete with the original work. They usually comment on that work...
- 4 The work produced is in most cases original for the purpose of the Copyright Act and paradoxically itself qualifies for copyright protection.⁸⁵

What Morrow essentially proposes is that appropriative artworks are a site where dialogue could occur in which both artists and audiences became better informed. So where the work of Johnson and Tillers could be seen as inappropriate, the fact that they have incited debate is critical. This dialogic possibility was most lucidly conveyed by the visual discourse between Imants Tillers and Gordon Bennett (as well as critics commenting on their work) throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁸⁶

⁸² Jane Anderson, "Indigenous Communal Moral Rights: The Utility of an Ineffective Law", *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, vol.5 #30, February 2004, p.8.

⁸³ William Morrow, "Pastiche, Bricolage & Appropriation: Post-Modernism and the Infringement of Copyright", *Australian and International Art Monthly*, #15, October 1988, p.28.

⁸⁴ This of course does not take into account any income that artists earn from the sale of work.

⁸⁵ Morrow, "Pastiche, Bricolage & Appropriation, 1988, p.28.

⁸⁶ Gordon Bennett is an artist who catapulted to prominence in 1990 when he won the Mōet & Chandon Australian Art Fellowship. His work drew heavily on his Indigenous heritage though he has resisted being categorised as an Indigenous artist. The artistic relationship between Bennett and Tillers, as a result of their appropriative cross-referencing, has been the subject of discussion in itself, both textually and artistically. As a result of the dialogue between them they are now linked in such a way that Tillers appears in texts on Aboriginal art. See Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 1998, pp.378-9. Rex Butler has also considered this relationship. See Rex Butler, "Echo and Narcissus: Gordon Bennett and His Critics", *Postwest*, #16, 2000, pp.46-51. Lesser known artists such as Frank Thirion have continued the dialogue in their own practice.

As we have seen, Tillers was criticised because his appropriation of Michael Jagamara Nelson's work was without context – without regard for the uneven power relations resulting from the process of colonisation within Australia. This was countered by the then emerging Indigenous artist Gordon Bennett in his work *The Nine Ricochets (Fall Down Black Fella Jump Up White Fella)* (1990) [Plate 22] which took Tillers' *Nine Shots* as its foundation and combined it with the appropriation of a historical image of a massacre of Indigenous people from 1890 [Plate 23].⁸⁷ In one fell swoop Bennett was able to reinsert that historical context though his use of appropriated imagery. In Bennett's painting slain Aboriginal men lay at the feet of the central figure who casually clutches his rifle while he marshalls the female figure who has been saved from slaughter. The main scene is partitioned by a series of canvas board panels which reference Tillers' *Pataphysical Man* (1984).⁸⁸ The final visual element that Bennett references from Tillers is the concentric circles of dots – originally taken by Tillers from Nelson's painting – which have literally become wounds, bullet holes, out of which blood red paint seeps.

There has been much analysis of the relationship between these two works and the references they contain.⁸⁹ Important for the present discussion is the fact that Tillers' work acted as a catalyst for Bennett. It was then Bennett's use of appropriated historical imagery that enabled him to bring the past – missing in Tillers work – into sharp focus for his audience.⁹⁰ According to Terry Smith he is able to:

Turn the torch of appropriation back onto those who appropriated Aboriginal imagery in violation of its contexts of origin, and in a manner which, whatever their intentions, whatever their commitment to the free play of images and ideas, echoed the high-handedness of past abuses of Aborigines.⁹¹

It is only through his use of appropriation that this is possible – that the shots of Tillers are returned, ricocheted back by Bennett. The dialogic potential of appropriation has been taken further by Tillers himself who, eventually entered into an artistic collaboration with the Indigenous artist he initially appropriated from; Michael Jagamara Nelson. This

⁸⁷ This image is taken from an engraving which appeared as *Queensland Squatters Dispersing Aborigines, 1890*, the frontispiece to A.J. Vogan's *The Black Police* which was subsequently reproduced in the exhibition catalogue: Macgregor, *History and Memory in the Art of Gordon Bennett*, 1999. It was also reproduced in Bruce Elder, *Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and Maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians since 1788*, Child & Associates, Frenchs Forrest, NSW, 1988, p.106.

⁸⁸ According to Terry Smith, Bennett was also responding to Juan Davila's article "Aboriginality: A Lugubrious Game?" in this work. Terry Smith, "Australia's Anxiety", in Elizabeth A. Macgregor, *History and Memory in the Art of Gordon Bennett*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK and Henie-Onstad Kunstcenter, Oslo, Norway, 1999, p.13.

⁸⁹ Terry Smith has written an excellent analysis of the various elements of Bennett's work and how they relate to Tillers. See Smith, "Australia's Anxiety", in Macgregor, *History and Memory in the Art of Gordon Bennett*, 1999, pp.10-21. See also Rex Butler, "The Pataphysical Aborigine", in *Gordon Bennett: Paintings 1987-1991*, Møet & Chandon, 1992; Butler, "Echo and Narcissus", 2000, pp.46-51; Ian McLean, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, Craftsman House, 1996.

⁹⁰ This was one of the arguments that Owens made in "Allegorical Impulses" that the allegorical (appropriated) work was able to illustrate both "the remoteness of the past, and a desire to redeem it for the present." Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse", 1980, p.68.

⁹¹ Smith, "Australia's Anxiety", in Macgregor, *History and Memory in the Art of Gordon Bennett*, 1999, p.15.

collaboration was organised by the Campfire Group, a collective based in Brisbane. As we saw when Tim Johnson collaborated with Nelson, the terms of this new collaboration were firmly set out. According to Michael Eather, director of the Fireworks gallery, "the artists had a meeting at Campfire in July 2001 where the terms and parameters of the collaborations were discussed."⁹² Unlike Tillers' prior appropriation of Nelson's work the terms of this agreement were strict – as Vivien Johnson highlighted – "permission was respectfully sought [by Tillers] and a suitable fee arranged and pre-paid before Michael Nelson's brush hit the canvas."⁹³ Once the terms were set, the panels were worked on by Nelson who then sent them to Tillers to be completed. The resulting works were exhibited at the Fireworks gallery [Plate 24]. Without Tillers' initial appropriation of Nelson's work, there would have been no basis for this collaboration.

Even more recently, and also originating out of the Campfire Group, this dialogue was furthered by Indigenous artist Richard Bell in his paintings and manifesto on the nature of Aboriginal art within Australian society. Bell, a Gamilaroi man from Queensland, is an extremely outspoken artist who had been exhibiting overtly political artworks since the 1990s. His political activism reached its zenith in 2003 when he won the 20th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award with a painting that proclaimed "Aboriginal art, it's a white thing" [Plate 25].⁹⁴ Beyond the outspoken nature of his winning painting, Bell caused a furore with his antics during the course of the exhibition.⁹⁵

Bell's winning entry was developed out of a series of work displayed in Brisbane at the Fireworks Gallery in 2002 which drew heavily on the work of Imants Tillers. Appropriation had long been a strategy of Bell who had collaged historical photographs of Indigenous Australians in earlier work such as *This Black and White Thing* (1991) [Plates 26 & 27]. This work also included motifs from more recognisable Indigenous art forms from across Australia – dotting, stencilled handprints, boomerangs and so on. Yet Bell has been extremely critical of the practice of appropriation stating that:

The Aboriginal people of Australia and people from other former colonies are most upset about Appropriationism and consider it to be stealing. We couldn't care less about Western artists appropriating one another. But, we object strongly to the appropriation of 'our' artists' work by non-aboriginal people... To all those who have resisted the temptation [to appropriate] or who now desist, congratulations and thank you.⁹⁶

The irony of critiquing appropriation, and at the same time employing it, is not lost on Bell. As Chris Barry astutely pointed out

⁹² Michael Eather, [RE: Tillers & Jagamara Collaboration], 25/02/2002.

⁹³ Vivien Johnson, "Michael Jagamara Nelson Gives it a Go", *Artlink*, vol.24 #3, September 2004, p.26.

⁹⁴ His winning work was *Scientia E Metaphysica (Bell's Theorem)*, 2003.

⁹⁵ In particular, great offence was caused when he accepted the \$40,000 award wearing a t-shirt that stated "White girls can't hump". See Franca Tamisari, "When is Aboriginal Aboriginal too Much" (Not a Hump But a Historical Speed Bump", *Hecate*, 2004, vol.30 #1, pp.96-99.

⁹⁶ Richard Bell, "Bell's Theorem: Aboriginal Art It's A White Thing", unpublished statement, November 2002, n.p.

Bell is an artist who is Aboriginal, making political statements using white art from somewhere in the middle of it all. He's got his bases covered and given himself free reign to critique any issue he likes by placing himself in the centre.⁹⁷

In his 2002 series Bell appropriated numerous elements of Tillers' artistic practice; he employed text as a major component of the work referring to seminal essays by Tillers such as "Locality Fails". He also painted on individual canvas boards and in some instances directly quoted compositions by Tillers. Most important was the nature of Bell's text which saw phrases such as "I Am Not Sorry", "I Am Humiliated", "Land Rights", "Native Title" and "Terra Nullius" strewn across his canvasses. Like Bennett before him, Bell injected his work with a political element, in this case related to contemporaneous issues of land rights. Bell took the postmodernism of Tillers and gave it a postcolonial edge by changing the statements he employed – by making them reference specifically Australian historical debates around colonisation, dispossession, land rights and paternalistic government policies.

Conclusion

In spite of their perceived insensitivity to the unequal status of those from whom he appropriated, Tillers' works have been catalytic, functioning as starting points for an extended debate around the nature of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian art and, indeed, Australian citizens. That is, by employing appropriation, artists have been able to draw attention to the history of colonialism in this country – to bring the past into the present – the issue that is at the heart of this thesis. Appropriation has thus been seen to be *both* postmodern and postcolonial – as Indigenous artists have employed postmodern tactics with postcolonial intent.

This chapter has examined the development of a body of literature around appropriation which originated in postmodern conceptions of the end of originality, the all-pervasive nature of simulation and the destruction of the authoritative voice of the producer. Moreover I have paid particular attention to the flow of ideas around appropriation and postmodernism by examining the predicament of provincialism in Australia. I have argued that, despite its appeal to international theory and its lack of regard for those who were affected by the appropriations of artists like Tillers, there have been instances where it been catalytic in drawing attention to the historical disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. These issues will be further developed in the next two chapters where I will consider historical instances of appropriation in Australia, paying particular attention to those exchanges that have occurred between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. This will be further developed in Chapter Four to consider how we might conceive of appropriation in light of this dialogic potential.

⁹⁷ Chris Barry, "Richard Bell: Revolutionary Artist or Artistic Hypocrite", *Delirra*, #7, October 2003, p.20.

Chapter Three

Appropriation in a cultural and historical context

A crucial question is: who appropriates what, where and from whom? This implies a situating of appropriating practices in different power relations, which would go beyond the more formal approaches in art history.¹

In the previous chapter we began to consider the relationships that are implied when one artist appropriates from another. A clear path of appropriation from Imants Tillers to Richard Bell, over almost twenty years, was identified and analysed. However, it has only been with the benefit of hindsight that it has been possible to identify such a clear line of descent. In order to highlight a more complex history of appropriation in Australia, as it has been used to critique narratives of colonial history, it is necessary to examine other areas of Indigenous art production, particularly urban-based Indigenous artists. For it is these artists that went on, like Bennett and Bell, to use appropriation as a tactic of resistance. It is for this reason that it is important to ask; what does the history of postmodern appropriation, outlined in the two previous chapters, overlook? The work of urban-based Indigenous artists is tellingly absent from this account despite a significant increase in activity amongst these artists throughout the 1980s and whose work often incorporated appropriation.

This chapter will begin by briefly outlining examples of urban Indigenous artists who employed appropriation as a means of confirming their cultural heritage. I will then build on this analysis to consider historical instances whereby appropriation has been used as a tactic of resistance in order to attain a level of power and respect within the dominant culture. Finally I will examine how, in a historical context, Indigenous art was seen by some as the potential source of a national iconography – a bottomless pit of inspiration. In this chapter I want to refocus discussion on the nature of appropriation in Australia by considering the historical factors which have influenced its development which, as I see it, are distinct from those elsewhere.

Appropriation and the assertion of cultural identity

An alternative history of appropriation could be found in the work of urban-based Indigenous artists working concurrently to the postmodern history outlined in the previous chapters.² Having studied formally in Adelaide, Melbourne and Canberra, Trevor Nickolls, for example, was using appropriation in the late 1970s and early 1980s to comment on the impact of industrialisation on Aboriginal people in his painting titled *Dreamtime*

¹ Arnd Schneider, "On 'Appropriation'. A Critical Reappraisal of the Concept and its Application in Global Art Practices", *Social Anthropology*, vol.11 #2, 2003, p.219.

² Artists other than Gordon Bennett and Richard Bell who have cleverly inserted themselves into that postmodern history through their own references to high profile artists like Tillers.

Machinetime (1981) [Plate 28]. Nickolls was one of the first art school trained urban-based Indigenous artists to gain public recognition and will be discussed throughout this thesis, for now, however, it is important to note that his appropriation did not fit neatly into the postmodernist trajectory outlined above because the sources of his imagery were not that of popular culture but rather the designs of other Indigenous Australians from central Australia and Arnhem Land.³ Nickolls' initial use of Indigenous designs resulted from a meeting with the Papunya artist Dinny Nolan Tjampitjinpa.⁴ This in itself is a pertinent critique on the conditions of Australian culture given that, as an Indigenous person in the south-east of the country, Nickolls had been severely affected by the impact of colonisation to the point that he had no designs of his own upon which he could draw in his art-making practice.⁵ Other examples of similar practice could include the work of the late Lin Onus, a Yorta Yorta man, who started exhibiting in Melbourne in the 1970s and began to employ appropriation in the 1980s. Onus appropriated motifs from Arnhem Land bark painting [Plate 29], which he had sought permission to use, as well as images from the history of Australian painting.⁶ Onus travelled to remote Indigenous communities where cultural practices were still strong.⁷ Onus' subject matter ranged from land rights, Indigenous health and the stolen generations to environmental subjects like nuclear testing and land degradation. He also completed a number of portraits in his career and documented Indigenous resistance fighters such as Musquito.⁸

In 1984 both Nickolls and Onus exhibited in the important show *Koori Art '84*⁹ at Artspace in Sydney which, as a show, made comments on the conditions of Australian society from an Indigenous perspective [Plate 30]. This exhibition, with its predominantly social realist character, received little critical attention – possibly as a result of the genre in which the works operated – a seemingly antiquated form of art contrary to what was seen as the most innovative of contemporary art discussed above. To this end there were few reviews of the

³ Ulli Beier's book on Nickolls provides a good illustration of the range of his early painting from still life scenes and portraits to landscapes executed in a variety of styles. It also demonstrates his gradual incorporation of desert motifs into his repertoire of design elements. See Beier, *Dream Time - Machine Time*, 1985.

⁴ See Ruth Megaw & J.V.S Megaw, "Trevor Nickolls", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, p.663.

⁵ As shall be developed in subsequent chapters, the fact that Nickolls had no designs of his own was a problem faced by other urban-based Indigenous artists such as Richard Bell and Gordon Bennett. This has been overcome through a process of research into artists' own cultural heritage to uncover local imagery or through the development of unique personal styles that do not draw on Indigenous motifs at all.

⁶ Onus discussed this process of gaining permission in an article on copyright and appropriation. Lin Onus, "Copyright and Issues of Appropriation", *Artlink*, vol.10 #1 & 2, 1990, p.38.

⁷ Onus was associated with Yolngu artist Jack Wunuwun (c.1930-1990) who had given him permission to paint some of his designs. See Jo Onus and Tiriki Onus, "Chronology" in Margo Neale, *Urban Dingo: The Art and Life of Lin Onus 1948-1996*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2000, p.121-2.

⁸ As with Nickolls, Onus will be discussed throughout this thesis.

⁹ Koori is a general term used to refer to Indigenous people of New South Wales and Victoria. According to Morphy it refers to "a supra-regional ethnic group of Aboriginal people". See Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 1998, p.422. Other terminology in common usage includes; Murris of southern Queensland, Kaurna people of Adelaide, Nyoongar from Perth, Palawa from Tasmania and Ngannawal people from the Canberra region.

show. Where it was reviewed it was within publications such as *Australian Artist* a monthly journal which also included articles on how to paint water or capture landscape. "Shattering the myth that Aboriginal art exists only in traditional forms"¹⁰ by Anthony Lambert is a two page review article of the show which included illustrations of work displayed and interviews with artists. What this magazine did, that other more critically aware journals did not, was engage with an urban Indigenous arts community and in so doing helped to quash the stereotypical view that 'authentic' Aboriginal culture, and by implication art, was traditional. In another issue of the magazine Gary Foley, the recently appointed Director of the Aboriginal Arts Board, was interviewed in a feature article.¹¹ Lin Onus' *Musquito* series [Plate 31], seen at the Art Gallery of New South Wales as a satellite event of *Koori Art '84*, was also the subject of feature article and shorter articles on subjects such as the marketing of Aboriginal art were also published.¹² Clearly, at this early stage, urban Indigenous art forms were seen as amateur and not worthy of publication in major art journals. Fiona Foley lamented this fact complaining that:

When we do have successes, sell our work and have major exhibitions, it's still not taken up by the educators and people in the art market. It's still, other, it's still outside, it's still operating on the fringes. Our work is still not written up in popular art magazines like *Art and Text* and some of the others. So they don't have any printed material on urban Aboriginal art.¹³

In a direct attempt to rectify this situation, Foley and others had set up a studio and exhibition space in Sydney called Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative.¹⁴ Boomalli was established in 1987 by a group of artists disenfranchised by the tertiary education sector and its attitude toward their cultural heritage. Croft explained:

Being urban Kooris we found ourselves continually misunderstood and marginalised through ignorance and prejudice... Our identity was often challenged or ignored... It was constantly put to us by academics and students alike, that we were not 'real' Aboriginals, therefore our art was not acceptable as 'real' Aboriginal art.¹⁵

Part of the challenge that Boomalli took up was to carve out a space where such urban art could be seen as a relevant and legitimate form of Indigenous expression. Moreover, the emphasis was on the fact that it was the artist / members who were in control over how their work was exhibited. It offered a program of member's exhibitions as well as supporting

¹⁰ Anthony Lambert, "Shattering the Myth that Aboriginal Art Exists Only in Traditional Forms", *Australian Artist*, vol.1 #4, October, 1984, pp.24-25.

¹¹ See Anthony Lambert, "How Gary Foley is Giving Aboriginal Artists More Control of What Happens to Their Art", *Australian Artist*, vol.1 #2, August 1984, pp.34-35.

¹² For Lin Onus see Anthony Lambert, "The Aboriginal Artist Who is Painting a Black Bushranger into Australian History", *Australian Artist*, vol.1 #5, November 1984, pp.18-19. For marketing see Anthony Lambert, "Breathing New Life Into the Buying and Selling of Aboriginal Art", *Australian Artist*, vol.1 #3, September 1984, pp.32.

¹³ Fiona Foley cited in Jennifer Isaacs, "Views in Print and Poster", *Australian and International Art Monthly*, #9, April 1988, p.23.

¹⁴ According to Brenda L. Croft, the founding members of Boomalli were; Bronwyn Bancroft, Euphemia Bostock, Brenda L Croft, Fiona Foley, Fernanda Martins, Arone Raymond Meeks, Tracey Moffatt, Avril Quail, Michael Riley and Jeffrey Samuels. Croft, *From Little Things Big Things Grow*, 1994, p.19.

¹⁵ Brenda Croft, "Boomalli", *Artlink*, vol.10 #1 & 2, 1990, p.108.

emerging artists in regional areas of the state.¹⁶ Importantly, it also provided a support network for artists and, despite its various incarnations, continues to fulfil this role today.

An opportunity for the critical attention that Foley and Croft desired came in 1990 when *Art Monthly Australia* devoted an entire issue to the review of work by urban-based Indigenous artists [Plate 32].¹⁷ This issue, edited by Jennifer Isaacs and Wally Caruana, featured works that employed appropriative tactics as a means of critiquing the unequal status of Indigenous Australians within the larger community as a result of colonisation. This included paintings by Gordon Bennett, Robert Campbell Junior and Lin Onus and photographs by Tracey Moffatt alongside artworks that were thematically similar but did not employ appropriation. In addition the critical engagement that Foley sought was delivered in the form of articles by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. In one such article, Roberta Sykes¹⁸ outlined the difficult task faced by urban Indigenous artists in the face of the decimation of the cultural heritage. She asked; "What uniquely Aboriginal theme, then, is left for urban Blacks whose Dreaming has largely been obliterated by the white people?"¹⁹ In answering her own question, Sykes posited the history of white occupation and colonisation of the land and people as the major theme available to urban Indigenous artists – that and a celebration of their survival against these odds: "They depict the suffering of a people against whom genocide was practised."²⁰

Artlink also produced a special double issue of their journal in 1990 on the theme of *Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art* [Plate 33].²¹ In line with the desire that organisations like Boomalli had, in regards to controlling their own representation, *Artlink* strove to devote 70% of their articles to Indigenous authors – it fell short but did achieve a majority (56%) – which it was claimed set "a new benchmark in primary participation by Aboriginal artists and authors in a publication about their own cultural production."²² The issue included articles on a range of individual artists as well as reviews of exhibitions like *Balance 1990: Views, Visions, Influences* which will be discussed in Chapter Six.

The year of these publication was also significant for the fact that it was the first year that Indigenous artists had been selected to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale. The

¹⁶ Boomalli mounted an exhibition, *Kempsey Koori Artists*, in 1988 that introduced artists from this regional town including the late Robert Campbell Junior, a Ngaku artist, of great acclaim. Croft, *From Little Things Big Things Grow*, 1994, p.20.

¹⁷ *Art Monthly Australia* supplement *The Land The City – The Emergence of Urban Aboriginal Art*, 1990.

¹⁸ Roberta Sykes was integral to the development of the Indigenous civil rights movement in the 1970s. Sykes employed the rhetoric of the Black American civil rights movement in her championing of "Black Power". See Ann Turner (ed), *On Trial: Black Power in Australia. Bobbi Sykes Versus Senator Neville T. Bonner*, Heinemann Educational Australia, South Yarra, Vic., 1975.

¹⁹ Roberta Sykes, "Non-citizens in our own country? The Social and Cultural Background of Rural and Urban Aboriginal Artists", *Art Monthly Australia* supplement *The Land The City – The Emergence of Urban Aboriginal Art*, 1990, p.6.

²⁰ Sykes, "Non-citizens in our own country?", 1990, p.6.

²¹ *Artlink*, vol.10 #1 & 2, 1990.

²² Such was the success of this issue that it was reprinted 1992 after continual demands exhausted the original supply. "Editorial – Landmark 1992 Reprint", *Artlink*, vol.10 #1 & 2, 1990 (reprinted 1992).

urban-based artist, Trevor Nickolls, discussed above, was one of these artists. Rover Thomas, a Kukatja-Wangkajunga artist who was then living in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, was the other.²³ The selection of these artists must be seen in relation to the growing recognition that Indigenous art received within the Biennales in Australia. For example, in 1979 the *Biennale of Sydney* included the work of Arnhem land artists Milpurrru, Malangi and Bungawuy. This presence was augmented in the following show in 1982 with the inclusion of a Walpiri sand painting within the Art Gallery of New South Wales. In 1984 there was no Indigenous representation; however by 1986, both urban and central desert community based artists were included through the work of James Simon and Michael Jagamara Nelson.²⁴ The Top End was represented by the Ramingining Performance Group.²⁵

The acceptance of urban artists such as Simon, who had previously exhibited in *Koori Art '84*, was surprising given Folcy's comments regarding the lack of recognition and critical attention that urban artists were receiving at the time. Whilst he did not employ appropriation, Simon certainly used his art to draw attention to his Indigenous perspective on Australian history. That is, he used his art as a form of resistance in a similar way to Richard Bell. He painted scenes such as *The First Sighting* (1984) that he subtitled "The Aboriginal first sighted the white man, when he first 'discovered' this country. We really discovered him."²⁶ Simon also exhibited works which charted the *Confrontation* (1984) between the invaders and the Indigenous people and following this, his final work in the suite, *On the Mission* (1984) [Plate 34], demonstrated the desolate landscape and tin shelters that constituted the reality of mission life.

A history of cross-cultural appropriation – strategic resistance and paternalistic colonialism

To this point we have considered instances of artistic appropriation in Australia from the 1980s onwards, some of which have involved some sort of intercultural dimension. That is, I have concentrated on the way that Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists were involved in forms of artistic appropriation. What has been important here is the notion of intercultural appropriation or transfer. The transfer of artistic imagery has not just been between equal and consenting artists but rather between artists often from very different socio-economic circumstances, different periods in time and perhaps, most importantly, different cultures.

²³ Thomas passed away in 1998.

²⁴ By the next biennale, held in 1988, Indigenous representation became much more problematic as a result of the bicentenary of white settlement that occurred in that year. Many Indigenous artists boycotted any state funded events. The one inclusion of Indigenous art in this exhibition was *The Aboriginal Memorial* curated by Djon Mundine and consisting of 200 burial poles constructed by artists from Ramingining in Arnhem Land. This memorial will be discussed in more detail in Part Two of this thesis.

²⁵ The group was comprised of George Milpurrru, Nancy Wandjuk, Tom Djumburpur, Margaret Djunging, Bobby Bunungurr, Joy Borruwa, George Banburna, Joy Burrana, Dorothy Djukulul and Jardie Ashley. The show also included bark paintings by George Milpurrru and Bobby Bunungurr. See *Origins Originality + Beyond*, 1986 pp.236-7.

²⁶ James Simon, [artist statement], *Origins Originality + Beyond*, 1986, p.260.

As such, it is important to consider theories of appropriation that are not solely devoted to artistic exchange but that also consider this intercultural relationship; the negotiation of identity and cultural heritage which is at the heart of this thesis. For this thesis is not just about an artistic phenomenon; its underlying concern is with the cultural fabric of settler Australia and its interwoven histories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage and identity as relayed through contemporary art.

Investigations into cultural appropriation have primarily taken place within the domain of anthropology, cultural and post-colonial studies. By cultural appropriation I refer to the history of complex webs of exchange between the new settlers and Indigenous people from whom the British appropriated lands. This includes artistic appropriation but is not limited to it. It is by considering this wider history of cultural appropriation, by looking at the specific ways in which settlers and Indigenous peoples engaged and exchanged throughout history that it is possible to discern a pattern of appropriation, since colonisation, that has informed the artistic appropriations of the last two decades.

Nicholas Thomas has argued that this history of cultural appropriation is unique in settler colonies such as Australia. These settler colonies, Thomas argued, "differ from those [colonies] based in trade, or the exploitation of native labour and natural resources...[in that] the Indigenous population, in theory, was to be supplanted rather than exploited."²⁷ The initial aim has led to the situation today whereby there has been no decolonisation: "indigenous peoples survive" and the "settlers remain dominant."²⁸ The result was that cultural appropriation, or as Craig Latrell has termed it, "intercultural transfer"²⁹, has been almost unavoidable. In the same way that the exchange between Tillers and Bennett can be seen as an effective means of inciting dialogue on the issues of appropriation and the value of Indigenous cultural heritage, Latrell argued that cultural appropriation provides opportunities for a new space in which hybrid cultural forms can be expressed.³⁰ As such, he argues for the dissolving of binaries (in his case East and West) in order to accommodate a more local and nuanced interpretation of the phenomenon. He asks "Why should we assume that intercultural transfer is primarily a politically based, one-way phenomenon – a cultural monologue rather than a dialogue?"³¹ Further, he goes on to ask:

Why not start with the assumption that other cultures are *not* just passive receivers of Western ideas and images, but active manipulators of such influences, and that intercultural borrowing is not simply a one-way process, but something far more interestingly dialogic?³²

It is this assumption, that intercultural transfer is a dynamic and effective tool for cultural engagement, that underpins my thesis. The crux of Latrell's argument is that cultural appropriation is not just something that is enacted by the dominant powers over marginalised

²⁷ Thomas, *Possessions*, 1999, p.10.

²⁸ Thomas, *Possessions*, 1999, p.11.

²⁹ Craig Latrell, "After Appropriation", *The Drama Review*, vol.44 #4, Winter 2000, pp.44-55.

³⁰ This issue of hybridity is discussed in more detail in Chapters Six and Ten of this thesis.

³¹ Latrell, "After Appropriation", 2000, p.45.

³² Latrell, "After Appropriation", 2000, pp.45-6.

people. Other authors, including Arnd Schneider, have also called for a more complex investigation into the nature of appropriation as opposed to one which looks primarily at the way groups engage as homogenous entities.³³ Schneider considers appropriation from an anthropological point of view under the broader framework of cultural change. Schneider, like Latrell, also argues for a more detailed view of appropriation that takes into account individual objects or customs that have been appropriated and the specific circumstances under which this has occurred.

While cultural appropriation differs markedly in its theorisation from the form of postmodern appropriation outlined in the previous chapter it is based on the same premise of taking something and making it one's own. Yet when the appropriation is of a cross-cultural nature, value judgments are made about the status of the cultures taking and being taken from. As Latrell has argued this conception of appropriation, as occurring between discreet cultural groups, fails to take into account the transgressions of individuals that complicate this dominant / subordinate categorisation. It is too simplistic to argue that Indigenous Australians have had their land, culture and identity appropriated by the colonisers in the process of colonisation. While this is certainly true, only looking at the debate on this macro level denies the personal vigils of individuals who have seized their own forms of power, albeit often localised and temporary, through their own acts of appropriation. The Ku-ring-gai man Bungaree (d.1830), is an apposite and very early example of an Indigenous Australian who appropriated aspects of the dominant culture in order to secure his position within a rapidly changing society. Bungaree first gained a place of respect for himself, in the eyes of the colonisers, for the useful role that he played in acting as an intermediary between maritime explorers and Indigenous people on various voyages departing from Sydney in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.³⁴

In addition to this maritime career Bungaree was integral in the development of cross-cultural relations in Sydney Town during the later period of his life when he became an exceptionally well known figure. In 1815 Governor Lachlan Macquarie identified Bungaree as the leader of his group and bestowed upon him the title of Chief.³⁵ This title was marked by a breastplate, then known as a 'king plate', which was worn around the neck and proclaimed the following: "Boongaree – Chief of the Broken Bay Tribe – 1815".³⁶ This breastplate can be seen in many of the portraits of Bungaree, where it is clearly worn with a sense of pride. Bungaree also took on a particularly unique character that would define his image until his death and beyond. It was during these years that Bungaree acquired the cast off officer's coat and cocked hat that can be seen in many of the portraits of him [Plate 35]. In this guise, Bungaree greeted newcomers to the colony, as King of the country, affecting the mannerisms of the governor of the day. Accounts of his 'ritual and flamboyant' greeting

³³ Schneider, "On 'Appropriation'", 2003, pp.215-229.

³⁴ See Anna Lawrenson, "From Tourist Attraction to Cultural Icon: Representations of Bungaree", UWS Honours Thesis, 1999.

³⁵ *Sydney Gazette*, 4 February 1815

³⁶ See Jakelin Troy, *King Plates: A History of Aboriginal Gorgets*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1993, p.10.

of newcomers to the colony are many, as are descriptions of Bungaree's brilliant powers of mimicry.³⁷ Taking on the role of the jester, and imitating prominent dignitaries, clearly seems to be one that was strategic, that enabled Bungaree to acquire status, material objects and notoriety generally. The benefits he procured ranged from donations of food and alcohol to being granted a prime portion of land on Sydney Harbour and being cared for by the state (securing hospital treatment and full settler's rations) when he was elderly and infirm. As was noted at the time:

The superiority of his mental endowments... obtained for him a more than ordinary share of regard from the white inhabitants of the colony, which was testified by frequent donations suited to his condition, not only from private individuals, but from the Authorities.³⁸

Moreover, Bungaree retained his revered status amongst his own people.³⁹ Contemporary accounts in the *Sydney Gazette* demonstrate that he participated in ceremonial life, ritual fighting and actual warfare.⁴⁰

From this example it is possible to see that, in the face of major transformations since the arrival of European settlers, Bungaree mounted a unique response based on the appropriation of a persona and costume that imitated that of the social elite. These actions enabled him to both advance his status within the colony and retain a sense of leadership amongst his own people. This was also the case with the Victorian artist William Barak. Barak was a Ngurungaeta, or leader, and elder of the Wurundjeri people whose country lay to the north east of what is now Melbourne. Barak was instrumental in establishing the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station which was largely self-sustaining through agricultural pursuits. The site of the reserve at Coranderrk was chosen by the Indigenous people who had been moved off their previous reserve as a result of pastoral interests.⁴¹ As Gaye Sculthorpe has argued, it is in these sorts of stations that we can see the origin of the contemporary cultural tourism that is now well advanced.⁴² During the 1870s and 80s at Coranderrk, inquisitive visitors from the city of Melbourne could experience Aboriginal culture, within an easy day-trip from the city. While there, they could purchase souvenirs such as boomerangs, baskets and other artefacts.⁴³ Barak's paintings were also available for sale. These saleable objects provided the

³⁷ One such account was written by the French botanist and entomologist, Jules Dumont d'Urville, who recalled a meeting with Bungaree in his *Voyage Pittoresque Autour Du Monde, Résumé général des voyages de découvertes* published in Paris in 1834-5. An excerpt from this text is reprinted in Keith Vincent Smith, *King Bungaree: A Sydney Aborigine Meets the Great South Pacific Explorers 1799-1830*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1992, pp.170-73.

³⁸ *Sydney Gazette*, 27 November 1830.

³⁹ This moving between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds has been seen as problematic by Homi Bhabha who has argued that even when a modicum of respect has been attained by the Indigenous person within the dominant society they remain nonetheless marginalised from it – almost the same but not quite. See Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse", *October (Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis)*, #28, Spring 1984, pp.125-133.

⁴⁰ *Sydney Gazette*, 23 December 1804.

⁴¹ See Andrew Sayers, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p.14.

⁴² Gaye Sculthorpe, "When Whitefellas Go Walkabout", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, p.391.

⁴³ Sculthorpe, "When Whitefellas Go Walkabout", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, p.391.

community with funds to purchase goods they could not manufacture or grow themselves such as farming equipment, tobacco or clothes.

Despite the fact that, at the time, the objects offered for sale were often seen as inauthentic and produced solely for the tourist trade, it is currently held by anthropologists such as Howard Morphy, that much of the work displays substantial continuity with the traditional art of that area. Barak's work is characterised by its almost exclusive attention toward Indigenous subjects [Plate 36]. Unlike his contemporary, Kwatkwat artist Tommy McRae who painted many scenes of contact and interaction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous subjects in the nineteenth century [Plate 37], Barak depicted ceremonial life, scenes of hunting and their associated objects.⁴⁴ The art of Barak demonstrates a solid affirmation of his ancestry and status as a senior man in the community. Little however is actually known about the content of the ceremonies he depicted but it is believed that they refer to past ceremonies because at the time performing such ceremonies was outlawed by white authorities.⁴⁵ Barak's art was transgressive by the very fact that he depicted these outlawed ceremonies. His paintings are thus seen as a record of that previous way of life – "one of the things that helped to keep his traditional culture alive... to preserve identity in the face of the drive in European society to assimilate Aboriginal people."⁴⁶ Even the materials with which he created these works of art have been seen as subversive – combining European graphical elements with natural pigments such as ochres and charcoal. As Andrew Sayers argues:

His choice embraced the possibilities of the non-traditional, but his art also resisted them, and retained links with traditional practice and the natural world. In using watercolour washes combined with ochres in drawings of Aboriginal subjects, Barak took the European and made it Aboriginal.⁴⁷

The intercultural transfer evident here is also based on the fact that Barak adapted his art into portable forms suitable for a western market.⁴⁸ So the concept of a western souvenir trade was appropriated, and adapted to suit the needs of this community and provide a vital income needed for a society that was becoming increasingly fractured by the powers of colonial influence.⁴⁹

In a similar way, the work of Albert Namatjira is now seen as strongly asserting his Aranda identity and thus being worthy of reverence. This is in contrast to the view during his lifetime in

⁴⁴ McRae lived on Lake Moodemere near Wahgunyah, a Murray River town in Victoria. See Andrew Sayers, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994.

⁴⁵ Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 1998, p.356.

⁴⁶ Sayers, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, 1994, p.13.

⁴⁷ Sayers, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, 1994, p.22.

⁴⁸ Of course Barak is not the only artist to have done this. For an outline of the adaptation of Indigenous Australian art since settlement see Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 1998.

⁴⁹ This fracturing was not, however, total. As a testament to his importance as a cultural leader an exhibition, *Remembering Barak*, was recently organised by the National Gallery of Victoria to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Barak's death in 1903. It included Barak's own drawings accompanied by archival photographs documenting the artist and his life at Coranderrk. The catalogue also featured an essay by Barak's descendant Joy Murphy-Wandin, "Barak My Uncle" in Joy Murphy-Wandin, Judith Ryan & Carol Cooper, *Remembering Barak*, exh.cat., National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2003.

which his work was seen as a novel example of Indigenous assimilation of western techniques. Albert Namatjira became extremely well known for his watercolour paintings which rivalled those of his teacher Rex Battarbee and have withstood the test of time to a far greater degree. Namatjira was popular amongst the Australian public from the late 1930s until his death in 1959. Despite his popular acclaim Namatjira was, at the time of his most prodigious art production, considered outside of the realm of the avant-garde. This is evidenced by the fact that his work was only sporadically collected by public art institutions and was promoted more enthusiastically by anthropologists such as C.P. Mountford.⁵⁰ In contrast his work was voraciously consumed by private collectors – his first solo exhibition in Melbourne in 1938 sold out within the first few days – all to private collectors.⁵¹ A number of his works were also reproduced and widely dispersed which, Alison French has argued, obscured the diversity of his oeuvre as his works quickly found their way into patron's private collections and, in turn, obscurity.⁵²

Namatjira's acclaim escalated and in 1944 he became the first Indigenous Australian to be listed in the publication *Who's Who in Australia*. It was also in this year that Mountford published a book about Namatjira – the cover of which was designed by the artist himself. He was presented to the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester in 1946 and awarded the Queen's Coronation Medal in 1953. Finally he was presented to the Queen the following year in Canberra in 1954. This enthusiastic reception of Albert Namatjira and his painting resulted in the ultimate reward in European eyes – he was awarded full citizenship rights in 1957.

Art historians dismissed Namatjira's work as derivative and unsophisticated copies of his mentor Rex Battarbee. It was not until relatively recently, along with the postmodern dismantling of categories of high art, that Namatjira's work has been reconsidered and is now valued as an important representation of the intersection of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. An important turning point was the book *The Heritage of Namatjira* edited by Jane Hardy, Vincent Megaw and Ruth Megaw published in 1992. In particular, within this volume, "Namatjira's White Mask: A partial interpretation" by the late Ian Burn and Ann Stephen, provided a vital catalyst for a re-examination of his art. They attempted to eschew the 'chocolate box' branding of his art and instead posited it as a valid and vital form of Indigenous cultural production providing a legacy for artists who went on to work in that medium.⁵³

⁵⁰ See Charles Mountford, *The Art of Albert Namatjira*, Bread and Cheese Club, Melbourne, 1944.

⁵¹ He also had a solo exhibition in Adelaide in the following year – it was from this exhibition that the Art Gallery of South Australia acquired their first Indigenous artwork. Another of Namatjira's works was purchased by the Art Gallery of Western Australia in 1946. See Brenda L. Croft, "Albert's Gift", in Alison French, *Seeing the Centre: The Art of Albert Namatjira 1902-1959*, exh.cat., National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2002, pp.145-48.

⁵² French, *Seeing the Centre*, 2002, p.22.

⁵³ Through the use of reproductions in their article, Burn and Stephen illustrate a line of continuity between Namatjira and the work of more recent artists: Jillian Namatjira, Therese Ryder, Wenten Rubuntja, Doug Abbott, Gabriella Wallace, Ivan Pannka, Basil Rantji and Gordon Waye. Ian Burn & Ann Stephen, "Namatjira's White Mask: A Partial Interpretation", in J. Hardy, J.V.S. Megaw & R. Megaw (eds), *The Heritage of Namatjira*, William Heinemann, Port Melbourne, 1992, pp.242-250.

Burn and Stephen argue that the biography of Namatjira has overshadowed any real interpretation of his work. They begin their article by analysing how Namatjira portrayed himself as an artist. They note that Namatjira combined his Christian name and traditional family name, which would not ordinarily have been used together, when he signed his work [Plate 38]. Thus by signing his work 'ALBERT NAMATJIRA' he was signalling and affirming his identity. The signature then, Stephen and Burn argue, becomes "an enunciation of a subject between cultures"⁵⁴ further, they argue that Namatjira would have been acutely aware of this 'intersection of cultural difference' signified by the intersection of names.

Burn and Stephen then go on to discuss the construction of Namatjira's works – their use of perspective and compositional elements. They argue that his works are quite unique in composition suggesting that he used the western watercolour convention merely as a starting point for his own innovative interpretation of the landscape. As a means of conveying this point, Burn and Stephen refer to the recurrent Ghost Gums present in Namatjira's works which are positioned too close to the centre of the image to be a framing device, but not central enough to be the main focus. They assert that these gums, and other foreground objects that are presented in focus, invert the western conventions of peripheral vision and convey a more immediate sense of the viewer actually being present in the landscape. They also highlight Namatjira's use of multiple foci within an image as opposed to the single or double point perspective conventionally used in this type of imagery. Stephen and Burn continue:

The more we analyse his pictures in terms of a Western perception, the more convinced we become that the artist... has little conformity to Western picture-making as applied to landscape painting. What becomes curious then is how *like* Western landscapes his finished pictures are.⁵⁵

Namatjira's intentions for his art will now never be known and this attempt by Burn and Stephen to discuss the aesthetic construction of the works was seminal in the reappraisal of Namatjira's art. This reappraisal was furthered in 2002 with a major publication and touring exhibition of Namatjira's work organised to mark the centenary of his birth.⁵⁶ In this publication we see a much more considered discussion of the extremely large body of work produced by Namatjira. The catalogue considers his major thematic concerns including depictions of gaps and gorges, palm valleys, portraits of trees and panoramic depictions of country.

The catalogue also includes an essay by Brenda L. Croft, Indigenous artist and curator, titled "Albert's Gift", in which she discusses the importance of Namatjira, and his work, as setting

Alison French has also discussed the legacy of Namatjira's practice. See French, "Creating Legacies", in *Seeing the Centre*, 2002, pp.29-35.

⁵⁴ Burn & Stephen, "Namatjira's White Mask ", in Hardy, Megaw & Megaw (eds), *The Heritage of Namatjira*, 1992, p.256.

⁵⁵ Burn & Stephen, "Namatjira's White Mask ", in Hardy, Megaw & Megaw (eds), *The Heritage of Namatjira*, 1992, p.270.

⁵⁶ French, *Seeing the Centre*, 2002.

a precedent for Indigenous artists beyond the obvious influence he had on his immediate community.⁵⁷ Croft states:

The gift from the artist is the message in his paintings, and in the works of other Indigenous artists...throughout the country. This message is a request for shared compassion, understanding and knowledge of what can be achieved collectively to ensure that contemporary Indigenous people do not continue to suffer the same fate as Namatjira, outcast in their own land. In a few years the copyright on Namatjira's paintings will be unprotected, and therefore available to an uncontrolled and open market to do with as it so desires. Imagine that.⁵⁸

If we concur with Croft, that Namatjira's work seeks to incite compassion and understanding in his audience, then it is significant that he chose a language – that of watercolour painting – that was understood by his audience. Crucial to Croft's reevaluation then, is a shift in perception which saw Namatjira not as a mere imitator of a western mode of watercolour painting but rather as an astute artist who *appropriated* western watercolour as an effective mode by which to draw attention to sites of importance to him. So while Namatjira was dismissed, critically, for his appropriation of a western style of painting, this was in fact one of the main reasons that his work, and life, were as well documented as they were. It is also the reason why his paintings, and eventually his 'message', as interpreted by Croft, were understood.

At the same time as Namatjira's work was receiving popular attention a different group of artists and academics were investigating Indigenous Australian art as a vast and exciting resource awaiting appropriation. Aboriginal art was promoted in Sydney by the then Curator of Anthropology at the Australian Museum, F. D. McCarthy. As part of his position there he facilitated access to the collection of Aboriginal art. He also actively sought out an interested audience and gave lectures at the Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW. Brenda Factor described him as "single-minded in his attempts to popularise Aboriginal art through its use by European artists."⁵⁹ To this end McCarthy published a book on the subject in 1938, *Australian Aboriginal Decorative Art*, and organised an exhibition along the same lines, *Aboriginal Art and Its Application*, in 1941 at the David Jones department store in Sydney [Plate 39]. One section of this show focused on white applications of Aboriginal designs within the decorative arts and included "an entire lounge room to demonstrate the use of Aboriginal art motifs" within the home.⁶⁰ The exhibition also included a section devoted solely to the exhibition of Aboriginal art and a final section titled "The Daily Life, Religion and Mythology of the Australian Aborigines as a Source of Inspiration to Artists" which exhibited Namatjira's work alongside white contemporaries such as Margaret Preston.⁶¹

⁵⁷ As is well known the watercolour tradition, instigated by Namatjira, has evolved into the so-called Hermannsburg school of watercolourists emerged from the Finke River Mission and surrounds in subsequent years.

⁵⁸ Croft, "Albert's Gift", in French, *Seeing the Centre*, 2002, p.148.

⁵⁹ Brenda Factor, "Marketing an Australian Identity", *Olive Pink Society Journal*, vol.3 #2, 1991, p.23.

⁶⁰ Factor, "Marketing an Australian Identity", 1991, p.23.

⁶¹ Factor, "Marketing an Australian Identity", 1991, p.23. It is interesting to note that the supposed innovation of the exhibition *Primitivism in Twentieth Century Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (1984) was found in the fact that the curators had juxtaposed so-called 'primitive art'

Margaret Preston was particularly interested in the possibilities of Australian flora and fauna to comprise a national art. She completed many paintings and woodblock prints of native floral arrangements. These still lives eventually developed into her so-called 'Aboriginal' paintings where she adopted a reduced palette of earthy colours to mimic the designs of Aboriginal painting that she had seen [Plate 40]. Preston was one of a new breed of Australian women artists – a fiercely independent woman who bucked convention by marrying late in life and never having children – instead she devoted her life to her art making practice. As a demonstration of this commitment she travelled widely in pursuit of inspiration. Janine Burke listed but a few of Preston's destinations:

She went to the Solomon Islands in 1924, to Japan in 1935, to South and Central America two years later then to the Kimberleys and Arnhem Land in 1940.⁶²

She was, like earlier and more renowned Australian artists Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts, interested in developing a national art, but for Preston it was not the pastoral frontier which should be its source. She was one of the first Australian artists to take an interest in Aboriginal cultural production as an art form. Moreover she was well informed about its nature, studying Indigenous objects in the country's museums and visiting Indigenous communities and reporting on the nature of the artworks that she viewed.⁶³ She saw that Australian art was in a subservient relationship with the art of England and that nurturing an interest in Australian's Indigenous art may go some way to liberating it from that realm:

In wishing to rid myself of the mannerisms of a country other than my own I have gone to the art of a people who have never seen or known anything different from themselves, and were accustomed always to use the same symbols to express themselves. These are the Australian aboriginals (sic), and it is only from the art of such people in any land that a national art can spring.⁶⁴

Its important to note that for Preston, appreciating Aboriginal art as a national style also meant appropriating it – that is she did her own so-called Aboriginal paintings and advocated the 'application' of Aboriginal art particularly in the decorative arts. Her support for this application was such that she provided practical guides and instructions on how artists may "be aboriginal."⁶⁵ Despite her advocacy of, and admiration for, Aboriginal art, she did not

alongside modern works in which some sort of affinity could be found. In fact this very project, though the works were not hung in direct pairings, was presented in Australia over forty years earlier by F. D. McCarthy in his exhibition *Aboriginal Art and its Application*.

⁶² Janine Burke, *Australian Women Artists 1840-1940*, Greenhouse Publications, Collingwood, Vic., 1980, p.46.

⁶³ She studied profusely in the Australian Museum, frequently referring to it in her articles. She also described journeys to actual sites where she viewed Indigenous art in situ. One such expedition to the north east Arnhem Land community of Oenpelli, where she viewed rock paintings, was recounted in *Art & Australia*. See Margaret Preston, "Paintings in Arnhem Land", *Art in Australia*, 3rd series, #81, November 1940 reprinted in Elizabeth Butel (ed), *Art and Australia Selected Writings 1920-1950: Margaret Preston*, Richmond Ventures, North Sydney, 2003, pp.78-80.

⁶⁴ Margaret Preston, "The Indigenous Art of Australia", *Art in Australia*, 3rd series, #11, March 1925 in Butel (ed), *Art and Australia Selected Writings 1920-1950: Margaret Preston*, 2003, p.60.

⁶⁵ Margaret Preston, "The Application of Aboriginal Designs", *Art in Australia*, 3rd series, #31, March 1930, in Butel (ed), *Art and Australia Selected Writings 1920-1950: Margaret Preston*, 2003, p.70.

conceive of the fact that Aboriginal people might be responsible for creating the national style of which she spoke.⁶⁶ It was not, as Christine Nicholls has highlighted, conceived of "as an *Aboriginal led movement*."⁶⁷ Instead she was interested in the possibilities of this visual iconography for non-Indigenous artists. Her promotion of the application of Aboriginal art can be seen in numerous ranges of fabric that were printed at the time which drew on images often seen in bark paintings that had been collected by anthropologists.⁶⁸

Preston's work was exhibited in the 1941 David Jones department store exhibition in Sydney, *Aboriginal art and its Application*, introduced above. The show was divided into three parts, the first section displayed an extensive collection of bark paintings, artefacts and photographs of rock art from the Australian Museum's collection. Some material for this section was also borrowed from the South Australian museum and the Museum of Victoria.⁶⁹ The second section was devoted to practical applications of Indigenous art including exhibits of ceramic objects, fabrics and home wares all of which were made by designers and craft practitioners who demonstrated how Aboriginal motifs might be applied to objects of modern life.⁷⁰ Finally, the third section displayed works of fine art by non-Indigenous artists (with the one exception being Namatjira) and this is where Preston's works were exhibited and her attempt to emulate an Aboriginal style was demonstrated.⁷¹ Preston was considered to be "the first person in Australia who realized the importance of aboriginal art as a source of inspiration for Australian artists."⁷² She was not, however, the last.⁷³

Conclusion

This chapter has examined instances of appropriation that have possessed a cultural dimension; appropriating between different Indigenous groups, from the dominant culture to secure power and from the perspective of the dominating colonial taking from Indigenous cultures. It is in light of this history of cultural appropriation that we can consider more recent works that appropriate, particularly because these artworks often address similar themes to their predecessors. That is, the contemporary works that comprise the main subject of this thesis not only relate to the instances of cultural appropriation discussed above, they also often explicitly appropriate from that history.

⁶⁶ As a further testament to the dialogic potential of appropriation, Margaret Preston's artworks have provided yet another source for Indigenous artist Gordon Bennett particularly in his *Home Décor* (*Preston + De Stijl = Citizen*) (1997) series.

⁶⁷ Christine Nicholls, *From Appreciation to Appropriation: Indigenous Influences and Images in Australian Visual Art*, exh.cat., Flinders University Art Museum City Gallery, Adelaide, 2000.

⁶⁸ In Chapter Eleven I will examine instances of the appropriation of Indigenous Australian motifs within the decorative arts in more detail.

⁶⁹ See Nicholas Thomas, "Indigenous Presences and National Narratives in Australasian Museums", *Humanities Research*, Winter 1997, p.7.

⁷⁰ Factor, "Marketing an Australian Identity", 1991, p.23.

⁷¹ Factor, "Marketing an Australian Identity", 1991, p.23.

⁷² Roman Black, *Old and New Australian Aboriginal Art*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1964, pp.122-3.

⁷³ In Chapter Eleven I examine other artists within the decorative arts arena who were contemporaneous to Preston and who took up her challenge to create a national style based on Indigenous motifs.

Indigenous artists adopted artistic appropriation in the late 1970s and into the 1980s as a means of connecting with a lost Indigenous heritage. For the most part this type of appropriation was based on a deep respect for Indigenous culture and an adherence to its protocols of seeking permission to employ visual elements from other areas. Appropriation has been used by Indigenous people since settlement as a means of resistance. This was demonstrated in the examples of Bungaree, Barak and Namatjira who all, in their own ways, appropriated elements of the dominant culture in order to secure benefits for themselves and their community. Cultural appropriation is less easily defined, when compared to straight artistic appropriation but, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, it is important to view all forms of appropriation as portraying relationships of power and it has been power that was secured in these three examples. Finally appropriation was employed by non-Indigenous artists such as Margaret Preston who saw that Indigenous imagery provided a vast wealth of inspiration upon which she, and other artists, could draw in the creation of a national style. While Preston's appropriations were well intentioned, it is within the paternalistic attitude to Indigenous people at the time that her justification for appropriation lay.

It has been an aim of this chapter to outline the great variation in the way that appropriation has been taken up, historically, in an Australian context. Moreover, one of the themes developed in Chapters Two and Three is that the use of appropriation has been with an educative intent. By employing appropriation, artists such as Bell and Bennett have sought to educate their audiences about the inadequacies of Tillers' approach. Similarly, Barak and Namatjira could both be seen as educating their audiences about their culture and country respectively through their visual language. It is this history of cultural appropriation that is an underlying component of later instances of postmodern appropriation. With the Australian context and history in mind it is clear that the term appropriation on its own is not sufficient to encompass the multifaceted examples of its application since the beginning of white settlement.

As such the remainder of this thesis will be focused on what I will call appropriative histories, as distinct from other forms of postmodern appropriation. These appropriative histories demonstrate a relationship between the past and the present. In the following chapter I will further develop the concept of appropriative history as a more adequate means of describing this complex practice of cross-cultural and trans-historical referencing evident in the artworks that form the subject of this thesis.

Chapter Four

Appropriative history painting – a new genre in Australian art?

I see my current work as a kind of history painting. I am attempting to place into an 'historical continuum' images which should have been placed in a lot earlier. Unfortunately many events and situations were written out.¹

[History painting provides] the space where language, paintings and actions cease merely to describe a given situation and begin actively to participate in the production of meaning.²

So far I have been concerned with the intersecting histories of artistic postmodern appropriation and the broader history of intercultural exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. In this chapter I explore the potential merging of these previously separate histories, by qualifying the term appropriation, in order to see artistic appropriation within an historically and socio-politically aware paradigm. This creates a space for a more complex and nuanced analysis of how appropriation has been used by artists in the last two decades of the twentieth century to critique narratives of settlement and colonisation.

One of the criticisms made of Imants Tillers, introduced above, was that his appropriation of Indigenous art was done without any regard for the social context – the uneven relationships of power existent within colonised societies. The use of appropriation by Indigenous artists has, however, reinserted the historical conditions underpinning their experiences of the colonised nation. They draw attention to history. I will refer to this type of art with a historically illuminative intent as appropriative history painting.³ By doing so both the postmodern and postcolonial intentions of the work are equally highlighted. The use of appropriation in Australia represents a sustained interrogation into narratives of colonialism and Indigeneity which are particular to that place. The fact that Indigenous Australian art has received such enormous international acclaim, combined with the history of intercultural exchange or appropriation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, has created a unique status for appropriation as a critical tool within an Australian context. By invoking the term 'history' in naming this type of politically motivated, narrative-based, appropriative practice, I also acknowledge its affinity with a much earlier, and thoroughly documented art

¹ Gordon Bennett interviewed by Bob Lingard, "A Kind of History Painting: Gordon Bennett", *Tension*, #17, August 1989, p.39.

² Paul Duro, *The Academy and the Limits of Painting in Seventeenth Century France*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p.8.

³ Or appropriative history photography, sculpture, installation and so on depending on the medium. As the majority of the examples I refer to here are painting, this has been used as the *lingua franca* for this type of art.

form – history painting. There are many areas of intersection between the current practice and its earlier counterpart but I will return to detail them later.

In referring to this practice as appropriative history painting I attempt to distance it from the negative connotations of appropriation in which it is merely seen as theft. As discussed above, appropriation is not only a one-way phenomenon, it also has a dialogic potential. For this reason it is important to move beyond a definition of appropriation that only sees the appropriated as a victim of domination for this is not always the case.⁴ Such a narrow definition denies the importance of the Indigenous voices who have used appropriation as a means of 'writing back' to the Empire.⁵ As such it is useful to qualify the term appropriation, for, in its current form, it is a highly charged and contentious word. By qualifying appropriation it is possible to focus on specific types of appropriation and examine how they have been used in each instance. Furthermore this does not mean that the politics of appropriation itself have to be dispensed with. I argue for a shift in focus, to accept that this work has been produced, and analyse its impact and intent within art historical and socio-political environments.

Moreover, the development of appropriation in Australia occurred at a time when there were significant advances in Indigenous campaigns for civil rights as well as a general awareness of the need for land rights recognition, social justice and equity across the social and political spectrum. When seen in relation to these shifts, it is possible to see this focus within artistic arenas, on colonisation and its implications, as symptomatic of a greater shift in Australian society – not as merely an art historical development. This is further substantiated by the fact that many of the first generation of Indigenous artists who employed appropriation for the purposes of social commentary were not art school trained and thus were not necessarily conversant with postmodern theory. For example Richard Bell, who as we have already seen was fully engaged in appropriative tactics, is a self-taught artist. Bell had employed appropriation since the early 1990s and it appears that his concern then was not with appropriation but rather with highlighting injustice and creating a politically motivated art practice. Appropriation, in early works such as *Crisis: What to do About This Half-Caste Thing* (1991) [Plate 41], is used to illustrate a diagrammatic juxtaposition of opposing social and cultural interests – that of the church, the settler, the empire – and their impact on Indigenous people. In doing so this work highlights a new perspective, and alternate view to the dominant discourse of Australian history, and as such it can be seen as instructive and didactic in nature. Welchman points to this hijacking of appropriation, as evident in Bell's social commentary:

Such processes, random and capricious, or issued in ironic homage, pay little respect of course, to the founding theorisation of appropriation. Instead, they annex materials, fragments and interpretations, turning them

⁴ For a discussion of some varied ways that Indigenous peoples have appropriated aspects of dominant cultures see Bruce Ziff & Pratima V. Rao (eds.), *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation*, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1997.

⁵ See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, Routledge, London & New York, 1989.

into physical armatures or conceptual shell structures for the presentation of hybrid local content.⁶

This adaptation can also be seen in many of the next generation of artists that I will discuss in succeeding chapters who *were* art school trained; Gordon Bennett and Fiona Foley are two well known examples.⁷ Clearly Bennett has taken up postmodern theory with great gusto, as seen from his appropriative interactions with Tillers discussed in the previous chapter. Foley however explicitly criticised the postmodern practice of appropriation, despite the fact that she went on to employ it in her later work. She stated that, her educators "were for postmodernism – a universal thing where you can borrow from different cultures. I was questioning that whenever I got the chance."⁸ That an artist could change tack so radically suggests that there has been a shift from the more general forms of appropriation practiced under a postmodern rubric and towards a realisation of the potential of appropriative histories as a means of critique. When Foley appropriates, as we shall see in more detail in following chapters, it is a highly political act – a reclamation of lost heritage and a validation of her culture's survival mechanisms.

When artists like Foley, Bell and Bennett use appropriation to highlight a shift in perspective the emphasis is on demonstrating that displacement between the original source and the new image. This means that the appropriation is more often than not, recognisable in some way. It is still necessary to account for a range of viewers and levels of education. While some may not be able to identify the specific work being purloined by name, the fact that a received image has been used is evident. This lends support to my argument that appropriation, as it is used by the artists I am considering in this thesis, is not constituted around a theoretical exploration of the deconstructive possibilities of the received image. To this end I acknowledge the theoretical basis of strategies of appropriation but move beyond its broader conception in order to examine the commonalties evident amongst this particular group of artists.

Qualifying appropriation?

Many authors have tried to qualify the term appropriation, and its use by Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists in Australia. While each attempt has furthered the analysis of this area of inquiry there remain gaps which require attention. In the early history of postmodern appropriation, when issues of copyright and the legality of the practice were still being teased out, there was debate around the actual nature of appropriation as distinct from pastiche, bricolage, montage, collage etc.⁹ William Morrow, representing Artslaw, defined

⁶ Welchman, *Art After Appropriation*, p.24.

⁷ Fiona Foley is a Badtjala woman from Thoorgine (Fraser Island) off the coast of Hervey Bay in Queensland. She is now known for her public sculptures but began her career in printmaking before moving into installation.

⁸ Fiona Foley cited in Michaels, "Postmodernism, Appropriation and Western Desert Acrylics", in Cramer, *Postmodernism*, 1989, p.26.

⁹ Essentially, all of these terms refer to the combination of existing imagery. Pastiche referred to the imitation of the style of another artist. Bricolage originated with the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss and indicated a jack-of-all-trades who relied on the already existing signifiers. Collage implied

each term, highlighting their subtle variations, as part of his analysis of the legality of appropriation within Australian law. All forms were found to be in contravention of copyright laws if they incorporated already existing artistic works. Beyond the legal issues – for it was generally accepted that if no financial gain was a result of the appropriation there would be little chance of litigation¹⁰ – those in academic circles also contested the term.

Joan Kerr, who has not featured so prominently in the discussion of postmodern appropriation, was concerned mainly with the appropriation of colonial imagery by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian artists.¹¹ She opted, however, for the more neutral term 'quotation' in much of her writing. The importance of this shift in nomenclature cannot be overlooked, particularly because Kerr was writing about appropriation and cultural difference. To quote is simply to make an acknowledged reference to an already existing text. To appropriate is to take it and claim it as one's own. This is a crucial difference for Indigenous artists who repeatedly talk about reclaiming images of the past as their own.¹² In particular, contemporary Indigenous artists have reclaimed photographs or images of ancestors, who were initially taken (appropriated) in order to illustrate a particular history of the colony and its development.¹³ In such a case these contemporary artists are not interested in borrowing, or quoting the images, but rather in securing them and once again making them their own. This is confirmed by the fact that the only time Kerr has used appropriation in the title of an essay on this subject was in *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*.¹⁴ The works she discussed in this piece were predominantly created by Indigenous artists who had used images of other Indigenous Australians from the archives of Australia's visual culture. Thus it was the subjects of these works, originally arrested by the mechanisms of colonisation, who were reclaimed.

Similarly, in *White Aborigines: Identity Politics in Australian Art*, Ian McLean distinguished between the use of appropriation by Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists.¹⁵ He set out two types of appropriation, that which is inspired by postcolonialism – like the work of Indigenous artist Gordon Bennett – and that which is derived from postmodern concerns – the primary example of which is Imants Tillers.¹⁶ He stated:

a combination of fragments and montage referred specifically to a combination of existing elements within a photograph. See Morrow, "Pastiche, Bricolage and Appropriation", 1988, p.28.

¹⁰ Shane Simpson, "Copyright v Contemporary Art Practice", *Australian and International Art Monthly*, #8, March 1988, p.28.

¹¹ See Kerr, "Colonial Quotations", 1996, pp.376-387; "Past Present: The Local Art of Colonial Quotation", in Thomas & Losche, *Double Vision*, 1999, pp.231-51.

¹² See discussions of Fiona Foley, Brook Andrew, Destiny Deacon in Part Three of this thesis.

¹³ The exhibition *Portraits of Oceania*, which will be discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis, is a good example of how historical photographs of Indigenous people were reconfigured through the process of exhibition in order to shift the focus from that of the colonial perspective from which they were created and towards a celebration of the survival tactics of the subjects represented. Judy Annear, *Portraits of Oceania*, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, 1997.

¹⁴ Kerr, "Appropriation Art", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, pp.483-89.

¹⁵ Ian McLean, *White Aborigines: Identity Politics in Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp.130-33.

¹⁶ McLean, *White Aborigines*, 1998, p.142.

Even though the strategies used by contemporary Aboriginal artists are so crossed-over with white discourses that they are difficult to distinguish from the other, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art cannot be uncritically collapsed into a shared postmodern/postcolonial discourse.¹⁷

'Uncritically' is the key word here. McLean's argument is weakened by the fact that his main case study, Gordon Bennett, was extremely conversant in postmodern theory and based his entire practice upon this strategy of appropriation. McLean seems intent on separating postcolonial appropriations from postmodern ones. While distinguishing between the postmodern and postcolonial intentions of a work may be useful, keeping Indigenous and non-Indigenous art separate for analytical purposes denies the very intent of the artists who employ the strategies of appropriative history painting. Further, to differentiate between an analysis of postcolonial and postmodern intentions (where, as in McLean's analysis, postcolonial is equated with Indigenous artists) the work of Indigenous artists is further marginalised and is only ever gauged against other Indigenous artists' work. Such a separation is in direct contrast to the expressed desires of some urban Indigenous artists who want their work to be valued for its artistic merit rather than its Indigenous heritage. For example, Tracey Moffatt has claimed that: "Yes I am Aboriginal, but I have the right to be *avant-garde* like any white artist".¹⁸ Gordon Bennett has also expressed concern about his acceptance as an artist, based not on his artistic merit, but on his cultural heritage.¹⁹ He stated, "My quick success has something to do with my Aboriginality and that worries me."²⁰ This separation of uses of appropriation was also highlighted by Welchman. He argued that after the initial phase of appropriation a series of artists took up what he called a practice of "counter-appropriation" whereby previously marginalised or disenfranchised peoples, including Indigenous Australians, employed appropriation as a means of critiquing dominant cultural discourses. Welchman points to a very important shift in the use of appropriation by Indigenous artists, and one that is central to this thesis. Counter-appropriation, however, remains limiting in the fact that it is, in essence, divisive, separating the counter act from the initial, and by implication innovative, deployment of the strategy. As such the proponents of counter-appropriation could be seen as merely repeating the strategies of the dominant cultural group.²¹ Rather than relying on overarching labels across a broad spectrum of appropriation that ultimately divides the use of appropriation into

¹⁷ McLean, *White Aborigines*, 1998, p.133.

¹⁸ Tracey Moffatt interviewed by Scott Murray, "Tracey Moffatt. Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy", *Cinema Papers*, #79, May 1990, p.21. Later, M.A. Greenstein was much more forceful in articulating Moffatt's desire to be judged by her art and not her Indigeneity stating that: "Early on in her career Moffatt admittedly earned a reputation as a 'bitch' for chewing up and spitting out those who located her work in a solely ethnographic context." M.A. Greenstein, "Tracey Moffatt", *Art AsiaPacific*, #33, 2001, p.32.

¹⁹ These examples, of course, are isolated – they do not speak for all Indigenous artists but, as Brenda L. Croft has argued, urban Indigenous artists in particular have been faced with the limitations that such pigeonholing engender. She related an example in which Judy Watson was required to categorise her practice as either Aboriginal or contemporary "but not both". Croft, "Labelled Buyer Be Aware", 2000, p.85. Such categorisations are also reflected in collecting institutions like art galleries – is Indigenous art exhibited in isolation, or part of the larger narrative of Australian art? (most often it is both).

²⁰ Bennett interviewed by Lingard, "A Kind of History Painting", 1989, p.41.

²¹ See. Welchman, *Art After Appropriation*, 2001, pp.21, 24-5 .

cultural groups, this study focuses on the theme of history as a starting point from which to analyse, on a case by case basis, the way that each artist, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, has deployed this tactic while remaining critically aware of the complexities outlined above. As Howard Morphy and David Elliot have argued: "the breakdown of simple dichotomies", like postmodern / postcolonial, appropriation / counter-appropriation, "has emphasised rather than reduced the diversity of Aboriginal art" and to this we could add Australian art as a whole.²² They argue for allowing "distinctions" to emerge in an organic manner and it is with this in mind that the connections between artists of different background, all of whom have employed appropriation, can be examined.

The potential for appropriation to be dialogic – to bridge the cultural divide – has been recognised by Rex Butler who, at a conference in Canberra, stated that there should be more appropriation – that it was the only way that there would be parity amongst artists of Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage.²³ Butler's comments were brave (perhaps insensitive), seemingly asserting that Indigenous cultural heritage required no special protection or sensitivity. What he attempted to articulate was the fact that the appropriation of Indigenous art forms was related to the uneven relations of power between black and white. Moreover he argued that when it became possible to appropriate Indigenous art in the same way as any other art form, Australian society would be closer to an equitable relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.²⁴ Elsewhere he expressed this, with his co-author Morgan Thomas, as follows:

It is not the appropriation of the other as such that we must distrust but the 'qualified' appropriation of the other, the kind of appropriation that would want to maintain a superior, objective, right-thinking critical distance on its subject matter.²⁵

What Butler and Thomas yearn for is a free exchange in which all parties are equal, but clearly this utopia is yet to be reached. In the meantime, qualified appropriation occurs and as such it remains necessary to examine how it has been used. This is what is achieved in the grouping of historically focused appropriation under the rubric of appropriative histories.

From this discussion it is clear that appropriation, both as a practice and as a category, has been contested and qualified since its debut as a postmodern art practice. I acknowledge that the concept of appropriation has negative connotations but argue that it is still relevant to a discussion of these artists' works. What lies at the heart of the move away from the term

²² Howard Morphy and David Elliot, *In Place (Out of Time): Contemporary Art in Australia*, Museum of Modern Art Oxford, United Kingdom, 1997, p.9.

²³ Rex Butler, [Session 4: Psst! Whatever happened to postmodernity?], ANU Arts Centre Theatre, Canberra, Friday 11 April, 2003.

²⁴ This qualification of appropriation has also been examined by Christine Nicholls who questioned whether there should be "limits" placed on what images are available for appropriation and in specifically how this related to "particular images than are *owned* by Indigenous artists." In examining this issue, and inviting dialogue around it, she presented a range of examples in order to elicit "educated and informed debate" on this contentious topic. Nicholls, *From Appreciation to Appropriation*, 2000, p.4. This show will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

²⁵ Butler & Thomas, "'I am not Sorry': Richard Bell Out of Context", 2003, p.38.

appropriation is the desire for a more inclusive term. As I have discussed, the employment of appropriation is extremely useful in these works, in drawing attention to the distance between past and present in order to comment on narratives of history. The broader use of appropriation, as discussed so far, remains a central interest to this thesis however I want to now focus on how appropriation has been used to great effect in contributing to the genre of contemporary history painting.²⁶ Appropriation constitutes a very effective way in which artists have engaged in this discourse. Moreover, this interest in the portrayal of Australian history, as seen in the last two decades of the twentieth century, was not limited to the visual arts and in fact it represents one type of engagement with historical revision that has also occurred in literature, academic writing, film, television and popular culture.

Appropriative histories and the history of history painting

The term 'history painting' is central to the European tradition of academic painting but it also gained currency in an Australian art context in the late twentieth century. The term 'history painting' was employed by Gordon Bennett to describe his appropriative works. Bennett explicitly intended his paintings to acknowledge an Indigenous perspective within Australian history and as such created a view of that history. Non-Indigenous artist Geoff Parr, who was also working around narratives of colonial history in Australia, has similarly linked his contemporary appropriative practice to the art historical model of history painting.

Bennett's use of the term seems limited to the fact that he is very literally painting history, but Parr clearly connected his work with a European tradition when he stated that he considered his work "to be adding to the tradition of History Painting."²⁷ In response to both of these artists' claims for their work, I will examine the concept of history painting as a potentially illuminative framework in which to view these works. I argue that *contemporary* appropriative histories are not governed by the strict conventions of eighteenth century history painting but rather they adhere to its conceptual framework.

Artists such as Bennett and Parr who have created appropriative histories – with an interest in the interrogation of Australian history – are aware of its didactic dimension. In other words they actively engage in the production of meaning, contributing to Australia's visual / historical culture. It is in this sense that their work can be conceived of as a type of history painting. Moreover, these appropriative works, which contribute to narratives of Australian history through visual juxtaposition, enable a shift away from the negative connotations of the practice as wholesale theft. This occurs by drawing attention to the space *between* the original artwork being quoted and the new appropriation in order to highlight a change in perspective – a shift in time. By suggesting that these works constitute a new genre of Australian history painting I maintain that appropriation remains the central methodological

²⁶ Within the broader category of contemporary history painting we could include the work of Ngarrindjeri narrative painter Ian Abdulla who contributed to this revision of Australian history by portraying his experiences growing up as an Indigenous Australian. Similarly Rover Thomas depicted Aboriginal massacres in his works. This shift in perspective, from colonial to Indigenous, constitutes a revision of what was once the dominant view.

²⁷ Geoff Parr, [re: Appropriation / historical references in your art-making], 22 September, 2002.

drive behind the works but, rather than being *about* appropriation they merely use it as a tool to comment on the more prominent issue of history and its construction.

The story of history painting is very long and crucial to the development of western art practice. It begins with Leon Battista Alberti in early Renaissance Florence in the 1400s. Alberti developed a system of painting in which, for the first time, the viewer was positioned within the composition thus allowing them to participate, empathise, interact with the scene presented. He achieved this by thinking about the flat, two-dimensional, surface of the canvas as a window upon which the viewer could peer through and view an accurately composed scene of the world thanks to his use of linear perspective.²⁸ His system of painting, which he called *istoria* (literally meaning history), also called for a certain type of subject to be represented, one which would inspire and move the viewer. As the art historian, Vernon Hyde Minor suggests, "The artist does not so much invent subjects, but reinterprets those that are well known, and he does it in such a way as to elevate and touch the viewer".²⁹ Minor's proposition provides a crucial connection between history painting and the contemporary Australian art which is the subject of this thesis. Both forms are concerned with moving the audience, in the case of Australian art, moving them to think differently about the perspective from which Australian history has been recorded. Moreover, the idea that the history painter does not invent their own subjects but rather reinterprets already existing narratives correlates with the idea that the Australian appropriative history painter uses existing images, or existing narratives, as the basis of their own work. The stories are familiar ground for viewers, but the way they are interpreted, retold, and recomposed provides the basis for innovation – the point at which the viewer may be elevated.

History painting was motivated by a desire to represent the 'truth' (or in the twentieth century the 'truths') and often this was manifested as a desire to represent a moral truth.³⁰ History painting, was established as the most prestigious of genres above landscape, portraiture and still life painting in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³¹ It was endorsed by the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture which went on to become the only publicly supported art school in France from 1663 and thus history painting was also promoted by the state. The most distinguishing feature of history painting that is consistently noted is the fact that it was an intellectual pursuit. Paul Duro, a specialist in both history painting and the academy, describes the history painter as "a new kind of artist: rational, literate, intellectual

²⁸ Brunelleschi developed linear perspective for use in painting and architecture slightly earlier. See Cecil Grayson (ed & Trans.), Leon Battista Alberti. *On Painting and Sculpture. The Latin Texts of De Pictura and De Statua*, Phaidon Press, London, 1972.

²⁹ Vernon Hyde Minor, *Art History's History*, Prentice Hall & Harry N. Abrams, New Jersey, 1994, p.62.

³⁰ Thomas W. Sokolowski (citing Greenberg) *Morality Tales: History Painting in the 1980s*, p.9. Also see my discussion of *True Colours: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists Raise the Flag* in Chapter Eight. The catalogue for this exhibition, written by Hetti Perkins and Brenda L. Croft systematically exposed the "truth" of Australian history as opposed to the dominant white version which they labelled as "white lies".

³¹ Antoine Schnapper, "The Debut of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture", in June Hargrove (ed), *The French Academy: Classicism and its Antagonists*, University of Delaware Press, Newark & Associated University Presses, London & Toronto, 1990, pp.33-4.

and inquiring."³² Similarly, kudos was acquired by painting subjects in an interpretative rather than descriptive manner aware of past traditions and representations.³³ That is, the history painter reveals "truth through allegory and symbol."³⁴ And, in our contemporary pluralist context, we could modify that to include truth(s) rather than the singular truth previously aspired to. An artist who employs appropriation thus demonstrates, through their engagement with existing images, that they are aware of the history of representation that they are addressing, and indeed adding to, via their appropriation.

Beyond the Renaissance, history painting became the most esteemed form of art practice in the academies of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – this was particularly so in the French academy. Academies were state-supported institutions charged with the authority to teach the virtues of painting and sculpture. Initially, in the French Academy of Painting and Sculpture, history painting was at the pinnacle of painting genres that one should aspire to. Subjects for history paintings were to be taken from history, preferably ancient history – Roman or Greek – but they needed to have a moral implication that would be visible to the contemporary audience. It was not until Jacques Louis David's sketch for *The Tennis Court Oath* (1791-2) that a contemporary subject was elevated to the status of a history painting. The significance of this painting gave credence – monumental status – to contemporary events, identifying them as moments that would go down in history. We can see parallels with Australia here in the way that certain politically charged moments have been documented in traditional history painting; the opening of the first Federal Parliament in 1901 and, in its contemporary appropriative form; the stolen generations, land rights, social justice and the rise of Pauline Hanson to name a few.³⁵

It can be argued that, between the 1980s and the end of the millennium (and continuing into the next) Australia was preoccupied with its own revolution of sorts. These revolutionary decades have seen warring from disparate groups on the nature and facts of our history – the history wars – as briefly outlined in the Introduction to this thesis.³⁶ Art has been skilfully deployed to strike blows on the frontline. In complement to the newspaper dialogue, the publications, the conferences and the documentaries, the artwork has functioned as a wide-reaching and accessible form of commentary on the nature of Australian history and the state

³² Duro, *The Academy and the Limits of Painting*, 1997, p.8.

³³ Duro calls this a narrative rather than representational mode of production and further notes that Nicholas Colombel's *Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro*, c. 1685 is a pastiche of Poussin. Paul Duro, *The Academy and the Limits of Painting*, 1997, p.3.

³⁴ Duro, *The Academy and the Limits of Painting*, p.10.

³⁵ Moreover Australia's first history painting, Benjamin Duterrau's *The Conciliation* (1840), memorialised a meeting between Indigenous people of Tasmania and George Augustus Robinson who was appointed by the government to conciliate the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. This painting, and its importance for contemporary artists as a source of appropriation, will be discussed in detail in Chapter Nine.

³⁶ The details of specific events will be outlined across the next two parts of this thesis. It is the function of this first part to provide the art historical context for this study and while illuminating some socio-political events has been unavoidable it is not the main aim of this section.

of the so-called war.³⁷ It was during this time that a different type of popular history writing became prominent through the texts of Henry Reynolds.³⁸ Despite the fact that the accuracy of his accounts remain questioned by some of his fellow historians, the impact of Reynolds' writing was substantial.³⁹ Some Indigenous artists have been particularly responsive to his texts, such that Julie Dowling, for example, has expressed a desire to paint his portrait – a rare deviation for someone who is concerned with her genealogy and predominantly depicts members of her own family.⁴⁰ Reynolds articulated the dispossession and violence of the colonial experience for Indigenous people that had not been previously expressed in such a public manner.⁴¹ This influence can also be seen in exhibitions, to be discussed later, where Indigenous curators rely heavily on Reynolds as a source to espouse the history of violent conflict between the new settlers and Aboriginal people in Australia.⁴² It was also evident in the writing of artists such as Bennett, who explicitly referred to the writing of Reynolds as integral in his own discovery of a hidden history of Australia of which he was previously unaware.⁴³

The artworks that form the basis of this thesis respond directly to political events, often by way of invoking historical narratives in much the same way that the history painters of France used subjects of antiquity to illuminate a contemporary situation. Lin Onus' *Twice Upon A Time* (1992) [Plate 42] demonstrates this point aptly. In this work Onus appropriated a colonial landscape painting by H. J. Johnstone's *Evening Shadows, Backwater of the Murray, South Australia* (1880) [Plate 43]. Onus repainted Johnstone's painting upon a backdrop of dendroglyphs⁴⁴ – a traditional practice of Indigenous people in the south east of the country – dissecting the picture plane horizontally was a length of barbed wire preventing access to both the carved trees of the background and the landscape of the

³⁷ See Macintyre & Clark, *The History Wars*, 2003; Attwood & Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict*, 2003; Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth About Our History*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Vic., 1999.

³⁸ Some of Reynolds influential texts include: Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic., 1982; Henry Reynolds, *Dispossession: Black Australians and White Invaders*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1989; Henry Reynolds, *Aboriginal Sovereignty: Reflections on Race, State and Nation*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1996; Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1998; Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, 3rd ed, Penguin, Camberwell, Vic., 2003.

³⁹ Keith Windschuttle is Reynolds' main detractor. See Keith Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, Macleay Press, Sydney, 2002.

⁴⁰ Victoria Laurie, "The Double Life of Julie Dowling", *Weekend Australian Magazine*, 10-11 November, 2001, p.31.

⁴¹ In 2005 Reynolds revealed that investigations into his family history had revealed the possibility of his own Indigenous heritage. See Henry Reynolds, *Nowhere People: How International Race Thinking Shaped Australia's Identity*, Penguin Books, Camberwell, Vic., 2005.

⁴² See Brenda L. Croft & Hetti Perkins, *True Colours: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists Raise the Flag*, Bluecoat Gallery & Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, 1994.

⁴³ See Bennett & McLean, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*.

⁴⁴ Dendroglyphs are designs carved into the trunks of trees and it is "likely that these graphic elements encoded restricted knowledge". Sylvia Kleinert, "Art and Aboriginality in the South-East", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, p.241. Bearing this in mind, the potential of this restricted knowledge may have been the impetus behind Onus' masking of the designs by placing Johnstone's painting in front and by veiling the dendroglyphs with leaves and branches.

foreground. Notably absent in Onus' painting is the family of Indigenous people originally inhabiting Johnstone's painting – quite literally now dispossessed. While the meaning of Onus' work is not fixed, the absence of people and the inaccessibility of the environment depicted both suggest a comment on land rights and loss of heritage. This is reinforced when we note that the land rights debate was in full swing in 1992, when this work was painted, with the Mabo decision being handed down in June of that year which reversed the doctrine of *terra nullius*.⁴⁵ Appropriative histories such as Onus' are both revisionist, in that they provide a catalyst for new ways of thinking about Australian history (what was left in/out of the original work appropriated), and evaluative because they comment on the progress of the revolution so far (access to country and traditional knowledge is still obstructed).

Conclusion

In this section I have argued for the power of appropriative histories to contribute to a debate on the revision of Australian history. I have distanced this work from a more general examination of appropriation by qualifying the term in order to focus on appropriative works that use this strategy to critique narratives of colonial history. Artists of the last twenty years have not simply painted history with a view to immortalising and valorising the events of the past. Rather there has been a concern to present a commentary on that history which has often taken the form of a critique. The use of appropriation in particular has enabled artists to demonstrate that critique visually by depicting a shift in perspective between the original work and their new commentary. It has therefore enabled a condensing of the space between past and present.

At this point it is impossible to keep the art historical context isolated from the socio-political events that informed the production of appropriative histories. These works have not simply come out of the art historical vacuum of postmodernism, rather their birth has been a result of the confluence of postmodernism with the rise to prominence of Indigenous Australian art, increasing public questioning of the treatment and status of Indigenous Australians, historical reflection stimulated by national anniversaries and international events and the pursuit of a national program of reconciliation to name but a few. The atmosphere created by this confluence found expression both in the works of art that were created and in the way that they were exhibited as documents radically challenging dominant discourses.

⁴⁵ The Mabo decision will also be discussed in Chapter Six.

Part Two

Exhibiting appropriative histories

In Part Two of this thesis I argue that the potency of these works was further augmented by their exhibition within curated group exhibitions allowing for visual juxtapositions between original source and new appropriative history painting. I focus on exhibitions which evolved around 'important' moments in Australian history: the bicentenary of settlement in 1988, the subsequent period of the nineties in the wake of the bicentenary, and in the lead up to the Sydney Olympic Games and the centenary of Federation in 2000 and 2001 respectively. For each has inspired an unprecedented level of introspection in regards to Australian history, culture and identity. Finally, as a point of contrast, I will consider international exhibitions of Australia art that have exhibited appropriative histories within broader commentaries on the nature of colonisation and Australian history.¹

The exhibition of these appropriative histories within group exhibitions sees them placed within an imposed framework whereby the curator has attempted to form coherent narratives. Moreover, the exhibition of these works, with their accompanying texts and catalogues, has allowed a critical discourse on Australian appropriative histories to emerge where there has otherwise been none. As Joanna Mendelssohn has argued, "because book publishers have long preferred superficial illustrated surveys over scholarly analysis, those writing on Australian art have long been overly dependant on exhibition catalogues as a vehicle for publication."² What this has meant is that exhibitions, and their catalogues, have been the testing ground for what Juliana Engberg has called "thematic visual theses".³ Implicit in these comments is the power of the curator to create unlikely juxtapositions, across different times and places and to bring together works that were created in isolation – historical and contemporary, Indigenous and non-Indigenous and so on – in order to direct the viewer to a particular interpretation or theme. It is the curator's role to lay "a theoretical stencil over existing work" in order to create new contexts, ask new questions and invite new interpretations.⁴ It is for this reason that the analysis of individual artworks within these exhibitions is still of paramount importance, for, how an individual work of art is dealt with in the context of a group exhibition differs to how it may be analysed in isolation. The analysis of individual artworks in the following chapters offers a contextual examination that highlights the frequency and form of appropriative histories as distinct from the in-depth analysis offered in Part Three.

¹ Space permits only a small sample of the many exhibitions that could have been analysed. See Appendix Two for a more comprehensive list.

² Joanna Mendelssohn, "Editorial", *Artlink*, vol.26 #1, 2006, p.22.

³ Engberg is artistic director of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. Juliana Engberg, cited in Stephen Hay, "Scaling Up at ACCA", *Artlink*, vol.22 #4, 2002, p.27.

⁴ Richard Brown, "Curatorial Strategies", *Tension*, #13, June 1988, p.35.

These chapters seek to question how have curators used appropriative histories. I argue that these shows have advanced the status of appropriative history painting enabling it to be viewed as an entity beyond a simple preoccupation with postmodern appropriation the likes of which were discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis.

Chapter Five

The Bicentenary forced many communities to reflect on their past and – often for the first time – these communities began to take seriously the prior Aboriginal occupation of the continent... Australians have at least been subjected to more sustained debate about the continent's history than ever before.¹

Key Bicentennial issues have emerged: the question of nationalism and the official rhetoric of "celebration"; the offensiveness of this celebration for the oppressed Aboriginal nation within Australia; the issue of the appalling situation of the Aboriginal people; and the question of the horrific numbers of Aboriginal deaths in custody... [it] is not the "Celebration of a Nation".²

This chapter considers the representation of historical narratives – often manifested in appropriative history paintings – during the period around the bicentenary of white settlement in 1988. This time was one in which representations of Australian history were highly visible and contested as seen in the above quotes. The exhibition of appropriative histories contributed to this discourse by providing alternative perspectives to those self-congratulatory narratives privileged by official bicentenary authorities. Their focus for the anniversary was on the positive achievements of the nation but, as will become evident, artists provided a counterpoint to this within both official and independent exhibitions.

Exhibitions at this time can be divided into two categories; those which relied, in part or full, on government funding and those which remained independent of this funding. I will begin this chapter by considering the organisation of the 'celebrations' on a national and state level in order to highlight the type of events which were funded by government bodies. Following this I will move into a discussion of the shows themselves, including *The Great Australian Art Exhibition* and *The Face of Australia*, as well as existing shows that took advantage of available funds, such as the *Biennale of Sydney* and *Perspecta*. Despite the fact that the government-funded exhibitions attempted to appeal to a broader audience, it was still possible to identify works within these shows which employed appropriation to challenge dominant narratives of Australian history. In the second part of this chapter I will examine exhibitions that refused funding or tried to present an alternative perspective from the official government narrative. The main examples here will be *A Changing Relationship: Aboriginal Themes in Australian Art c.1938-1988* (1988) and *Right Here Right Now* (1988). These exhibitions attempted to pose questions of their viewers rather than present them with

¹ Peter Spearritt, "Celebration of a Nation: The Triumph of Spectacle", in *Making the Bicentenary (Australian Historical Studies special issue)*, vol.23 #91, October, 1988, p.18.

² Julie Ewington, *Right Here Right Now: Australia 1988*, exh.cat., Co-Media, Adelaide, 1988, n.p.

affirmations. They were comparatively smaller than their wholly government-funded counterparts and they tended to be more focused thematically.

Appropriative histories were not the only type of works exhibited within these counter narrative shows. Despite this, and amongst the variety of work that was displayed, it was still possible to discern a distinctive undercurrent of appropriative histories that combined the history of cultural appropriation with the newly emerging themes of postmodernism outlined in the previous chapters.³ Also explicit in these counter narrative shows was a reflection on the place of Indigenous Australians within the 'celebrations'. In spite of the new status that was accorded Indigenous art within contemporary art surveys, outlined in the previous chapters, many Aboriginal artists chose to boycott exhibitions associated with, or sponsored by, the Australian Bicentennial Authority (ABA), the national funding body. The celebrations were, they felt, an insult to the efforts of Indigenous people to gain rights and recognition as the original custodians of this continent. As the now late artist and activist Kevin Gilbert argued:

Despite our two hundred years of effort to force a sense of justice within white Australia and despite our attempts to find a catalyst to engender a national spirit of integrity, humanity, decency in white Australia generally, our two hundred year war continues.⁴

Indigenous and some non-Indigenous artists and curators chose to mount their own exhibitions which attempted to contravene the sanitised version of history that was being promoted, particularly in Sydney where the bicentennial celebrations were focused.

26th January 1988 – Celebration of a Nation?

Around two million Australians converged on Sydney Harbour, many camping out overnight, in order to secure a glimpse of the celebrations that were to mark the bicentenary of white settlement [Plate 44].

Most watched from waterfront balconies, city skyscraper rooftops, and swarming along the Harbour foreshore, changing its colourscape to a thick, vivid confetti of humanity... the Harbour was a glorious confusion of bow-to-bow boats, luxury yachts, ferries, battered motorboats, rowboats, inflatables, anything that could float.⁵

The revellers witnessed the passing of the eleven tall ships which comprised the First-Fleet Re-enactment⁶ followed by the two hundred strong flotilla of tall ships, drawn from forty countries, in the Parade of Sail which "gave the world an unforgettable glimpse of romance

³ This germination came to fruition in the 1990s with numerous exhibitions exhibiting appropriative history paintings that commented on the impact of colonial history on the postcolonial present. These will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

⁴ Kevin Gilbert, *Aboriginal Sovereignty: Justice, the Law and the Land*, Treaty '88, Canberra, 1988, p.6.

⁵ Janet Hawley, "Millions Revel into the Night", *Sydney Morning Herald*, News and Features, 27 January 1988, p.1.

⁶ The official First Fleet Re-enactment was organised by Jonathan King and was a separate venture to the ABA funded Tall Ships project. See Fiona Capp, "A Dream Comes True, Despite the Bureaucracy", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 1988, p.11.

and excitement from a bygone era."⁷ Around 150 military aircraft took part in a magnificent flyover and entertainment was provided throughout the day in the form of musical performances, boat races and daytime fireworks. In the evening a mammoth twenty-minute fireworks display began "with a 200-gun salute and ended with 200 Roman candles atop the Harbour Bridge."⁸ Following this, musical entertainment continued into the night.⁹

In addition to the spectacular events seen on the harbour there was also a program of official addresses and ceremonies which began at 7:30am with a commemorative service marking the raising of the flag, two hundred years earlier, by Arthur Phillip. This began a spate of speeches which included addresses by the visiting Prince Charles, accompanied by Lady Diana, the Governor-General, Sir Ninian Stephen, The Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, the Most Reverend Donald Robinson, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, the Most Reverend Edward Clancy, the Premier of New South Wales Barrie Unsworth and the Prime Minister of Australia Bob Hawke. All of the state Premiers were also in attendance.¹⁰

On the other side of the world another flag raising ceremony was being conducted. This time it was the late Burnum Burnum, a Woiworung/Yorta Yorta man who was a member of the stolen generations, who initiated the re-creation.¹¹ Burnum Burnum planted an Aboriginal flag on Folkestone beach, beneath the White Cliffs of Dover claiming Britain for Australia's Indigenous people. The protest drew attention to the absurdity of claiming one country for a people through the act of raising a flag. In an ironic statement which highlighted the great devastation that the British enacted upon the Indigenous people of Australia as a result of colonisation he stated that "In claiming this land, we wish no harm to you natives."¹²

Back in Australia, and away from the bustling foreshore of Sydney Harbour, thousands of Indigenous Australians amassed in Redfern to begin their march for Freedom, Justice and Hope.¹³ This march trailed through Redfern via Belmore Park, where they were joined by

⁷ Norman Abjorensen, "Day of Contradictions", *Sydney Morning Herald*, Special Supplement, 27 January 1988, p.1.

⁸ Janet Hawley, "Millions Revel into the Night", *Sydney Morning Herald*, News & Features, 27 January 1988, p.1.

⁹ See "A Harbourside Party for Everyone", *Sydney Morning Herald*, Special Supplement, 26 January 1988, p.2.

¹⁰ The fact that the Victorian Premier was in Sydney for the celebrations was noted in the media which picked up on the fact that outside of New South Wales the anniversary held less significance despite federal government efforts to garner national support and generate enthusiasm across the country. See Larry Schwartz, "Party Mood is Half-Hearted Out of the Limelight", *Sydney Morning Herald*, News and Features, 27 January 1988, p.14.

¹¹ Peter Read described Burnum Burnum (1936-1997) thus; "his achievements were remarkable and singular. He loved Mozart, he played rugby for NSW in the 1950s, he studied law at the University of Tasmania in the late 60s, he won a Churchill Scholarship in 1975, he ran for the Senate." Peter Read, "Agent of Change, From the Outside", *The Australian*, 20 August 1997, p.15.

¹² Burnum Burnum cited in Alan Hamilton, "Aboriginal Stakes British Land Claim", *The Times*, 27 January 1988.

¹³ Brenda L. Croft, a participant in the protests who later went on to document the period, put the total number of participants at 60,000 people. Brenda L. Croft, "From Little Things Big Things Grow: Indigenous artistic, political and cultural development in the New South Wales Region of Australia from 1984-1994", MA Thesis, College of Fine Arts, University of NSW, Sydney, 1991, p.5 Estimates

non-Indigenous supporters, and concluded at Hyde Park where a stage had been erected and a range of speakers, including international First People representatives addressed the audience [Plate 45].¹⁴ Protesters also converged on Mrs Macquarie's chair where an Aboriginal Embassy was erected and another re-enactment was conducted. This time it was the landing of Captain Arthur Phillip and two oarsmen in a longboat.¹⁵ They were greeted by an Indigenous party who capsized the boat, symbolically 'drowned' its occupants, and took command of the vessel.¹⁶

It was not the first time that Indigenous Australians had protested the celebration of Australia Day for, as Indigenous activist Michael Mansell has appositely indicated:

The day's celebration continues to offend the Aboriginal peoples of Australia yet the white population seems immune to the offensive nature of the celebrations... Australia Day celebrates the coming to power of whites over blacks... the day glorifies the invaders.¹⁷

In 1938, on the sesqui-centenary anniversary of the white settlement of Australia, a group of Indigenous people gathered in Sydney to recognise the day as a "Day of Mourning." Organised by members of the Aborigines Advancement League and the Aborigines Progressive Association and held in the Australian Hall building in Sydney, this conference explicitly called for recognition of citizenship rights for Indigenous Australians.¹⁸ The official event, celebrated by mainstream Australia, consisted of a re-enactment of the landing of Arthur Phillip in which Aboriginal people brought in from Menindee and Brewarrina were forced to participate by retreating in the face of the British envoy.¹⁹

of crowd size however, vary greatly. One newspaper article stated "Black leaders estimated there were at least 40,000 people taking part. Police estimated the crowd at 15,000." The same article went on to state that "The NT's traditional community performed a 'welcoming' dance and more than 30,000 people clapped to the rhythm of their clapping sticks." Tony Hewett & David Monaghan, "Blacks Boo Royal Pair on Barge", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 January 1988, p.2.

¹⁴ Hewett & Monaghan, "Blacks Boo Royal Pair on Barge", 1988, p.2.

¹⁵ There was no official re-enactment of the landing of Phillip. Stopping short of actually landing was a meagre gesture of little value in relation to the pomposity of the rest of the 'celebrations'. However as *The Times* reported it was conceived of "as a gesture of reconciliation towards the embittered descendents of Australia's original inhabitants, who were dispossessed and murdered." "Australia Celebrates With Style", *The Times*, 27 January 1988, accessed 12/06/06, [document number: T000000020051004dk1r00stg, <http://global.factiva.com>].

¹⁶ Tony Hewett & David Monaghan, "Blacks Boo Royal Pair on Barge", *Sydney Morning Herald*, News & Features, 27 January 1988, p.2.

¹⁷ Michael Mansell cited in, "Australia Day Celebrates Whites Killing Blacks: Mansell", *Australian Associated Press General News*, 25 January 2005, accessed 13/07/06, [document number: AAP0000020050125e11p000uo, <http://global.factiva.com>].

¹⁸ Key people involved in this conference were William Cooper, William Ferguson, Jack Patten, Pearl Gibbs, Doug Nicholls and Margaret Tucker. See Melinda Hinkson, *Aboriginal Sydney: A Guide to Important Places of the Past and Present*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2001, pp.22-24; Broome, *Aboriginal Australians*, 2002, pp.171-2. Interestingly, when the building that this conference took place in was under threat of demolition Gordon Hookey appropriated a photograph of the conference in a painting titled *Day of Mourning* (1997) which served to illustrate the historical significance of this building to the Aboriginal civil rights movement. This painting is illustrated alongside Heather Goodall, "Day of Mourning", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, p.570.

¹⁹ Notably absent from the reconstruction were any convicts – the main reason for the landing in the first place. See Paul Ashton, *Waving the Waratah: Bicentenary New South Wales*, New South Wales Bicentennial Council, Sydney, 1989, pp.21-3. Verity Burgmann has highlighted the fact that if one was to compare expenditure on the bicentenary and the sesqui-centenary the latter would have only

Protests also took place in 1970 on the bicentennial anniversary of the landing of Captain James Cook at Botany Bay. One Koori participant, James Miller, recounted his experience on that day:

At La Perouse, on the site of the Protection Board Reserve, Koori Australia mourned. Koori leaders, many wearing red headbands as a symbol of the bloodshed, carried placards showing the names of hundreds of traditional groups wiped out by the invasion. Wreaths were thrown into the bay and drifted across to Kurnell [where the official celebrations took place].²⁰

Two years later attention was directed toward Canberra where an Aboriginal Embassy was erected on the lawns of what is now Old Parliament House. As outlined in the Introduction, the embassy was intended to draw attention to the then Government's refusal to acknowledge Aboriginal rights to land.²¹ The Embassy stood as a highly visible site of protest and was the focus of violent clashes later in the year when Federal police moved in to dismantle the dwellings and arrest its residents.²² These protests form the backdrop to the events of 26 January 1988 which has subsequently been referred to as invasion day, survival day, day of mourning – all of which served to draw attention away from the celebratory nature of the mainstream incarnation of Australia Day.²³

In the lead up to the celebrations, and on the day itself, it became clear that there was a division between those who celebrated this white Australian anniversary and those who protested or questioned it.²⁴ From the outset, there was conflict between the national government – who wanted the bicentennial celebrations to be significant to all Australians, regardless of their geographical location – and the NSW state government who were more

cost around \$1 million in 1988's terms. She went on to note that most of the funding for the 1938 celebrations "came from private sources, with the New South Wales Government chipping in the equivalent of \$141,275. There was no Federal Government money involved." Verity Burgmann, "Flogging the Bicentenary", *Arena*, #82, Autumn 1988, p.8.

²⁰ James Miller, *Koori: Will to Win. The Heroic Resistance Survival and Triumph of Black Australia*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1985, p.194.

²¹ It was established by Michael Anderson, Billy Craigie, Bertie Williams and Tony Coorey all activists from the Sydney suburb of Redfern. Bain Attwood has noted that it soon gained the support of other Indigenous activists including (amongst others) Kevin Gilbert, Gary Foley, Paul Coe and Roberta Sykes. Bain Attwood, "Tent Embassy", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, p.712.

²² See James Miller, *Koori: A Will to Win. The Heroic Resistance, Survival and Triumph of Black Australia*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1985. The Embassy was an intermittent fixture in Canberra in subsequent years and was finally established permanently in 1992 in its original position. In recent years it has survived numerous attempts to dismantle it including an arson attack in June 2003 which destroyed one of the original dwellings that had housed Embassy documents and photographs amassed over its 31 year history. Sid Marris, "Arson Ignites Tent Embassy Fury", *The Australian*, 16 June 2003, p.2.

²³ These protests also need to be seen in relation to the increasingly vocal calls for Indigenous rights recognition especially in relation to Land Rights. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to detail all of the advances in this area. For an account of the development of such political activism see Broome, *Aboriginal Australians*, 2002.

²⁴ This division between those who celebrated Australia Day and those who did not was not confined to the bicentennial anniversary. Australia Day has been marked as a Day of Mourning, as Invasion Day and as Survival Day by many Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous supporters of Indigenous rights. See Heather Goodall, "Survival Day", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, pp.705-706.

partial to celebrating the historical anniversary as it happened in that state. The bicentenary celebrations were promoted with great verve by the NSW government, more so than in any other state. NSW formed its own government body, the NSW Bicentennial Council, to administer their budget which, as Martin Thomas has noted, rivalled that of the national budget assigned to the Australian Bicentennial Authority (ABA) which had been formed in 1980 to administer and promote the celebrations.²⁵ With the implementation of the NSW Council in 1982, both the ABA and the NSW Council were responsible for funding events associated with the bicentenary and their promotion in NSW. Other states also had similar councils in order to administer the ABA's funding. Each council's director automatically became a sitting member of the ABA. No other state body rivalled the funding that the NSW government, under the direction of Premier Neville Wran (1976-1986), devoted to this anniversary.²⁶

Thomas also highlighted the contrast between the national attempt to shift the focus of celebrations away from the actual anniversary – 26 January 1788 – which inevitably focused attention on the arrival of British settlers, and the NSW Council's emphasis on that very history of colonisation. As a result, Thomas argued that the funding provided by the NSW state government enabled an extremely Sydney-centric focus for the celebrations contrary to the desire of the national funding body. The ABA was also bound by the fact that it had to co-operate with the NSW authorities on a number of levels simply out of practicality; the NSW authorities controlled the police, public transport, and the main public spaces in which the celebrations would occur – Sydney Harbour and Circular Quay.²⁷

There was also opposition between those who decided to participate – either in a positive affirmation of the events or in a public denouncement of the anniversary – and those who boycotted the events all together. With the rebuke from Indigenous Australians, "don't celebrate '88", emblazoned on protest banners, many other public figures also boycotted the celebrations. Gerry Hand, the then Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, decided to boycott the celebrations, with surprising support from his government. He spent the day, "when everyone was lining Sydney Harbour – in Katherine talking about a land claim and two days before that I was in the Torres Strait talking about independence".²⁸ Musician John Williamson chose not to perform at the Royal Bicentennial Concert on account of his desire for an Australian republic.²⁹ Australia's first female high court judge, Mary Gaudron, "declined to be made a Companion of the Order of Australia in the bicentenary Australia

²⁵ Martin Thomas, "Making this State Grate: The pretensions of Darling Harbour", *Art & Text*, #29, 1988, p.66.

²⁶ The NSW Bicentennial Council allocated \$80 million to the celebrations as compared to the \$166 million that the ABA was granted to spend across Australia. The Tasmanian Bicentennial council devoted \$257,000 to celebrations while in South Australia \$5 million was spent. See Martin Thomas, "Making this State Grate: The pretensions of Darling Harbour", *Art & Text*, #29, 1988, p.66.

²⁷ Denis O'Brien, *The Bicentennial Affair: The Inside Story of Australia's Birthday Bash*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney, 1991, p.6-7 and Martin Thomas, "Making this State Grate: The pretensions of Darling Harbour", *Art & Text*, #29, 1988, p.66.

²⁸ Gerry Hand, cited in "Bicentenary – A Year of Success or Shame?", *Sun Herald*, 11 December 1988, p.55.

²⁹ "Rebel Patriot", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 1988, p.20.

Day honours list" though she did not explicate a specific reason for her refusal.³⁰ The author Patrick White refused any public comment on the subject after Australia day.³¹

Individual boycotts, such as those above, were met by equally strident individual calls for the celebrations to be firmly situated within historical fact. Jonathan King, a descendent of Philip Gidley King, was instrumental in organising the re-enactment of the voyage of the First Fleet despite opposition from the ABA. King's personal crusade was specifically designed to celebrate the historical moment of European settlement. He described the ABA's alternative, the procession of tall ships, as "just a spectacular without any historical significance".³² But on the day, the official re-enactment sponsored mainly by the NSW Council, and the procession of Tall Ships, the official ABA event, merged into one in the public's enthusiastic appreciation of the spectacle of the day.³³ This merging of state and nationally funded events was of little consequence to the public and the bicentenary celebrations were hailed a success by most, regardless of initial opposition.³⁴

The tensions outlined – between celebration, historical fact, inclusiveness, boycott and protest – were in essence related to how Australia's history would be remembered and what the effects of that memorialisation would be. All events had to deal with the tension between "two hundred years of nation building and two hundred years of territorial occupation."³⁵ The national approach, which was more inclusive, focused on the achievements of the nation and its people and shifted the emphasis away from the historical anniversary. The state approach adopted by the NSW Government attempted to heighten awareness of the historical past through re-enactments and by focusing on specific locations of historical significance disregarding the implications of territorial occupation that this engendered. Drawing attention to the past, but highlighting the implications of the past, was also a strategy taken up by Indigenous protestors who utilised places of historical significance in order to highlight how historical events influenced their contemporary circumstances. Effectively, this was also the function of the appropriative history painting, to bring events of the past into a contemporary focus in order to make a connection between those past events and the present.

³⁰ Jennie Curtin, "13 Take Honours, But One Says No", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 1988, p.1.

³¹ "Bicentenary – A Year of Success or Shame?", *Sun Herald*, 11 December 1988, p.55.

³² Jonathan King in Fiona Capp, "A Dream Comes True, Despite the Bureaucracy", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 1988, p.11.

³³ Fiona Capp, "A Dream Comes True, Despite the Bureaucracy", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 1988, p.11.

³⁴ Morgan Gallop Polls indicated that in May 1986, 39.6% of the people surveyed did not think that the money spent on the Bicentennial celebrations was worthwhile and 20.3% said they were unsure. As the anniversary approached, in October 1987, 45.8% of people did not see the amount of money devoted to the celebrations as money well spent. However, by 1 February 1988, 78.5% of people surveyed in a Saulwick Poll were extremely satisfied with the bicentennial celebrations describing them as either very interesting and exciting or quite interesting and exciting.

³⁵ Peter Cochrane and David Goodman, "The Great Australian Journey: Cultural Logic and Nationalism in the Postmodern Era", *Making the Bicentenary (Australian Historical Studies special issue)*, vol.23 #91, October, 1988, pp.21-44.

There is an analogous relationship here between the use of re-enactment discussed above and the use of appropriation exhibited in shows around the bicentenary. Both re-enactment and appropriation rely on existing knowledge of events and images for their power. In the case of the NSW Council re-enactment was used to confirm moments in colonial history that were deemed important – the landing of Cook; the flag raising by Arthur Phillip. For Indigenous Australians, who also recognised the power of such reconstruction, re-enactment was used to challenge and subvert those accepted narratives of history. Finally the ABA recognised the power of re-enactment in their refusal to support events like the First Fleet Re-enactment, opting instead for more inclusive celebrations with less emphasis on actual historical events. For artists too re-enactment was used as a form of subversion illustrating, through the use of appropriation, a shift in perspective between original and their new work. Curators also illustrated this shift by juxtaposing works that demonstrated contrasting outlooks.

Representing the Nation – Government supported exhibitions

The celebrations on that particular day were the culmination of years of planning. But the focus of funding was not solely on public pageantry – it also included a large portion for various arts activities including theatre, dance, music and the visual arts.³⁶ Funding for exhibitions took on two distinct forms – social history exhibits and exhibitions of fine arts drawn from the collections of the country's art museums and galleries. One of the major blockbuster exhibitions that the ABA supported was *The Great Australian Art Exhibition*, organised by the Art Gallery of South Australia, which toured to all state galleries across the country.³⁷ The show was essentially a modernist exercise, selecting individual works that could be considered as icons of Australian art which were arranged to tell the history of the nation and its people. It was criticised for its chronological format, its reliance on connoisseurship, and its compartmentalisation of works into broad and seemingly arbitrary categories.³⁸ Accompanying this exhibition was a major publication, *Creating Australia: 200 Years of Art 1788-1988* (1988) [Plate 46], which constituted a significant resource on the history of Australian art. The exhibition was a broad survey of Australian art from colonial times to the then present. Ron Radford, the Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, coordinated the selection of works and Daniel Thomas acted as the show's curator and edited the accompanying volume.

This show is significant to consider for three reasons; first it illustrated the history of Australian appropriation outlined in the first part of this thesis. It did this by juxtaposing historical and contemporary examples of appropriation by exhibiting the work of artists like William Barak, whose work was exhibited in the "Centenary Art: Culture", through to Albert Namatjira and Margaret Preston [Plate 47] whose works were seen in the section devoted to "Twentieth Century Art: Nature". Trevor Nickolls' painting *Machine-time Dreamtime* (1981) [Plate 28] and Tim Johnson's *After Canaletto* (1986), as well as political posters protesting

³⁶ See, Sarah Overton (ed), *Reviews: Australia's Bicentennial Arts Program 1988*, The Australian Bicentennial Authority, Sydney, 1989.

³⁷ It did not tour to the territories.

³⁸ Nancy Underhill, "A Singular View", *Art Monthly Australia*, #13, August 1988, pp.11-15.

the bicentennial celebrations and uranium mining were seen in the broad categorisation of "Twentieth Century Art: Culture" and the appropriative work of Imants Tillers, *Kangaroo Blank* (1988) [Plate 48]³⁹ was seen in "Twentieth Century Art: The Individual" alongside acrylic paintings by Aboriginal artists like Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri and Turkey Tolson Tjupurrula amongst others. The history of cultural appropriation, outlined in Chapter Three above, was clearly apparent in this exhibition.⁴⁰

Second, it brought alternative perspectives on Australian history together through the juxtaposition of works by artists from diverse backgrounds (migrant/Indigenous/non-Indigenous) and diverse periods of time from settlement to 1988. Thomas claimed that the exhibition provided viewers with a variety of works never before seen in any survey of Australian art. In order to achieve this there was an emphasis on different mediums, beyond painting and sculpture, which included the decorative arts, ceramics, photography, prints and drawings.⁴¹ It also claimed to be the first exhibition to display Indigenous Australian art "within the full continuity of Australian art."⁴² As such, many of the colonial works on display depicted colonisation as a benign process whereas the inclusion of contemporary works of art by Indigenous artists like Trevor Nickolls highlighted the ongoing effects of that seemingly benign process as being linked to loss of heritage. Moreover, by including the work of Indigenous artists working in a range of situations – from urban to remote community – across similarly diverse media it also demonstrated the varied ways that colonisation had impacted upon different people and in turn their art production. This inclusive approach, however, was seen as problematic. The attempt at inclusion stopped short of actually integrating the display of so called "traditional art" with the remainder of Australian art, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. As Nancy Underhill observed "the viewer is presented with a seemingly chronological view of Australian art" yet this was not actually the case, as she went on to note that despite the fact that Aboriginal artworks "precede the colonial section... some are contemporary."⁴³ The book which accompanied the exhibition mirrored this divide beginning with a comprehensive, well-illustrated, section on "Traditional Aboriginal Art" introduced by Daniel Thomas and including essays on specific works by Luke Taylor, Margaret K.C. West, John E. Stanton and Michael A. O'Ferrall. Other Indigenous artists were integrated in the remainder of the text. This approach, of singling out individual works for detailed analysis was indicative of the strategy of the book as a whole – Thomas introduced a theme and subsequently key works were chosen which illustrated that theme and were analysed in a short scholarly essay.⁴⁴ Joan Kerr criticised this exhibition for

³⁹ This work was commissioned by Thomas for the exhibition. See Nancy Underhill, "A Singular View", *Art Monthly Australia*, #13, August 1988, p.13.

⁴⁰ Although it may not have been an aim of the curators to present such a history of cultural appropriation, it is with the benefit of hindsight that we can identify this theme.

⁴¹ Daniel Thomas (ed), *Creating Australia: 200 Years of Art 1788-1988*, International Cultural Corporation of Australia in association with the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 1988, p.10.

⁴² Daniel Thomas (ed), *Creating Australia: 200 Years of Art 1788-1988*, International Cultural Corporation of Australia in association with the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 1988, p.10.

⁴³ Nancy Underhill, "A Singular View", *Art Monthly Australia*, #13, August 1988, p.13.

⁴⁴ Apart from the section titles "Traditional Aboriginal Art" the show was ordered chronologically in three parts; "Colonial Art", "Centenary Art" and "Twentieth Century Art". Within each of these

its simultaneously inclusive and exclusive approach. As she highlighted, with over three hundred works on exhibition by a diverse group of artists across a range of mediums, "there is something for almost everyone here."⁴⁵ Yet the show took on an air of exclusivity within the accompanying book which selected fifty-seven works for "star treatment". Kerr argued that these works were "conservative and elitist", dominated by male artists working within the traditional framework of large-scale painting.⁴⁶

Finally this show illustrated alternative perspectives on Australian history through the exhibition of appropriative works. The most significant of these, for this study, was Imants Tillers' *Kangaroo Blank* (1988), which was commissioned for the exhibition. In this painting Tillers appropriated a painting of a kangaroo created by the English artist George Stubbs. Stubbs had never been to Australia and painted the Kangaroo from a skin that had been taken back to England by Joseph Banks after his 1770 voyage to Australia with Captain James Cook [Plate 49]. As Nicholas Baume argued in his catalogue entry for this work:

Tillers refers to our past reliance, whether we be Aboriginal or Euro-Australian, on outsiders' representations of who we are, even when their perspective – like Stubbs's – is well intentioned but ill-informed.⁴⁷

Tillers omitted the kangaroo, reproduced the entirety of the landscape in which it was depicted and substituted a 'blank' column to the left of where Stubbs' kangaroo had been seen.⁴⁸ Tillers appositely demonstrated that the bank of historical images, which had been used to affirm the process of exploration and colonisation, were in fact contrived and second hand. As Harriet Edquist confirms, "the model is anything but natural and the landscape is an entire fabrication."⁴⁹ Tillers' work therefore questions this fabricated national iconography.

A similar deconstruction, and subsequent reconstruction, of historical representations of colonisation was found in *The Face of Australia*, another exhibition staged by the ABA, which drew on the collections of regional galleries and university museums. Like *The Great Australian Art Exhibition*, this show highlighted the ABA's desire to present an inclusive cultural program that promoted the bicentenary as a celebration for all – not simply something to be celebrated in Sydney. The show only toured to regional centres. Like their blockbuster, the show included both a historical and contemporary dimension within its four thematic areas.⁵⁰ Anne Zahalka's critique of the constructed nature of the Australian

chronological sections the artworks were categorised further under the themes of; "Nature", "Culture" and "The Individual".

⁴⁵ Joan Kerr, "The Bicentenary and the BLOCKbuster", *Artlink*, vol.8 #3, September 1988 reprinted in Sarah Overton (ed), *Reviews: Australia's Bicentennial Arts Program 1988*, Australian Bicentennial Authority, Sydney, 1989, pp.492-96.

⁴⁶ Kerr, "The Bicentenary and the BLOCKbuster", 1988, Overton (ed), *Reviews*, 1989, p.492.

⁴⁷ Nicholas Baume, "Where Truth is no Stranger to Fiction", in Thomas (ed), *Creating Australia*, p.227.

⁴⁸ The "blank" and the diagram that radiates across the canvas, are references to the work of Shusaku Arakawa, a Japanese-American artist.

⁴⁹ Harriet Edquist, "Imants Tillers: The Suspended State of Painting", in Juliana Engberg, *Colonial Post Colonial*, exh.cat., Museum of Modern Art, Heide, Vic., 1996, p.60.

⁵⁰ The show was divided as such: "The Land – The Present", "The Land – The Past", "The People – The Present" and "The People – The Past".

landscape genre – as presenting a rural idyll not necessarily mirroring the reality of the pastoralist's experience – was demonstrated in her work *An Early Morning Shoot* (1983) [Plate 50].⁵¹ This work depicts a film crew setting up for a photo shoot inserted into Elioth Gruner's iconic painting *Spring Frost* (1919). Gruner's work, which Zahalka appropriated, was not on show in the exhibition, but another painting of his was [Plate 51], as were some of the more quintessentially Australian depictions of landscape by Hans Heysen. Both Tillers and Zahalka bring the past and the present together by the very incongruence of their imagery – Tillers by juxtaposing an eighteenth century study in fauna with the stark imagery of a twentieth century conceptualist and Zahalka by overlaying obviously photographic components over a painted image. By re-enacting the images of exploration and settlement both artists drew attention to the way those images could be seen as constructions.

In addition to the specifically devised program of exhibitions funded by government bodies, already existing shows, like *Australian Perspecta*, (introduced in Chapter Two), received supplementary funding during the bicentenary. For its "very special exhibition for the Australian Bicentenary"⁵² a smaller sample of seventeen artists were chosen so that their work could be exhibited in the best possible conditions. The exhibition also travelled to Germany with funding from the Australia Council.⁵³ Significantly, none of the seventeen core artists chosen to represent the country were Indigenous Australians.⁵⁴ It was with the next *Perspecta* exhibition, in 1989, that Indigenous artists such as Gordon Bennett, introduced in Part One, were selected to exhibit what he called, "a kind of history painting".⁵⁵ Bennett responded directly to the events of the bicentenary in many of his works produced during 1988-9, all of which incorporated appropriative elements and some of which were shown in the '89 *Perspecta*.⁵⁶ Other urban-based Indigenous artists such as Fiona Foley also had works displayed in this exhibition which marked a decided interest in Urban Aboriginal art – what Bennett called "flavour of the month".⁵⁷ In addition to Foley and

⁵¹ Zahalka's work during the 1980s was characterised by its use of appropriation. In 1985 she produced a series of works that appropriated landscapes by Heysen and McCubbin into which she inserted various figures often partaking in leisure activities. This interest in leisure and tourism continued in her next series *Bondi – Playground of the Pacific* (1989) which appropriated iconic images of beach life seen in the work of artists like Max Dupain and Charles Meere replacing the figures with a range of subjects from pale red heads to Japanese tourists and elderly migrant women. More recently she has continued to focus on leisure and multiculturalism but has not employed appropriation.

⁵² Edmund Capon, "Forward to Perspecta Catalogue", *The Australian Bicentennial Perspecta*, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, 1987, p.3.

⁵³ The *Bicentennial Perspecta* was seen at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney in 1987. It subsequently toured during 1988 – the fact that it was seen before the actual bicentenary was in line with its biennial cycle which did not fall during the bicentennial year.

⁵⁴ The curator of the show, Anthony Bond, brought these artists together because in his eyes they had all, as individuals, carved out their own way of speaking about Australia in a world context. Appropriators included in this show were Imants Tillers and Juan Davila but neither of their works explicitly critiqued colonisation.

⁵⁵ Gordon Bennett interviewed by Bob Lingard, "A Kind of History Painting: Gordon Bennett", *Tension*, #17, August 1989, p.39.

⁵⁶ His *Triptych – Requiem; Of Grandeur; Empire* (1989) was exhibited in this *Perspecta* and will be discussed in detail in Chapter Nine.

⁵⁷ Bennett interviewed by Lingard, "A Kind of History Painting", 1989, p.39.

Bennett's work being seen in the main exhibition, a satellite show of *Perspecta* titled *A Koori Perspective* was seen at Artspace.⁵⁸

The only Indigenous representation in a major survey show devoted to the presentation of contemporary art in the bicentenary year was a collaborative work, *The Aboriginal Memorial (200 Burial Poles)* (1988) [Plate 52].⁵⁹ Djon Mundine who was, at the time, the art advisor in the community of Ramingining in Arnhem Land conceived of the project. The work consisted of two hundred funerary poles which, when amassed, resembled a forest of dead trees.⁶⁰ The work was first exhibited in the Australian Biennale, *From the Southern Cross: A World View of Art c.1940-88*, in 1988. While appropriation or re-enactment were not used in this work Mundine did provocatively open his catalogue entry by explicitly linking the history of white settlement, and the bicentenary celebrations, with the death of innumerable Indigenous people. "Since 1788" he claimed "at least several hundred thousand Aboriginals have died at the hands of white invaders."⁶¹ Mundine went on to note that the presentation of Aboriginal art in official, government-funded exhibitions, during the bicentenary year presented a unique dilemma – how to bring attention to Aboriginal art in an international context without actually celebrating the bicentenary.⁶² In the end he decided that it was more productive to exhibit the burial poles than to boycott the show.⁶³

⁵⁸ *A Koori Perspective* exhibited the work of Bronwyn Bancroft, Euphemia Bostock, Robert Campbell Junior, Karen Casey, Brenda Croft, David Fernando, Vanessa Fisher, Fiona Foley, Lindsay Albert Johnson, Pam Johnston, Ellen Jose, Fernanda Martins, Raymond Meeks, Sally Morgan, Trevor Nickolls, Lin Onus, Michael Riley, Jeffrey Samuels and Judy Watson. It was curated by Avril Quail.

⁵⁹ This exhibition was a version of the Biennale of Sydney that also toured to Melbourne. Given that it received national funding, from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Australian Bicentennial Authority, it is not surprising that they adopted a national title.

⁶⁰ The NGA, who purchased the work, list the artists as follows: Paddy Dhathangu, 1915-1993, Philip Gudthaykudthay, b.1935, Neville of the Liyagalawumirr people, 1942-1998, Djardie Ashley, b.1950, Tom Djumburpur, b.1920, Yambal Durrurrunga, b. 1936, Peter Minyngululu, b.1942, Wurraki 2, 1934-c.1981, George Malibirr, 1934-1998, Dorothy Djukulul, b.1942, Charlie Djurritjini, b.1952, Roy Burmyila, b.1955, Jimmy Djelminy, b.1946, Djunginy, b.1947, Elizabeth Djutarra, b.1942, Agnes Marrawurr, 1953-1996, Clara Wubukwubuk, b.1950, Ganyila 2, b.1969, Jimmy Wululu, b.1936, Tony Djikululu, 1938-1992, John Mawurndjul, b.1952, David Daymirringu, 1927-1999, Tony Dhanyula, b.1935, Mick Daypurryun 2, 1929-1994, John Dhurrikayu 1, b.1959, Neville Gulaygulay, b.1959, Frances Rrikili, b.1962, Jimmy Mamalunhawuy, 1934-1992, Billy Black Durrumba, active 1980s, Terry Mangapal, b.1967, Jack Mirritji 2, 1966-1991, Roy Riwa, 1929-1995, William Watirri, b.1946, Jimmy Moduk, b.1942, Andrew Marrgululu, b.1959, Don Gundinga, 1941-1989, George Jangawanga, b. c.1938, Dick Smith Mewirri, 1920-c.1995, Paddy Fordham Wainburranga, b.1941, David Blanas, b. c.1930, Joe Patrick Birriwanga, active 1980s – deceased, Victor Pamkal, active 1980s – deceased and Toby Gabalga, b.1957. See National Gallery of Australia website: www.nga.gov.au.

⁶¹ Djon Mundine, "Ramingining Artists Community", *1988 Australian Biennale. From the Southern Cross: A view of world art c.1940-1988*, Biennale of Sydney & Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1988, p.230.

⁶² This use of art for political purposes was also seen in the creation of the Barunga Statement discussed in the introduction. It was modelled on the earlier Yirrkala petition presented to the House of Representatives in 1963 by Yolngu artists. See Howard Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, Phaidon, London, 1998, pp.254-7.

⁶³ The *Aboriginal Memorial* was subsequently acquired by the National Gallery of Australia on the proviso that it would be on permanent display and would never be deaccessioned. See Terry Smith, "Public Art Between Cultures: The 'Aboriginal Memorial,' Aboriginality, and Nationality in Australia", *Critical Inquiry*, vol.27 #4, Summer 2001, pp.629-661.

Not all of the exhibitions supported by government funding were devoted to an analysis of contemporary Australian society through art – there were also a number of exhibitions which had a purely historical focus – there were two major exhibitions of historical works on show in Sydney during the bicentenary.⁶⁴ The first, *The Artist and the Patron*, examined the development of the arts industry in the fledgling colony of New South Wales.⁶⁵ The second, *Terra Australis: The Furthest Shore*,⁶⁶ showed the public a vision of Australia before settlement and the establishment of colonies which was inspired by Bernard Smith's important study, *European Vision and the South Pacific*.⁶⁷ Both of these shows were partly funded by the ABA.

Beyond the blockbuster: Alternative perspectives, political art and the bicentenary

Some shows did receive bicentenary funding but still managed to present an alternative perspective to that promoted by the official shows. One such show was *A Changing Relationship: Aboriginal Themes in Australian Art c.1938-1988*, held at the S.H. Ervin Gallery in Sydney. This exhibition was partly funded by the NSW Bicentennial Council as part of their regional gallery program. Despite the fact that the funding was directly associated with the bicentenary, co-curator Catherine DeLorenzo barely discussed the anniversary in her catalogue essay. She made fleeting references to the events of 1988, with the assumption that the reader was aware of the significance of that particular year.

The exhibition attempted to present an alternative to the exhibition formats already in existence which addressed the place of Indigenous art within Australian art history as seen in *The Great Australian Art Exhibition* and *Faces of Australia*. In the catalogue essay, DeLorenzo argued that the exhibition sat outside of the accepted formats for the presentation of Indigenous art because the work displayed was situated within "an historically contextual framework" which aimed to "show relationships between two cultures".⁶⁸ In order to achieve this aim, the curators assembled a variety of artworks by Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists that included both contemporary and historical works, all of which somehow

⁶⁴ History in general was promoted as something which the public could engage with, as well as help to create. This attempt at popularising Australian history, taking it out of the realm of academic discourse, was clearly evident in public events such as the stage production of *Manning Clark's History of Australia: The Musical* in Melbourne. The historian Peter Fitzpatrick has argued that it was "a remarkable, spectacularly enjoyable celebration-cum-critique of our culture". Part of the importance of this show is found in the fact that history was seen as an important part of the present; determining our national identity. See Peter Fitzpatrick, "History – The Musical: A Review and a Retrospect", *Making Bicentenary (Australian Historical Studies special issue)*, vol.23 #91, October 1988, pp.171-9.

⁶⁵ Patricia R. McDonald & Barry Pearce, *The Artist and the Patron: Aspects of Colonial Art in New South Wales*, exh.cat., Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1988

⁶⁶ William Eisler & Bernard Smith, *Terra Australis: the Furthest Shore* (exh.cat.), Art Gallery of New South Wales & International Cultural Corporation of Australia, Sydney, 1988. Subsequent to this exhibition Eisler went on to publish a book on the subject. See William Eisler, *The Furthest Shore: Images of Terra Australis from the Middles Ages to Captain Cook*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1995.

⁶⁷ Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1969.

⁶⁸ Catherine DeLorenzo & Dinah Dysart, *A Changing Relationship: Aboriginal Themes in Australian Art c.1938-1988*, exh.cat., S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney, 1988, pp.5-6.

addressed the relationship between the new settlers and original Indigenous inhabitants and thus venturing a revision of how that relationship had previously been exhibited.

This was the first exhibition that explicitly set out to bring together historical examples of appropriation and with their contemporary counterparts. It was not, however, just about appropriation, rather it was concerned with the history of interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists. Ultimately, this approach served to merge the dominant discourses on appropriation outlined in Part One of this thesis. That is, it merged the earlier history of cultural appropriation, usually confined to historical or anthropological discussions of art, with the contemporary, postmodern examples of appropriation, in order to highlight the ongoing construction and reconstruction of power relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians as seen in art practice. It achieved this by exhibiting a range of works: historical appropriations of Indigenous designs found in the arena of decorative arts, artworks depicting Indigenous people, contemporary artworks influenced by Indigenous modes of image making, contemporary appropriative works that directly commented upon cross-cultural relations and history in Australia, political art made by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and art made by Indigenous Australians that similarly addressed this relationship. It was through the contrasting of these different types of works that Dysart and DeLorenzo were able to "reassess the past and by so doing reevaluate the present."⁶⁹ Dysart and DeLorenzo took works from the history of Australian art, like Preston and Namatjira, and placed those works at the beginning of a historical continuum of intercultural appropriation which ended with artists like Tillers and Johnson. Thus they challenged their viewers to see these works in a new light – to the way such works were exhibited in survey type shows on Australian art discussed earlier.

In the contemporary appropriations that were displayed, a range of socio-political issues were addressed such as appropriation and the question of permission, evoked by the work of Imants Tillers, Tim Johnson, Trevor Nickolls and Lin Onus. The historical treatment of Indigenous Australians during colonial times was seen in the work of Geoff Parr and, related to this, contemporary issues like Aboriginal deaths in custody were considered in Robert Campbell Junior's painting. It was these appropriative works that elicited a strong response from reviewers. Bob Evans, writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, argued that the work of Tim Johnson and Trevor Nickolls misappropriated Aboriginal images and techniques.⁷⁰ Evans' comments on the ethics of appropriation shifted attention away from the stated aim of the exhibition, to show a complexity of changing relationships, by privileging a static appropriation / misappropriation model. His review did not in any way illuminate the reader as to the negotiations that may or may not have taken place between the artists and the people from whom they were accused of misappropriating (discussed in Part One).⁷¹ In

⁶⁹ DeLorenzo, "Be Aboriginal" in DeLorenzo & Dysart, *A Changing Relationship*, 1988, p.6.

⁷⁰ Bob Evans, "Painting for Survival in a Whitefella's World", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 June 1988, p.78.

⁷¹ Evans did note that Johnson had often collaborated with Michael Jagamara Nelson but he did not make a connection between his collaborations and what he termed the misappropriations.

contrast, DeLorenzo addressed the complicated levels of exchange and influence evident in Johnson's work in her catalogue essay.

Other reviewers were more appreciative of the variety and forms of cultural exchange evident in the exhibition and were less enamoured with the products of this exchange. Christopher Allen focused on attempts "to cross the cultural boundaries" in his review concluding that the results of such boundary crossing were "not always successful."⁷² He argued that Parr's appropriation of Benjamin Duterrau's *The Conciliation* (1840)⁷³ was "of even less artistic interest than the original"; Nickolls' work was described as "somewhat flat and un compelling", and Campbell Junior's was "decorative rather than expressive".⁷⁴ What Allen overlooked was the fact that this show had created a space for the examination of the relationship of exchange, despite the fact that these exchanges may have been seen as clumsy, sometimes one way, or rudimentary. Perhaps it was the very fact that, in employing appropriation, these artists had come across a novel way of commenting on the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians that drew the attention of the critics. For, in so doing, they evoked a history of cross-cultural exchange, that had been one-sided but was becoming more complicated, as urban Indigenous artists appropriated from other Indigenous artist's visual repertoires; as non-Indigenous artists collaborated with their Indigenous counterparts and as the non-Indigenous visual archive was also employed by artists with a genuine concern for the welfare of contemporary Indigenous people. Moreover, the fact that these issues were raised in reviews testifies to power of the curator to generate debate around such a topic through the juxtaposition of works of art.

Part of the backdrop to this exhibition were politically motivated claims for civil rights and social justice arising from the issue of Indigenous deaths in custody. The painting by Campbell Junior that Allen referred to was in fact titled, *Death In Custody* (1987) [Plate 53].⁷⁵ This painting was executed in Campbell Junior's idiosyncratic style that "combine[s] the stick-figures of Arnhem Land with the caricatured outlining of white cartoons to present gentle but pointed scenes of Aboriginal life."⁷⁶ It depicted scenes of the final hours of an Indigenous person's life; being arrested, incarcerated, and finally committing suicide in a prison cell. Such a tragic scene was familiar in 1988 as a result of national publicity generated by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The commission set out to investigate a number of deaths that had occurred while Indigenous people were in the custody of the police or corrective services. It came about through the agitation of community groups like the Committee to Defend Black Rights as well as families of victims

⁷² Christopher Allen, "Exchange and the Fine Art of Robbery", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 June 1988, p.81.

⁷³ Parr's appropriation will be analysed in detail in Chapter Nine of this thesis [Plate 105].

⁷⁴ Christopher Allen, "Exchange and the Fine Art of Robbery", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 June 1988, p.81.

⁷⁵ Campbell Junior's work was not the only one in this exhibition to directly comment on the issue of Indigenous deaths in custody. Non-Indigenous artist Ruth Waller also exhibited a painting titled *Death In Custody* (1988) which depicted an black person being hanged by a white person.

⁷⁶ Terry Smith, "From the Desert: Aboriginal Painting" in Bernard Smith & Terry Smith, *Australian Painting 1788-1990*, 3rd ed, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995, p.510.

and Aboriginal Legal Services.⁷⁷ Investigations began in 1987 under the leadership of Justice James Muirhead. It quickly became apparent that the scope of the issue was much greater than initially anticipated and as such the timeframe for the inquiry was increased and additional Commissioners were appointed.⁷⁸ An interim report was handed down in December 1988 which made a number of recommendations for immediate action, one of which was to screen potential police officers in order to weed out entrenched racism.⁷⁹ When the Commission handed down its final report in 1991 it made recommendations on reducing the number of Indigenous Australians in custody and, in the event of incarceration, improving the level of care administered whilst there. It also contained two volumes concerned with the "underlying issues" surrounding deaths in custody, completed by Mick Dodson, as well as making more general recommendations on issues such as the advancement of reconciliation, land rights recognition and self determination as important factors in addressing Indigenous disadvantage. As Chris Cunneen has argued, the Commission took the position that "contemporary Indigenous disadvantage was directly linked to the historical legacy of colonisation."⁸⁰ It was this legacy of colonisation that was both celebrated, and called into question, in 1988 and the historical context of *A Changing Relationship* provided the necessary link between that history and the contemporary situation.

In other exhibitions, such as *Right Here Right Now: Australia 1988*, there was a similar emphasis on current issues of social welfare like deaths in custody and political activism around land rights and social recognition more broadly as being linked to Australian history or the "legacy of colonisation" as Cunneen put it. This exhibition was comprised exclusively of prints, many of which were produced as commercial posters that also incorporated slogans or textual elements in order to articulate their position more clearly. In the catalogue essay Julie Ewington made a very clear point of noting that it was *not* an 'official' bicentenary exhibition. It did *not* receive any funding from any bicentennial authority and, importantly, it did not seek any funding from such organisations. From this standpoint, Ewington claimed, the show was able to articulate an "independent view" of the bicentennial year.⁸¹ This independent view toured throughout every state in Australia.

All of the prints in this show commented on the history of settlement in Australia and the impact that this has had on the Indigenous population. Importantly, this was explored from both an Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspective and many of the images do so through the appropriation of historical images which recall colonisation. The Brisbane Poster Group reproduced an image of Captain James Cook in order to illustrate the ferocity with which the

⁷⁷ See Cunneen, *The Royal Commission*, n.d.

⁷⁸ "Muirhead Commissioners", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 April 1988, p.4.

⁷⁹ Paul Grigson, "Ban Racist Police, Says Muirhead", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 December 1988, p.1.

⁸⁰ Cunneen, *The Royal Commission*, n.d., p.4.

⁸¹ Julie Ewington, *Right Here Right Now: Australia 1988*, exh.cat., Co-Media, Adelaide, 1988, n.p.

new settlers attempted to assimilate Aboriginal knowledge and dismantle culture [Plates 54 & 55].⁸² Juxtaposed against the imposing image of Cook is the following text:

I want your food and your trees and your soil. I want the manly men and all the women. Your kids. I want your knowledge and skill. Stop your dreaming. I want you to be like me. What's wrong with that, of course I know we're equal. But I'm better. Lets have a drink and celebrate.

The print takes on the look of an advertising/sales catalogue and the stark juxtaposition of Cook, against the ridiculously callous nature of the printed text with its list of demands, criticises the history of colonisation that the general population were being asked to celebrate. Such a tactic recalls the imagery of Cook as a hero – founder of a new land ripe for British colonisation – and presents an alternative perspective. In this image, Cook is oblivious to the consequences of his actions for the Indigenous people of Australia and their way of life before his arrival.

Similarly, Byron Pickett challenged the antiquated notion of Aboriginal people as a dying race in his work *Descendants* (1987) [Plate 56]. This work played off two images of Aboriginal people, one, a historical photograph of men chained together with neck braces [Plate 57] and the other a portrait of a young Indigenous couple. Like the Brisbane Poster Group, Pickett incorporated text into his work to highlight his message for the audience. He wrote:

No man can undo the past the Aboriginal Australian has suffered through their loss of human dignity, culture and traditional way of life.

Our ancestors were crippled emotionally, spiritually and mentally but we are still Aboriginal people and we will always be proud of that.

Pickett literally brought the past and the present together in this print. He asserted a contemporary presence for Aboriginal people that was in defiance of the treatment that was afforded them as part of the process of colonisation. In Pickett's print, colonial attitudes were embodied in the imprisonment of Indigenous people. Imprisonment was also referenced in Pam Debenham's work *History* (1987) which depicts a black figure being taken away by police and appropriates elements of Tommy McRae's *Dancers with Weapons; Hunting and Fishing; European House and Couple* (1862) alongside tall ships with billowing sails, chains, fences and the bars of prison cells. This juxtaposition between contemporary circumstances and historical (often appropriated) images was common amongst the works on display.

Exhibitions such as this one, with its outspoken political intent, signal the growing vocalisation of protests heard from many urban-based Indigenous artists which found expression in the lead up to the bicentenary in exhibitions such as *Koori Art '84*, discussed in

⁸² The image of James Cook has been appropriated by a number of artists including the Kudjla / Gangalu artist Daniel Boyd in his work *Captain No Beard* (2005/6). Non-Indigenous artist Joan Ross has also incorporated an appropriated image of Cook, alongside similarly appropriated images colonial authorities and Indigenous figures from history like Bungaree and Bennelong in her installation *The Tortoise and the Hare* (2006).

Part One and continued to gain momentum throughout the decade. As has been demonstrated in the above discussion, contemporary artists used appropriation to challenge preconceived notions of Australian history. Their critiques were further amplified when these works were displayed within a specific curatorial framework which either set out to consider appropriation and shared influence, as in *A Changing Relationship*, or to critique dominant narratives of colonial history as was seen in *Right Here Right Now*. Appropriation, like other re-enactments seen during the bicentenary drew on people's prior knowledge of the events and images being re-enacted. Such strategies were used to either confirm those preconceptions or challenge them.

What these exhibitions serve to highlight is that historical narratives of cultural appropriation and cross-cultural exchange were evident during the 1980s and, despite the official ABA's attempt to depict Australia as a positive multicultural community looking towards the future, historical narratives, and critiques of those narratives were irrepressible. The bicentenary may now seem like a distant shadow but it has been useful to consider how Australians attempted to mediate competing versions of history for a national and international audience through public pageantry, exhibitions, performances and protest. This investigation becomes even more pertinent when considered in relation to the representations made in the lead up to the Centenary of Federation celebrations and immediately prior to this the international presentation of Australian-ness and history constructed for the Olympic Games held in Sydney in 2000.

Chapter Six

Acknowledging history and identity in the nineties

History should not be a selective grab bag from which are drawn only those events deemed to support national pride. Australia cannot use the highlights of its history as a backdrop for contemporary Australia, on the one hand, and also, on the other, ignore as irrelevant the darker side of its past.¹

In a post-bicentennial, multicultural Australia, there was a move away from the singular grand narrative of colonial history embodied in the re-enactment of the arrival of the First Fleet. Instead, individual narratives and experiences came to prominence as valid forms of expression. This decade was characterised by an increased emphasis on acknowledging Indigenous history and the implication of that history on contemporary experience. Moreover, the details of Indigenous history emerged in much more public ways than had been seen before via public discourse around land rights, reconciliation and the stolen generations. Exhibitions of this period explicitly set out to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the past and the present. This was achieved through the exhibition of appropriative histories, through the juxtaposition of historical and contemporary artworks and through the exhibition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artist's work. All of these factors served to highlight contrasting and often competing perspectives.

In this chapter I will examine how artists continued to question narratives of colonisation through a use of appropriation and how curators incorporated those works into exhibitions. To an even greater degree than previously, appropriative histories were included in exhibitions that were concerned with the representation of Australian history, its cross-cultural dimension, and the impact of that history on the then present situation. It was in the nineties that the stolen generations were made public through the release of *Bringing Them Home*, land rights and native title came to the fore through the highly publicised Mabo and Wik court cases and the Council for Aboriginal reconciliation was formed and began their grassroots campaign to raise awareness of Indigenous issues and the importance of their recognition for the process of reconciliation. The way Indigenous people represented themselves also changed. An emphasis on the fluid nature of identity in a cross-cultural environment developed during the 1990s replacing the pan-Aboriginalism of exhibitions such as *Koori Art '84* with its focus on Aboriginality and "Black"² identity in an attempt to

¹ Marcia Langton, "Why 'Race' is a Central Idea in Australia's Construction of the Idea of Nation", in Susan Magarey (ed), *Human Rights and Reconciliation*, a special issue of *Australian Cultural History*, #18, 1999, p.36.

² As an alternative to "Black", the artist Destiny Deacon began to use the term "Blak" in 1991 as part of the title of her work *Blak Lik Mi* (1991). The term has since been adopted into popular nomenclature "as part of a symbolic but potent strategy of reclaiming colonialist language to create a

create solidarity through shared identification. It was relinquished for a more detailed examination of cultural heritage and identity that focused on individual genealogy rather than large-scale homogenising categories of identification.³ This exploration of cultural heritage and genealogy extended to non-Indigenous artists as well and the very nature of essentialist identity was critiqued through a much more nuanced acknowledgement of mixed heritage, regional identities and urban and international influences. This was in accordance with the shift in cultural theory, away from ideas of the postmodern and towards a theory of identity politics, taking into account recent postcolonial discourse.

The end of essentialist identity and the rise of the hybrid

Post-colonial discourses on hybridity became extremely influential within curatorial practice gaining momentum as the 1990s progressed. As a result curators began to question previously held identity categories such as Aboriginal / settler / immigrant and presented more complex picture of the subject. This theoretical concern was also reflected in the political rhetoric of the early 1990s. During this time the Labor government was promoting policies of multiculturalism in order to celebrate and legitimise the changing face(s) of Australia. Multicultural policies were originally championed by both the Whitlam / Labor (1972-75) and Fraser / Liberal-National (1975-1983) governments in the 1970s. The change in government policy, towards multiculturalism, replaced the earlier emphasis on the assimilation of new migrants into the Australian community. The shift also had implications for Indigenous Australians who were subject to policies of assimilation and, as outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, the period the saw emphasis in Indigenous policy shift towards self-determination.

The initial bipartisan support for multicultural policies waned during the 1980s and 1990s. While multicultural policies towards immigration were established in the 1970s, the concept of multiculturalism as a community-building credo was not promoted until the Hawke and Keating Labor governments. It was at this time that the Liberal opposition began to distance themselves from the idea of multiculturalism. Celebrating diversity through a non-discriminatory immigration policy became a point of opposition between the Labor government and Liberal opposition. Bob Hawke and Paul Keating saw value in promoting the ideal of multicultural society as a means of identifying with the greater Asia Pacific

means of self-definition and expression." Clare Williamson & Hetti Perkins, *Blakness: Blak City Culture!*, exh.cat., Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, South Yarra, Vic., & Boomalli, Sydney, 1994, p.20. *Blak Babe(z) & Kweer Kat(z)* (1998) was another exhibition that actively employed "blak" as an alternative to Indigenous, Aboriginal, Black etc. See Brook Andrew & r e a, *Blak Babe(z) & Kweer Kat(z)*, exh.cat., Gitte Weise Gallery & Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Sydney, 1998.

³ As the decade progressed there was more emphasis on the identification of an artist's specific language group/country than was seen in shows like *Koori Art '84* where, despite the title, not all of the artists exhibited were Kooris. See Brenda L. Croft, *Beyond the Pale: 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2000. This could be seen as a response to Native Title legislation which came into effect in 1993 and required claimants to demonstrate their connection to the particular country that they were making a claiming of native title over. See Christine Choo & Shawn Hollbach, (eds), *History and Native Title*, Studies in Western Australian History #23, Centre for Western Australian History, University of Western Australia, 2003.

region – a potential source of great economic opportunity. The Liberal opposition, under the leadership of John Howard, saw that this policy was potentially divisive and would threaten the nature of Australian identity.⁴

What the Hawke and Keating governments sought to articulate in the late 1980s and through the 1990s was "a cosmopolitan Australian identity [which would] move the nation further away from its old image as a white Australia."⁵ This was in line with worldwide attitudes, as Nikos Papastergiadis noted in a special issue of *Art & Design* devoted to the theme of hybridity:

From Brussels to Buenos Aires, Melbourne to Montreal, bureaucrats and politicians alike are attempting to incorporate the amoeba-like concepts of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism within the framework of the nation state.⁶

Unlike the *national* narratives espoused in official exhibitions during the bicentenary, exhibitions from this decade displayed the work of Indigenous artists, migrants and settler-culture artists side by side with the aim of exploring *personal* identity. By placing these works alongside each other curators in the 1990s attempted to create a space in which difference was entertained without the imposed structure of a hierarchy. That is, a supposedly level playing field was created in which all parties were equally valued.

This was certainly the aim of *Balance 1990: Views, Visions, Influences* (1990) at the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.⁷ *Balance 1990* was an exhibition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous work with a focus on a multitude of identities and perspectives. Within this, colonisation and its effects, Indigenous histories, appropriation and cultural maintenance were all themes examined via a group of works that the curators viewed as "catalysts and initiators of debate, discussion and education."⁸ The exhibition was organised by Michael Eather and Marlene Hall. Eather would go on to be one of the founders of the Campfire Group – an informal artistic association composed of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists interested in the exchange of artistic inspiration between different cultural groups as well as initiating collaborations between artists from differing backgrounds.⁹ *Balance 1990* was conceived along these lines; as exploring the idea that "all Australian artists – whether Aborigines or Islanders living in traditional ways, Aborigines or Islanders living in rural

⁴ See Anthony Moran, "Multiculturalism: Threat or Opportunity?", *Australia: Nation, Belonging, and Globalization*, Routledge, London, 2005, pp.87-127.

⁵ Moran, *Australia: Nation, Belonging, and Globalization*, 2005, p.115.

⁶ Nikos Papastergiadis, "And: An introduction into the Aesthetics of Deterritorialisation", *Art & Design (Art and Cultural Difference: Hybrids and Clusters)*, Profile 43, vol.10 #7/8, 1995, p.6. For a further discussion of hybridity in art, in relation to Australian artists, see Nicholas Thomas, "Cold Fusion", *American Anthropologist*, vol.98 #1, March 1996, pp.9-25.

⁷ The main protagonist for this show, Michael Eather, had hoped that *Balance* would be on exhibition in 1988 but planning the exhibition took longer than anticipated and it was eventually seen in 1990.

⁸ Eather & Hall, *Balance*, 1990, p.44.

⁹ The Campfire Group came about as a direct result of the relationships forged whilst organising *Balance*. Key founding members were Michael Eather, Marshall Bell and Richard Bell. The Group expanded over the next decade and were responsible for initiating the collaborative projects between Michael Jagamara Nelson and Imants Tillers in 2002. See Michael Eather, *Shoosh! The History of the Campfire Group*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2005.

communities, or White artists living anywhere – can learn through sharing resources and opinion."¹⁰ An auxiliary concern was to highlight the dynamic nature of Aboriginal and Islander culture – as manifested in art practice.

It was also significant for its exploration, and in turn validation, of many different media including kitsch or previously considered tourist art objects alongside more traditional high art forms such as oil paintings. Reviewers such as John McDonald, critic for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, noted:

It is the antithesis of a museum exhibition, filled as it is with bric-a-brac, sociological artifacts, amateur and commercial art, and distinctly second-rate pictures, mixed in with some marvellous things.¹¹

The catalogue outlined the myriad forms that Indigenous art had taken and, related to that, the ways that non-Indigenous artists had engaged with it. It also charted the significant exposure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art had received in the years prior to the current show claiming that "by far the most important catalyst for the surge of cultural awareness was the Australian Bicentenary in 1988."¹² Importantly, the rise to prominence was also linked to the history of appropriation through copyright cases, as well as to postmodern appropriation through the work of Imants Tillers. For example, the show included the T-shirt produced by Flash Screenprints in 1988 which depicted John Bulun Bulun's *Sacred Waterhole* (1980) without his authorisation. The curators also included the original painting by Bulun Bulun which was reproduced in *Australia's Living Heritage* by Jennifer Isaacs and provided the means for Flash Screenprint's appropriation and in turn sparked the one of the first Indigenous Australian copyright infringement case.¹³

Although there was no judgment made on the various degrees to which white artists appropriated Indigenous motifs, this was certainly commented on by reviewers such as McDonald. He noted that the textile work of Simone Weatherhog, which appropriated 'tribal motifs' under the auspices of raising awareness of Aboriginal art, demonstrated "the fine line between stimulating interest and sheer commercial exploitation."¹⁴ Further, he applauded the curators for allowing the audience to make up their own mind on the appropriateness of these actions. The curators carefully laid out the issues within the four sections of the show – "Creation Stories/Concepts of Belief", "Regional Views", "Survival Issues" and "The Domestic Arena" – for the audience to pass their own judgement. Louise Dauth, however, considered this to be problematic stating that "there was no immediately available information as to which were Aboriginal artists and which were not."¹⁵ This, Dauth

¹⁰ Michael Eather & Marlene Hall, *Balance 1990: Views, Visions, Influences*, exh.cat., Queensland Art Gallery, 1990, p.8.

¹¹ John McDonald, "Purity Calls May Be Paternalistic", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 March 1990, p.79.

¹² Eather & Hall, *Balance*, 1990, p.11.

¹³ Eather & Hall, *Balance*, 1990, p.49-51.

¹⁴ McDonald, "Purity calls may be paternalistic", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1990, p.79.

¹⁵ Louise Dauth, "Balance 1990", *Artlink*, vol.10 # 1 & 2, 1990, p.74.

continued to argue, masked the complex relationships between artists such as Johnson and Tillers who have approached the appropriation of Indigenous art in quite different ways.¹⁶

In addition to the appropriation of Aboriginal motifs by white artists, this exhibition also displayed work by urban-based Indigenous artists who had appropriated the more recognisable forms of Aboriginal art including cross-hatching and dot painting. As Djon Mundine, the then manager of the Ramingining Art Centre, and witness to a number of urban Indigenous visitors to that community, noted:

Urban Aboriginal people have been unable to express themselves artistically... Searching for images or symbols of their own, many borrowed techniques from northern and central Australia. For these artists it is almost a necessity to use some of these devices as a tool to work through to the individual self.¹⁷

This borrowing of techniques was, and continues to be, viewed as problematic by some Indigenous people.¹⁸ Marshall Bell's *Lounge Room Painting* (1989) [Plate 58] demonstrates this fusion of styles incorporating an x-ray style associated with Arnhem Land art practice and a dot style of painting reminiscent of the art of the central desert. Moreover, it also appropriated a tourist art aesthetic via the inclusion of a painted boomerang and historical referencing through addition of a tree that is decidedly reminiscent of the ones portrayed by the colonial artist John Glover complete with Aboriginal figures scaling its twisted limbs [Plate 59]. Within this combination of references was a broader comment on the competing forces that characterised contemporary existence: "the balance of education new / old... the balance of Aboriginal survival from Dreamtime to urban / city lifestyle."¹⁹

Appropriation of historical images also surfaced in this exhibition through the work of Geoff Parr, whose contribution *Spaceman* (1987), will be discussed in detail in Chapter Nine [Plate 103]. In addition to Parr's work, which appropriated a historical photograph of Trukanini, *Balance 1990* also included a selection of works from *Right Here Right Now*, discussed in the previous chapter. Significant to this discussion was the re-exhibition of works by the Brisbane Poster Group and Byron Pickett, both discussed in the last chapter and both of which incorporated historical referencing. That these prints were re-exhibited in *Balance 1990* is a testament to the power of historical appropriation to successfully comment on the nature of Australian history and colonisation.

¹⁶ Dauth, "Balance 1990", 1990, p.74.

¹⁷ Djon Scott-Mundine, "Black on Black: An Aboriginal Perspective on Koori Art", Wally Caruana & Jennifer Issacs (eds), *Art Monthly Australia – The Land, The City – The Emergence of Urban Aboriginal Art*, special supplement, 1990, p.8.

¹⁸ Brenda L. Croft highlighted this difficult position in relation to the "Label of Authenticity" proposed by the National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association in 1999. She argued that "there has been an unwillingness to address appropriation of imagery, or creation of generic Indigenous designs by some Indigenous people... This is partly understandable when, for decades, it was reinforced that only certain types of Indigenous designs were acceptable as Indigenous art... However, as artists creating visual representations of our culture for sale we must take responsibility for retaining cultural integrity within our artwork." Croft, "Labelled Buyer Be Aware", 2000, p.85.

¹⁹ Marshall Bell, [artist statement], in Eather & Hall, *Balance*, 1990, p.46.

In each of these instances appropriation made possible a greater understanding of the history of colonisation in this country, either through the loss of traditional designs by urban-based Indigenous artists, through historical referencing, or through the ambiguous adoption of Indigenous motifs by non-Indigenous artists. This history of colonialism also pervaded political discourse throughout the 1990s as a result of a number of landmark moments in the history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. In 1992 the basis of settlement was destabilised by a High Court decision reversing the doctrine of *terra nullius*.²⁰ As the then Prime Minister Paul Keating argued, the Mabo decision:

does finally quash the outrageous notion of terra nullius... a notion that the dispossession of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders was justified because they had no notion of property... In other words, if they were not operating to the norm as we as European settlers understood it, they were in a position of not having any notion of property and the whole notion of dispossession was a justified one.²¹

The Mabo land claim was mounted in 1982 by Eddie Koiki Mabo, Father David Passi, Sam Passi, Celuia Mapo Salee and James Rice against the Queensland government. The group argued that the Torres Strait Islands had been continuously occupied by the Meriam people since time immemorial.²² The Queensland government's response was to implement the *Queensland Coast Islands Declaratory Act 1985* which "declared that all Torres Strait Islanders' rights and claims were extinguished at the moment of annexation of the islands in 1879."²³ This act was later found by the High Court of Australia to be in contravention of the 1975 *Racial Discrimination Act* and the original land claim was in turn heard before the High Court. The High Court found in favour of the claimants and officially recognised that Mer (Murray Island) was not *terra nullius* at the time of settlement. Further, the court also regarded that none of Australia was *terra nullius* and that there could be many places within Australia where native title may not have been extinguished.²⁴ Eddie Mabo, who died before the final decision was delivered, became an icon of land rights recognition in this country as a result of his commitment to the case and attaining justice for his people.

The decision was met with outrage from the mining sector which foresaw future challenges to their industry. The managing director of Western Mining, Hugh Morgan, argued that "the 'socially adventuresome' High Court had placed property rights across Australia in disarray

²⁰ Henry Reynolds has analysed the historical origins of this concept as the foundation of British settlement – see Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, 3rd ed, Penguin, Camberwell, Vic., 2003; Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told: A Personal Search for the Truth About Our History*, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic., 2000; Henry Reynolds, "After Mabo, What About Aboriginal Sovereignty?", *Australian Humanities Review*, April 1996, accessed 20/03/02, [<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-April-1996/Reynolds.html>]. A counter to Reynolds' claims can be found in Michael Connor, *The Invention of Terra Nullius: Historical and Legal Fictions on the Foundation of Australia*, Macleay Press, Paddington, NSW, 2005.

²¹ Paul Keating, [Aboriginal Rights], House Of Representatives Official Hansard, 4 June, 1992, p.3586.

²² Broome, *Aboriginal Australia*, 2001, p.235.

²³ Broome, *Aboriginal Australia*, 2001, p.235.

²⁴ See Lorna Lippmann, *Generations of Resistance: Mabo and Justice*, 3rd ed., Longman Australia, Melbourne, 1996.

following its Mabo decision."²⁵ His comments were strongly criticised by Paul Keating who argued that "we should ignore the isolated outbreaks of hysteria and hostility" towards the decision.²⁶ Instead he saw it in an extremely positive light on the eve of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People.

Mabo is an historic decision. We can make it an historic turning point, the basis of a new relationship between indigenous and non-Aboriginal Australians. The message should be that there is nothing to fear or to lose in the recognition of historical truth.²⁷

This historical truth and its recognition became the subject of many artworks and exhibitions during this time, particularly in relation to land rights. Exhibitions addressed this issue both directly, as in the case of *Native Titled Now* (1996), and indirectly in *Tyerabarrbowaryaou: I Shall Never Become a White Man* (1992).

Native Titled Now was curated by Doreen Mellor and initially presented at Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute in Adelaide as part of the Adelaide Festival in 1996 before touring to other parts of the country. Tandanya is an Aboriginal owned and managed multi-arts centre devoted to the exhibition of Indigenous Australian cultural material.²⁸ This show was conceived of as providing a forum for Indigenous artists to reflect on the 1992 Mabo decision with some of the work commissioned specifically for the show.²⁹ It included a range of work by Indigenous artists from all parts of the country, urban, regional and remote.

Appropriation surfaced in this exhibition in an extremely contentious manner through the inclusion of three paintings by Eddie Burrup, who was presented as a senior Indigenous man from the Pilbara region of Western Australia, but was in actual fact a fabrication created by the non-Indigenous artist Elizabeth Durack.³⁰ Durack's deception was made public during the course of the show's tour to Victoria³¹ and was met with outrage by those who had been deceived. Mellor described Durack's actions as "malicious" and placed them "in a long line of betrayals by the by the non-Aboriginal, non-indigenous community towards the indigenous community."³² Elsewhere Mellor revealed that Durack had submitted the paintings for consideration along with photographs of rock engravings from which some of

²⁵ Paul Chamberlin & Peter Hartcher, "Blacks Launch Four Native Title Claims", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 October 1992, p.2.

²⁶ Paul Keating, "Redfern Park Speech", December 1992 reprinted in Michelle Grattan (ed), *Reconciliation: Essays on Reconciliation in Australia*, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2000, p.62.

²⁷ Keating, "Redfern Park Speech", 1992 in Grattan (ed), *Reconciliation*, 2000, p.62.

²⁸ See Kay Hannaford, "Tandanya: Australia's First Aboriginal Cultural Institute", *Artlink*, vol.10 #1 & 2, 1990, pp.106-107.

²⁹ Artists commissioned to create works for the exhibition were Bronwyn Bancroft, Lisa Bellear-Kvesic, Gordon Bennett, Michelle Broun, Brenda L. Croft, Kerry Giles, Ellen Jose, Danie Mellor, Deb Pirard.

³⁰ Durack's paintings, created under the *nom de plume* of Eddie Burrup, were also accepted, and exhibited in, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in 1996.

³¹ Robert Smith, "The Incarnations of Eddie Burrup", *Art Monthly Australia*, #97, March 1997, pp.4-5.

³² Doreen Mellor cited in Martin Daly, "Hoax", *Age*, 8 March 1997, p.23.

the motifs were taken.³³ Intensifying the problematic nature of Durack's appropriation was the extent of the fraud – to the point that she created a whole persona and back-story to support the Eddie Burrup phenomenon.³⁴ This provides one of the fundamental differences between appropriative history painters, analysed in this thesis, and other forms of appropriation – the use of appropriation as a tool, demonstrating a shift in context between original and appropriation, and appropriation as deceit. Gordon Bennett, who clearly fits into the first category, also employed appropriation in his work exhibited in *Native Titled Now*, but his work was created without any deception as to the origins of its imagery. His painting [Plate 60] was used to promote the show and consisted of a portrait of Eddie Mabo appropriated from an iconic newspaper image of Mabo circulating at the time.³⁵ The National Portrait Gallery in Canberra has since acquired the work for their collection as an important representation of this man. The fact that Bennett chose to appropriate a media image of Mabo drew attention to his iconic status within the media. As Bennett argued, "I can only 'know' him through his image in the newspapers, through what was written about him and his role in overturning the great white lie of Terra Nullius."³⁶ Bennett also included snippets of prominent headlines surrounding the case including "conscience", "cooperation", "rednecks", "white myth", "damage our souls", "racist", "justice", "ambivalence" and "confusion over Mabo" bringing together the spectre of colonisation, the shift in the legal system as a result of the recognition of native title and contemporaneous responses.

In the same way that Mabo became an icon for land rights recognition, as promoted in exhibitions and specific artworks such as Bennett's portrait, other earlier figures were also presented as heroes of the fight for land and rights. This was the case in *Tyerabarrbowaryaou: I Shall Never Become a White Man* (1992) curated by Djon Mundine and Fiona Foley and exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.³⁷ The title of the show was a quote attributed by Mundine and Foley to the resistance fighter Pemulwuy "Aboriginal hero, victim of white history and white historians."³⁸ In his catalogue essay Mundine set about repositioning Pemulwuy within the annals of Australian history, a task

³³ See Elizabeth Fortescue, "What Lies on Sacred Ground", *Daily Telegraph*, 8 March 1997, p.11.

³⁴ The website created by Durack and her daughter Perpetua, has been archived by the National Library of Australia. See Elizabeth Durack, *The Art of Eddie Burrup*, 1997, accessed 10/01/07, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/nph-arch/2000/S2000-Aug-15/http://www.ozpages.com/eddieburrup/index.html]

³⁵ The photograph was taken by Jim McEwan on 28 May 1998 and was illustrated in the *Age*. It was also reproduced in Broome, *Aboriginal Australians*, 2002, p.236. Bennett also appropriated the cityscape image that appears below Mabo from American artist Mike Kelley which was referred to in its title: *Eddie Mabo (After Mike Kelley's 'Booth's Puddle', 1985 from Plato's Cave, Rothko's Chapel, Lincoln's Profile*. See Gordon Bennett, "Artist Statement", 2 February 1996, The National Portrait Gallery – Portrait of the Month, accessed 28/07/05, [www.portrait.gov.au/content/gallery/portmth/february/portmth.htm].

³⁶ Bennett, "Artist Statement", 1996.

³⁷ The original concept of the show was devised for submission to the Havana Biennial in Cuba and was subsequently shown there in 1994. Some of the developments in the exhibition, between Sydney and Cuba, will be discussed in Chapter Eight of this thesis.

³⁸ Djon Mundine, "If My Ancestors Could See Me Now" in Mundine & Foley, *Tyerabarrbowaryaou: I shall never become a white man*, exh.cat., Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1992, p.6.

which others would also take on.³⁹ Mundine depicted him as "the first Aboriginal hero of the new struggle of the colonised Aboriginal clans of New South Wales."⁴⁰ This exhibition clearly argued for the legitimacy of a diverse range of Indigenous arts practices. Its attempt was, in some ways, to introduce the audience to this diverse array of practices in order to avoid stereotypical conceptions of what constituted Aboriginal art. As Mundine opened his catalogue essay:

My initial feeling about this show was that it would be a difficult pill for a general, white viewing audience to swallow. Unlike most current Aboriginal survey shows – attractive exhibitions – this would be a presentation that would be more confrontational.⁴¹

The confrontation came from the fact that much of the work on display dealt with issues of death or pain such as the separation of Indigenous children from their families, Indigenous deaths in custody, a lack of recognition of land rights and the fact that "white Australia has a black history."⁴² What makes *Tyerabarrbowaryaou* important to this discussion is the fact that it explicitly engaged in a discourse on colonialism and Aboriginal history within an exhibitionary framework and it did so through the use of works that incorporated historical appropriations. Its selection of artists challenged preconceived notions of what constituted both Aboriginal art and artists by including the work of artists who engaged very overtly with a discourse on colonialism including Sally Morgan, Gordon Bennett and Robert Campbell Junior, Ian Abdulla, Fiona Foley and Paddy Fordham Wainburranga.

Each of these artist's works raised issues facing Indigenous people both historically and in a contemporary context. Sally Morgan's work *Taken Away* (1988), for example, presented a commentary on the subject of the stolen generations which would become a much more public issue later in the decade as a result of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's report into the government practice of removing Indigenous children from their families in an attempt at assimilation. In this painting a sea of babies crawl towards their mothers but they are prohibited from making contact by a barrier that crosses the width of the canvas. Instead the mothers are left empty handed, mourning the loss of their children. The bright colours and stylised design belie the sombre subject matter of this print which refers to one of the most divisive government policies ever implemented in this country. In another of Morgan's works, *Another Story* (1989), she again employs a bright, stylised view in order to deal with a very dark story. In this case she illustrates the fact that the white Australian dream of a homestead with a picket fence is built on the foundation of Aboriginal loss. She dissects the land to reveal the subterranean burial ground that has enabled the colonial dream to come to fruition. Morgan's work is characterised by her use of bright colours, stylised poster-like graphics and reduced detail. This style is in stark contrast to the

³⁹ See Paul W. Newbury (ed), *Aboriginal Heroes of The Resistance: From Pemulwuy to Mabo*, Action for World Development, Surry Hills, NSW, 1999.

⁴⁰ Mundine, "If My Ancestors", in Mundine & Foley, *Tyerabarrbowaryaou*, 1992, p.7.

⁴¹ Mundine, "If My Ancestors", in Mundine & Foley, *Tyerabarrbowaryaou*, 1992, p.4.

⁴² Mundine, "If My Ancestors", in Mundine & Foley, *Tyerabarrbowaryaou*, 1992, p.7.

dark subject matter that her images highlight.⁴³ Similarly, Robert Campbell Junior's work *Hands of Time (Assimilation and Integration)* (1987) [Plate 61] effectively demonstrated the expectations that the white administrators had for the policy of assimilation in which children of mixed unions could be more fully accepted into the dominant society by adopting its ideals, customs and values. He also illustrated the fact that this new system replaced Indigenous cultural heritage and education with a dependence on white institutions of education and welfare in which flour, sugar and tea were staples. Television was the norm and children were educated into western systems of knowledge based on alphanumeric modes of communication. Indigenous animals are replaced with cows, sheep, planes and trains.

Appropriation was again seen in Gordon Bennett's work as a powerful tool for commenting on such issues. Bennett's work predated the Mabo decision and therefore the concept of *terra nullius* was still a contentious issue that, as Mundine argued "allowed the whites to rationalise the slaughter [of Indigenous Australians] that followed."⁴⁴ Bennett's work, *Terra Nullius* (1989) [Plate 62] demonstrates this contention with the foundational narratives of British settlement. The work is divided into two panels, the first is a cropped version of the Union Jack – symbol of British colonialism – through which the viewer can see a group of Indigenous men chained together constrained, both physically and metaphorically, by the limits of the flag. The second panel depicts the raising of the flag by the First Fleet. While there are no Indigenous people present at this British ceremony (taken from a social studies textbook) the Indigenous presence permeates the work through Bennett's mode of depiction. In accordance with his prevailing style Bennett created the scene out of a series of dots. He also repeated that use of dots in a concentric circle motif in the top portion of the work from which two sets of footprints emanate – upsetting the western perspective of the scene depicted.⁴⁵ In an early interview with Bob Lingard, Bennett explained his use of dots:

You have to understand my position of having no designs or images on which to draw to assert my Aboriginality. In just three generations that heritage has been lost to me. Dots are my bridge to my Aboriginality.⁴⁶

As well as aiding that connection with his Aboriginal heritage, Bennett also used dots to question stereotypical views on how Aboriginal art should look. He is an Indigenous artist, but at the time his work did not coincide with the generally accepted view of what constituted Indigenous Australian art. Because of the general nature of his dotting it also stands as a reference to reproduction.⁴⁷ Bennett used illustrations from common art and

⁴³ Her work could be compared to the work of Gordon Bennett, specifically his watercolours which include *Blooding the Dogs* (1991) and *Bounty Hunters* (1991). These artworks, which were exhibited in *Colonial Post Colonial* (to be discussed later in this chapter), also utilise a bright palette and graphic style to depict the massacre of Indigenous Australians at the hands of colonialists.

⁴⁴ Mundine, "If My Ancestors" in Mundine & Foley, *Tyerabarrbowaryaou*, 1992, p.4.

⁴⁵ For a thorough discussion of Bennett's use, and critique, of western perspectival systems see Chapter Nine of this thesis.

⁴⁶ Bennett interviewed by Lingard "A Kind of History Painting", 1989, p.42.

⁴⁷ Bennett described the evolution of his use of dots: "I was avoiding using dots because of the appropriation problem. Then I realised the links with western art and dot screens in reproductions, after a talk given by Tim Johnson." Gordon Bennett in Anne Kirker, "Gordon Bennett: Expressions of Constructed Identity", *Artlink*, vol.10 #1 & 2, 1990, p.94.

history books as the basis of much of the historical imagery that he appropriated in his early works.⁴⁸ As such, his use of dots also refer to the fact that many of these illustrations are reproduced *ad infinitum* in books and it is from these images that perceptions of history are cultivated. Specifically in this work he highlights that the lie of *terra nullius* was repeated often enough that it became a foundation of truth which was only shattered when the High Court handed down their decision three years after Bennett's work was created.

The debates raised by the work in *Tyerabarrbowaryaou* pre-empted many of the major debates of the decade and called into question the accuracy of Australian history and its ability to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into that narrative. While the Mabo decision created uncertainty with regard to the extent of native title rights – whether they extended to include sea rights, rights to mineral deposits and so on – it ultimately deemed that only 'crown' land could be subject to native title claims. This was overturned by the Wik decision four years later which incited an enormous amount of debate and elicited an almost hysterical response from those who felt their land and livelihoods were threatened by the ruling. The Wik decision (1996) also served to bring the past into the present by acknowledging the fact that Indigenous Australians had maintained native title over the land before colonisation and that these ties had not been broken by the granting of pastoral leases. As Reynolds, who acted as a consultant on the case, indicated "native title is not new title; it is ancient title belatedly recognised."⁴⁹ The Wik decision sparked immense concern on the part of many white Australians who felt that their title to land, which they had bought legally, was somehow under threat. This mood was captured in a letter to the editor in the *Sydney Morning Herald* which stated that:

One consequence of the High Court decision in Wik... is that all Aborigines have a very real chance of ending up as landed gentry, part-owners at least of sprawling real estate vastly greater in size and value than all the bits and pieces that all the rest of us could ever hope to own.⁵⁰

This "us" and "them" mentality expressed above was fanned by calls for the government to override the decision. Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett was outspoken in his condemnation of the judgement and called upon the federal government to implement legislation that would overrule the court's decision by extinguishing native title upon freehold leases.⁵¹ The National Farmer's Federation (NFF) also publicly condemned the decision claiming that it had, for their constituency, put an end to any possibility of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.⁵²

After immense pressure from interested parties the Howard government responded to the Wik decision presenting a Ten Point Plan which eventually resulted in changes to the *Native*

⁴⁸ Bennett, "The Manifest Toe" in McLean & Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, 1996, p.43.

⁴⁹ Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told?*, 2000, p.217.

⁵⁰ R. D. MacGregor, "A Limitless and Permanent Bonanza", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 January 1997, p.10.

⁵¹ Jeff Kennett cited in Lenore Taylor, "Wik: The Pressure Builds", *Australian Financial Review*, 31 December 1996, p.1.

⁵² Georgina Windsor, "Aboriginal Reconciliation Dead, Says NFF", *Australian*, 24 December 1996, p.4.

Title Act in 1998. The government was in a particularly difficult position. If they were to overrule the decision by legislating that pastoral leases did extinguish native title rights they would have been in contravention of the *Racial Discrimination Act*.⁵³ This had already been tried and failed. The Queensland government's response to the Mabo was to extinguish native title rights, a move which was deemed invalid by the High Court under the Federal *Racial Discrimination Act* in 1987.⁵⁴ The government therefore responded with what they thought was a practical compromise – the Ten Point Plan. It was not met with enthusiasm by supporters of native title recognition who argued that:

The Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan does not provide a fair and reasonable response to *Wik*, despite the Prime Minister's protestations... the 10 Point Plan does nothing to protect native title rights, but does provide for a substantial upgrading of pastoralists' rights, at the direct expense of indigenous peoples.⁵⁵

The proposed amendments were enshrined in the *Native Title Amendment Bill* which was passed in July 1998.⁵⁶ As a result of these high profile native title cases, and the Government's response to them, Indigenous rights became one of the central topics for public debate during this time.⁵⁷ It was also around this time that Pauline Hanson launched her political party One Nation. Hanson created One Nation with a view to protect the rights of, and give voice to, the average Australian 'battler'. She made her maiden speech to the Australian parliament on 10 September 1996 and, for a brief but vocal period, incited enormous public debate.⁵⁸

Hanson weighed into debates on multiculturalism, reconciliation and the accuracy of Aboriginal history. In line with this she denied any value in a diverse community and instead argued that "to survive in peace and harmony, united and strong, we must have one people, one nation, one flag."⁵⁹ This statement exemplifies the overall rhetoric of Pauline Hanson's One Nation, that is, that cultural unity (and as such uniformity) was necessary for Australia to prosper. Her policies were invariably insular and included revoking all foreign aid, the

⁵³ "Wik Decision Disappointing", *Australian Financial Review*, 24 December, 1996, p.12.

⁵⁴ Cameron Forbes, "Mabo Decision A Victory Over White Arrogance", *Age*, 4 June 1992, p.13.

⁵⁵ National Indigenous Working Group on Native Title (Australia), "Critique of the 10 Point Plan", *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, vol.4 #3, June 1997, p.10.

⁵⁶ Hollbach and Choo describe the implication of the act in practical terms for claimants; The *Native Title Act* gives rise to a process through which Aboriginal people can apply for to the Federal Court for... recognition of *pre-existing* native title rights and interests in an area of land [it] does not enable groups to apply for land or to 'get back' their traditional country." Moreover they argue that the "process can be intimidating, time-consuming and highly invasive." Hollbach & Choo, *History and Native Title*, 2003, pp.5-6.

⁵⁷ The Wik decision, and more importantly the government's response via the Ten Point Plan provided much fuel for Indigenous artists like Gordon Hookey who responded with the confronting painting *Ten Point Scam* (1998). This work was exhibited in the 2000 *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Beyond the Pale Contemporary Indigenous Art* which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

⁵⁸ See Gray & Winter (eds), *The Resurgence of Racism*, 1997.

⁵⁹ Pauline Hanson, [Maiden Speech], House Of Representatives Official Hansard, Thirty-Eighth Parliament, First Session – First Period, 10 September 1996, p.3861.

abolition of multiculturalism and an end to welfare payments for Indigenous Australians.⁶⁰ On this last point she noted:

Present governments are encouraging separatism in Australia by providing opportunities, land, monies and facilities available only to Aborigines... I do not believe that the colour of one's skin determines whether you are disadvantaged.⁶¹

While Hanson, a former fish and chip shop proprietor turned politician, was not known for her rigorously researched and measured comment she did pick up on the insecurities of many non-Indigenous Australians in relation to the land rights debates outlined above. Clearly her comments also outraged people who identified with the groups she attacked.

Artistic responses to One Nation were relatively quick to follow. Many of the Indigenous artists included in the exhibition *Black Humour* (1997), for example, made direct references to Pauline Hanson and the implications of her rhetoric for Indigenous Australians. The curators of the show, Neville John O'Neill and Jane Barney, did not expressly set out to critique Hanson's politics within the exhibition but her influence at the time was all pervasive and it certainly came through in the work on display and the catalogue essays. Barney made an immediate allusion to Hanson by titling her catalogue essay "Please Explain" a reference to Hanson's response when asked by a TV interviewer if she was xenophobic.⁶² The reference was clear in the exhibited work. The Campfire Group, for example, embarked upon a road trip to Hanson's fish and chip shop as research for their contribution to the show.⁶³ Brook Andrew, Gordon Hookey and H.J. Wedge also referred to Hanson in their work. The Australian flag also figured prominently with Julie Gough literally dividing up the continent into convenient land parcels, bundled in the flag, in her *The Sub-Dividing Games: Pogography 2000 – Tool for Land Reclamation Vs Tools for Land Degradation* (1996).⁶⁴ Yet other artists such as Brenda Palmer [Plate 63] employed appropriation to draw attention to the way that Indigenous Australians had been depicted historically by the "white population to reinforce their ideas of racial supremacy and national/cultural identity."⁶⁵ She did this by appropriating advertising images depicting Indigenous people and juxtaposed them against newspaper clippings which highlighted the reality of Indigenous life at that time. She argued that:

depicting 'Whacko the Abo' as a fierce warrior on tins of paint and 'Chief' as the noble savage on the white Pelaco shirt, belied the tragic dislocation of tribal Aborigines onto Native Reserves, where they remained out of sight, and out of mind!⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Some Indigenous leaders like Noel Pearson also deplored "the poison of welfare dependency" as disenfranchising by not addressing core problems such as substance abuse within Indigenous communities. See Noel Pearson, "Land Rights and Progressive Wrongs", *Griffith Review*, Summer 2003-2004, pp.153-162.

⁶¹ Hanson, [Maiden Speech], 1996, p.3860.

⁶² Jane Barney, "Please Explain", in Neville John O'Neill & Jane Barney, *Black Humour*, exh.cat., Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra, 1997, n.p.

⁶³ Their journey is documented in Eather, *Shoosh!*, 2005.

⁶⁴ See Avril Quail, "Black Humour", *Periphery*, #34, Autumn 1998, pp.33-34.

⁶⁵ Brenda Palmer, [artist statement], in O'Neill & Barney, *Black Humour*, 1997, n.p.

⁶⁶ Palmer, [artist statement], in O'Neill & Barney, *Black Humour*, 1997, n.p.

In so doing, she brought together historical debates on racism and assimilation and forced her viewers to consider the implication of those debates within the contemporary climate of racism proffered by Hanson.

Amid the divisive politics of One Nation, and Hanson's ironic calls for unity, the possibility of a harmonious coexistence between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia was fostered through the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR). It formed with the goal of achieving meaningful reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian by the year 2000. The council was created by way of bipartisan support for the *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991*. "A united Australia which respects this land of ours; values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage; and provides justice and equity for all"⁶⁷ was the vision of the Council. The life span of the Council was, from the outset, limited. It was scheduled to be dissolved at the end of December 2000. The dissolution of the Council will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. For now it is important to examine the practical programs that it initiated throughout the 1990s – the decade of reconciliation.

CAR initiated many "grassroots" projects aimed at engaging communities in the process of reconciliation.⁶⁸ The Council worked in conjunction with government bodies such as the Australian Local Government Association, as well as community organisations such as Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, to raise awareness of, and institute programs promoting reconciliation throughout all levels of community. The dichotomy between alarmist reactions to native title rights on the one hand and calls for reconciliation on the other continued over into the new millennium and was amplified by threats of protest and boycott of the Olympic Games to be held in Sydney in 2000. I will return to discuss the implications of this in the following chapter. An important aim of the Council in the process of reconciliation was an acknowledgement of the shared history of Australia between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. This goal became particularly pertinent when, in 1997, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission released its report into the removal of Indigenous Australian children from their families to be placed in the care of the state. The report, titled *Bringing Them Home*, made a number of recommendations including a call for all state and federal parliaments to issue an apology to the people affected by policies of removal. It also recommended that financial compensation be made available, to people affected by these policies.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Reconciliation Australia's Challenge*, December 2000 [<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/2000/16/prelim05.htm>].

⁶⁸ CAR publications, media releases, annual reports and conference proceedings are archived on the internet. See "Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Archive", accessed 30/11/06, [<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/>].

⁶⁹ The Report's recommendations, some of the personal stories it details and contemporary perspectives on it, are reproduced in Bird (ed), *The Stolen Children*, 1998.

It was revealed that, as a result of previous government policies, many Indigenous children were removed from their families between 1910 and 1970.⁷⁰ In the 1980s Peter Read had coined the term stolen generations to refer those affected by these policies and this phrase entered into public discourse and common usage in the late 1990s.⁷¹ Their number, legitimacy, and the affects of these policies were all the subject of public discourse which focused on the issue of compensation and the fact that the Government refused to apologise to these people who had been affected so greatly by past government policy.⁷² Debate also raged about whether this systematic removal of children from their families constituted a form of genocide as John Frow argued:

The almost unspeakable word here is 'genocide'.... [the Report] concludes that a principal aim of the child removal policies was the elimination of indigenous cultures, and that in the sense given the word by the relevant international convention this aim constitutes genocide.⁷³

Far from acknowledging such possibilities, John Howard refused to apologise on behalf of the government, a choice that was ostensibly driven by a fear of liability. Howard stated that:

A formal apology... does have the difficulty about being an admission of liability, of giving rise to a stronger legal claim... and that is the reason why this week I have stopped short of doing it.⁷⁴

However commentators such as Michael Gordon in *The Australian*, argued that Howard's choice was more complicated than this. He suggested a number of reasons which informed Howard's decision. First, that "mainstream Australia does not believe a national apology is warranted." Secondly he argued that Howard had an ungrounded fear of admitting guilt which he thought would stifle the reconciliation process. Finally, Gordon argued that Howard was cautious because of the fact that an apology would be a merely symbolic gesture and mean little in terms of practical benefits for the people affected.⁷⁵

The government may have been reluctant to enter into symbolic gestures, but many of the people of Australia were not. The report had a number of ramifications including the institution of a National Sorry Day marked on the one-year anniversary of the tabling of the report in Parliament. It also sparked a number of 'Sorry Books' in which members of the public, church, law enforcement agencies etc, could express in a tangible manner, their

⁷⁰ For a discussion of some artistic responses to policies of child removal see Christine Nicholls, "Indigenous Australian Art and the Stolen Generation", *Artlink*, vol.20#1, 2000, pp.36-39.

⁷¹ See Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883-1969*, New South Wales Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, 1982.

⁷² The stolen generations, and the debate that *Bringing Them Home* instigated will also be discussed in subsequent chapters of this thesis in relation to specific artistic responses to the report and the experience of separated people.

⁷³ John Frow, "A Politics of Stolen Time (continued)", *Australian Humanities Review*, February 1998, accessed 30/11/06, [<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-February-1998/frow2.html>]. See also Sue Stanton, "Time for Truth: Speaking the Unspeakable – Genocide and Apartheid in the 'Lucky' Country", *Australian Humanities Review*, July 1999 [<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-July-1999/stanton.html>]; Henry Reynolds, *An Indelible Stain? The Question of Genocide in Australia's History*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Vic., 2001.

⁷⁴ John Howard cited in Michael Gordon, "The Great Divide", *Australian*, 31 May 1997, p.21.

⁷⁵ Michael Gordon, "The Great Divide", *Australian*, 31 May 1997, p.21.

feeling on the findings of this report. The Sorry Books campaign was launched by Hazel Hawke and Bryce Courtenay on Australia Day in 1998. They provided an avenue for ordinary Australians to express their personal apologies.⁷⁶ The spontaneous success of these books was enormous with around one thousand books making their way around the country for people to sign. Some of those books are now held in the research library of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). The collection has since been inscribed on the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register as a further testament to its importance.⁷⁷

Other responses to Indigenous issues also involved community support. One of the most visual of these events was the Sea Of Hands organised by the community group Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR). ANTaR was specifically opposed to the government's handling of the Wik decision and launched a petition in opposition to amendments to the *Native Title Act*. This petition gained great support and ANTaR sought a creative means of demonstrating that support enlisting another community group, Australian Artists Against Racism (AAAR),⁷⁸ to propose a method of presenting the petition to the government. Their solution was a Sea of Hands; plastic cut-out hands in the colours of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags which were mounted on wire and planted into the lawn in front of Parliament House in Canberra on 12 October 1997. 70,000 hands made up this first sea and each carried the signature of supporters of the original petition.⁷⁹

As the CAR set out, an acknowledgment of the shared history of all Australians was vital to the advancement of reconciliation. Dominant historical discourses that had obscured alternative perspectives on history also served to limit the possibility of acknowledging the stolen generations and the fallacy of *terra nullius*. This overarching concern, to reveal another version of Australian history, taking into account new voices, was the underlying premise of the exhibition *Colonial Post Colonial* (1996). Although not directly related to the work of the CAR, the show demonstrated a similar concern for the recognition of other versions of history and the way in which that history impacted on the present. The artworks amassed by its non-Indigenous curator Juliana Engberg broadly addressed themes of lost heritage, frontier violence in the face of colonial expansion, the institutionalisation of

⁷⁶ Sorry Books were also launched in London on 26 March 1998 at Australia House with the support of Australian expatriates before being circulated in the House of Commons for British Members of Parliament to sign. See: "Sorry Books", accessed 11/07/05, [http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/lbry/dig_prgrm/sorrybooks/sorrybooks_background].

⁷⁷ See: "Sorry Books", accessed 11/07/05, [http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/lbry/dig_prgrm/sorrybooks/sorrybooks_background].

⁷⁸ Fiona Macdonald, working via Australian Artists Against Racism (AAAR), was responsible for the Sea of Hands concept. See Debra Jopson, "Hands You Must See", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 1998, p.13. AAAR, comprising of around fifty Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, also held an exhibition at Hogarth Galleries in 1998 titled *Co-existence*. See Bryce Hallett, "Sorry Seems to be the Hardest Word – to See", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 1998, p.15.

⁷⁹ The event was a great success and many other Sea of Hands events were staged subsequently. In Sydney during the Olympic Games and Corroboree 2000 similar installations were staged at the Botanical Gardens and Centennial Park. See: "Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation", accessed 04/07/06 [<http://www.antar.org.au>].

Indigenous people and the stolen generations. It was held at the Museum of Modern Art in Heide and was one of the first exhibitions of this decade to investigate such themes through the explicit exhibition of appropriative works alongside the original artworks that informed their creation.⁸⁰ Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian artists were assembled in this show alongside historical artworks and objects in order to highlight the transition from the imagined landscape of Australia, to early colonial experiences and finally to contemporary commentaries on those histories. Such inter-historical dialogue had been set in motion by the large survey shows of the bicentenary which, as discussed in the previous chapter, set about charting the development of a nation through artistic achievement. However, where these survey shows were unable to make meaningful connections between related works, separated by two hundred years of history, *Colonial Post Colonial* succeeded by reducing the amount of work on display and explicitly juxtaposing historical and contemporary; past and present; original and appropriation.⁸¹ Moreover, appropriation was a strategy employed by most of the contemporary artists exhibited in the show. Their subjects covered various aspects of colonisation – its effects on the people, the land, the animals.⁸²

The photo-compositions of Gamilaraay/Koamu artist Leah King-Smith, from her series *Patterns of Connection* (1991) [Plate 64], were exhibited in this show and depict Indigenous people from south eastern Australia within ethereal landscapes. The compositions took archival images from the State Library of Victoria as their starting point.⁸³ She re-photographed these nineteenth century originals and altered their landscapes in the process. In her new works, the people depicted occupy a more natural environment comprised of her own photographs and paintings. Another aim of her work was to draw attention to the conflicting functions of the original photos which function both as testaments to the colonising powers of governments and churches as well as providing a valuable family record for the descendants of those depicted. It was with this in mind that she has altered the context of the photographs so that, within these contemporary revisions, the mission / reserve has been obscured. She stated that:

⁸⁰ Heide, now the Museum of Modern Art and Heide, is a property in the suburb of Bulleen, in greater Melbourne. It is closely associated with the emergence of contemporary art in Melbourne being home to some of Australia's most well renowned post-war artists including Sidney Nolan who created his seminal *Ned Kelly* series there during the 1940s. As such this show was aimed at an academic and artistically aware audience. The catalogue comprised articles by many leading art historians and cultural commentators in addition to Engberg's own catalogue essay and scholarly texts on postcolonial theory were available for sale upon exiting the show. See Brian Castro, "Nature Morte: Pictures at an Exhibition", *Art Monthly Australia*, #92, August 1996, p.6.

⁸¹ The issue of appropriation and Indigenous Australian art was also the topic of another exhibition in this year curated by Vivien Johnson. This show, *Copyrites: Aboriginal Art in the Age of Reproductive Technologies*, was a collaborative project between the National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association and Macquarie University in Sydney. *Copyrites* was an extremely important touring exhibition which highlighted commercial appropriations of Indigenous art. It is not discussed in detail here because its questioning of the history of colonisation was implicit rather than explicit. Moreover, ethical debates around the use of appropriation within the commercial sector are beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁸² Fiona Foley's and Stephen Bush's works from this exhibition will be discussed in detail in Chapter Ten of this thesis. Ross Moore's and Narelle Jubelin's work will be considered in Chapter Eleven.

⁸³ King-Smith was the Stegley Foundation Koori photographer in residence at the State Library of Victoria in 1990-1. This series of photo-compositions were created as a result of that residency.

My aim in re-photographing these people was to shift the emphasis away from their outer-world condition, since that is determined by the dominant culture, to engage the viewer's attention inwardly to see these indigenous people in a positive and spiritual light.⁸⁴

This emancipation of archival images of Indigenous people was also seen the work of other Indigenous artists such as Fiona Foley whose work will be discussed in detail in Chapter Ten. One point of difference however was the fact that Foley appropriated images of her own ancestors, whereas King-Smith had no connection with the people she appropriated.⁸⁵ In a way then, it could be argued that King-Smith is appropriating these people yet again, not reclaiming their images, or freeing them but simply recapturing them. This predicament, of who has the right to appropriate images from the past was also addressed in Stephen Bush's work on show here. In his painting *No Title* (1989), Bush painted himself (a non-Indigenous Australian artist) impersonating the Ku-ring-gai man Bungaree.⁸⁶ Moreover, the exhibition of non-Indigenous artists, particularly Tim Johnson and Imants Tillers, who have been criticised for their appropriation of Indigenous cultural heritage, alongside Indigenous artists like Bennett, Foley and Leah King-Smith also addressed the debate about cultural heritage and appropriation.

As stated above, Engberg also included an array of historical works in this exhibition to create what she called a "colonial corridor"⁸⁷ to contextualise the contemporary works displayed. These historical works included many of those directly referred to by the contemporary artists and thus there was a direct correlation between the historical image and the contemporary history.⁸⁸ The metaphor of the corridor was used to represent a transition from one space to another, and from one time (past) to another (present). As such, Engberg presented the historical works as ideologically narrow, their representations constructed out of a eurocentric vision whilst the contemporary re-readings of those works, found at the end of the corridor, provided an alternative, a commentary. Brian Castro condemned the division of the exhibition into nineteenth century "colonial", and twentieth century "post-colonial", works for being overtly didactic and simplistic. While this show was innovative in exhibiting source material and appropriation within the one arena it stopped short of physically juxtaposing the works. This lack, Castro argued, was a major flaw of the show:

The nineteenth-century works were herded into a sort of antechamber, a gloomy waiting room devoid of much natural light, a kind of anaesthetized

⁸⁴ Leah King-Smith, "The Nineteenth Century Photographs in Patterns of Connection", *Art Monthly Australia – Aboriginal Art in the Public Eye*, special supplement, 1992-3, p.41.

⁸⁵ King-Smith is a Gamilaraay/Koamu woman whose country lies near the NSW/Qld border. The images that she appropriated in her series *Patterns of Connection* depicted people from Victoria such as Barak, the Wurundjeri elder discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis.

⁸⁶ Bungaree was also introduced in Chapter Three of this thesis and Bush's work will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Ten [Plate 118].

⁸⁷ Juliana Engberg, 'The Colonial Corridor' *Colonial Post Colonial*, exh.cat., Museum of Modern Art, Heide, Vic., 1996, pp.9-24.

⁸⁸ Historical source material was provided for work by Fiona Foley, Leah King-Smith, Sigi Gabriele and Jane Tengrove. Historical work that complemented most of the other contemporary works – though there was not always a direct relationship (appropriation) involved – were also displayed in this colonial corridor.

repository of a dead world, a tomb from which the promised rock would roll away to reveal the dazzling post colonialism of our enlightened times.⁸⁹

Castro's criticism was somewhat justified – why include these historical points of reference if they are only to be separated from the new works that they have inspired? Despite the fact that artworks gathered in this show sought to reduce the distance between the colonial past and postcolonial present, the physical separation of the works on display in effect created unnecessary distance.

The direct juxtaposition of historical original and contemporary appropriation was seen two years later at the Museum of Sydney in the exhibition *Flesh + Blood: A Sydney Story 1788-1998* (1998) which inspired the title of this thesis. The approach to display employed by the host institution, the Museum of Sydney, floats between the museum / ethnographic approach to display and the art gallery / aesthetic approach.⁹⁰ Despite proclaiming itself to be a museum, it houses a gallery space which presents mainly fine arts gallery-oriented exhibitions.⁹¹ The debate between art and ethnographic 'ways of seeing' is implicit and underlying in the exhibition.

Ace Bourke, whose family connections link him to not one but two previous NSW Governors – Sir Richard Bourke and Philip Gidley King – as well as a swath of other prominent colonial aristocrats, curated the exhibition from a personal perspective. The show included the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists within a historical and contemporary framework in order to examine the intricacies of the curator's genealogy. It exhibited "paintings, heirlooms, memorabilia and anecdotes"⁹² and, as Bourke himself noted, "ended up very 'Dead White Male'"⁹³ with most of the family imagery depicting men. Parallel to this narrative of family history was a more personal account of Bourke's immediate connections within a contemporary context. This material directly related to Bourke's association with the contemporary art world of Sydney particularly through the Hogarth Galleries of Aboriginal Art where he was co-director at the time of this show.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Brian Castro, "Nature Morte: Pictures at an exhibition", *Art Monthly Australia*, #92, August 1996, p.5.

⁹⁰ The institution houses both permanent and changing exhibits of social history and fine arts displays.

⁹¹ The Museum also commissioned work by Australian artists for their inaugural display. Fiona MacDonald was one of these artists. Her work literally wove together reproductions of colonial artworks depicting Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in line with their aim to explore the intertwined histories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of Sydney. The Museum went on to reproduce MacDonald's work on holographic postcards for sale in their shop. MacDonald had been using this technique, prior to this commission, as a means of exploring Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity. For a discussion of MacDonald's work see Jo Holder, "Fiona MacDonald: The Ground Beneath Her Feet", *Art & Australia*, vol.40 #4, June-August 2003, pp.610-617.

⁹² "Flesh & Blood: A Sydney Story 1788-1998", Media Release, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1998.

⁹³ Ace Bourke, *Flesh + Blood: A Sydney Story 1788-1998*, exh.cat., MoS, 1998, p.13.

⁹⁴ Bourke has been highly involved in the exhibition of Indigenous Australian. He was curator of Aboriginal art at the Crafts Council of Australia from 1980 before becoming the exhibition coordinator of Aboriginal Arts Australia from 1984-89. Following this he was the co-Director of Hogarth Galleries from 1990-1999. Bourke also curated *Art & Aboriginity* and *Contemporary Aboriginal Art from Australia*, both seen in the UK and both to be discussed in Chapter Eight of this thesis.

Flesh + Blood was essentially a white, colonial version of history that used the work of Indigenous artists to disrupt that narrative. It achieved this through its unconventional juxtapositions, which saw colonial paintings hung alongside their contemporary revisions. In this sense it presented a potent critique of colonisation through acknowledging the presence of a perspectival shift between colonial history painting and the contemporary appropriative history. It was at once extremely innovative and profoundly conservative. Its innovation lay in the disruption of the standard chronological hang criticised in shows like *Colonial Post Colonial* discussed above. The freedom gained from eschewing the conventions of chronology allowed for the juxtaposition of Gordon Bennett's *Metaphysical Landscape no.2* (1990) against Joseph Lycett's *North View of Sidney (sic), New South Wales* (1822) – the reference of Bennett's appropriation [Plate 65]. These two works were the first ones seen when entering the gallery space and thus from the outset the idea that there may be multiple perspectives on the same subject was highly evident. These two works were also featured on the catalogue for the exhibition occupying the front and back covers respectively. In Bennett's painting the background, which Lycett has used to indicate the vastness of the landscape and the extent of colonial development, has been excluded removing the impact of colonisation and instead turning our attention to the ship, the initial vehicle for contact which becomes symbolically representational for what is excluded. Bennett also crops the image vertically again excluding the patch of cultivated grass in the foreground of Lycett's image and instead turning our focus towards the native flora which comes to dominate his painting.

Bennett reduced his palette of colours to essentially white dots on a ground of ochre with black brushstrokes used to fill in the detail. When seen alongside Lycett's painting, in part, Bennett draws attention to the 'European Vision' of early colonial artists who naively grappled with representing a different country with a different type of light and different flora and fauna.⁹⁵ Bennett also segments his work and, if taken as separate panels, only one of these segments depicts the ship; the symbol of colonisation. In effect, this serves to highlight, again, the fact that there are different stories to be told, that the colonial perspective only occupies one part of the overall picture. As Ben Genocchio argued "it offers a brilliant reinterpretation of the scene (and, by extension, history) through indigenous eyes, watching silently, intently from the trees."⁹⁶ Bennett's segmentation of the work can also be seen as a kind of compartmentalisation of the environment, measuring, categorising and ultimately colonising.

Other appropriative works on show included Clinton Nain's *Quality Street* (1997) [Plate 66], which referenced Augustus Earle's (1793-1838) *Natives of N.S. Wales As Seen in the Streets of Sydney* (1830) [Plate 77]. Nain is a Meriam Mer-Ku Ku artist who has employed

⁹⁵ See Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1969; Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages*, Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 1992.

⁹⁶ Benjamin Genocchio, "A Sydney Family Tree from the Back of Bourke", *Australian*, 28 December, 1998, p.14.

appropriation in a number of works from his early career.⁹⁷ The subject of appropriation in *Quality Street* depicts a group of Indigenous people gathered together eating and drinking in the street outside of a public drinking house. As Keith Vincent Smith has argued, Earle's print provides "a graphic statement of the degradation of the Aborigines of Australia" as a result of colonisation – reduced to drinking rum on the street – while "there is a clear sub-textual message in the background, which shows the figures of 'respectable' Europeans entering the inn to drink liquor."⁹⁸ Nain's inversion is simple: he reproduced Earle's lithograph with a 'Quality Street' chocolate wrapper overlaid on top of it – it's clear plastic allowing the viewer to still perceive the image behind it. Nain highlights that Earle's image is not 'chocolate box' art. It is not the sort of benign, attractive image that reconfirms romantic stereotypes of colonial life, rather it lays bare the inequities of that period. Another appropriation by Nain *Dream Run* (1997) [Plate 67], re-presents Bungaree as he was depicted by Earle in his oil painting *Portrait of Bungaree, A Native of New South Wales, with Fort Macquarie, Sydney Harbour, in Background* (c.1826). In this work Nain has taken Bungaree out of his original colonial setting and positioned him in contemporary Sydney, on the north side of the harbour where Bungaree was granted a portion of land by Governor Macquarie in 1815, with the Sydney Harbour Bridge in the background.⁹⁹ Earle's painting was also on display in the exhibition as were other colonial depictions of Bungaree by Earle and Phillip Parker King.

Such juxtapositions provided an extremely succinct method of signalling larger debates around historical revision and how different perspectives resulted in different modes of production and indeed views. However, the exhibition was highly problematic: why invite Bourke to tell his story and continue the discourse from a white perspective which seems adversarial to the museum's aims of giving a voice or representation to all people? Why did this bringing together of colonial and contemporary history paintings need to be under the guise of an explication of family lineage? And why privilege *this* family history which has already been the basis for much scholarship devoted to its prominent characters?

Ken Watson, the then assistant curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art at the AGNSW praised the exhibition for its non-linear approach to exhibiting the history of Sydney which he linked to an Indigenous mode of narrative:

Ace exposes the failure of the western historical process, a process that manages to ignore connections especially those which significantly affect the power relations within such entities as colonial societies... western culture promotes the cult of the individual over the needs of the community.

⁹⁷ *Dream Run* (1997) which appropriates Augustus Earle's *Bungaree a Native of New South Wales* (c.1826) and *Two Natives Dancing* (1998) which appropriates a drawing by Philip King, were exhibited in *Flesh + Blood. Ramming The Blak Rams* (2001) is another work by Nain, created later than the previous works, which appropriates Tom Roberts' iconic painting *Shearing the Rams* (1889-1890). In addition he has appropriated everyday objects, such as the White King brand bleach bottle, and incorporated that into his artworks.

⁹⁸ Smith, *King Bungaree*, 1992, p.153.

⁹⁹ See *Sydney Gazette*, 4 February 1815; Hinkson, *Aboriginal Sydney*, 2001, pp.48-49.

An indigenous perspective would focus on the community and social connections as Ace has done in this exhibition.¹⁰⁰

He was unperturbed by the fact that Bourke can be seen to represent the aristocracy that has always been in the privileged position of being able to tell stories. This is the very conundrum of this show – from an extremely traditional starting point, one which focused on the privileged individual, came a uniquely multifaceted exhibition which dealt with the complexities and contradictions of Australian history. It highlighted in very clear terms that the past of this country is indeed our very own flesh and blood. Unlike John Howard's version of Australian history, where the past was seen as a distant murmur, for which people in the present had no responsibility, Ace Bourke demonstrated that within a few generations the past of colonisation, settlement, massacres and disease became the present world of land rights, stolen generations and reconciliation. This was achieved primarily through his non-linear approach to the display of history – through the fact that appropriative works were used as points of intervention. They disrupted what would have otherwise been a story of development and progress depicted by those powerful enough to be able to recount that story.

That appropriation can be used in such a manner to disrupt dominant narratives of history is one of its unique qualities and has been a common tool used by the artists and curators above in bringing together the past and the present by way of critique. This was augmented by the fact that during this decade issues around Aboriginal history were extremely high profile as a result of landmark decisions in the recognition of native titles rights, acknowledgment of the effect of past policies of assimilation and their part in creating 'stolen generations' of people. All of these issues found expression in exhibitions that explicitly set out to provide alternative perspectives by reflecting on the policies and attitudes of the past. Such alternatives were found in the juxtaposition of historical and contemporary attitudes to Australian history, as seen in *Flesh + Blood* and *Colonial Post Colonial*, between different forms of art practice in *Balance 1990*, and through the presentation of a variety of Indigenous perspectives in *Black Humour*, *Native Titled Now* and *Tyerabarrbowaryaou*.

Identity politics and the mixed heritage of Australia was an underlying theme of these exhibitions. Australia's Indigenous history, in combination with issues of identity politics, provided the most fertile ground for artists of this decade to express their concerns and participate in political and public discourse in a much more immediate manner than any scholarly text could have achieved. The following chapter will examine how these issues – history, reconciliation, genocide, land rights and appropriation – reached their zenith during the next few years as the world's eyes turned towards Australia for the celebration of the Olympic Games in the year 2000.

¹⁰⁰ Ken Watson, "A Polylogue of the Imagination – Flesh and Blood. A Sydney Story 1788-1998", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, vol.1 #1, 2000, p.244.

Chapter Seven

Federation, the Olympics and reconciliation

National commemorations use the events of history but the stories they tell are determined more by the politics of the present than the ideals of the past.¹

Public exposure and concern for Indigenous history, rights and reconciliation reached a high point in 2000-01. This was brought about by the focus on Indigenous culture and history on a national and international level via the Sydney Olympic Games. It was, however, also established through tangible public support for the process of reconciliation demonstrated by the massive mobilisation of the population seen in the Bridgewalk events that took place in the final year of the CAR's life. The Centenary of Federation on 1 January 2001 provided the final marker in this changing national narrative. How much had been learned from the historical reflection that arose around the bicentenary of settlement, the Mabo and Wik decisions, the *Bringing Them Home* report and the CAR? The exhibition of appropriative works alongside other politically motivated works of art, with an interest in the acknowledgment of Aboriginal history and its impact on the present, continued at the beginning of the new millennium. Large scale depictions of Australian identity, akin to those proffered during the bicentenary, were also seen in this period; in the pageantry of the Olympics' opening ceremony and in blockbuster exhibitions like *Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001* (2000). Also similar to the bicentenary was the presence of counter-narratives in response to these representations.

Unlike the bicentenary, the Olympics were not, in and of themselves, a point of contention – the celebratory nature of the event was not in question.² Rather they provided an international stage upon which Australian history and identity (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) could be enacted. The Centenary of Federation on the other hand did draw attention to the fact that, at the moment of Federation in 1901, Indigenous people were subjected to discriminatory laws that excluded them from the rights and privileges enjoyed by other Australians.³ This fact materialised in small-scale exhibitions such as *A Centenary*

¹ Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2000, p.57.

² The appropriation of Indigenous culture to promote the Games was a point of contention however, artist Brenda Palmer and commentator Marcia Langton both drew attention to this in the catalogue for *Black Humour* (1997).

³ As Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus highlight the Australian "Constitution did not formally exclude Aborigines from Australian citizenship or the right to vote" however "it was based on a presumption of racial inferiority and entailed an act of exclusion: Aborigines were not to be counted as Australians." Attwood & Markus, *The 1967 Referendum*, 1997, p.3.

vs *Eternity* (2001) and was evident, if easily overlooked, in larger blockbuster exhibitions such as *Federation: Australian Art and Society*. Beyond the Olympics and the Centenary of Federation the day-to-day political discourse around aspects of Australian history continued. This discourse found expression in two exhibitions in Adelaide. The first, *Beyond the Pale: 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australia Art* (2000), clearly questioned the dominant narrative of Australian history that Prime Minister John Howard promoted wherein "the balance sheet of Australian history" was seen as "an overwhelmingly positive one."⁴ The second, *From Appreciation to Appropriation: Indigenous Influences and Images in Australian Visual Art* (2001), sought to address the complexity of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists throughout the history of Australian art. Before addressing these exhibitions, it is necessary to continue to sketch the social context in which these shows were seen.

The Cultural Olympiad

The Sydney Olympics began many years before the Games themselves. After a lengthy bidding process, it was announced on 25 September 1993 that Sydney would host the Olympic Games in 2000 – preparations began almost immediately.⁵ In terms of the arts, and expressing Australian identity to a mass audience, the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) launched the Olympic Arts Festival in 1997. It provided the opportunity to "showcase the world of Australian ideas and images"⁶ and consisted of four themed festival years beginning with the "Festival of the Dreaming" under the directorship of Bundjalung arts worker Rhoda Roberts.⁷ Importantly, this first Festival in the series was devoted to exhibiting material that related to the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and events were focused geographically around Sydney and NSW more broadly.⁸ The following year the program expanded to include activities in all states under the banner of "A Sea Change" which was aimed at creating a public discourse on the "cultural impact of immigration".⁹ In 1999, "Reaching the World" was aimed at taking "Australian culture to many parts of the globe" and in 2000, the year of the Olympics, the

⁴ John Howard, [Racism], Commonwealth Of Australia Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, Official Hansard, Thirty-Eighth Parliament, First Session – Second Period, 29 October 1996, p.5976.

⁵ See John Huxley & Sam North, "Sydney Celebrates", *Sydney Morning Herald*, News & Features, 25 September, 1993, p.1.

⁶ Andrea Stretton, "Preface" in Adam Shoemaker (ed), *A Sea Change: Australian Writing and Photography*, Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, Sydney, 1998, p.5.

⁷ Roberts has worked as an artistic director, actor, writer, journalist and TV presenter. In addition to her role as director of the "Festival of the Dreaming" she was also the creative director, with Stephen Page, for the "Awakening" segment of the Sydney Olympic Games opening ceremony and acted in the role of Indigenous Cultural Advisor to SOCOG. She was also a member of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

⁸ The fact that the Cultural Olympiad began with events devoted to recognising Indigenous forms of expression could be seen as a strategy used by SOCOG to ensure that protests were minimised as a result of high Indigenous participation in official events. Brett Neilson has provided an analysis on the types of protests that were mounted which he argues used the media and its "communicative networks" to draw attention to the history and current situation of Indigenous Australians in an international arena. See Brett Neilson, "Bodies of Protest: Performing Citizenship at the 2000 Olympic Games", *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, vol.16 #1, 2002, pp.13-25.

⁹ Stretton, "Preface", in Shoemaker (ed), *A Sea Change*, 1998, p.5.

focus of the Festival was repositioned on Sydney under the title of the "Harbour of Life" festival.¹⁰

Importantly, a major exhibition of the "Festival of the Dreaming" sought to create a new context for a group of historical photographs of Indigenous people – illustrating the significance at the time of perspective in analysing works of art. *Portraits of Oceania* (1997), curated by Judy Annear at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, exhibited, for the first time *en mass*, a series of nineteenth century photographic portraits of Indigenous peoples from Australia and the Pacific.¹¹ Many of the photographers had neglected to identify the subjects of their images, or had only identified them by their geographical region – typifying nineteenth century attitudes towards Indigenous subjects.¹² The photographs included studio portraits and tableaux in which people were posed in artificially created picturesque landscapes; studio portraits with a more 'scientific' focus on using the depicted subjects for study, portraits in real landscapes and peopled landscapes often depicting mission life.

The contemporary context of these works was built around the contributions of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers, in the exhibition catalogue, who reflected on the photographs and the extensive research that was conducted into them before they were displayed. This research involved identifying as many of the subjects as possible with the assistance of Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Within this program of research, descendants of the pictured subjects were contacted and consulted with on whether or not they wished to have the photographs displayed.¹³ Brenda L. Croft was one of the Indigenous writers who contributed an essay in which she described discovering an image of her own father in the records of a mission outside of Alice Springs. "This photograph", she stated, "did not sit alongside other images in the family photo album of my childhood."¹⁴ The photograph, illustrated in the catalogue (but not exhibited in the show), was subsequently used by Croft in a new appropriative work in which it was juxtaposed against more conventional family photographs [Plate 68].¹⁵ While this particular image was created after the exhibition, appropriative histories based on archival photographs had been created by Leah King Smith, for example, much earlier. Moreover, Wiradjuri artist Brook Andrew was also using archival photographs by Charles Kerry in his work at the time [Plate 69].¹⁶

¹⁰ Stretton, "Preface", in Shoemaker (ed), *A Sea Change*, 1998, p.5.

¹¹ Some individual photographs had been exhibited previously but there had not been an exhibition devoted entirely to them before.

¹² One photographer, for example, went so far as to name the plant seen in their photograph but neglected to name the Samoan woman who was posed in front of it. See Unknown photographer (W.C.F.), *Ver Plant and Samoan Woman*, n.d. in Judy Annear, *Portraits of Oceania*, AGNSW, Sydney, 1997, p.94.

¹³ Judy Annear, "Permission to Look", *Portraits of Oceania*, 1997, p.5.

¹⁴ Brenda L. Croft, "Laying Ghosts To Rest", in Annear, *Portraits of Oceania*, 1997, p.8.

¹⁵ See Brenda L. Croft, *Oh Yes, I Remember That Now, He Said*, 1998, 50 x 75cm illustrated in Gabrielle Pizzi, *Beyond Myth - Oltre Il Mito*, exh.cat., Palazzo Papadopoli, Venice, 1999, p.33.

¹⁶ Exhibiting this contemporary work alongside its historical sources could have provided this exhibition with a more visually arresting illustration of the importance of these photographs for contemporary Indigenous people rather than simply relegating that task to the catalogue.

Although this exhibition did not directly display appropriations, the photographs on show did become documents which called into question the history of Australia via the curatorial strategy of juxtaposing them against contemporary Indigenous voices within the catalogue essays. Rather than capturing a dying race, arguably the photographer's original intention, Wiradjuri / Ngunnawal photographer and writer Alana Harris argued that, for her, these "nineteenth century images strongly support the notion of a proud people who have continued with dignity and a strong sense of survival."¹⁷ For Croft and Harris these works functioned to illustrate familial connections and to demonstrate the strength of Indigenous culture in surviving the colonial onslaught.

Indigenous Australian culture and history was also on display in the "Reaching the World" component of the Festival in 1999.¹⁸ Under the auspices of taking Australian artistic talent and cultural production to the world the *Aboriginal Memorial* (1988) [Plate 52], a collaborative installation first seen in Sydney in 1988 and introduced in Chapter Five, embarked upon a tour of Europe. In May 1999 the *Memorial* left its permanent home at the National Gallery of Australia for the first time in order to, as Lowitja O'Donoghue, Indigenous advisor to SOCOG, claimed, let the people of the world know "we have a living culture."¹⁹ The then Director of the NGA, Brian Kennedy, agreed, adding that it was "the most significant exhibition of Australian art to travel from this country."²⁰ With Kennedy's comments in mind it is important to reiterate that the *Memorial* was in fact memorialising "several hundred thousand Aboriginals [who] died at the hands of white invaders."²¹ Both *Portraits of Oceania* and the tour of the *Aboriginal Memorial* therefore, provided significant recognition of the history of colonisation in Australia from an Indigenous standpoint.

In addition to these expressions of Indigenous history within the Olympic Arts Festival, the opening and closing ceremonies of the games themselves also functioned in a similar capacity. The opening ceremony in particular contained myriad artistic references pastiched within a multi-layered whole that attempted to weave together the Indigenous and colonial histories that were the source of such public debate since the bicentenary of settlement was observed. Within this it also sought to enhance the status of Australia on the world stage attempting to articulate a mature and cultured society with a multifaceted history informing its continual development. The closing ceremony on the other hand was marked by much more overtly political acts such as the rock band Midnight Oil performing a song about

¹⁷ Carol Cooper & Alana Harris, "Dignity or Degradation: Aboriginal portraits from nineteenth century Australia", in Annear, *Portraits of Oceania*, 1997, p.20.

¹⁸ This is not to say that there was no Indigenous contribution to other areas of the Arts Festival – for example, the photographs of Tracey Moffatt and Destiny Deacon were included in *A Sea Change* in 1998. What I have sought to illustrate, in choosing specific moments is the most prominent exhibitions of Indigenous art and culture and the ones that have most bearing on the representation and contestation of narratives of Australian colonial history.

¹⁹ Lowitja O'Donoghue in Catherine Taylor "Cemetery Art Reflects Living Culture", *Australian*, 30 April 1999, p.10.

²⁰ Brian Kennedy in Taylor, "Cemetery Art Reflects Living Culture", 1999, p.10.

²¹ John Mundine, "Aboriginal Memorial", in *1988 Australian Biennale*, 1988, p.230.

Indigenous land rights while wearing t-shirts printed with the one word that the Prime Minister John Howard refused to say – sorry.²² Midnight Oil were followed by the band Yothu Yindi, led by Mandawuy Yunupingu, whose song *Treaty* also called for recognition of Indigenous land rights and Aboriginal sovereignty in the form of a negotiated treaty.²³

The cultural section of the opening ceremony – the theatrical component – was divided into seven sections each with its own theme, director and cast of performers. Combined, these sections told the story of Australia from pre-settlement to the present. These sections were "Deep Sea Dreaming" directed by Meryl Tankard, "Awakenings" created by Roberts and Stephen Page, "Fire" by David Atkins, "Nature" by Peter Wilson, "Tin Symphony" by Nigel Jamieson, "Arrivals" by Lex Marinos and "Eternity" by Nigel Triffit. As with the Olympic Arts Festival, Indigenous Australian cultures were given maximum exposure, taking centre stage in the "Awakenings" segment and maintaining a visible presence thereafter.²⁴ Indigenous people from all over the country entered the stadium in a moving procession during "Awakenings" [Plate 70]. When all were in attendance, the Koori people of NSW entered, as custodians of the land, and a smoking ceremony was conducted. Throughout the procession Yolngu dancer, Djakapurra Munyarryun,²⁵ led the embodiment of the new culture – a young blonde girl named Nikki Webster – through the ceremony, symbolically and literally showing her the way of Indigenous Australians. Australia's visual archive provided much inspiration for the pageantry of this event. In "Awakenings" gigantic screens positioned on either side of the main stage were used to illustrate the Bradshaw figures from a rock art gallery in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.²⁶ As commentator and popular Indigenous TV presenter Ernie Dingo explained, the Bradshaw figures were known to the Indigenous population as Gwion Gwion and were considered to be helpers of the Wandjina – ancestral beings from that area. In the finale of this section a tremendous Wandjina figure rose out of the ground "Awakened" by the gathering of people.²⁷

²² As discussed in the previous chapter, the "sorry" debate related to the refusal of the then Prime Minister, John Howard, to apologise for the hurt and pain suffered by Indigenous Australians as a result of previous Government policies of child separation.

²³ Liz Reed has argued for the strong theme of reconciliation in the closing ceremony promoted by its creative directors Ric Birch & David Atkins who convinced Midnight Oil to sing *Beds are Burning* rather than their original choice – a song off their then new album. See Liz Reed, "Awakening: The Politics of Indigenous Control and Authenticity at Sydney 2000", *Australasian Music Research*, vol. 7, 2002, p.100.

²⁴ Stephen Page, Roberts' co-director on *Awakenings*, is the artistic director and choreographer of Bangarra Dance Theatre and is descended from the Nunukul people and the Munaldjali clan of the Yugambeh tribe from southeast Queensland, Australia. See "Stephen Page: Artistic Director of Bangarra Dance Theatre", accessed 29/11/06, [<http://www.bangarra.com.au/bios/spage.html>].

²⁵ Munyarryun is from Dhalinbuy near Yirrkala in north-eastern Arnhem Land and was, at the time, the principal dancer with and cultural advisor to Bangarra Dance Theatre. See Lisa Meekison, "Bangarra Dance Theatre" in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, pp.367-369.

²⁶ Controversy surrounds these particular paintings – it has been claimed by Grahame Walsh that the Bradshaw figures were not produced by Aboriginal people but rather predate Aboriginal occupation in the area. See Kim Akernan, "The Traditional Aboriginal Art of the Kimberley Region (WA)", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, p.226-230.

²⁷ By linking the Bradshaw figures with the Wandjina, Dingo claimed a continuity of culture between these paintings and the later dated Wandjina figures thus refuting the claim that Indigenous Australians did not produce them.

After the "Awakenings" came the "Fire", a flaming spectacular aimed at evoking the energy of a bushfire which, as Dingo explained, cleanses the land and encourages the new growth celebrated in the following "Nature" sequence.²⁸ This section consisted of a parade of blooms unique to Australia including the waratah, wattle, gum blossoms and the Sturt Desert Pea amongst many others. The parade culminated in a visual tableau which, when photographed from above, as the commentators indicated, was based on a painting by Jeffrey Samuels a local Indigenous artist.²⁹ Again, this image was displayed on the screen. Nature and the Indigenous cultures of Australia took centre stage in the first four sequences of the ceremony and it was not until the "Tin Symphony" that Captain Cook arrived and Australia was transported into the modern world of exploration, industry and technology. In this sequence Sidney Nolan's visualisation of Ned Kelly was used as a prominent motif. Finally in "Arrivals", David Moore's extremely iconic photograph *Migrants Arriving in Sydney* (1966) was used to illustrate the migrant experience. Groups of people symbolising migration from Africa and the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Pacific entered the stadium representing the arrival of migrants from all over the world. The pageantry then segued from performance into the parade of athletes and official business before the ultimate finale which saw Indigenous sprint star, Cathy Freeman, light the Olympic cauldron in a final reconciliatory gesture.

Throughout the entire event, the symbolism was profound; the ancient Indigenous culture represented by Munyarryun and the young settler culture materialised in Webster. Importantly, it was a joining together of these cultures that was one of the most dominant themes with Munyarryun acting in the role of teacher to the young Nikki.³⁰ This image, of Munyarryun and Webster embarking on a journey, hand in hand, through the history of Australia was such a strong one that it was subsequently used by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) on the cover of their final report [Plate 71]. This report was submitted to the Prime Minister and Commonwealth Parliament and published in hardcopy and online in December 2000.³¹ It represented the culmination of ten years work and marked the dissolution of the Council. As discussed in the previous chapter, the CAR had been established in 1991 with the view to initiating a meaningful reconciliation between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of Australia. Their mandate was to achieve this goal by the Centenary of Federation when the Council would be officially disbanded. The CAR

²⁸ Dingo's commentary was somewhat reductive in conflating Indigenous firestick farming and bushfires more generally. See Stephen J. Pyne, "Firestick History", *Journal of American History*, vol.76 #4, March 1990, pp.1132-1141.

²⁹ Samuels was a founding member of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative and exhibited in the seminal exhibition *Koori Art '84*.

³⁰ Despite the inclusiveness of the Opening Ceremony, it must be noted that the logo for the Olympics was in fact an appropriation of Indigenous Australian cultural heritage. The logo was a running figure, comprised of three boomerang shapes, representing the arms and legs of the figure.

³¹ Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Reconciliation – Australia's Challenge: Final Report of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation to the Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Parliament*, Commonwealth of Australia, December 2000; Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Reconciliation Australia's Challenge*, December 2000, accessed 02/04/02, [www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/2000/16/index.htm].

gained a great degree of public prominence immediately prior to the Olympics and the handing down of its final report. At the time of the Council's dissolution an independent body, Reconciliation Australia, was formed to continue the work of the CAR.³²

CAR staged a conference in Sydney in 2000 as part of reconciliation week which they called Corroboree 2000. It was held at the Sydney Opera House and coincided with the first People's Walk for Reconciliation, or, Bridge Walk. In Sydney, approximately 250,000 people walked across the Sydney Harbour Bridge from Milsons Point to Circular Quay as a means of demonstrating their desire for a more just and equal relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians [Plate 72].³³ With public support demonstrated so clearly in Sydney, many similar events were organised in other states enabling others to also demonstrate their commitment. Approximately 70,000 participated in Brisbane by crossing the William Jolly Bridge, the King William Street Bridge in Adelaide was host to approximately 55,000 supporters and 25,000 people walked the span of the Tasman Bridge in Hobart.³⁴ Perth and Melbourne also hosted similar events in December 2000. The Melbourne march was considered a huge success attended by an estimated 150,000 to 400,000 people, amongst them the Liberal Party deputy leader Peter Costello.³⁵ The Labor leader Kim Beazley and the then Premier of Western Australia, Richard Court, took part in the Perth event in what was seen as a show of bipartisan support.³⁶ The demonstration of political and public support for reconciliation, seen in these walking events, had not been seen and before and has not been equalled since.³⁷ As Michelle Grattan has argued it was not simply the work of the CAR but the combination of its efforts with events such as the Olympics that heralded such great popular support. She stated that "While not 'political', the Games have carried a political message for reconciliation... Like the Bridge Walk, the Games have been integral to this crucial... year for reconciliation."³⁸ Compelling public support for reconciliation symbolically culminated in CAR's Corroboree 2000, parallel to the Sydney Bridge Walk, which was used as a platform from which to present its reconciliation document – Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation.

An underlying issue of the conference was frustration at the Howard government's refusal to apologise, on behalf of the government, for the injustices of the past – in particular for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, discussed in

³² Reconciliation Australia continues to operate as not-for-profit organisation fostering greater understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Although they sponsor a range of diverse community-based projects they lack the high profile public status that was accorded the CAR in the late 1990s until its dissolution in 2000.

³³ Bridgewalk 2000 was held on 28th May 2000 and was organised by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

³⁴ Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Reconciliation – Australia's Challenge*, 2000, p.68.

³⁵ Michael Gordon, "Walking For Unity", *The Age*, 4 December 2000, p.1.

³⁶ Gordon, "Walking For Unity", 2000, p.1.

³⁷ Political support for these bridge walks was widespread with politicians from all levels of government and all parties participating. The Prime Minister however did not participate. See "PM Shirking Leadership On Reconciliation", *Canberra Times*, 30 May 2000, p.8.

³⁸ Michelle Grattan, "If Only... Win Forces New Look At Race Divide", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 September 2000, p.4.

the previous chapter.³⁹ The fact that this issue still remained controversial some three years after the tabling of the *Bringing Them Home* report in 1997 demonstrates the hurt that was felt at Howard's refusal to apologise. Howard was subjected to vocal protests during his speech at the conference:

Dozens yelled 'Say sorry' amid the boos...Others unfurled banners, reading 'Say Sorry Or You'll Be Sorry' and 'No Reconciliation Without Justice'. One Aboriginal woman stood below the stage, directly in front of the Prime Minister, and screamed at him to apologise.

Mr Howard refused to acknowledge the protestors.⁴⁰

By refusing to acknowledge the protestors at the conference, and the vocal public calls for an apology before that time, Howard attempted to distance himself from the actions and policies of past governments which he considered was not a concern of the present. Howard argued that "Australians of this generation should not be required to accept guilt and blame for past actions and policies over which they had no control."⁴¹ In his speech at Corroboree 2000 Mick Dodson countered Howard's argument by entering into a very personal account of the way government policies had affected his own family and juxtaposed his experience with contemporaneous events in the life of John Howard. Dodson stated:

By the time I was 18 months old the new Commonwealth policy was assimilation. Mr Howard would have been about 12 or 13. Removing kids was all the go when I was born and it persisted well after my birth.⁴²

By presenting his address in such a manner, Dodson managed to close the gap that Howard had been drawing between the 'past' and contemporary Australian society. Dodson very effectively demonstrated that within his own lifetime, and within that of the Prime Minister, these policies were operating. In the same way that appropriation art enables a collapsing of the distance between past and present through juxtaposition, Dodson's own juxtaposition, of his experiences growing up and those of the Prime Minister, equally enabled a contraction of distance between the past governments which Howard was trying to separate himself from and present contemporary Australian society. Dodson concluded his speech by asking:

Who is the generation of Australians Mr Howard blames for the removals and the assimilation policies?... Are not John [Howard] and John [Herron] part of this generation? Indeed, am I not part of this generation? If we are not part of a generation that took Aboriginal kids then who is Mr Howard talking about?⁴³

³⁹ Howard did state "that personally I feel a very deep sorrow for indigenous people who suffered under the injustices of policies pursued by past generations." But such a personal recognition stopped short of the official apology, on behalf of the government that could have been made. John Howard, [Aboriginal Reconciliation], Commonwealth of Australian Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives Official Hansard, Thirty-Eighth Parliament, First Session – Fourth Period, 27 May 1997, p.4113.

⁴⁰ Mark Ludlow, "700 Protesters Humiliate PM", *Sunday Mail*, 28 May 2000, p.11.

⁴¹ John Howard, "Practical Reconciliation" reprinted in Michelle Grattan (ed), *Essays on Australian Reconciliation*, Black Inc. Press, Melbourne, 2000.

⁴² Mick Dodson, "The Truth About Our Generation", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May, 2000, p.17.

⁴³ Dodson, "The Truth About Our Generation", 2000, p.17.

This was but one instance where Indigenous Australian history was challenged within a public arena during the 1990s and despite the attempts of Howard to distance himself from that history it remained a major subject of debate. The so-called 'history wars' were also brought into this public arena with delegates such as Geoff Clark, the then chairman of ATSIC, directly referencing them. Clark began his speech by saying that he had a black armband view of Australian history and he was proud of it.⁴⁴ Beyond his initial declaration, Clark also used his speech as a vehicle for reigniting debate around the issue of a treaty. He drew attention to the fact that "There has been no treaties, no formal settlements, no compacts. There now needs to be."⁴⁵ He also highlighted the fact that there are a number of models in operation in other countries which the Australian government could draw upon if it wanted to negotiate a formal relationship with its Indigenous citizens.⁴⁶ Citizenship, and the rights of Indigenous citizens, aptly provided a point of reference for Indigenous activism in relation to the Centenary of Federation. As another speech at the Corroboree conference noted, "The Constitution proclaimed in 1901 in Centennial Park excluded the Aboriginal people. It continued to exclude them for two-thirds of our first century as a nation."⁴⁷ The speaker, the then Premier of NSW – Bob Carr, went on to note that his speech fell on the 33rd anniversary of the national referendum that rectified that exclusion.⁴⁸ It was with such weighty symbolism that the Centenary of Federation was anticipated as an appropriate anniversary upon which to enshrine a change in attitude toward the Indigenous people of Australia.

Centennial Celebrations

Many Centenary of Federation events were held during the Olympic year and certainly the 'afterglow' of the Olympics carried over into the following year. Both events drew international attention to Australia. Like the bicentenary of settlement, both the Centenary of Federation and the Olympics provided an opportunity to pause and reflect upon the achievements of the nation. After the hype of the Olympics however, the Centenary of

⁴⁴ Excerpts from Clark's speech were reprinted in the *Australian*. See Geoff Clark, "ATSIC's Message – Corroboree 2000", *Australian*, 29 May 2000, p.2.

⁴⁵ Geoff Clark, "Address to Corroboree 2000, ATSIC Chairman, Geoff Clark, May 27, 2000", Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, accessed 20/06/05, [www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/2000/14/speeches/Geoff_Clark.htm].

⁴⁶ The idea of a treaty, and the fact that Clark used his speech as a vehicle for raising this issue, was seen by some as undermining the work of CAR and their Declaration For Reconciliation. Two days before the conference, Geoff Clark, Australian Democrats Senator Aden Ridgeway and former CAR Chairperson Patrick Dodson met with John Howard, without the knowledge or support of the current CAR Chairperson Dr Evelyn Scott, to put the issue of a treaty back on the agenda. The independent reconciliation group, ANTaR, also promoted a treaty by handing out stickers and promotional material at the Bridgework event and during the Conference itself. Scott argued that this focus on a treaty undermined the conference proceedings. She stated "I was quite annoyed about that. I knew nothing about it and we were sort of hijacked." Evelyn Scott, "The Conversation Isn't Over, But It's Time To Say Goodbye", *ATSIC News*, February 2001, p.12. Also see David Nason, "The Hijacking of Corroboree 2000", *Australian*, 3 June 2000, p.1.

⁴⁷ Bob Carr, "Speech by Premier Bob Carr, Corroboree 2000, May 27, 2000", Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, accessed 20/06/05, [www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/2000/14/speeches/Bob_Carr.htm].

⁴⁸ Carr adopted a similar strategy to that of Dodson, personalising the past and connecting his own generation with the failures of the past.

Federation was seen as somewhat of a let down. Paul Alberts argued that "the event in total passed almost as if it were 'mistimed', failing to seize its civic moment, upstaged by the Sydney Olympics."⁴⁹ Alberts went on to outline a number of Centenary events that were poorly attended arguing that they represented a general apathy amongst the public despite the efforts of the government which mounted blanket marketing campaigns from 1998 onwards in order to raise awareness of the significance of the anniversary. The Government formed the National Council for the Centenary of Federation which, in turn, distributed funds to state based councils for events including "festivals, parades, dinners, meetings, publications, conferences, public announcements, educational campaigns, advertisements, public works, sporting events and memorabilia."⁵⁰ Amongst these events the National Council funded two major art / cultural events of concern to this thesis. One, a touring exhibition staged by the National Gallery of Australia, titled *Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001* (2000) [Plate 73], and the second, a special funding structure devised for the National Museum of Australia to facilitate its completion by the anniversary. Satellite events were also funded through both federal and state avenues.

Federation: Australian Art and Society was a blockbuster hosted by the NGA and curated by John McDonald, the newly appointed head of Australian Art at the gallery.⁵¹ McDonald was formerly the art critic for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and his appointment to the NGA was extremely controversial given that his background was in journalism rather than academia.⁵² Like the blockbusters of the bicentenary, and indeed the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games, the exhibition was divided into sections each with a thematic focus. McDonald divided the history of twentieth century Australia into "Beginnings", "The Land", "Cities and Suburbs", "Boom and Bust", "Patriotic Duty", "At Ease", and "Encounters". Unlike the display at the NGA the catalogue contained an additional section, "Designing the Australian Experience", which saw decorative arts analysed separately from the rest of the works. These sections were not chronologically ordered but rather adhered to the overarching thematic structure.⁵³

Confirming Alberts' claim that the Centenary of Federation did not muster the enthusiasm of the public, this exhibition's focus on Federation did not arouse passionate responses. Even McDonald emphasised the impact of the Sydney Olympic Games, to a greater extent than his

⁴⁹ Paul Alberts, "The Sense of a Centenary", *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, vol.16 #1, 2002, p.27.

⁵⁰ Alberts, "The Sense of a Centenary", *Continuum*, 2002, p.30.

⁵¹ McDonald's position as a curator at the gallery was controversial. His appointment was initially backed by the then Director, Brian Kennedy, but this relationship quickly deteriorated. McDonald resigned as head of Australian art in September 2000 but was retained as a consultant on the *Federation* exhibition. He was subsequently sacked in May 2001 for comments he made to the media about the gallery that were seen to be in breach of his contract. See Joyce Morgan, "What Made Kennedy's 'Time Bomb' Tick", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 October 2001, p.18; Joyce Morgan, "Outspoken Gallery Critic Gets The Boot", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 May 2001, p.9.

⁵² Peter Harris has detailed many of the protests against McDonald's appointment. See Peter Harris, "Why They Tried to Kill John McDonald", *Quadrant*, vol.43 #10, October 1999, pp.21-29.

⁵³ This was perhaps the one triumph of the exhibition – that it did not conform to a chronological story of nation and instead tried to make thematic links across time.

discussion of Federation, in his catalogue essay "From Gallipoli to Homebush Bay".⁵⁴ Responses from art critics were unfavourable and dismissive. Daniel Thomas, curator of *The Great Australian Art Exhibition* discussed in Chapter Five, described the show as containing "mediocre" works that only served to fill gaps in the narrative of twentieth century history and ultimately confused the audience.⁵⁵ He continued to suggest that McDonald's inexperience as a curator was the reason that most of the material on display was drawn from the NGA's own collection as he was unable to secure loans from other institutions.⁵⁶ Related to this, Jacqueline Millner argued that McDonald's personal taste permeated the selection of works on show undermining its survey intentions by overlooking areas of Australian art that he was known to despise.⁵⁷ Humphrey McQueen derided McDonald for his journalistic style that masked his lack of familiarity with Australian art scholarship.⁵⁸

Significant to this study, the "Encounters" section of the show was broadly concerned with politics and difference, within which debates around identity – Indigenous, non-Indigenous, migrant, sexual and so forth – were examined. It included overtly political images including Wayne Ludbey's 1993 photograph of Indigenous AFL footballer Nicky Winmar pointing to his black skin with pride in response to racist jeers from the crowd.⁵⁹ Other significant images included Trevor Nickolls *Deaths in Custody* (1990) [Plate 74] – a reminder for viewers of the Royal Commission in Aboriginal Deaths in Custody established in 1987.⁶⁰ Land rights and the unresolved issue of Indigenous sovereignty were also brought into focus by the work of Robert Campbell Junior in his painting *Aboriginal Embassy* (1986) which, in his characteristic narrative style, illustrated the fate of Aboriginal people campaigning for land rights who were ultimately taken away by police. The striking prints of Nunugal-Goenpul artist and curator Avril Quail, *Trespassers Keep Out!* (1982) [Plate 75], and non-Indigenous printmaker Marie McMahon's *You Are on Aboriginal Land* (1984), also drew

⁵⁴ Notably, his title overlooked Federation all together. By beginning his narrative with Gallipoli (1915), and continuing through to Homebush Bay, the site of the Sydney Olympics in 2000, McDonald avoided both Federation and its centenary. John McDonald, "From Gallipoli to Homebush Bay" in John McDonald, *Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2001, pp.10-15.

⁵⁵ Daniel Thomas, "Tricky Shifts Between Art and History: Federation: Australian Art and Society 1902-2001", *Art and Australia*, vol.39 #1, Spring 2001, p.57.

⁵⁶ Thomas, "Tricky Shifts", *Art and Australia*, 2001, p.57

⁵⁷ Millner pointed out that McDonald completely overlooked the more revolutionary forms of art in the 1960s such as public, performance and installation art. Jacqueline Millner "Curating Australia for the Centenary of Federation", *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, vol.16 #1, 2002, p.47.

⁵⁸ Humphrey McQueen, "Dear John", *Postwest*, #18, 2001, pp.20-25.

⁵⁹ This photograph was also reproduced in the exhibition catalogue for *True Colours* discussed in the following chapter.

⁶⁰ Not only did this work remind people of the issue of deaths in custody but it also served to highlight the fact that this was a continuing problem that was not resolved by the commission. Chris Cunneen argued, in 2001, that for Indigenous people "the situation has not improved in relation to custodial levels or deaths in custody." Chris Cunneen, "Assessing the Outcomes of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody", *Health Sociology Review*, vol.10 #2, 2001, p.53. Even more recently, in 2004, this debate was reignited by the death of Mulrunji Doomadgee while in police custody on Palm Island. The coronial inquest into the death found that "actions by the arresting officer, Senior Sergeant Chris Hurley, were responsible for his death" but that there was insufficient evidence to seek a prosecution. See Tony Koch, "Legacy of Racist Past", *Australian*, 30 December 2006, p.17.

attention to the issue of land rights. Quail's print shows a figure propped against a fence upon which has been written "trespassers keep out!" It is ambiguous as to whether this man is defending the fenced off land or if indeed he is the one who has been prevented from entering. The image appropriates from two sources. First, the Aboriginal land rights flag, as designed by Luritja artist Harold Thomas in 1971, is referenced in the overall composition of the print. Secondly, the central image of a man in front of a picket fence was appropriated from a photograph of Gurri Nuggan a resident of Moongalba (also know as Myora mission) who sold wildflowers to passing tourists.⁶¹ It has been argued that this particular work by Quail:

signified the exclusion of Indigenous Australians from Australian political and social life, and became a visual symbol in the Indigenous political struggle during the lead-up to the bicentennial celebrations in 1988.⁶²

While Quail's work may have been used for political purposes at the time, the bicentenary itself was catalytic in the creation of Gordon Bennett's work on display in the show. In keeping with his concerns at the time of its creation, Bennett appropriated historical depictions of Indigenous Australians in his polyptych *Web of Attrition* (1989) [Plate 76]. In particular, a detail from Augustus Earle's *Natives of New South Wales As Seen in the Streets of Sydney* (1830) [Plate 77] was used as the basis for the first panel in this series.⁶³ The detail that Bennett has focused on in this panel is that of the feet and legs of a child and woman in front of whom are empty bottles. Compositionally, Bennett has drawn the attention of the viewer to one of the bottles that sits vertically in the centre foreground of the painting. He achieved this by the inclusion of a perspective drawing that hones the viewers eye in that direction thus suggesting that the introduction of alcohol contributed to the attrition, the gradual wearing down, of the Indigenous people depicted in Earle's print.

Although it was possible to draw out politically confronting works such as those discussed above, these were viewed by critics as exceptions and the exhibition as a whole shied away from contentious issues and challenging works. As Millner argued:

the overall impression is of an exhibition that is a testament to John Howard's vision of Australia: 'multiculturalism' is but a whisper, the British legacy reverberates, lip-service is paid to Aboriginal traditions without sufficient acknowledgment of their contribution.⁶⁴

Furthermore, this lack of critical engagement, this washing over of more difficult issues, resulted in an exhibition that emphasised the view that, as John Howard noted in his

⁶¹ Moongalba / Myora mission was on Stradbroke Island in Queensland, Quail's own country. For a history of the mission see Faith Walker, "Useful and profitable: history and race relations at the Myora Aboriginal Mission, Stradbroke Island, Australia, 1892-1940", *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum, Cultural Heritage Series*, vol.1 #1, April 1998, pp.137-174. The original photograph was reproduced in Bernice Fisher, *Moongalba (Myora) Sitting Down Place*, North Stradbroke Island Historical Museum Association, Point Lookout, Qld, 1997, p.46.

⁶² Kathryn Matthews, "Avril Quail", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, p.681.

⁶³ This was the same print that Clinton Nain appropriated in his work *Quality Street* discussed in the previous chapter.

⁶⁴ Millner "Curating Australia for the Centenary of Federation", 2002, p.49.

foreword to the exhibition catalogue, "we have much to celebrate."⁶⁵ Clearly he had forgotten the criticisms aimed at him in the last year as a result of his distance from the activities of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and the direct attacks on him at Corroboree 2000.

In contrast to this exhibition, the second federally funded Centenary of Federation project, the opening of the National Museum of Australia, was extremely confronting and willing to engage with many difficult issues resulting in it being dogged by controversy even before its doors opened to the public.⁶⁶ When the NMA officially opened on 11 March 2001 it instantly provoked an extraordinary level of sustained criticism with headlines suggesting that it was a "Triumph of Trivialisation".⁶⁷ The particular perspectives on Australian history that it chose to illustrate were major points of contention with many claiming that the dominant discourses on history – the ANZACs and pioneers in particular – had been forgotten and in their place was a story about Indigenous Australians and trivialities such as the Hills Hoist.⁶⁸ From a quantitative perspective, two thirds of the museum's collection is comprised of material relating to Indigenous Australia, thus it seems logical this collection strength would be utilised within their display.⁶⁹

The Museum was accused of being a theme park which catered to the public's sensory perception rather than investing in serious scholarship.⁷⁰ Questioning became even more strident when individuals such as Keith Windschuttle claimed that the museum's display of material relating to violence on the frontier of settlement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people was plainly wrong.⁷¹ Within the first six months of its life, the Museum was forced to conduct an internal review as a result of this formal complaint lodged by Windschuttle, the polemical commentator and author of *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* which was published after his complaint in 2002. He claimed that the exhibition on Frontier Warfare, which represented the Bells Falls Gorge massacre near Bathurst in the 1820s, was not based in historical fact, but rather on oral accounts, and thus could not be verified.⁷² As such he claimed that the museum misrepresented Indigenous history and relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians during colonial times.⁷³ This controversy sparked the next round in the history wars and resulted in a forum at the

⁶⁵ John Howard, "Foreword", in John McDonald, *Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2001, p.6.

⁶⁶ For a full account of the development and institution of the National Museum of Australia see Angela Philp, "Museums and the Public Sphere in Australia: Between Rhetoric and Practice", PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 2006.

⁶⁷ Peter Ward, "Triumph of Trivialisation", *Australian*, 16 March 2001, p.39.

⁶⁸ See Miranda Devine, "A Nation Trivialised – White History 'A Bad Joke'", *Daily Telegraph*, 12 March 2001, p.3. Moreover this imagery recalls the type of objects revered in the "Tin Symphony" component of the Sydney Olympic Games opening ceremony.

⁶⁹ Michael Fitzgerald, "History on the Loose No Glass Cabinets Here", *Time (South Pacific)*, 12 March 2001, p.56.

⁷⁰ Rebecca DiGirolamo, "Research Dying Art In 'Super' Museums", *The Australian*, 25 July 2001, p.3.

⁷¹ See Keith Windschuttle, "How Not To Run A Museum", *Quadrant*, vol.45 #9, September 2001, pp.11-19.

⁷² Windschuttle, "How Not To Run A Museum", *Quadrant*, 2001, p.19.

⁷³ Georgina Safe, "Museum Keeps Review Closed", *Australian*, 13 August 2001.

National Museum in December 2001 to debate this issue of frontier conflict and the accuracy of its reportage culminating in the publication of papers from conference in *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*.⁷⁴ In this collection of essays, and also on display in the Contested Frontiers exhibit at the museum, was Fiona Foley's sculpture *Annihilation of the Blacks* (1986). In its construction, this sculpture appropriates the form of other works in the NMA's collection created by Wik artists Arthur Pambejan Sr and Arthur Pambejan Jr, but it presents a much more violent story than their original [Plate 78]. Her structure, in which black carved figures hang lifelessly with nooses around their necks while the white figure in the foreground seemingly ignores the scene, makes a potent criticism of the treatment of Australia's Indigenous people on the colonial frontier. It is said to have been inspired by her mother's "account of massacres of Aboriginal people in the Maryborough area... and bears some resemblance to representations of American lynching parties."⁷⁵ The display of such a work, with its interpretative response to oral history around frontier conflict, was a bold move by the museum, which, under the directorship of Dawn Casey, continued to encourage dialogue around the stories that it told. Casey stated that the exhibitions, and the resulting Frontier Conflict forum with its related publication demonstrated the museum's:

commitment to encouraging public debate on issues of national importance.... Through its exhibitions and public programs, the Museum has embraced the function of 'stimulating legitimate doubt and thoughtful discussion', as its planners had intended.⁷⁶

Unfortunately for the Museum, and its aim to provoke discussion on difficult issues, Casey's three-year contract was not renewed and her appointment was terminated in December 2003. Her effective dismissal was met with claims that the NMA's board had been stacked with conservative members who undermined her authority and, in her stead, would appoint someone to reflect the Howard government's own conservative approach to Australian history.⁷⁷

Alternative perspectives on Indigenous history, with particular reference to the Centenary of Federation, were also found in a comparably small exhibition at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative; *A Centenary vs Eternity*. This exhibition was conceived of as providing "an opportunity for Indigenous Artists to speak and express their views on Black History, A history that is often forgotten and denied."⁷⁸ Despite its politically charged intent and engagement with major socio-political issues it did not receive a great deal of publicity or recognition. This was in spite of the fact that it received funding from the NSW Centenary of Federation Committee and was designed to give a voice to Indigenous Australians during

⁷⁴ Attwood & Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict*, 2003.

⁷⁵ Graeme Davison, "Conflict in the Museum", in Attwood & Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict*, 2003, p.206.

⁷⁶ Dawn Casey, "Preface", in Attwood & Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict*, 2003, p.xi.

⁷⁷ See Roger Wettenhall, "Jobs For Mates Not the Way to Go", *Canberra Times*, 3 February 2004, p.4; Georgina Safe, "Going Down in History", *Australian*, 9 December 2003, p.15; Dawn Casey, "Let History Be the Judge", *Australian*, 15 December 2003, p.7.

⁷⁸ "Centenary vs Eternity", Accessed 30/04/02, <http://www.culture.com.au/boomalli/exhibitions/A%20Centenary%20vs%20Eternity/first1> (original emphasis).

this Centenary year.⁷⁹ Many of the participants in this show were not all that well known in the international art world. However some participants, like Michael Riley, Gordon Hookey, Kevin Gilbert and Bronwyn Bancroft, are well known and have been discussed in other parts of this thesis. The venue was also highly significant, the site of the first Aboriginal artists Co-operative in Sydney started in the 1980s in order to give a voice to urban based Indigenous artists. The exhibition was opened by Colin Markham, state Labor member for Wollongong, who stated that the show provided:

an Indigenous response to one of the major turning points in Australia's history... the inclusion of black history is an important aspect of Federation for all Australians as it will provide an understanding of the cultural differences that existed within the Australian constitution, that still has repercussions today.⁸⁰

Although it was not a major interjection into the mainstream celebratory tenor of other state funded exhibitions, *A Centenary vs Eternity* was a significant show for the NSW Centenary of Federation Committee to fund. The show documented events like the Bridgewalk for Reconciliation which was represented by Kevin Butler and Valerie Law in their collaborative work. Butler and Law also exhibited another collaborative piece titled *100% Stolen* (2001) which responded to the *Bringing Them Home* report. Other artists like Warwick Keen displayed impatience at the lack of apology offered by the government in his painting which prominently featured "Sorry" emblazoned across its breadth. The exclusion of Indigenous Australians from the status of citizens in the newly formed constitution of 1901 was also addressed in the work of Les Saxby.

The Australian constitution itself had become a point of contention in the 1990s, in the lead up to the Olympics, with increasing calls for a referendum on whether Australia should become a republic and take on a new flag.⁸¹ The continuing ties to Britain, evident most symbolically in the flag, were perceived by some to be an embarrassment representing a fledgling nation rather than a confident self-sustaining one.⁸² The issue of a Republic had been under consideration for many years and, in the 1996 election campaign, Howard promised to organise a convention to discuss the possibility of an Australian republic, what form it might take.⁸³ Subsequent to the convention a referendum on the topic was held on 6 November 1999. The question of a republic was bundled with a second question on whether it was appropriate to include a preamble to the Constitution – to situate it within a contemporary context. The proposed preamble was seen as an opportunity by Indigenous activists to attain constitutional recognition of their prior occupation of the land. In the lead up to the referendum, while debate around the phrasing of the preamble raged, the then chairman of ATSIC, Gatjil Djerrkura, said that "we will be asking for constitutional

⁷⁹ Kilmeny Adie, "Artists With A World Vision", *Illawarra Mercury*, 15 February 2001, p.11.

⁸⁰ Colin Markham in Adie, "Artists With A World Vision", *Illawarra Mercury*, 2001, p.11.

⁸¹ The Australian flag, with its British imperial connotations was the subject of an exhibition curated by Brenda L. Croft and Hetti Perkins in association with Eddie Chambers and exhibited in the UK in 1997 which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

⁸² See Croft, "Beyond the Pale: Empires Built on the Bone of the Dispossessed", *Beyond the Pale*, 2000, p.11.

⁸³ See Malcolm Mackerras, "Will Ballot Scuttle the Republic?", *Australian*, 29 July 1996, p.13.

recognition of our rights."⁸⁴ This proposed recognition would acknowledge Indigenous Australians' prior occupation and custodianship of the land. John Howard took on the role of personally drafting the preamble, with the assistance of poet Les Murray. When the first draft was released in March Howard was criticised for not referring to Indigenous people as "custodians" of the land, rather he stated that they were inhabitants seemingly stopping short of the recognition that Djerrkura had sought.⁸⁵ After a redraft, Indigenous Australians were honoured as "the nation's first people" and "their deep kinship with their lands" was recognised.⁸⁶ This wording ignored the expressed desire for recognition of custodianship and was condemned by many Indigenous leaders.⁸⁷ After an extensive and tiresome debate about the wording of the preamble the referendum returned a negative vote.⁸⁸ Moreover, the proposed model of republic on offer was also rejected.⁸⁹ A factor which contributed to this negative result was the model put forward by the Government which was not supported by many republicans in spite of more general support for a republic.⁹⁰

The quashing of the referendum was a sore point, seen by curator Brenda L. Croft as an "embarrassingly immature" result which would ensure that Australia remained "tied to the apron strings of a kingdom ruled over by a distant queen", as she argued in her exhibition catalogue accompanying the show *Beyond the Pale: Contemporary Indigenous Art*.⁹¹ This exhibition, a showcase of emerging and established Indigenous artists, was curated by Croft for the Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art as part of the Adelaide Festival in 2000. The governing of Australia was also a concern of Gordon Hookey, a Waanyi artist, whose paintings and sculptures such as *King Hit (For Queen and Country)* (1999) [Plate 79] overtly attacked the government, its ties to the Queen and other superpowers such as the United States of America. Land rights were also highlighted in *Ten Point Scam* (1998) [Plate 80],

⁸⁴ Gatjil Djerrkura cited in Georgina Windsor, "Indigenous leaders Set Sights on Constitution", *Australian*, 3 January 1998, p.8.

⁸⁵ See "Preamble Fudges the Hard Question", *Age*, 24 March 1999, p.14.

⁸⁶ John Howard, [Constitution Alteration (Preamble) Bill 1999], Commonwealth of Australian Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives Official Hansard, Thirty-Ninth Parliament, First Session – Fourth Period, 11 August 1999, pp.8426.

⁸⁷ Indigenous Senator Aden Ridgeway had helped to redraft the preamble in order to get it passed in the Senate. He was criticised by those who opposed it. See Lauren Martin & Debra Jopson, "Ridgeway Criticised Over Role in Preamble Wording", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1999, p.4.

⁸⁸ 60.66% percent of voters opposed the proposed change. Australian Electoral Commission, "1999 Referendum Report and Statistics – Summary of Results – Preamble", accessed 22/08/06, [http://www.aec.gov.au/_content/When/referendums/1999_report/summary2.htm].

⁸⁹ 54.87% of all voters disagreed with the proposed model. Moreover, this negative majority was echoed in all states and territories except for the ACT in which 63.27% of voters were in favour of the republican model proposed. See Australian Electoral Commission, "1999 Referendum Report and Statistics – Summary of Results – Republic", accessed 22/08/06, [http://www.aec.gov.au/_content/When/referendums/1999_report/summary.htm].

⁹⁰ It has been shown by International Social Science Surveys/Australia that there was great support for Australia to become a republic in the referendum year (66%) which, while it did recede slightly, was still strong in 2001 (65%) despite the negative result of the referendum. See Jonathan Kelley, M.D.R. Evans & Bruce Headey, "Public Opinion on an Australian Republic: Changes Since the 1999 Referendum", *Australian Social Monitor*, vol.4 #2, August 2001, pp.41-45.

⁹¹ Croft, "Beyond the Pale: Empires Built on the Bone of the Dispossessed", *Beyond the Pale*, 2000, p.11.

which attacked the lands rights plan put forward by the Howard Government, which in essence made it more difficult for Indigenous Australians to claim native title rights to land.

Although Hookey employed a graphic style to depict his analysis of the legacies of colonisation and the impact of then current governmental policies others, such as Gamilaroi artist r e a, employed appropriation. Her installation, *Don't Shoot Till You See The Whites of Their Eyes* (1999), included a series of digital photographs consisting of a self-portrait and an appropriated portrait. In addition to these two-dimensional elements, a series of glass heads were also displayed accompanied by a sound installation. The image r e a appropriated in the digital photographs depicted Gwoya Jungarai, who was commonly known as 'One Pound Jimmy', as their subject matter. The original photograph was taken by Roy Dunstan in 1935 for *Australian Geographical Walkabout Magazine*.⁹² Frontier violence was also at issue in this work which depicted its subjects squarely in the sights of a gun scope.⁹³ Humphrey McQueen argued that these works "should go next door to the foyer of the Museum as a reminder of how such institutions once collected their anatomical evidence."⁹⁴ Violence against Indigenous people was depicted in a more subversive manner in the work of Clinton Nain who appropriated White King bleach bottles within his installation. In his work bleach was used as a metaphor for colonisation and the attempted assimilation of Indigenous Australians. John Harding, explains his brother's metaphor, that Indigenous people were "bleached of their languages, bleached of their children, bleached of their pride, bleached of their very way of life".⁹⁵ As Nain reminds his viewers however, "If not washed out [bleach] will rot and eat itself. Leaving stains and shadows of existence... I cannot be extinguished or bleached out of existence."⁹⁶ In extending this metaphoric use of bleach as a means of 'painting', Nain has also incorporated actual bleach bottles into his installations appropriating the brand White King and setting it up in opposition to his own identity as "Blak Queen" – a reference to his culture and sexuality respectively.⁹⁷ Everyday objects were also appropriated in the images of Destiny Deacon, though her sources related more closely to the works exhibited in *Motif and Meaning* coming from the realm of consumer kitsch representations of Indigenous art and culture.

In addition to the diverse array of mediums represented, which included painting, sculpture, photography, weaving, installation and sound, Croft also selected historical objects from the collection of the South Australian Museum (SAM) by "unknown artists" which she used to signify the collecting of Indigenous cultures by colonising institutions such as museums

⁹² r e a's artwork, and the source of her appropriation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Ten of this thesis.

⁹³ It could be suggested that these gun scopes allude to the Coniston massacre which occurred in 1928 and which Jungarai is said to have witnessed. See Bill Wilson & Justin O'Brien, "'To Infuse An Universal Terror': A Reappraisal of the Coniston Killings", *Aboriginal History*, vol.27, 2003, pp.59-78.

⁹⁴ Humphrey McQueen, "Art Can Reveal But Never Resolve", *Art Monthly Australia*, #128, April 2000, p.6.

⁹⁵ John Harding, *Whitens, Removes Stains, Kills Germs!*, exh.cat., Sherman Galleries, Sydney, 2001, n.p.

⁹⁶ Clinton Nain, [artist statement], in Croft, *Beyond The Pale*, 2000, p.46.

⁹⁷ Harding, *Whitens, Removes Stains*, 2001, n.p.

across time.⁹⁸ This inclusion of historical objects from the museum also served to highlight a continuity of cultural practice visibly discernable through the juxtaposition of historical and contemporary objects. For example there was a clear relationship between the shell necklaces that were loaned from the SAM and the ones that were exhibited by contemporary artist Lola Greeno and made in 1999.⁹⁹ This was also the case for the weaving and basket work which was on display – again there was a visible link between the work in the Museum collection and that being made by Indigenous artists like Yvonne Koolmatrie (also on exhibition in this show) in a contemporary context. This juxtaposition, as well as the dominant concern for political issues evident in much of the work resulted in a "show that allow[ed] Australia's past, present and future to magically commingle."¹⁰⁰

Although artists in *Beyond the Pale* employed appropriation, it was not the main subject of the exhibition. It was, however, the specific concern of another show in Adelaide which ran concurrently. *From Appreciation to Appropriation: Indigenous Influences and Images in Australian Visual Art* (2000), was curated by Christine Nicholls and seen at the Flinders University Art Museum City Gallery. The show attempted to open up a dialogue on the issues of appropriation and the somewhat blurred line between reverential appreciation and exploitative appropriation. It did so by exhibiting works that could be seen as being located across this spectrum of appreciation and appropriation. It also achieved this by recounting the history of intercultural appropriation in this country within the catalogue, and by highlighting some of the many artists who have drawn on Indigenous Australian art for inspiration in varying degrees. It was the second show of 2000 to examine the appropriation of Indigenous art by non-Indigenous artists. The first was *Motif and Meaning: Aboriginal Influences in Australian Art 1930-1970*. This exhibition was curated by Claire Baddeley and was initially seen at Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, in regional Victoria, in 1999 and toured to South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania into 2000.

Although the subject matter of these two exhibitions was similar, the resulting shows were quite distinct. *Motif and Meaning* was primarily a historical exercise with a significant emphasis on appropriation within the decorative and commercial arts arena. It sought to place the more familiar paintings of Margaret Preston within a broader historical context that not only included artists like James Cant and Byram Mansell but also ceramicists, graphic designers and textile artists [Plate 81]. In this variety of media it echoed the 1941 exhibition, *Aboriginal Art and Its Application*, discussed in Chapter Three, but did so from a critical perspective examining the implications of such appropriation. The cultivation of a critical perspective was primarily through the catalogue essays which included contributions by Nicholas Thomas and Brenda L. Croft, Glenn R. Cooke and Baddeley herself. In fact, this

⁹⁸ It is also significant to note that the South Australian Museum had just reopened its collection of Indigenous Australian material to the public in a newly renovated wing of the museum which it boasted was the largest in the country.

⁹⁹ The shell necklace, as a symbol of cultural continuity for the Palawa people of Tasmania will be discussed in detail in Chapter Nine of this thesis.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Fitzgerald, "Renewing the Country", *Time Magazine*, vol.155 #13, 3 April 2000, accessed 03/06/02, [<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/printout/0,8816,42822,00.html>].

was one major criticism made of the show, that the critical perspective put forward in the catalogue was not reflected in the actual display of objects. In a review by Penny Mason, which described viewing the exhibition with Palawa artists Lola Greeno and Julie Gough, the exhibition was noted for its "silence and flatness" as "no Aboriginal voices accompanied the display."¹⁰¹ Further, Julie Gough argued that "It wasn't apparent whether this work was to be lauded or debased"¹⁰² going so far as to suggest that the show could be confusing to the point that it "could encourage people, children... to borrow from another culture not only without permission or guidance – but without even giving it a second thought."¹⁰³ These criticisms were grounded in two factors; a lack of Indigenous "voices", that is to say, artworks that responded to the historical appropriations on show, and a lack of contemporary interpretation within the display.

In contrast, *From Appreciation to Appropriation*, exhibited both historical and contemporary works executed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists creating the contemporary context and Indigenous voices that were lacking in *Motif and Meaning*. This enabled a more complex view of the artistic outcomes that have resulted from Australia's cross-cultural heritage rather than the one-sided view proffered in *Motif and Meaning*. The complex nature of appropriation was indicated by Nicholls in her catalogue essay as a series of questions:

It raises questions about whether there is a point at which 'appreciation' and 'appropriation' become problematic, and if so, where – and how – does one draw the proverbial line in the sand? Ought there be limits or should it be 'open slather' on the world's treasure trove of images? What about particular images that are *owned* by Indigenous artists, and therefore subject to the strict rules of Indigenous intellectual copyright – should they be regarded as off limits? Are contemporary postmodernists just like rich First World kids in the lolly shop pillaging and looting the image bank of colonized cultures for their own visual pleasure, or is such a view just an extreme manifestation of what has been glossed by some commentators as 'political correctness'?¹⁰⁴

The use of contemporary artworks in *From Appreciation to Appropriation* meant that many of the social and political issues that characterised the lead up to the new millennium found expression in this show (as distinct from in *Motif and Meaning*). This was not only through the work on display but also in the exhibition catalogue and the series of panel discussions which accompanied it. It was across this variety of media that issues of appropriation and Indigenous culture, history, land rights, reconciliation and the stolen generations were addressed. The attempt to engage in public discourse was not veiled. As Bruce James noted in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the exhibition provided "an instructive mix" of artists and artworks.¹⁰⁵ In the same way that the appropriative artwork is instructive in its simultaneous presentation of two perspectives – the old and the new – this exhibition provided a number of perspectives on the subject of the appropriation of Aboriginal art and identity.

¹⁰¹ Penny Mason, "Inconstant Values? *Motif and Meaning: Aboriginal Influences in Australian Art 1930-1970*", *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Art*, vol.2 #1, 2001, p.268.

¹⁰² Julie Gough cited in Mason, "Inconstant Values?", 2001, p.268.

¹⁰³ Gough cited in Mason, "Inconstant Values?", 2001, p.269.

¹⁰⁴ Nicholls, *From Appreciation to Appropriation*, 2000, p.4.

¹⁰⁵ Bruce James, "The Politics Of Envy", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 April 2000, p.14.

The show relied on visual juxtaposition in order to highlight the varying degrees of appropriation/appreciation under examination. This was most strikingly seen in the pairing of Emily Kame Kngwarreye's *Atnwelarr – Yam Dreaming* (1995) and Imants Tillers' *Nature Speaks VI* (1999), which appropriates aspects of the former work. Tillers work *Prism* (1986) was also exhibited and depicts, in its entirety, a design by Pintupi artist Tim Payungka Tjapangarti.¹⁰⁶ Nicholls was not prescriptive in her analysis of these works, rather she drew attention to the underlying cultural differences that informed their creation. For Tillers, "visual appeal" was the motivation behind his appropriation but Nicholls directed the viewer to the fact that for Kngwarreye her custodianship of the Yam Dreaming was of utmost importance, beyond aesthetics.¹⁰⁷

The blurred boundaries of Indigenous artists appropriating motifs from other Indigenous artists / areas was also broached in the work of Trevor Nickolls whose *State Bank Dreaming* (1993) used dots to form a western desert style ground upon which visual motifs are incorporated.¹⁰⁸ Lin Onus was also discussed in relation to his intercultural appropriation and it was clearly noted that his appropriation was carried out with the permission of Jack Wunuwun, Onus' mentor.¹⁰⁹ As discussed in previous chapters, Onus incorporated *rarrk* cross-hatching in his paintings – a motif commonly associated with Arnhem Land Indigenous art.

The issue of permission was also at play in Tim Johnson's work and was highlighted further by the inclusion of both collaborative works, between Johnson and the Indigenous artist Kaapa (Mbitjana) Tjampitjinpa [Plate 82], as well as works created by Johnson alone.¹¹⁰ Curatorially, this choice challenged the audience to ask where the boundaries lie in relation to the liberty afforded to artists within the collaborative process. At the very extreme end of the scale of rights and permissions was the artist Elizabeth Durack who not only appropriated Indigenous art forms but presented her art as being made by a traditional Indigenous man – her created alter ego 'Eddie Burrup' – who was purported to be from the Kimberley region of WA.¹¹¹ What all of these debates around rights and permissions

¹⁰⁶ James, "The Politics Of Envy", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2000, p.14.

¹⁰⁷ Nicholls, *From Appreciation to Appropriation*, 2000, pp.6-7.

¹⁰⁸ Nickolls' work referred to the mishandling of funds which left the State Bank in a dire financial situation that resulted in the state Government bailing it out.

¹⁰⁹ As highlighted in Chapter Three, Onus developed a lasting relationship with Wunuwun that resulted in him incorporating some of Wunuwun's designs into his own visual repertoire. This was a process that Onus was very open about as seen in his discussion of their relationship in an article published in *Artlink*. See Onus, "Copyright and Issues of Appropriation", 1990, p.38.

¹¹⁰ See earlier discussions in Part One of this thesis on Tim Johnson's appropriation of Indigenous Australian motifs within his work.

¹¹¹ Not only did Elizabeth Durack present her work as being that of a senior initiated Indigenous man she also profited from this ruse by entering her work in exhibitions ordinarily only open to Indigenous artists. As Nicholls highlights, the extent of the subterfuge was confirmed by the extensive website created by Durack and her daughter Perpetua. The website provided the back story for the character of Burrup and thus legitimated his artworks. See Christine Nicholls, *From Appreciation to Appropriation: Indigenous Influences and Images in Australian Visual Arts*, Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide, 2000, p.12-13.

highlight is the long history of appropriation of Indigenous culture and imagery as outlined in Part One of this thesis. This history is, as I have argued, indicative of the general perception and treatment of Australia's Indigenous citizens. So while many of the subjects of these exhibited works may not have appropriated directly from the historical image bank of representations of colonisation, the fact that they employed intercultural appropriation was in itself an evocation of that broader history.

The show however was more than the sum of its parts. The exhibition generated debate around current political and social issues, steeped as they were in exposing the truth of history for Indigenous Australians. Reconciliation was a prominent theme of the panel discussions that were organised as part of the exhibition. Nicholls argued that it would only be through discussion and education, such as this exhibition was promoting, that a meaningful "genuine reconciliation... a people led movement"¹¹² could be reached. A significant public program associated with the exhibition, these panel discussions attempted to generate debate beyond the context of the exhibition and its catalogue. Elizabeth Durack's presence provided the opportunity to address complicated issues around identity and the responsibility of artists to respect cultural difference. Again reconciliation was central to this discussion. While some, such as Djon Mundine, saw that Durack's work may have been innocent in intent it was within the context of the history of appropriation that her works became highly problematic.¹¹³ Similarly Doreen Mellor argued that reconciliation is a two way process and that Durack's works did not exhibit a give and take.¹¹⁴ At the heart of this lively discussion was the issue of permission and respect. Certainly permission was something emphasised by Nicholls in the catalogue as a vital element in negotiating the use of "owned images".¹¹⁵ Durack's critics claimed that she completely ignored cultural protocols and did not seek permission to represent herself in such a manner. Durack's rebuttal was that she was well respected and intertwined with the local Indigenous community and thought it inappropriate to ask every Indigenous person in Australia whether she could paint these images.¹¹⁶

The issues were not resolved on this day, but the fact that they were openly discussed in a public forum signalled a move forward in the educative process which may have advanced the understanding of issues for those individuals in attendance. Like *Portraits of Oceania*, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, *From Appreciation to Appropriation* sought to create a context in which issues could be debated and a greater understanding around their complexity reached. As has been argued throughout this part of the thesis, broader social issues concerning history, reconciliation, the stolen generations, land rights and so on, have

¹¹² Christine Nicholls, [panel discussion], Flinders University Museum City Gallery, Adelaide, CD-ROM, 11 March 2000.

¹¹³ Djon Mundine, [panel discussion], Flinders University Museum City Gallery, Adelaide, CD-ROM, 12 March 2000.

¹¹⁴ Doreen Mellor, [panel discussion], Flinders University Museum City Gallery, Adelaide, CD-ROM, 12 March 2000.

¹¹⁵ Nicholls, *From Appreciation to Appropriation*, 2000, p.13.

¹¹⁶ Elizabeth Durack, [panel discussion], Flinders University Museum City Gallery, Adelaide, CD-ROM, 12 March 2000.

provided contemporary catalysts for both the creation and exhibition of appropriative history paintings. The confluence of the Olympics and the Centenary of Federation with events like Corroboree 2000 and debates around the politics of apologies, the possibility of a treaty, and related Indigenous affairs, all called into question the history of this nation in regards to the treatment of Indigenous people. Such public assertions enabled curators to launch highly sophisticated, if somewhat "instructive", exhibitions on history using appropriation as a vehicle for this examination.

The fact that history had figured so prominently in the media during this decade, and at the turn of the century, allowed these shows greater currency – as was seen in the opening ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympics. The past remained a concern of the present because past laws, policies and attitudes were being debated and the ramifications of that past were firmly experienced in the present. The past was also prominent due to the fact that it was hoped that a turning point had been reached, particularly through the CAR, in which the abysmal treatment of Indigenous people in 'the past' could be rectified in the present and reconciled for the future. As Robert Manne has argued however, "in 2001, public interest in Aboriginal reconciliation or native title or questions of injustice bequeathed by history quickly died away."¹¹⁷ Moreover, as Daniel Thomas has noted, "Anniversaries trigger biggest-budget events", and as has been seen throughout these last three chapters, smaller responses to those big budget shows. He continued that, "the key Australian anniversaries, of 1788 Colonisation and 2001 Federation, won't come round again for a long while."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Robert Manne (ed), *Whitewash: On Keith Windschuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, Black Inc. Agenda, Melbourne, 2003, p.5.

¹¹⁸ Daniel Thomas, "Art History for Artists or Others", *Artlink*, vol.26 #1, 2006, p.26.

Chapter Eight

International expressions of Australian history

As the artworks and exhibitions discussed in the previous three chapters were tied to the socio-political environment of Australia from the 1980s to 2001, so the works discussed in this chapter are part of a larger narrative. Local politics obviously did not enjoy the same prominence outside of Australia as they did within it. Rather this history of appropriation, as it relates to a re-evaluation of Australian history through an engagement with Indigenous histories, is tied to a broader narrative on the acceptance of Indigenous Australian art overseas. Ian North has asserted his belief that "the Aboriginal art revolution of the last three decades [is the] most significant art movement in recorded Australian art history" adding that "it may well assume a place in world art history as a twentieth-century movement of similar significance as cubism or surrealism."¹ Amongst such claims for the status of Indigenous art in the world context, it is not surprising that Indigenous art figured so prominently in international expressions of Australian history, culture and identity. As such, the international exhibitions discussed here, that included appropriative histories, were more often comprised exclusively of Indigenous artists and their work, in contrast to the integrated multicultural forms of expression discussed in the previous chapters. During the period under discussion here, there have only been a handful of large-scale international exhibitions that have included Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists whose work provides a commentary on the history of Australian settlement and colonisation through the use of appropriation. Despite the fact that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous were employing the same tactics to critique narratives of history, this intersection has rarely been acknowledged internationally.

The tone of these international shows often differed greatly from their Australian counterparts in order to provide an audience unfamiliar with Australian politics, history or society with a context in which to view the images on display. If, as I have argued, contemporary appropriative histories are concerned with identity and place within the Australian imagination, and intimately connected to a particular socio-political framework, how did the impact of these works change when exhibited beyond our shores? And, how did curators compile shows differently in order to address this outside audience? Is it possible to see the changes in attitude discussed in the last three chapters unfolding in an international context? It is not possible to discuss all of the exhibitions involving Australian artists that have been seen overseas; this chapter will focus on the most interesting and prominent examples of such exhibitions that make a contribution to the history of Australian

¹ Ian North, *Staraboriginality*, Hawke Institute Working Paper Series No.20, Hawke Institute, University of South Australia, Magill, SA, 2002, p.17

colonialism and its contemporary ramifications through the exhibition of appropriative works of art.

...

The history of Indigenous Australian art and culture on display in international environments is long. From the eighteenth century when people such as Bennelong and Yemmerrawannie were taken to the motherland to be displayed amongst the British elite,² to the co-opting of Aboriginal people in the nineteenth century for curiosity shows, circuses and international expositions,³ there have been many instances where Aboriginal culture were put display. Such historical representations are beyond the scope of this thesis. What this chapter does chart however, from the mid 1980s onwards, is the transition from paternalistic representations of a static and 'primitive' ancient Aboriginal culture towards self-representation by Indigenous curators and artists. These representations championed the depiction of Indigenous Australian cultures as well and truly alive, vibrant and diverse.⁴

D'un Autre Continent: l'Australie le Rêve et le Réel (From Another Continent: Australia the Dream and the Reality), (1983) at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, claimed to be the first exhibition outside of Australia to display the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian artists side by side.⁵ This show exhibited many postmodernists: Peter Kennedy, Juan Davila, Maria Kozic, Jenny Watson to name a few. The non-Indigenous artists in this show relate directly to *Popism* (1982) at the National Gallery of Victoria a year earlier.⁶ Within this sample appropriative histories were seen in the work of Kennedy [Plate 83] who appropriated figures from a Tommy McRae drawing [Plate 84] and juxtaposed them against an appropriation of the landing of Captain Cook originally painted by E. Phillips Fox in his installation with John Hughes titled *On Sacred Land* (1982).⁷ Kennedy claimed to

² In 1793 Bennelong and Yemmerrawannie were taken to England with Governor Arthur Phillip. Yemmerrawannie died in London and Bennelong became gravely ill but was nursed back to health on the return voyage to Australia. See Smith, *King Bungaree*, 1992, p.27.

³ See Roslyn Poignant, "Tambo: Race and Representation" in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, pp.191-96; Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2004.

⁴ They also provided the opportunity for Australian Indigenous artists and curators to forge ties with other people of colour resulting in collaborations both overseas and in Australia. For example the collaboration between Eddie Chambers and Brenda L. Croft began in the United Kingdom on the exhibition *True Colours* (discussed here) and continued back in Australia where he provided a catalogue essay for the Adelaide exhibition *Beyond the Pale* (discussed in the previous chapter).

⁵ Suzanne Pagé, *D'un Autre Continent: l'Australie le Rêve et le Réel*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville, Paris, 1983, p.13.

⁶ Artists who also exhibited in *Popism* were Juan Davila, Richard Dunn, Maria Kozic, Jenny Watson and ↗↖.

⁷ Kennedy was a key member of the cooperative gallery Inhibodress operating in Sydney in the early 1970s with an emphasis on performance and new media. Kennedy and Hughes also exhibited an installation of the same name, but dated 1983-4, at the Biennale of Sydney in 1984. Both of these works consisted of painted banners, taking their form from traditional trade union banners, and a video installation. Kennedy was responsible for the banners while Hughes executed the video pieces. Kennedy was recently the subject of a retrospective at the Ian Potter Museum of Art. See *Peter Kennedy, Selected Works 1970 to 2002*, exh.cat., Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Vic., 2002.

explore the domination and exploitation of the land by Europeans since 1788 through the juxtaposition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous responses to colonisation.⁸

Although themes of colonisation were explored, there remained a divide between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. Jill Montgomery argued that the work of the non-Indigenous artists was largely dismissed by audiences in lieu of the more exotic Indigenous art. Montgomery argued:

It is obvious that, without the aboriginal participation...The Australian contribution to the Paris Autumn Festival would have been almost a 'non-event'. Probably, the exhibition of contemporary Australian art would have gone virtually unnoticed by the Parisian public.⁹

The Indigenous contribution to this exhibition consisted of a ground painting and performance by Walpiri artists, commissioned by Pagé after an earlier trip to Australia.¹⁰ Ian McLean has also argued that the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists were polarised stating that "The French exhibition made Australia the site of alterity, with the curator, Suzanne Pagé, picturing Australia as a mythical place where the extremes of humanity meet."¹¹ What this fascination with the juxtapositions of art from differing cultural backgrounds indicates is the underlying interest in so-called 'primitive' cultures. This interest found its ultimate expression in the exhibition *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (1984), Museum of Modern Art, New York. This show sought to display 'affinities' between art objects central to the history of western modernism and those which were outside that history and, as such, categorised as primitive. It was met with great criticism by international writers such as Thomas McEvelley who responded with a lengthy article in *Artforum* which sparked a series of exchanges between himself and the curator of the exhibition, William Rubin.¹² *Primitivism* was followed up with *Magiciens de la terre* (1990), Centre Pompidou, Paris. McEvelley contributed an essay to the catalogue and wrote a further defence of the show in *Artforum*.¹³

Primitivism and *Magiciens* are certainly of importance to this thesis; they give us an understanding of how art from other cultures and parts of the world has been received internationally. They are, however, somewhat secondary to the focus of this chapter, which is concerned with how the display of artworks that explicitly challenged the dominant

⁸ Peter Kennedy, [artist statement], in Pagé, *D'un Autre Continent*, 1983, p.122.

⁹ Jill Montgomery, "Australia – The French Discovery of 1983", *Art + Text*, #12 & 13, Summer 1983 & Autumn 1984 (double issue), p.3.

¹⁰ The catalogue listed Peter Jangala Ross, Old Bob Jangala, Ronnie Jakamarra Lawson as "the Owners who supervised the ground painting in Paris" (p.48). Bob Japaljarri Leo, Dick Japaljarri Raymond, Lindsay Jungari Herbert were listed as the "managers" who have executed the ground painting in Paris" (p.47) and Abie Dubanba Jangala, Jim Jambidjimba Kelly, Willie Jupurrula Hudson, Bobby Leo Japaljarri, Joe Jangala Long, Lesley Jambidjimba Robertson and Jimmy Jambidjimba Robertson were also listed as being involved in the project. Pagé, *D'un Autre Continent*, 1983, pp.47, 48, 77-79.

¹¹ McLean, *White Aborigines*, 1998, p.123.

¹² Thomas McEvelley, "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief: 'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art' at the Museum of Modern Art in 1984", *Artforum*, #23, November 1984, pp.54-61.

¹³ Thomas McEvelley, "The Global Issue", *Artforum*, #28, March 1990, pp.19-21.

narrative of Australian history were exhibited and received overseas. The genealogy of these shows follows a similar path to key exhibitions in Australia. Moreover many of the protagonists are the same. There is a direct relationship, for example, between *Art and Aboriginality* (1987) seen in Portsmouth and *Koori Art '84* the important exhibition of urban-based Indigenous artists' work seen in a Sydney. *Art and Aboriginality*, curated by Ace Bourke through Aboriginal Arts Australia, was viewed as part of the Portsmouth Festival in the United Kingdom.¹⁴ The catalogue for the show included an essay by Vivien Johnson and reprinted another by Roberta Sykes, originally taken from the *Koori Art '84* catalogue. In this piece Sykes made a very clear connection between the artists, the subjects of their works, and the fact that it was the history of colonisation which had informed their creation. She stated that:

Too frequently, the subject speaks of pain. This is not, however, the artists' fascination with the morbid – it is the reality of Black modern life and visual presentation of our recent history. The scenes are torn from the psyche of a people, and in their presentation the Black community can weep and begin the process of recovery. Our grief and pain *must be acknowledged!*¹⁵

Within the very specific history of a people that Sykes highlighted there was also a sense of the universal plight of the world's Indigenous peoples signified by the use of "Black" which was associated with the Black Power movement in the United States of America.¹⁶ The concern for the representation of history, as demonstrated in contemporary Aboriginal art, was made all the more explicit in Johnson's catalogue essay which began by drawing attention to the fact that concurrent to this exhibition a re-enactment of the departure of the First Fleet, bound for Australia, was staged. Of course, Johnson pointed out the irony of the situation by arguing that:

The object of the original expedition was the occupation of Aboriginal lands using the flimsy excuse that the Aboriginal inhabitants were too uncultured to be regarded as owners of territory.¹⁷

Yet there in Portsmouth, 200 years later, this convincing display of culture was mounted as a rebuke to the efforts of the colonists to erase the Indigenous peoples of Australia under the doctrine of *terra nullius*. Tracey Moffatt, who was in Portsmouth for the exhibition, protested at the ceremony to mark the departure of the First Fleet and was arrested. Her actions demonstrated, as one reviewer argued, her political stance that was also evident in her photographs on display in the exhibition.¹⁸ These photographs, from the series *Some Lads* (1986) [Plate 85], depict Indigenous male dancers and were created to contrast the ethnographic representations of Indigenous people prevalent in the nineteenth century that

¹⁴ The show was also seen in Sydney in April 1988. See John McDonald, "Black Funk Warms a Cool Culture", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 1988, p.20.

¹⁵ Roberta Sykes, "Foreword" *Art and Aboriginality 1987*, Aspex Gallery, Artspace Portsmouth, UK, 1987, n.p.

¹⁶ Sykes had made this connection between Indigenous Australians and other Indigenous peoples in other areas and the reason for this could be related to her own identity, as outlined in the previous footnote. See also Ann Turner (ed), *On Trial: Black Power in Australia Bobbi Sykes versus Senator Neville T. Bonner*, Heinemann Educational Australia, South Yarra, Victoria, 1975.

¹⁷ Vivien Johnson, *Art and Aboriginality 1987*, 1987, n.p.

¹⁸ Andrew Hughes, "Art and Aboriginality", *Arts Review* (London), vol. XXXIX #11, 5 June 1987, pp.386-7.

they reference. This was achieved by photographing confident, playful, charismatic figures rather than suppressing their individual characteristics. She stated that:

I encourage my subjects to enjoy the staring camera (in contrast to the uncomfortable glaring in the earlier century photographs), to intentionally pose and show off. In an attempt to dispense with the seriousness and preciousness, it captures a lyricism and rarely assigned bold sensuality.¹⁹

Individuality and diversity of media, subject matter and style were also characteristics of the artworks exhibited in this show generally. Many of the artists who showed in *Koori Art '84* were also included in this exhibition and it was representative of the growing community of artists that had evolved out of that exchange and related community activities.²⁰ The exquisite cross hatching of George Milpurrurru's bark paintings was seen in relation to the appropriated designs of Lin Onus who, as discussed previously, was taught to paint in such a manner by Yolngu artist Jack Wunuwun.²¹

Onus's work, *Gamardi Dreaming* (c.1986), demonstrates his hybrid *rarrk*/photo realist style. On a ground of cross-hatching Onus documented a trip he took with Wunuwun to Gamardi – his country. He documents all parts of the journey; the bush tucker he ate is depicted in an X-ray style akin to that of the rock art of that area. The rifle used to hunt it on the other hand is comprised of flat areas of colour, stylised but not cross-hatched. This was the case with all of the western technologies depicted; the solar powered CB radio and the windmill that was being built in the community. Finally his work includes a photo-realist style cat depicted as if it was perched on top of the canvas. In addition to telling the story of his Gamardi journey, Onus also drew attention to the historical context that informed his art production within his artist statement. He stated:

When I sit and stare at the blank canvas and no ideas will come my thoughts often turn to the past... I sit and wonder about the lives of my father, his father and other fathers who came before. Whilst other Australians prepare for their great birthday party who will remember our fallen? As the champagne and beer flow who will think of the chains and poison, of guns and the lash, the dreaded 'Native Inspector' come to take the children away...²²

Onus effectively drew attention to the dispossession of Indigenous Australians and the effects of assimilationist policies, before the report into the stolen generations was handed down. Importantly, this was linked to the present and future via the reference to the planned bicentenary celebrations.

While the Portsmouth Festival marked the departure of the First Fleet, both Australia and the UK commemorated its arrival in 1988. As in Australia, exhibitions were used to mark this anniversary and appropriation served as a succinct way of collapsing two hundred years of history. *Stories of Australian Art* (1988) was a joint project initiated by the Australian

¹⁹ Tracey Moffatt, [artist statement], *Art and Aboriginality 1987*, 1987, n.p.

²⁰ Banduk Marika, Raymond Meeks, James Simon, Trevor Nickolls, Fiona Foley and Lin Onus all exhibited in both *Koori Art '84* and *Art and Aboriginality*.

²¹ Onus & Onus, "Lin Onus" in Neale, *Urban Dingo*, 2000, p.122.

²² Lin Onus, [artist statement], *Art and Aboriginality 1987*, 1987, n.p.

Studies Centre at the University of London and assisted by the Commonwealth Institute. It was curated by Jonathan Watkins to coincide with the bicentenary of British colonisation in Australia.²³ It was a survey exhibition that spanned the two hundred years of white settlement that provided the catalyst for its development. It included the work of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and was one of the first exhibitions to do so on foreign shores. Many of the works assembled for the show were sourced from British collections which provided a unique twist in that the representation of Australian art and artists came not from Australia but from the empire.²⁴ The show aimed to represent "Australian-ness" which was primarily characterised by representations of the landscape and history. The hang was largely chronological with separate rooms devoted to each of the four themes of the show: "A Romantic Landscape", "A Land of Golden Summers", "An Empty Space" and "A Postmodern World."

"A Romantic Landscape" focused on representations made by the new settlers of their newly explored / acquired lands. Artworks by Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists were displayed in this show. Albert Namatjira's work was exhibited in the section titled "A Land of Golden Summers", ironically alongside the work of other iconic Australian artists, like Streeton and McCubbin, who immortalised the Australian landscape as one in which clearing and farming the land were most highly valued. This exhibition of Namatjira's work indicates, in part, the reevaluation of his work within a high art domain.²⁵ It was primarily in the last section of the show, "A Postmodern World", that Indigenous artists' work, and appropriative interventions by white artists were displayed.

Under the guise of a fairly benign survey show celebrating the bicentenary, alternative narratives surfaced in many of the contemporary artworks, as well as in the catalogue essays by Joan Kerr and Tim Johnson. Kerr's essay recounted the history of Australian art with an emphasis on postmodern interventions. This essay represents one of her first critical discourses on history, appropriation and Australian identity to be published. What it demonstrates is the role of exhibitions in this period in advancing scholarly research in the area of appropriative history painting. Kerr's essay begins by outlining the development of an Australian art history that has always maintained a problematic (provincial) relationship with other art centres. It is at a turning point in the essay that Kerr proposes:

to examine some of the ways recent artists have incorporated Australian art historical references into their work, as one sort of evidence of a growing popular iconography we can call our own.²⁶

²³ Watkins was born in the United Kingdom but emigrated to Australia as a teenager where he completed his university training in art history and worked in the art industry before returning to London. He was also artistic director of the 11th Biennale of Sydney in 1998. Michele Field, "A Boost for the Biennale", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 April 1997, p.14.

²⁴ Interestingly some of the photographs of Aboriginal people from the nineteenth century by J.W. Lindt were exhibited in this show, well before it was deemed appropriate to do so in Australia. The images came from the collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum, an anthropological institution in Oxford.

²⁵ This issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Eleven of this thesis.

²⁶ Kerr, "Other Voices: More Stories", in Watkins, *Stories of Australian Art*, 1988, p.50.

Kerr went on to chart the history of the appropriation of Australian art historical icons in the twentieth century which had a particular emphasis on artists like Tom Roberts and Frederick McCubbin. She cited the work of Imants Tillers²⁷ and Geoff Lowe who both had work included in this show.

Lowe's painting *Impersonation* (1983) [Plate 86] depicts a figure who stands guarding a bricked up doorway. This figure feebly impersonates an Aboriginal man dressed in loose black pants and long sleeve top with a balaclava, boomerang and spear as accoutrements. As Kerr noted in her essay, Lowe's painting references another work by Sir Edward Poynter; *Faithful Unto Death* (1865), which depicts a Roman sentry standing guard over the city limits.²⁸ Kerr argues that this work is overtly "double-coded". On the one hand, for an uninformed audience, the work indicates the contrived nature of colonial portraits of Indigenous Australians which Kerr saw as "distorted, inevitably racist and propagandist."²⁹ On the other hand the source of the appropriation may have been familiar to some of the audience as the painting by Poynter that graced the cover of Bulwer Lyntton's novel *The Fall of Pompeii*. In this case the reference to the Roman sentry, standing guard dutifully protecting his country allows a different perspective to resonate, as Kerr states, Lowe's "black Australian is still standing 'faithful unto death' to a place which is being destroyed all around him by forces beyond his control."³⁰

Other appropriators on display in this show included Ian North who used historical photographs, which he had worked back into with painted overlays, as the basis of his *Seasons, Australia 1987 (Kangaroo)* series [Plate 87]. A kangaroo perched atop a rock, towering over the landscape, dominates these obviously contrived images – photographs with painted overlays. North appropriated the kangaroo from the same George Stubbs painting, executed from a specimen, and subsequently engraved and first published in Hawkesworth's *Voyages* (1773),³¹ that Tillers' also used in his *Kangaroo Blank* discussed in Chapter Five [Plates 48 & 49].³² The kangaroo, as reproduced by North, appears even more awkward and unnatural than Stubbs' original due to its monumental scale. This can be paralleled with the unease with which the British engaged with the flora, fauna and people of new lands like Australia.

The interaction between settler and Indigenous Australians was the subject of Geoff Parr's installation *Place II* (1983/8) [Plate 88]. This installation consisted of six photographic images mounted on lightboxes. All of these photographs depict Parr dressed in a full suit and

²⁷ Tillers also had a solo exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London which also toured to Glasgow and Northern Ireland in 1988.

²⁸ Kerr, "Other Voices", in Watkins, *Stories of Australian Art*, 1988, p.52.

²⁹ Kerr, "Other Voices", in Watkins, *Stories of Australian Art*, 1988, p.52.

³⁰ Kerr, "Other Voices", in Watkins, *Stories of Australian Art*, 1988, p.52.

³¹ Smith & Smith, *Australian Painting*, 1995, pp.1-2.

³² In addition to being exhibited in *The Great Australian Art Exhibition Kangaroo Blank* was also part of *Colonial Post Colonial*. Tillers was not the only artist in this show to use this work – it formed the basis of Constantine Nicholas' *From a New World: Native Marsupial of the South, number 20* (1992) also on show in *Colonial Post Colonial*.

tie, as the protagonist in each work. In one image he stands with a noose around his neck, next to a reproduction of *Governor Arthur's Proclamation to the Aborigines* (1828) [Plate 89]. The original placard was created to demonstrate that justice and the law related to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by pictographically representing the concept of crime and punishment. This was contrasted against the reality in Tasmania where frontier violence was rife and Aboriginal people were forced off their lands, the subject of another of Parr's images which appropriates Benjamin Duterrau's *The Conciliation* (1840).³³

Contrasted against these appropriations that engaged with the history of colonisation in Australia, an Aboriginal perspective on that same history was seen in the work of Robert Campbell Junior. His paintings *Ration Day* (1987), *The Past and Present of 200 Years* (1987) and *Shooting the Blacks* (1987) dealt respectively with mission life, the decimation of cultural heritage and frontier violence in his characteristically narrative manner. The apparent simplicity of these works contrasted with the juxtapositions of art historical referencing in the work of Lowe, Parr and Tillers and must have been confronting for the British audience given the historical images that were also in this exhibitions – images which were created to convey the success of the settlement. Also included were remote community based artists such as Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri, Michael Jagamara Nelson and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri. A collaborative work between Clifford Possum and Tim Johnson was also exhibited. The catalogue included an essay by Johnson in which he explained some of the issues facing Indigenous Australians at the time, including battles over land rights and the fight for social justice, and how those social issues impacted upon their artistic endeavours. Not only did the array of art on display bring together the history of colonisation, and its ramifications for Indigenous people in 1988, but the essays also served this function.

On another continent *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia* (1988) opened at the Asia Society Galleries in New York and subsequently toured to Chicago and Los Angeles before returning to Australia.³⁴ This show was responsible for introducing Aboriginal art to an American audience and educating them as to its uniqueness in the process. The lengthy and comprehensive catalogue that accompanied the exhibition as well as a documentary film examining the origins of the artists and the development of their work further demonstrated this educative role. In addition the work on display was supplemented by more than the usual amount of contextual material in the form of extended labels, or "protective packaging" as one critic termed it.³⁵

This exhibition was much more intimately linked to the history of exhibitions of Indigenous Australian art than it is to the concept of contemporary appropriative painting and as such I

³³ Both the circumstances of colonisation in Tasmania and Parr's appropriation of *The Conciliation* (1840) will be discussed in detail in Chapter Nine.

³⁴ The exhibition was organised by the South Australian Museum in collaboration with the Asia Society Galleries. Key protagonists and contributors to the catalogue included Peter Sutton, Françoise Dussart, Christopher Anderson, Philip Jones and Steven Hemming.

³⁵ Roberta Smith, "From Alien to Familiar", *New York Times* (Late City Final Edition), 16 December, 1988, Weekend Desk – C.

will not examine it in great detail here.³⁶ It is, however, worthwhile to note that despite the fact that no urban-based Indigenous artists were exhibited in the show they did find their way into the catalogue which was much more concerned with the representation of a diversity of perspectives and artistic styles. Urban-based artists, as we have seen, were responsible for the most overtly political forms of history painting which often employed appropriation to convey a sense of the injustices of the past. So while the work was not included in the exhibition itself it is important to acknowledge its place within the greater framework of the show.³⁷ Moreover, despite the fact that the show only included the work of Indigenous artists, numerous non-Indigenous artists were also discussed within the catalogue under the auspices of a history of appropriation and the place that Indigenous art occupies within the larger Australian art context. The debate around Margaret Preston's role as an advocate / appropriator of Indigenous art was referred to, as was the general appropriation of Indigenous motifs within the applied arts industry from the 1930s onwards.³⁸ This discussion of appropriation continued through the work of Ian Fairweather right up until the time that the exhibition took place.

The exhibition had a huge impact on the perception of Indigenous Australian art in an international market and, with the addition of the catalogue, some of the political issues related to the history of dispossession were also aired. Had the show not been accompanied by the extensive catalogue, this historical dimension would have been diminished. Many of the reviews of the exhibition were preoccupied with the aesthetic quality of the work and fitting the concept of the 'dreaming' into existing categories of art/cultural production.³⁹ Only one review, of the book rather than the exhibition, drew strongly on this notion of the history of cross-cultural understanding and exchange as impacting on the art produced. Elizabeth Ward, of the *Washington Post*, argued that the book proved the ignorance of the white settlers at dismissing the culture of Indigenous Australians.⁴⁰

...

As was initiated with *Art and Aboriginality* in Portsmouth the broad conception of Indigenous art, which included both the work of urban-based and remote community artists, was continued in two exhibitions of 1990. *Contemporary Aboriginal Art 1990 – From*

³⁶ For an analysis of this exhibition see Fred R. Myers, "Culture-making: Performing Aboriginality at the Asia Society Gallery", *American Ethnologist*, vol.21 #4, November 1994, pp.679-699. Myers also examines this exhibition within a broader discussion Indigenous art and its acceptance as fine art in: Fred R. Myers, *Painting Culture: The Making of an Aboriginal High Art*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002.

³⁷ Lin Onus (p.181) Trevor Nickolls (p.203, 207), Fiona Foley (p.205), Byron Pickett (p.206) were also discussed within the catalogue. Peter Sutton (ed), *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, Asia Society Galleries, New York, 1988.

³⁸ Sutton (ed), *Dreamings*, 1988, p.208.

³⁹ See Thomas Keneally, "Dreamscapes", *New York Times* (Late City Final Edition), 13 November 1988; Smith, "From Alien to Familiar", *New York Times* (Late City Final Edition), 1988, Weekend Desk – C; "Aboriginal Art Show at Smart Gallery", *Chicago Sun-Times*, 29 January, 1989, p.7; Tony Stephens, "Fine Art of Dreaming", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 November 1989, p.84.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Ward, "To The Antipodes", *Washington Post*, 4 December 1988, p.13.

Australia (1990) was jointly supported by the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow and the Australia Council. The Aboriginal Arts Management Association produced the catalogue for the show which contained a scholarly essay by the art historian Terry Smith and an introduction by the artist, Lin Onus, who was, at the time, the Chair of the Aboriginal Arts Committee of the Australia Council. This was a major exhibition with the work of forty-two artists included from all parts of Australia. It toured from Glasgow to Swansea and Manchester in 1991. This was, Onus claimed, the first international exhibition in which "Aboriginal people have care and control"⁴¹ over its content. It was presented as part of a larger festival of Indigenous Australian art and culture in Glasgow called Tagari Lia: My Family – Contemporary Aboriginal Arts From Australia.

Important appropriative histories exhibited in this show included Gordon Bennett's, *Metaphysical Landscape no.2*, (1990) which was discussed in detail earlier in this thesis.⁴² Fiona Foley's *Survival* (1988) series was also included in this show consisting of four photo-etching collage works [Plate 90]. *Survival* represents one of Foley's earlier appropriations of historical photographs of Badtjala people, uncovered during research at the John Oxley Library, and re-presented within her own art making practice.⁴³ In this series, Foley juxtaposed these nineteenth century images of Badtjala people with landscape photographs of Fraser Island depicting the beach and shell middens. As such this was one of the first bodies of work that she produced which explicitly tried to connect the often unidentified inhabitants of these archival images with their country. In this quietly political act, Foley drew attention to the dispossession that had occurred and the fact that the remnants of that culture remain in the landscape and can, if one desires, be connected back to these people.⁴⁴

Indigenous Australian art was gaining exposure all over the world, not simply in America and the United Kingdom. Trevor Nickolls and Rover Thomas became the first Indigenous artists to represent Australia at the *Venice Biennale* in 1990. Again, we can see that in the international realm there was a greater parity between the representation of remote and urban-based Indigenous artists than there was initially in Australia. This is perhaps because of the time lapse between the emergence of Aboriginal art from Papunya Tula in Australian exhibitions from the 1970s onwards. Beyond the *Venice Biennale*, the first major exhibition of Indigenous Australian art in Europe was *Aratjara: Art of the First Australians* (1993). *Aratjara* toured to Düsseldorf, London and Denmark.⁴⁵ More confronting than other shows such as *Dreamings*, *Aratjara* was described in one newspaper article as exploring "dark territory; the big bosses and the fathers in chains, the dog collars, the petrol sniffers, the

⁴¹ Lin Onus, "Foreword", *Contemporary Aboriginal Art 1990 From Australia*, exh.cat., Aboriginal Arts Management Association, Redfern in association with Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, 1990, p.1.

⁴² See the discussion of *Flesh + Blood: A Sydney Story* in Chapter Six of this thesis.

⁴³ Genocchio, *Fiona Foley*, 2001, p.65.

⁴⁴ Foley's work will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Ten of this thesis.

⁴⁵ The exhibition was meant to finish its European tour in Australia but, according to Djon Mundine, "the exhibition came to a sad end when the Australian venue cancelled out. So it has never been seen in its country of origin." Djon Mundine, "Aboriginal Art Abroad: Responses to Touring Exhibitions in Europe, the United States and Asia", *Art and Australia*, vol.35 #1, 1998, p.71.

deaths in custody."⁴⁶ The show was originally conceived in 1984 by Gary Foley, the then Director of the Aboriginal Arts Board, and the Swiss artist Bernhard Lüthi. It was hoped that the show could provide an avenue for Indigenous artists to express themselves during the bicentennial year without being involved in the 'celebrations' in Australia.⁴⁷ Unfortunately however it was not possible to organise the show in time for this anniversary and it was not until 1993 that the project came to fruition in Germany.

The show was hugely successful in that country, with record numbers of visitors passing through the doors in the first week, despite its confronting themes and a catalogue that "did not mince words about Australia's treatment of Aborigines."⁴⁸ The response was not all positive however, as John McDonald noted:

There were complaints from audiences and host venues in Germany, London and Denmark that the urban work tended to spoil the show. It did not fit in with the usual preconceptions about the spirituality of Aboriginal art, and introduced a radical, discordant note.⁴⁹

Clearly however, the inclusion of this work was a conscious decision by the curators precisely aimed at challenging those preconceptions. And the work was challenging. For an unfamiliar audience there was a huge disparity between the exquisitely cross-hatched bark paintings of Arnhem Land and political posters made in the Southern states advocating lands rights and calling for an end to deaths in custody. *Aratjara* was divided into regionally defined sections. The catalogue included essays reflecting these regional divisions and also created an international context for the art on display.⁵⁰ It did so by including broad essays on the representation of non-European art in America and Europe as well as more localised essays illuminating the challenges of working in remote communities. It also included written contributions by artists, one of which was a lengthy essay by Gordon Bennett – one of the very few primary accounts of his work published.

Lin Onus wrote the catalogue essay for the section that included contemporary artists working mostly out of urban centres: "Southwest, Southeast Australia and Tasmania". Onus began his essay with a history lesson, alerting the reader to the fact that, as a result of colonisation, Indigenous Australians had been devastated by introduced diseases, been dispossessed of their lands, subjected to violence, poisoned, studied and confined to missions and government reserves.⁵¹ From this historical beginning Onus charted the development of a political art movement in the south-east which included, but was not limited to, artists such as Trevor Nickolls, Robert Campbell Junior, Richard Bell, Fiona Foley and, of course, himself.

⁴⁶ Judy Peebus, "Songlines Across Europe", *Age*, 4 June 1994, p.11.

⁴⁷ Lin Onus, "Foreword", in Bernhard Lüthi, *Aratjara: Art of the First Australians*, exh.cat., Kustsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, 1993, pp.11-12.

⁴⁸ Terry Ingram, "Traumzeit's Dream Run Continues in Germany", *Australian Financial Review*, 13 May 1993, p.34.

⁴⁹ John McDonald, "The Dream Weavers", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1998, p.14.

⁵⁰ Mundine has noted that the catalogue sold out in Düsseldorf and London well before the shows ended in each city. Mundine, "Aboriginal Art Abroad", 1998, p.70.

⁵¹ Lin Onus, "Southwest, Southeast Australia and Tasmania", in Lüthi, *Aratjara*, 1993, p.289.

Also included in the catalogue, and discussed by Onus, were historical works by Tommy McRae and William Barak. Directly related to the historical work were contemporary appropriations by Leah King Smith. Her *Untitled (no.3)* (1991) [Plate 91], from the series *Patterns of Connection*, appropriated a photograph of "William Barak, a powerful leader of the Wurundjeri people in Victoria."⁵² King-Smith's work, introduced in Chapter Six, set out to draw attention to the fact that the photographs function in two opposing ways as "symbols of cultural domination" and, for the ancestors of those depicted, as "treasured family portraits and records of material culture."⁵³ She highlighted this by juxtaposing the original images, with their references to mission life, with imagery of her own depicting colour landscapes. The past and the present literally came together in the one photograph.⁵⁴ Historical photographs of Indigenous Australians were also used in Karen Casey's screen print *Land Rights* (1987) and Richard Bell's painting *The Story Unfolds* (1992). The use of such imagery drew attention to the history of colonisation that Onus outlined in his catalogue essay and addressed, in Bell's case, the "serious lack of education" around this history by raising contentious issues such as genocide.⁵⁵

The focus on urban artists' works continued in the UK in 1994 with a much smaller exhibition of eight artists all working within a so-called non-traditional genre. This show, *True Colours: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists Raise the Flag* (1994), was one of the most explicit exhibitions to challenge the events of the past by directly confronting the mother country with the 'truths' of Aboriginal history.⁵⁶ It was curated by Brenda L. Croft and Hetti Perkins, who were representing Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative in collaboration with the Institute of New International Visual Arts, a UK based organisation whose aim was to promote "contemporary artists who have largely been ignored and marginalised on the basis of race, gender and cultural difference"⁵⁷ and a Bristol based freelance curator, writer and artist, Eddie Chambers.⁵⁸ This show was, by far, the most overtly political in its intent and execution. It was described in the media as:

An angry show. It attempts to counter that limited conception [of Indigenous Australian art] which expects to see only paintings involving dots, earth colours, dreaming and songlines.⁵⁹

⁵² Leah King-Smith [Artist's Statement] in Lüthi, *Aratjara*, 1993, p.351.

⁵³ Leah King-Smith, "The Nineteenth Century Photographs in Patterns of Connection", *Art Monthly Australia – Aboriginal Art in the Public Eye*, special supplement, 1992-3, p.41.

⁵⁴ Her photographs were not collages or montages but rather "single exposure compositions of two visual planes simultaneously merged into one another." King-Smith, "The Nineteenth Century Photographs", *Art Monthly Australia*, 1992-3, p.41.

⁵⁵ Richard Bell, [Artist's Statement] in Lüthi, *Aratjara*, 1993, p.350.

⁵⁶ *True Colours* also toured to Australia and was seen at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative in May 1995 in addition to its UK showings at the Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool, South London Gallery and The City Gallery, Leicester.

⁵⁷ Brenda L. Croft & Hetti Perkins, *True Colours: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists Raise the Flag*, exh.cat., Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Sydney, 1994, n.p.

⁵⁸ Chambers is of Jamaican descent and has been involved in curating many exhibitions of "black" artists in Britain and the USA. He also exhibits widely himself and was coordinator of the African and Asian Visual Artists archive. See Croft & Perkins, *True Colours*, 1994, n.p.

⁵⁹ Sacha Craddock, "Around the Galleries: Contemporary Art", *The Times*, 27 July, 1994.

It achieved this goal by including the work of a number of extremely outspoken artists and creating a catalogue that mirrored their political discontent by signalling some of the reasons behind it. The exhibition was clearly aimed an overseas audience unfamiliar with Australian current affairs, a fact demonstrated by the abundance of newspaper clippings reproduced within the catalogue [Plate 92]. In addition, the catalogue essay (written by Croft and Perkins) presented an extremely outspoken critique of the creation of Australian history by attempting to dispel its "myths" or "white lies." Instead, they attempted to expose the "truth" of the Indigenous experience to Australia's motherland. They stated: "Myth / white lie number three: Aboriginal people were 'dispersed'. Truth number three: dispersals = murders".⁶⁰ Thus, there was an intermingling of contemporary and historical issues via the historical nature of the essay juxtaposed against the current newspaper clippings and the actual artworks themselves.

Coincidentally, in the same year as this exhibition toured the UK, with its focus on the Australian flag as "a piece of rag symbolising dispossession and oppression",⁶¹ Cathy Freeman won gold at the Commonwealth Games in Canada and, in a defiantly political act, carried the Aboriginal flag on her victory lap (alongside the Australian flag). Flags, both Australian and Aboriginal featured prominently in this exhibition as a mechanism for critiquing colonial discourse.⁶² This could be seen in the work of Brook Andrew who incorporated both the Aboriginal and Australian flags into his kitsch souvenir tea towel reconstructions depicting the "noble savage"⁶³ alongside other indigenous flora and fauna. He did not change the overall kitsch Australiana aesthetic in his appropriation, rather his intervention was subtle, replacing two hundred years of 'settlement' with two hundred tea towels in through which he hoped to "reclaim and reconstruct false histories."⁶⁴ Others, such as e a and Destiny Deacon [Plate 93], also appropriated the Australian flag in their works for the show while Richard Bell created an entirely new one.

Overtly political international expressions of the other side of Australian history were also found in *Tyerabarrbowaryaou II* (1994), the follow up exhibition related to the show of the same name discussed in Chapter Seven. The show was again curated by Fiona Foley and Djon Mundine and was seen in Cuba at the Havana Biennial. The Biennial was specifically established as a forum for Indigenous peoples from all over the world in which they could exhibit, exchange ideas and form connections. This was reiterated by Foley who argued that "[Indigenous Australians] have a lot in common with other artists who will be displaying

⁶⁰ Brenda L. Croft & Hetti Perkins, 'Truths, Myths and Little White Lies', in Croft & Perkins, *True Colours*, 1994, n.p.

⁶¹ Richard Bell, [artist statement], in Croft & Perkins, *True Colours*, 1994, n.p.

⁶² The show was conceived of as an Australian parallel to an earlier exhibition curated by Chambers in the United Kingdom titled *Black People and the British Flag* (1993) which they symbolism of the British flag. It came about through Croft's contact with Chambers in 1990 and was funded by INIVA through Chambers. See Ann McGrath, Hetti Perkins & Brenda Croft, "Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative", *Labour History*, #69, November 1995, pp.217-230.

⁶³ Brook Andrew, [artist statement], in Croft & Perkins, *True Colours*, 1994, n.p.

⁶⁴ Brook Andrew, [artist statement], in Croft & Perkins, *True Colours*, 1994, n.p.

their work – dispossession of land, loss of language, colonisation."⁶⁵ These themes certainly permeated much of the work Foley and Mundine amassed in their augmented version of the 1992 exhibition.

The Havana exhibition increased to represent sixteen artists including a contingent of historical works by the nineteenth century artist Tommy McRae. McRae's work depicts interactions between the new settlers and the Indigenous people within everyday scenes of hunting, working, fighting and ceremony. The inclusion of these historical works allowed a continuity of expression to be established in which images depicting the effects of colonisation created by artists the nineteenth century were seen in relation to contemporary works of art concerned with the same subject matter. Gordon Bennett provided one such history of intercultural relations since colonisation in his polyptych *Untitled (dismay, displace, disperse, dispirit, display, dismiss)* (1989) [Plate 94]. This work incorporates text and appropriated images in order to juxtapose Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives on the nature of colonisation. In one scene *The Founding of Australia. By Capt. Arthur Phillip R.N. Sydney Cove, Jan. 26th 1788* (1937) is appropriated.⁶⁶ It depicts a recreation of the landing of Phillip in which the British claiming of the continent was symbolised by the raising of the Union Jack. It is against this triumphant moment for the British that Bennett has painted the word "DISPLACE". From this original displacement of Indigenous Australians, signalled by the arrival of the British, Indigenous people were dispersed, dispirited [Plate 95], displayed [Plate 96] and finally, according to Bennett's version of history, dismissed.⁶⁷

Appropriative histories in the United States of America and the United Kingdom

As is clear from the discussion above, most of the exhibitions that had some interest in Australian history and its representation were often curated or organised by Indigenous Australians. The few exhibitions that exhibited both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian artists' works demonstrated a familiarity with debates around postmodernism, appropriation and cultural and historical identity that are central to this thesis. *Antipodean Currents* (1994-5) was one of these shows. It travelled to the United States of America with a view to question existing perceptions about Australian art and culture. The curator, Julia Robinson, was quoted in the media as seeing a need to present a complexity of Australian identity to defy the stereotypical view that Americans had as either one of Aboriginal art or Crocodile Dundee.⁶⁸ The work was challenging, with a mixture of Indigenous and migrant

⁶⁵ Fiona Foley cited in Amanda Phelan, "Art On Show In Cuba", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 April, 1994, p.25.

⁶⁶ Algernon Talmage, *The Founding of Australia. By Capt. Arthur Phillip R.N. Sydney Cove, Jan. 26th 1788* (1937), oil on canvas, 77 x 106.5cm, State Library of NSW, Sydney.

⁶⁷ It is important to note that, even though this work was shown in 1994 in Havana it was actually made by Bennett in 1989 the year following the bicentenary. Bruce Elder's *Blood on the Wattle*, 1988, contains some of the sources of Bennett's appropriation in this work.

⁶⁸ Julia Robinson cited in Carmel Dwyer, "US to See New Face of Oz Art", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 June, 1994, p.28.

perspectives represented amongst the ten Australian artists on show.⁶⁹ A number of scholarly essays were included in the exhibition catalogue which provided an introduction on the artists and artworks displayed. As with all international exhibitions, these essays provided the background necessary for those audiences to engage with the work by fitting that work into a broader international framework. Each of the three introductory essays provided a brief history of Australian art, its preoccupation with identity and finally its relationship to, or similarities with, the north American context in which it was being displayed.⁷⁰ Catharine Lumby's piece, in particular, provided a distillation of the major debates in Australia since the 1970s. Moreover she focused this discussion around the relationship between Australia and outside influences such as north America, in relation to Terry Smith's concept of the "provincialism problem".⁷¹

Again, Bennett's work was exhibited providing a historically focused critique of frontier violence in Australia interpreted in a contemporary setting for American audiences. *Death of the Ahistorical Subject (Vertigo)* (1993) [Plate 97] employed many of his signature motifs: the dot screen was the main visual element of this work, covering the whole canvas. He also included a perspective diagram indicating a western system of thought and representation. Finally, the work was made up of abstract gestural strokes that are reminiscent of the abstract expressionism of Jackson Pollock, the scarification of initiated bodies or "the lacerations of flogged Aboriginal bodies."⁷² His subject matter was also typical, though this is not to say that it would not have been shocking for the unfamiliar audience. In this work, a white figure, armed with a rifle, takes pot shots at two black figures. One of the black figures is captured in this painting falling dead, as a result of the gunfire, into a black hole that has been painted into the landscape. The source of this painting was reproduced in Bruce Elder's *Blood on the Wattle* (1988) and was illustrated in relation to a chapter on a massacre of Aboriginal people in Queensland in 1857 [Plate 98].⁷³

Although appropriations such as Bennett's were recognised for their familiar postmodern intent, they were also seen as uniquely Australian, as a distinctive form of appropriation bound up with Australian identity and history. This was a particular point of interest for the American critic Eleanor Heartney in her contribution to the catalogue. She noted the rise and fall of

⁶⁹ Artists on show were Gordon Bennett, Mutlu Çerkez, Tim Johnson, Felicia Kan, Simone Mangos, Tracey Moffatt, Mike Parr, Imants Tillers, Judy Watson and John Young.

⁷⁰ Introductory essays included Catharine Lumby, "The Art of Flux: An Australian Perspective"; Eleanor Heartney, "Antipodean Undercurrents: An American Perspective" and Daniel Thomas, "LAND versus PEOPLE". In addition to these, individual essays were devoted to each exhibiting artist. Robinson, *Antipodean Currents*, 1995.

⁷¹ Smith's "provincialism problem" was discussed in detail in Part One of this thesis.

⁷² Nicholas Zurbrugg, "Gordon Bennett: Between the Lines", in Robinson, *Antipodean Currents*, Guggenheim Museum, 1995, p.41.

⁷³ In this chapter Elder describes the escalation of frontier violence in the Dawson River region of Queensland whereby a reprisal attack carried out by the Yeeman people, in response to being "treated as animals", resulted in subsequent attacks by the white squatters of the area who succeeded in "the wholesale slaughter of an entire Aboriginal group with the consequent obliteration of their language and culture." See Bruce Elder, "The Massacre of the Yeeman People – 1857", *Blood on the Wattle*, 1988, pp.111-121.

appropriation art in America in with its "radical critique of originality" as a peculiarly 1980s phenomenon but went on to argue that in Australia "appropriation is an issue bound up with the sense of an Australian identity."⁷⁴ This identity was informed by Australia's isolation, in which appropriation was used by artists like Tillers who "simply acknowledges the secondhand quality of the Australian cultural experience with respect to Western artistic traditions."⁷⁵ Moreover appropriation was further complicated "when it intersects with another specifically Australian issue – namely, the place of Aboriginal people within Australian culture."⁷⁶ The complexities of appropriation, in an Australian context, were indicated by the inclusion of solo works by Tim Johnson as well as collaborative work between Johnson and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri. Johnson's paintings incorporate the dot screen of Indigenous art which was such a recognisable form, as Pepe Karmel, writing in the *New York Times*, noted. He described Johnson's use of dots as a "profusion of buttonlike colored dots, borrowed from the aboriginal painters."⁷⁷ In contrast however, Roger Benjamin described a more complex interaction in his catalogue entry for Johnson in which he "has been at pains to understand Aboriginal artistry from the 'inside'" and "he is respectful of Aboriginal religious experience".⁷⁸ In contrast to this sensitive approach of Johnson was the work of Imants Tillers who "appropriates disparate imagery eclectically and relentlessly".⁷⁹ In his work on exhibition, *Izkliede* (1994), it was possible to identify appropriations of the work of European artists as well as direct references to the work of Gordon Bennett – some of which was easily recognised from Bennett's own work on display in the show.

This conglomeration of artworks very effectively outlined debates around the nature of appropriation in Australia but it also served to highlight the differences between it and its American counterparts. Here, appropriation enabled a condensation of time between past and present, recalling the history of colonisation and the gradual move toward multiculturalism that was evident in the broader selection of artists for the show. Culture, identity, history and power were all at the heart of the appropriations presented in this show. As I have discussed in Part One above, these are the characteristics of Australian appropriation, or history painting, unique to this country and this show represents a very apposite summation of this debate for an international audience. Despite the fact that these issues of Indigenous history were evident in the show, it was on the whole a showcase of Australian contemporary art and did not exclusively focus on this theme. One of the first exhibitions that did explicitly address the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in an international environment was *In Place (out of time): Contemporary Art in Australia* (1997) on show at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford (UK).

⁷⁴ Eleanor Heartney, "Antipodean Undercurrents" in Robinson, *Antipodean Currents*, 1995, p.27.

⁷⁵ Heartney, "Antipodean Undercurrents" in Robinson, *Antipodean Currents*, 1995, p.27.

⁷⁶ Heartney, "Antipodean Undercurrents" in Robinson, *Antipodean Currents*, 1995, p.27-28.

⁷⁷ Pepe Karmel, "Antidotes For A Cartoonish Image", *New York Times*, (Late Edition – Final), 23 June 1995, p.27.

⁷⁸ Roger Benjamin, "'Jointly and Severally': The Johnson Way of Art" in Robinson, *Antipodean Currents*, 1995, p.58.

⁷⁹ Julia Robinson, "Imants Tillers's Kaleidoscope" in Robinson, *Antipodean Currents*, 1995, p.100.

The curators, Howard Morphy and David Elliot, positioned this show within the trajectory of international art history. This occurred via a discussion of the exhibition of non-western art within a western art history context in order to highlight the fact that western art world categorisations such as primitive art were limiting.⁸⁰ Rather they proposed the deconstruction of such labels as 'Aboriginal art' in place of the broader framework of Contemporary Art in Australia. The show featured the work of mainly Indigenous Australian artists with three non-Indigenous – a reversal of the usual mode of display critiqued by Morphy and Elliot whereby Indigenous art has often been exhibited "as a footnote to European art" and expected to fit within its western categorisations.⁸¹ The director of the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, claimed that this show was "the first exhibition in Europe to suggest a more inclusive approach" to the display of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian art that was "free from rigid preconceptions."⁸² Yet as this chapter has shown, such juxtapositions were seen in London in *Stories of Australian Art* as early as 1988.⁸³ Moreover, four out of the twelve artists exhibited (Gordon Bennett, Mike Parr, Imants Tillers and Judy Watson) had been seen together two years earlier in the USA for *Antipodean Currents*.⁸⁴ In fact, Imants Tillers was represented by the same work, *Izkliede*, which was seen in both shows. This cross over does not necessarily detract from either of the shows – they were seen on different continents and were directed at different audiences. What it does highlight is the fact that when exhibiting the work of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists in an international context it is impossible not to take into account critiques of history, social justice, land rights and national identity. What separates this show from *Antipodean Currents* is the explicit political nature of the juxtapositions ventured. Where the previous exhibition simply sought to destabilise stereotypical conceptions of Australian culture and, in turn, cultural production, the later show was much more explicit in examining the relationship between the art of Australia's original inhabitants and new settlers post 1788. As Morphy and Elliot highlight, Indigenous and non-Indigenous art are in fact intimately linked – that the history of one necessarily invokes the other. By way of an example, they refer to the connection between Imants Tillers and Gordon Bennett. As discussed in previous chapters, it was Tillers' appropriation of Aboriginal imagery that, as Morphy and Elliot put it, provided the "irritation" that resulted in Bennett's visual response seen in *Nine Ricochets*.

Reviewers such as Antonia Carver connected this artistic relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous with a broader historical context. She argued that it was "Gordon Bennett's history paintings that dominate: uncomfortably sharp works, they play on

⁸⁰ The main examples of this discussion were *Primitivism in Twentieth Century Art* seen at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1984 and *Magiciens de la Terre* seen at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris in 1989.

⁸¹ Howard Morphy & David Elliot, *In Place (Out of Time): Contemporary Art in Australia*, exh.cat., Museum of Modern Art Oxford, UK, 1997, p.7.

⁸² Kerry Brougher, "Foreword", in Morphy & Elliot, *In Place (Out of Time)*, 1997, p.3.

⁸³ As Ian McLean has argued *From Another Continent: Australia, the Dream and Reality*, seen in Paris in 1983, provides another precedent for this show but while it did exhibit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists' work it did not do so in an inclusive manner. See Ian McLean, "documenta X and Australians in Oxford: Thinking Globally From Europe", *Third Text*, #42, Spring 1998, pp.57-70.

⁸⁴ Other artists included were Tom Djumburrpurr, Fiona Foley, Rosalie Gascoigne, Philip Gudthaykudthay, John Mawurndjul, George Milpurrurru, Eubena Nampitjin and Clara Wubugwubug.

Australia's unacknowledged discordant past."⁸⁵ Bennett was represented by his *Home Decor* (1997) series which combined the grid compositions of de Stijl artists like Piet Mondrian with stereotypical depictions of black minstrels juxtaposed against cartoon style houses neatly arranged and completed with picket fences. In *Home Decor (Preston + De Stijl = Citizen)*, *Men with Weapons* (1997) Bennett also included references to his own earlier works repeating the perspectival diagrams and appropriated figures from text books executed in an array of dots. These were transitional works, visually distinctive from those discussed up until this point. However the Mondrian grids, on one level, still functioned in a similar manner to the perspective diagrams of earlier works – both trapped Indigenous figures.⁸⁶

The innovation of this exhibition was found in the fact that it explicitly attempted to address issues of national identity, Indigeneity and history within an international context by engaging many perspectives on the subject – Indigenous, non-Indigenous and migrant. As has become apparent in this chapter, such an aim has been a rare occurrence. While the exhibition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous art has been seen together since 1983 (some four years after the first exhibition of Indigenous art within a fine art context in Australia) the relationship between the two has only been interrogated more recently. In contrast to Australia, the majority of the shows discussed here, that have been concerned with the representation of Australian / Indigenous history and identity, have exhibited the work of Indigenous artists' exclusively. Also in contrast to local exhibitions discussed in the previous chapters, there were few examples of exhibitions that made any distinction between the exhibition of work by Indigenous artists from remote regions of Australia and those from more urban environments. In part this may reflect the fact that Indigenous Australians, often responsible for curating or organising the exhibitions discussed here, were more aware of the diversity of practice and as such sought to present this in the world-wide context. It is fitting to end this chapter with this discussion of *Antipodean Currents* and *In Place (Out of Time)* for they signal a shift in perception whereby the exhibition of Australian art became less concerned with categorisations of Indigenous/non-Indigenous. Although there were differences in the way that artworks by Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists' were displayed, one constant has been appropriation. In particular, the type of appropriation that has critiqued colonisation and addressed the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, has still figured prominently in these shows. As such it can still be seen as a useful technique through which artists have focused viewer's attention on the contentious nature of Australian history.

This has been an overall argument of Part Two, that although there has not been a cohesive analysis of the development of appropriative histories in Australia, such an account can be discerned from considering a range of exhibitions from the 1980s to 2001 within which

⁸⁵ Antonia Carver, "In Place (Out of Time): Contemporary Art in Australia", *Flash Art International*, #197, Nov-Dec, 1997, p.74. Also see Antonia Carver, "A Moving Out of Place, About Time", *Art & Australia*, vol.35 #3, 1998, pp.438-9.

⁸⁶ Ian McLean has provided a detailed analysis of the complexities of these references. See Ian McLean, "Gordon Bennett's Home Décor: The Joker in the Pack", *Law / Text / Culture*, vol.4 #1, Autumn 1998, pp.287-307.

historically focused appropriative artworks have been a constant presence. By examining this period it has been possible to see the way that interactions with the past, via a use of appropriation, have changed in relation to contemporaneous social and political events. Moreover, the catalogue essays and other dialogue surrounding these exhibitions have provided vital contributions to the field of discourse around appropriative histories that have, up until this point, remained disparate. When combined with the more orthodox consideration of appropriation, as outlined in Part One, it is possible to come to a fuller understanding of the significance of appropriation as a critical tool employed by artists in the last two decades of the twentieth century to critique narratives of colonial history. Moreover, the frequency and broad reach of this current in Australian art has been identified by considering the range of exhibitions in which such work was exhibited across a number of institutions and countries.

Part Three

Artworks

All of the exhibitions discussed above are linked by their re-presentation of Australian history. If we consider, as I have argued in Part One of this thesis, that the appropriative artworks exhibited within those shows are not simply concerned with the politics of postmodernism, then how might we begin to analyse them in terms of their common themes and tactics? In this final part of the thesis I suggest a new interpretation of these by presenting three different analyses of appropriative history paintings, all with their own unique relationship to events and attitudes of the past. The works have been grouped in relation to their common themes and techniques. I will examine individual works of art in detail and use supplementary examples, where relevant, to augment this analysis. Previously the examples I discuss here have been analysed within disparate arenas of art historical analysis: under the rubric of Aboriginal art, postmodernism, installation art and so on. By bringing these examples together through their use of a common form of visual expression it is possible to venture a different interpretation of them. The structure of the discussion necessitates a consideration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists alongside each other which, despite the best efforts of many, has still remained a stumbling block in Australian art criticism. Finally, this analysis of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists' work within the same forum attempts to fulfil a desire articulated by Indigenous artist Fiona Foley, and discussed in Part One of this thesis, for an extended and critical analysis of the work of Indigenous Australian artists.

In addition to the themes identified in each chapter of this last part of the thesis, it is possible to also identify overall trends within the body of Australian appropriative histories. None of the works considered here attempt to conceal the fact that their imagery is appropriated. Moreover, they leave clues; they aid their viewer in identifying the fact that they are appropriations. This is in direct opposition to the historical works created by non-Indigenous artists from which they quote. These historical works have been repeatedly characterised by the fact that they concealed the realities of Indigenous life in a colonised country. It is against this backdrop that contemporary appropriative histories operate, bearing all for the audience in an attempt to reveal a particular "reality".

Chapter Nine

The Grid: Perspective lines, boxes, mapping, measuring and western conventions of image making

The very idea of an 'Australian' landscape is based on an erasure. This erasure is not simply that of nature subsumed and recast by culture, but that of the distinctly Aboriginal, autochthonous spiritual landscapes obliterated by the recreant settler visions which literally followed the frontier in the canvas bags of artists who came to paint the new land.¹

For artists who reference colonial paintings of landscape and development these works contain implicit themes of colonisation. In this chapter I argue that western conventions of image-making, including perspectival diagrams, grids, techniques of mapping, measuring and surveying, have all been used symbolically to represent colonisation and western hegemony within the work of appropriative history painters. Moreover, the impact of this symbolic representation has been heightened through the use of appropriation – by bringing past representations of landscape into the present where it is openly critiqued for its underlying depiction of colonisation. It is only through the *combination* of a critical use of image-making techniques *and* appropriative references to the history of Australia through art that this critique has become apparent. For, to simply include references to western conventions of image-making without the historical contextualisation provided by appropriative references would be devoid of any localised meaning. I begin this chapter by considering how perspectival drawing has been utilised in the work of Indigenous artist Gordon Bennett investigating how this technique came to symbolise, for him, a single point colonial perspective which he in turn critiqued. By way of comparison I will examine the work of non-Indigenous artist Geoff Parr who has used similar methods, both visually and conceptually, to present a critique of the colonial vision which informed the settlement and picturing of this country. In addition to perspective drawings, Parr has also used references to mapping and surveying more generally as a metaphor for colonisation. Bennett and Parr have not been alone in employing these strategies to critique narratives of colonial history and settlement, in the final part of this chapter I will point to other non-Indigenous artists such as Imants Tillers and Narelle Jubelin both of whom have provided a commentary on the constructed nature of representations of Australian history by alluding to mapping, measuring and dissecting in combination with a use of appropriation.

One of the most obvious representations of colonisation has been the depiction of the environment and its people, in particular, the changing landscape of colonies – from

¹ Marcia Langton, "Homeland: Sacred Visions and the Settler State", *Artlink*, vol.20 #1, March 2000, p.13.

unknown wilderness to be explored and mapped to charting the development of towns and communities. Tim Bonyhady has defined the often opposing subjects of such representations as falling into three main categories: depictions of an Aboriginal arcadia, a pastoral arcadia and finally the wilderness explored but untainted by settlement.² Each of these subjects was depicted with a distinctive intent. Images of an Aboriginal arcadia, in which Indigenous Australians were depicted within the landscape enjoying a pre-colonial way of life were seen to reflect "a nostalgic attitude which developed only when the Aborigines were no longer a threat to the white settlers and were thought to be on the verge of extinction."³ On the contrary, the pastoral arcadia represented by colonial artists "demonstrated the recent achievements of individual squatters and the frequently ostentatious houses they built" while concealing "the hardships faced by the early settlers."⁴ Such images depicted cleared landscapes upon which sheep and cattle were successfully run and crops were harvested. Finally depictions of the wilderness intact "exploited the romantic aspect of those unsettled parts of Australia" that were inaccessible to many and remained unsettled but still depicted evidence of human exploration – they depicted "the wilderness intact but not untrodden."⁵ Each of these categories of colonial landscape painting is referenced, and critiqued, by the contemporary artists under consideration in this chapter.⁶

Re-imaging arcadia

Indigenous artist Gordon Bennett has been discussed throughout this thesis and, from this discussion, it is easy to recognise his prolific output on the theme of Australian history. Primarily a painter, Bennett has also worked in installation, film, photography and digital media. Bennett has called into question representations of Aboriginal arcadias by appropriating anthropologically motivated portraits of Indigenous icons and placing them prominently within landscape images. These icons thus positioned are not representations of Indigenous people unaffected by the machinations of colonialism but rather they come to represent triumph under extreme adversity. Moreover he references the pastoral arcadia within his own constructed landscapes of rolling hills devoid of any vegetation. It is, however, only by the inclusion of perspective diagrams alluding to the western means by which these images were produced that his critique attains its potency.

The specific use of perspectival diagrams was a recurrent feature of his early work produced during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Through explicit references to the western perspectival system of representation Bennett created a personal visual language in which he

² Tim Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition: Australian Landscape 1801-1890*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985, p.xxii.

³ Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition*, 1985, p.24.

⁴ Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition*, 1985, p.40.

⁵ Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition*, 1985, p.60.

⁶ Despite the fact that Bonyhady's major publications on the topic of Australian landscape were produced in the 1980s his writing remains important within this field. Subsequent authors such as Nicholas Thomas and Ian McLean have both used Bonyhady's categorisations of landscape in their major publications within their discussions of John Glover yet neither has extended this discussion to include contemporary revisions and critiques of these categories. See Thomas, *Possessions*, 1999; McLean, *White Aborigines*, 1998.

commented on the depiction (and colonisation) of Aboriginal people by white artists. Bennett argued:

Perspective may be seen as symbolic of a certain kind of power structure relating to a particular European world view... Aborigines caught in this system of representation remain 'frozen' as objects within the mapped territory of a European perceptual grid.⁷

As a means of highlighting this entrapment, Bennett reproduced perspectival diagrams in his works – demonstrating how this European worldview, embodied in the concept of the single point perspective drawing, was, in his mind, all pervasive. Fundamentally, perspective drawing is a form of representation that emulates three-dimensional space upon a two-dimensional surface. The Italian sculptor and architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) first conceived of the perspectival system of representation in the 1420s. Within his model, there was not only a correctly calculated view of the chosen scene but also a very precise mode of viewing it [Plate 99]. The viewer was made to look through a hole in the painting itself whilst simultaneously holding a mirror in front of the image thus seeing the painting reflected rather than viewing it first hand - a mirror into the world of the painting.⁸ It was imperative that the painting be viewed in such a manner so that the viewer could perceive the correct illusion of three-dimensionality and, as Brunelleschi discovered, there is only one point from which this can be achieved. Later in the Renaissance, the method of viewing these mathematically constructed images was relaxed with the work of Piero della Francesca and Leonardo da Vinci. Both of these artists accepted that the viewer would move around in front of the painting or that there would be more than one viewer at a particular time and thus it would not always be possible to view the work from the correct position. However the illusion of depth and the position of the viewer in relation to the painting still remained important and it should be noted that the method of construction still relied on an optimal viewpoint from which to position all other related objects.⁹

It was particularly this notion of a fixed viewpoint that Bennett critiqued as being representative of a Eurocentric vision that rendered its subjects static. He drew a parallel between the optimal viewpoint of the observer and that of the coloniser – both in a position of power. He argued that:

The viewer is placed in a position of centrality to an ordered array of phenomenon which is rendered completely visible in a compressed symbolic configuration; particular inflections of knowledge are indexed allowing comparison, distinction, contrast and variation to be instantly legible.¹⁰

There is a perception that the western tradition depicts, from this optimal viewpoint, a single moment in time – the frozen subjects that Bennett referred to. However, as Lee Andrews

⁷ Bennett, "The Manifest Toe" in Bennett & McLean, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, 1996, p.36.

⁸ Samuel Y Edgerton Jnr, *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry: Art and Science on the Eve of the Scientific Revolution*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1991, p.105.

⁹ See Lew Andrews, "The Viewer and the Vanishing Point", *Story and Space in Renaissance Art: The Rebirth of the Continuous Narrative*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp.34-47.

¹⁰ Gordon Bennett, "Aesthetics and Iconography: An Artist's Approach", Lüthi, B., *Aratjara: Art of the First Australians*, exh.cat., Kustsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, 1993, p.89.

argues in his book, *Story and Space in Renaissance Art*, the 'continuous narrative' tradition, developed in Medieval times and carried over into the Renaissance, can represent a passing of time within a singular scene.¹¹ This may see the repetition of certain characters from the scene in order to present a transition or may involve no repeated characters at all. Thus, the continuous narrative allows for a fluidity and movement which is denied by Bennett's narrow conception of Renaissance painting. I would argue that Bennett is actually using western perspectival painting as a metaphor demonstrating a single point perspective and the representation of a singular, truthful and authentic moment - a European vision - without recourse to the intricacies of the debate presented by Andrews. For it is a critique of European techniques of colonisation that is paramount to his work rather than an intricate exegesis of western painting tradition - this is merely the symbolic vehicle for the critique.

A major work by Bennett from this period, *Triptych – Requiem; Of Grandeur; Empire* (1989) [Plate 100],¹² provides an example of this metaphorical use of western perspective in combination with a series of borrowed images and diagrams.¹³ Each of the three panels in this work is comprised of a barren landscape of treeless orange undulating plains, a mountainous horizon line in the mid-ground and a vast sky completing the scene. Perspective diagrams are overlaid onto this landscape and in each instance they are used to draw attention to an appropriated portrait. All of these portraits depict Indigenous Australians and in some way comment on the techniques and impacts of colonisation. The final element common to each panel in this triptych is a line of footprints emanating horizontally across the top of the canvas from a series of concentric circles of dots that could be read as a sun motif but also conjures up the imagery Indigenous artists from the central desert like Michael Jagamara Nelson who was prominent at the time.

While each of these panels employ a similar visual language and composition they are also unique. The left hand painting of the triptych; *Requiem* (the mass or ceremony to put to rest the soul of the deceased) depicts a perspective line drawing of three boxes in the foreground (marked A, B, and C) with vanishing lines drawn in and converging on the central vanishing point (marked CVP) in the centre of the image [Plate 101]. It is here that Bennett has painted a portrait of Trukanini (1812-1876), a Nuennone woman from Bruny Island in Tasmania.¹⁴ Trukanini, is immensely significant to the history of colonisation in this country. Moreover, she is especially important to contemporary Tasmanian Indigenous people.¹⁵ As Greg Lehman, a descendant of the Trawlwuy nation from the north east of the island has noted,

¹¹ Andrews, *Story and Space in Renaissance*, 1995.

¹² This triptych was first exhibited in *Perspecta* at the Art Gallery of NSW in 1989. Its significance can also be gauged by the fact that it was subsequently chosen for inclusion in the international exhibition *Paraculture* in the following year.

¹³ This is by no means the only work in which Bennett has used perspective metaphorically – it is a good example of a particular stage in his art making practice. Other works could include, but are certainly not limited to, *Australian Icon (Notes on Perception 1)* (1989), *The Plough* (1989), *Prologue: They Sailed Slowly Nearer* (1988), *Self Portrait (But I always wanted to be one of the good guys)* (1990).

¹⁴ I have adopted the spelling of Trukanini from Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000.

¹⁵ For a discussion of contemporary Indigenous artists of Tasmania and their work see Julie Gough, "Time Ripples in Tasmania", *Art & Australia*, vol.35 #1, 1998, pp.108-115.

for Tasmanian Aboriginal people Trukanini is a heroic figure of resistance; an "icon of survival."¹⁶ Trukanini earned this reverence through her diplomacy – her ability to negotiate an existence for herself and her people in extremely harsh conditions at the height of white attempts to exterminate Tasmania's Indigenous population.¹⁷ As a result of this interaction with the settlers she has become the subject of numerous anthropological portraits and posthumous study – many of which demonstrate a morbid fascination with her as an anthropological specimen representing the last of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. This is a view that still persists into the twenty first century according to Lehman who argued that "for most non-Aborigines, Trukanini is a symbol of the extinction of a race"¹⁸ in spite of the fact that descendants, such as Lehman himself, are actively seeking to correct this false perception.

It is not surprising that Bennett chose to reproduce this image of Trukanini at this particular time – while the memories of the bicentenary celebrations were still fresh. As Michael O'Ferrall has pointed out, it was during the bicentennial year, whilst in his final semester at art school, that Bennett developed the "radically rearranged framework and underlying intellectual structure" that characterises these works.¹⁹ Bennett was concerned to articulate how history drew attention to particular figures, who became visual icons, while at the same time totally overlooking others. He sought to highlight the constructed nature of history by illustrating the method of construction:

I am trying to make it clear in my work that these are constructed images. I am trying to make the way of seeing in the picture obvious with the use of perspective lines; how perspective constructs images as well as histories.²⁰

In light of Bennett's comments, the positioning of Trukanini at the central vanishing point, can be seen as both a repositioning of this figure in the twentieth century – as one of those forgotten during the bicentenary and it can also be seen as drawing attention to the fact that in earlier times Trukanini was seen as one dimensional and a fabrication representing colonisation in Tasmania rather than an individual responding to individual circumstances.

The image of Trukanini that Bennett depicts in this work is appropriated from a Charles Woolley photograph c.1866 [Plate 102]. The photograph is but one of many images of Trukanini that could have been used. As Roslyn Poignant has noted, portraits of Trukanini can be "found in almost every collection of anthropological photographs [which] testifies both to the intense scientific speculation they aroused and to the morbid curiosity that

¹⁶ Greg Lehman, "Trukanini", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, p.722.

¹⁷ A number of accounts detail this period – see for example Vivienne Rae Ellis, *Trukanini: Queen or Traitor?*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1981; Lyndall Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, University Of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1981.

¹⁸ Lehman, "Trukanini", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, p.722.

¹⁹ Michael O'Ferrall, "On Other Perspectives", *Gordon Bennett: Paintings 1987-1991*, Mōet & Chandon, 1992, n.p.

²⁰ Bennett interviewed by Lingard, "A Kind of History Painting", 1989, p.39.

surrounded this... group of survivors."²¹ This photograph was also used on a series of commemorative postage stamps released by Australia Post to mark International Women's year in 1975.²² Significantly, in that same year a battle was being fought out in Tasmania over the custodianship and final resting place of her remains which had, up until that point, been housed in the Tasmanian Museum and Gallery after being exhumed from their original resting place.²³ The story of this exhumation is a sickening testament to the Enlightenment fascination with the search for truth through the study of bones and remains.²⁴

It is apt then that Bennett presents his audience with this requiem, freeing the spirit of Trukanini from the constraints of western representation that has seen her as the focus, both metaphorically and literally, of a vanishing point. The marking of ABC on each of the boxes can also be seen to signify a western system of language, speech and education - all tools of intellectual colonisation - particularly through the writing of history that had previously written out Indigenous Australians. Language as a technique of colonisation, is a common theme taken up by other Indigenous artists, including Fiona Foley, who argues that "our indigenous children are indoctrinated to read, write and converse in the dominant language, possibly making our systems of complex grammar defunct."²⁵ These western language systems (signified by the boxes) marked ABC point, ever so clearly to the vanishing point, that is the decimation of the Aboriginal people. Bennett also uses the ABC to lucidly draw our attention to how language can be used as a tool of racism and oppression which subsequently reiterates colonial power relations. He has stated that "the inclusion of the alphabet (the ABC) [highlights] the way you build up your cultural world from basic units, the way it is constructed and ethnocentrically biased."²⁶ In other works such as *Daddy's Little Girl* (1989), Bennett draws the viewer's attention to the vocabulary of the coloniser in which A stands for 'abo', B for 'boong', C for 'coon' and D for 'darkie' thus conjuring up the racist taunts that Bennett himself witnessed when he was younger. He recalled the

²¹ Roslyn Poignant, "Surveying the Field of View: The making of the RAI Photographic Collection", in Elizabeth Edwards (ed), *Photography and Anthropology 1860-1920*, Yale University Press, 1992 p.45.

²² In 2002 Australia Post launched the exhibition *Postmark Post Mabo* at Post Master Gallery, which displayed Australia Post stamps representing Australian Indigenous peoples and cultures. It included the stamp representing Trukanini from 1975 - the first Australian stamp to depict an Indigenous woman.

²³ Trukanini died in 1876 and it was the centenary of her death in 1976 which, Rae Ellis argues, was the catalyst that sparked Aboriginal activists to "consider the matter of the final disposal of Trukanini's remains as a political issue." Rae Ellis, *Trukanini*, 1981, p.158.

²⁴ While the reproduction of this image of Trukanini on the stamp was intended as a memorialisation of an important historical figure, it could be argued that such a reproduction of her image, without the permission of the community, could be seen as insensitive and distressing for the community. Current protocols would prevent the reproduction of such an image, especially given the prolonged and difficult process of laying her to rest, in order to allow for adequate bereavement. See Doreen Mellor & Terri Janke, *Valuing Art, Respecting Culture: Protocols for Working With the Australian Indigenous Visual Arts and Craft Sector*, National Association for the Visual Arts, Potts Point, NSW, 2001, p.59.

²⁵ Fiona Foley, "A Blast from the Past" in Ian McNiven, Lynette Russel & Kay Schaffer (eds), *Constructions of Colonialism: Perspectives on Eliza Fraser's Shipwreck*, Leicester University Press, London & NY, 1998, p.169.

²⁶ Bennett interviewed by Lingard, "A Kind of History Painting", 1989, p.39.

atmosphere at his workplace as a teenager; "sitting around at smoko and listening to 'boong' jokes – there was no way I could identify myself to be the butt of those jokes."²⁷ Identification became possible, and was confidently developed, at art school where Bennett ascertained "the tools and language to explore [my Aboriginality] on my own terms."²⁸ It was in the year following his completion of art school that his triptych was first exhibited.

The physical act of genocide²⁹ is symbolised by the void depopulated landscape which Bennett depicts. He actually based this landscape on images of "dissected bowels"³⁰ subtly reaffirming that the process of colonisation was a brutal and bloody one which saw 'progress' founded on the spilt blood of the original owners of this land.³¹ So where images of the pastoral arcadia valued the depiction of cleared land – and were concerned to depict rolling hills, houses, cultivated gardens and so on, symbolising the extent of colonisation – for Bennett these hills become something much more sinister. This intestinal panorama in turn also draws attention to the decimation of the landscape itself via colonisation through a process of clearing and 'developing' the land for European settlement and farming. As such, the western perspective is not just overlaid onto the landscape (via the diagram) but actually shapes the environment and is part of it.

Bennett's final critique of colonisation through western perspectival representations comes in the form of a series of footprints, walking across the topmost portion of the painting. The footprints upset the western perspective system which dominates this composition by presenting, simultaneously, an aerial perspective. Howard Morphy has shown very clearly how Indigenous Australian artists employ a system of representation which is often conflated with an aerial perspective or map view but in actuality is one which is bound by unconventional mapping elements. He argues that "there are various twists in geographical perspective in order to incorporate mythological perspectives."³² Thus Morphy argues that whilst an aerial perspective is loosely adopted often there are elements which are not depicted in that manner. Resultantly, in Bennett's work we see a combination of the 'mythological perspectives' that Morphy spoke of which are in contrast to the geographically depicted landscape that Bennett has presented to us in a single point perspectival manner.

²⁷ Bennett interviewed by Lingard, "A Kind of History Painting", 1989, p.39.

²⁸ Bennett, "The Manifest Toe" in Bennett & McLean, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, 1996, p.33.

²⁹ For a discussion of the question of genocide in Australia see Ann Curthoys & John Docker (eds), "'Genocide?': Australian Aboriginal History in International Perspective", *Aboriginal History*, vol.25, 2001.

³⁰ Ian McLean, "Philosophy and Painting: Gordon Bennett's Critical Aesthetic", in McLean & Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, 1996, p.126, fn.15.

³¹ This is a recurring theme in Bennett's work which can be seen clearly in other images such as: *The Plough* 1988 and some of his 1991 watercolour series which included *Bounty Hunters*, *Valley of Dry Bones*, *The Small Brown Horse*. This is also a theme taken up by non-Indigenous artist Ruth Waller in her work *White Panorama: Select views of Sydney real estate 1788-1989*, c.1989. In this work Waller depicts, in three stages, the settlement and development of Sydney. In the bottom panel of this drawing she presents a similar depiction of skeletal remains littered across the landscape. The centre panel shows a European couple and their homestead - complete with picket fence and the top panel shows a cleared landscape with only tree stumps remaining. For further discussion of this work see Kerr, "Past Present", in Thomas & Losche, *Double Vision*, 1999, pp.231-251.

³² Howard Morphy, "Art, Maps and People" in *Aboriginal Art*, 1998, p.106.

The 'sun' of concentric dots, therefore becomes both a sun and a meeting place from which the footprints are departing.

In the above paragraphs, I have presented a very close reading of one of the works from Bennett's triptych. The other two works employ many of the same techniques, and certainly the same uniform aesthetic, to present similar arguments. The right hand panel of the triptych, *Empire*, also places an appropriated image of an Aboriginal from the nineteenth century at the central vanishing point using similar boxes, marked ABC to direct the viewer's gaze in that direction. The person depicted differs from Trukanini in that he was not individually identified but was instead an anonymous figure photographed as part of the views trade in postcards. The original photograph was produced by J. W. Lindt c.1873.³³ This photograph was exhibited in *Portraits of Oceania* at the AGNSW in 1997 whereby they labelled the work *Untitled (Aboriginal man holding an axe)*. In Bennett's painting, the figure sits below a triumphal arch modelled on The Arch of Titus, in Rome.³⁴ Such arches were constructed to recognise victory and commemorate those fallen in the celebrated battle. As such Bennett's work can be read as a triumph of the Empire in which he has inserted a commemoration to the Indigenous people who fought in this often unrecognised battle.

By contrast, the central work is more optimistic than the other two. Although the figure presented is ensconced in a perspectival corridor, the vanishing points do not converge on her as they do in the other two works. She is in the corridor, vanishing but not vanished. She is also the only figure to have a terrestrial presence, whereas the other two figures are transparent and floating above the landscape, she is solid, obscuring parts of the perspectival box encasing her and placed firmly within the, albeit desolate, landscape. The woman depicted (Bennett's mother) is engaged in the act of domestic service, a job often reserved for Aboriginal women during the period of assimilation.³⁵ The personal reference extends to the inclusion of an actual photograph of his mother from which the painting copies.³⁶ The perspectival corridor doubles as a crucifix indicating the significance of the mission's Christian values as the overarching influence in the childhood of his mother who grew up at Cherbourg mission. Bennett notes that it was through the focus on domestic service at the mission that his mother was able to attain an exemption. This exemption only came "after proving that she could live successfully with 'white' people for a period of three years."³⁷

³³ Lindt's photographs will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter in relation to the contemporary appropriations of his photographs by Alan Cruickshank.

³⁴ Whilst the arch that Bennett depicts is recognisably based on the Arch of Titus, denoted both by its architectural form and the inscription which matches the original, the figures atop the arch are not a part of the original work. It is possible that there is a replica in existence which does include these figures. Equally possible is the fact that Bennett has amalgamated forms from other triumphal arches. For example the Arc de Triomphe du Carosel in Paris includes a very similar group of figures at its apex.

³⁵ Bennett has also created a series of works concerned with domestic servants titled *Look Who's Calling the Kettle Black* (1992). See Christine Nicholls, "Indigenous Australian Art and the Stolen Generation", *Artlink (Reconciliation? Indigenous Art for the 21st Century)*, vol.20 #1, 2000, p.39.

³⁶ This photo depicts Grace Bennett and another woman cleaning a balustrade and was published in a magazine in the 40s. See Lingard, "A Kind of History Painting", 1989, p.39.

³⁷ Bennett, "The Manifest Toe", in McLean & Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, 1996, p.14.

This final work then, indicates another level of control and colonisation which continued until very recently. Christianity is depicted as part of the overall western perspectival model which has structured Aboriginal representation since colonisation.

Together, these three works signal the effects of colonisation on Indigenous Australians, a depopulated landscape, devoid of its original flora and fauna in which western representations serve to apprehend their subjects in a frozen momentary image before inevitable extinction. Bennett in turn tries to emancipate them from the oppressed realm of western representation by drawing our attention to the perspective from which it is calculated. That it is possible to analyse the individual elements of Bennett's work in such a manner testifies to its didactic mode which is concerned to reveal the construction lines rather than conceal them. As Lynne Sear argues:

Triptych is in all senses a composite work, exploiting disparate media and deliberately unsurprising forms: high-keyed colouration, graphic imagery, strictly gradated composition. The distinctiveness of each feature means that the design remains unintegrated, that is, the combined forms fail to combine.³⁸

By keeping these elements separate, Bennett does not allow his viewer to be seduced by the illusion of reality but rather keeps them at a distance from which it remains possible to see how the work is a composite and not an illusion.

The contrived nature of landscape representations have been much considered as we have seen in the important work of Bonyhady. Gary Lee, a Larrakia man who has worked as an anthropologist, curator and writer, provides a much more succinct analysis of the role of the landscape painter from an Aboriginal perspective:

It is blindingly obvious what the function of the landscape tradition is: it is about the theft of indigenous land. It is an artistic representation of, and cultural justification for, the process of colonisation.³⁹

Lee went on to argue that the colonial landscape tradition was compelled by a Europeanised colonial gaze which depicted the landscape, not as it appeared, but as a tamed and cultivated ideal reflecting the progress of the pioneering colonialists – Bonyhady's pastoral arcadia. An example of this Europeanised colonial gaze, as manifested in a landscape tradition, is that of John Glover.⁴⁰ His work, *A View of the Artist's House and Garden, in Mills Plains, Van Diemen's Land* (1835), clearly demonstrates his ownership of the land within the pastoral arcadia milieu, not simply through the depiction of the artist's house. Glover also exerts this authority via the extremely detailed manner in which he has depicted the cultivated land in the foreground including exotic plants obviously planted post-settlement – as if to reiterate to the viewer that the comforts of home were still possible in this new land. The second painting of his which exhibits a similar sense of ownership and cultivation can be seen in *My*

³⁸ Lynne Sear, "Gordon Bennett", *Australian Perspectives* 1989, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1989, p.17.

³⁹ Gary Lee, "Lying about the landscape", in Geoff Levitus (ed), *Lying About the Landscape*, Craftsman House Press, An Art & Australia Book, Sydney, 1997, p.100.

⁴⁰ See Ian McLean, "The Art of Settlement", *White Aborigines*, 1998, pp.34-51.

Harvest Home (1835). In this painting three bullock carts are depicted collecting crops in a cleared field. The mountains in the background of the scene become more densely treed the further they recede signalling the extent of the Glover property – cleared land was owned land – and this is also the point of Bennett.

Dianne Jones, a Nyungar artist from Western Australia, has also pursued an interest in the history of Indigenous representation within the landscape tradition, and its relationship to contemporary Indigenous identity. In a similar way to Bennett, Jones was struck by the fact that when Indigenous Australians were depicted historically, they were often denied any individual identity. She argued that:

When indigenous people were painted it was all too often as part of the flora and fauna and without names or identities, insignificantly fading into the background... so I have positioned my family as the main focus...and given them an identity and importance that indigenous people were not afforded. My family and I did not match the images that I was seeing in history books or artworks.⁴¹

The resulting works, digital photographs, redress this lack by introducing images of herself, and her family, into scenes originally created by artists as diverse as John Glover, Tom Roberts, Max Dupain, David Moore and Leonardo Da Vinci. Importantly for this discussion, her reconfigurations of the Aboriginal arcadias depicted by Glover have been concerned to highlight a contemporary Indigenous identity by way of demonstrating social structures overlooked by Glover. This was achieved by inserting family photographs into the Glover landscape whereby drawing attention to the family structure of the people depicted. As with Bennett's work, Jones' final images remain artificial, as seen in *Jones's Picnic* (2001) where there is a very sharp contrast between the people depicted and the landscape in which they are positioned.

Exploring, charting and measuring

Perspective is manifested in Geoff Parr's work by references to explorers of the untouched wilderness who charted and mapped the land and for whom Indigenous people were inconsequential. As Bonyhady reminds us, "in a Eurocentric view of the world, Australia was 'empty' until 1788."⁴² Marcia Langton has amplified this point when she argued that:

The Australian use of the term "wilderness" was a mystification of genocide. Where Aboriginal people had been brought to the brink of annihilation, their former territories were recast as "wilderness".⁴³

Parr executed a series of artworks beginning in the early 1980s that specifically related to Tasmania's colonial history and, to varying degrees, incorporated appropriation and made

⁴¹ Dianne Jones "Artist Statement", 2001, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne [[http:// www.niagara-galleries.com.au/artists/artistpages/theartists/jones/jones.html](http://www.niagara-galleries.com.au/artists/artistpages/theartists/jones/jones.html)].

⁴² Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition*, 1985, p.60.

⁴³ Marcia Langton, "What do we mean by Wilderness? Wilderness and *Terra Nullius* in Australian Art", *The Sydney Papers*, vol.8 #1, Summer, 1996, p.20.

references to perspective, mapping and measuring.⁴⁴ One work from this series, *Spaceman* (1987) [Plate 103], was exhibited in *Balance 1990* at the Queensland Art Gallery. The fact that this work is comprised of such similar elements to Bennett's, discussed above, indicates the prominence of both appropriation as a technique and Australian history as a subject at the time.⁴⁵ Parr's work, executed two years before Bennett's, also uses perspective lines, and incorporates an appropriated portrait of Trukanini as a central component of his work. Other references to colonialism and perspective can be found in the British flag, which is here used as a symbol of colonial oppression.⁴⁶

Parr's work is made up of two sections; on the left a gum tree in the process of shedding its bark dominates the foreground while the background is sectioned diagonally, one side off white, one side black. The white dominates and carries over into the second section of the canvas. In the right hand corner of the mid-ground is a framed union jack which extends beyond the parameters of the canvas and is partially obscured by it. Perspective sight lines emanate from this flag and frame two obscured portraits, one is identifiable as William Blake's portrait of Isaac Newton from 1795 which was used "to represent science and technology".⁴⁷ The second section of this painting is smaller and is dominated by an appropriation of an image of Trukanini photocopied from a J. W. Beattie photograph.⁴⁸ Alongside Trukanini, Parr depicts an eighteenth century man, taken from a "treatise on perspective", who exerts his single point perspective view over the landscape that is within his sight.⁴⁹

The individual motifs which make up this work are themselves worthy of investigation. The gum tree is the most dominant aspect of the left-hand side panel and, in a similar way to Bennett, it refers to the Australian landscape – though it is not the barren landscape that Bennett depicted. Parr has used a single tree to refer to the landscape, to nature untainted by colonisation rather than depicting a landscape scene, view or vista. As we have seen earlier through the writing of Gary Lee, such a scene could be viewed as a highly contrived and problematic form of representation. Instead, this lone tree in the process of renewal (shedding its bark) provides a decontextualised reference to nature, before colonisation, without the recursive accusations that are implicit in a non-Indigenous representation – or as Lee would argue possession – of a specific tract of land.

⁴⁴ Parr created five major works on various themes related to Australia's colonial history between 1982-87. One of these works, *The Scientific Artist* was reworked in 1995 for exhibition in *Colonial Post Colonial* at the Museum of Modern Art, Heide.

⁴⁵ Bennett also exhibited in *Balance 1990* but the works he showed did not use perspective diagrams in this way. He exhibited a large diptych titled *The Coming of Light* (1987) and a series of collaborative work produced with Eugene Carchesio titled *Works from the People's Republic of Spiritual Revolution* (1989) executed in water-colour, pencil and collage on paper.

⁴⁶ The symbolism of the Union Jack was explored in the exhibition curated by Croft & Perkins, *True Colours*, 1997.

⁴⁷ Geoff Parr, [Re: Appropriation / Historical references in your art-making], 17/09/02.

⁴⁸ There are many versions of this photograph – some are attributed to J. W. Beattie after Charles Woolley. See Tim Bonyhady & Andrew Sayers (eds), *Heads of the People: A Portrait of Colonial Australia*, exh.cat., National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, 2000, p.90.

⁴⁹ Geoff Parr, [Re: Appropriation / Historical references in your art-making], 17/09/02.

The Union Jack is also a significant symbol to consider. It is representative of the British and thus colonial authority in a similar way to Bennett's use of the Triumphal Arch. From this seat of colonial power represented by the flag, perspective lines emanate. Unlike Bennett, Parr's sight lines do not converge on the Indigenous subjects represented, rather they are projected from a position of western authority indicating that this vision was all encompassing and infinite. This is contrary to Bennett's *Triptych* which saw the Indigenous figures as the focus of that vanishing point suggesting rather that it was a very precise and premeditated attempt at erasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Parr seems to suggest that rather than being such a premeditated goal, the decimation of Australia's Indigenous peoples was part of a larger and perhaps more blinkered approach which only saw things through the western perspective with its narrow goal of establishing a successful colony at the expense of all other people and places.

A similar perspective diagram is attached to the fashionable European thinker in the second panel of the work. It is the enlightened man who brings to the picture a western sense of order and logic is demonstrated by the mathematical vision with which he sees and the tools of science to which he values. It is also directly related to the pictorial tradition which saw the explorer depicted with the tools of his trade. This tradition is clearly demonstrated in the work of William Arthur Devis, *Portrait of Captain Wilson of Antelope*, c.1782 [Plate 104]. This work sees a comparably fashionable man depicted in relation to the tools of western logic, a globe of the world, a chart map, a sextant and his 'wind-powered craft' visible through the window to his left – all of the logical tools required to explore, record and colonise previously unknown lands. Parr's explorer is depicted in a similar manner and, through Parr's emphasis, he exercises his European perspective upon the ground which he views.⁵⁰

The notion that a western perspective was overlaid onto the Australian context is supported by Parr's own comments about this work. He states; "I wanted to understand why the spacemen from those wind-powered craft were impelled to pace out their old life here, irrespective of either the people or the place."⁵¹ The people to whom Parr refers above are represented by the depiction of Trukanini. This depiction is tightly cropped to reveal an extreme close up of her facial features in tones of brown and black and surrounded by a relatively thick black frame. Trukanini is captured within this frame; disembodied by the confines of representation.

Parr's allusion to the Eurocentric nature of colonisation, through this composite image of appropriated elements, was somewhat more nuanced than earlier images. In another work from this history painting series [Plate 105] he appropriated what has been described as

⁵⁰ In terms of both the fashion of clothing and the manner of depiction, with worldly accoutrements, Arthur William Devis's *Portrait of Captain Wilson of Antelope*, c. 1782, NLA is comparable to the figure appropriated by Parr. I cite this example to indicate the time-frame from which Parr's enlightened man is taken.

⁵¹ Parr, [artist statement], in Eather & Hall, *Balance 1990*, 1990, p.58.

Australia's first history painting – Benjamin Duterrau's *The Conciliation* (1840) [Plate 106].⁵² If the nineteenth century images discussed so far have been characterised by their romantic vision through which the actualities of colonial life and its hardships were concealed, then Duterrau's painting represents the pinnacle of this genre.⁵³ Concealed in Duterrau's innocuous depiction of a meeting between a lone white man and a group of Indigenous Tasmanians is a brutal and determined attempt at the eradication of a race of people. The central white figure is George Augustus Robinson who was appointed by Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur to capture the Indigenous people of Tasmania and remove them from the mainland where he subsequently attempted to tend to their welfare and education. Lyndall Ryan has succinctly encapsulated this process of dispossession authorised by Arthur:

First he created a reserve distant from European settlement as a place of Aboriginal retreat. When the Aborigines failed to go there voluntarily, he ordered a military expedition known as the Black Line to sweep them from the settled districts. Then he commissioned a tradesman, G. A. Robinson, to round up the remaining Aborigines and place them in captivity on Flinders Island in Bass Strait. There the Aborigines were expected to become "civilised by tuition".⁵⁴

As she demonstrates, the tactics of the colonisers changed in the face of Indigenous opposition. Robinson's role included setting up a mission on Bruny Island which was plagued with disease and, within less than a year, many of the original inhabitants had succumbed. Robinson took those remaining on an expedition to the mainland in order that they may help him establish contact with other tribes and convince them, sometimes by force, to surrender their traditional lifestyle and lands in exchange for a settled Christian mode of life.⁵⁵ After an extended tour of the island, and in spite of the failure of the Bruny Island mission, fifty one Indigenous people were taken to Guncarriage Island to the north east of mainland Tasmania in 1831 where Robinson established his second Island reserve. The location of the mission moved around eventually settling on Flinders Island. Robinson was an intermittent resident leaving often, with Indigenous people from the mission, in order to seek out and capture other Indigenous groups who remained on the mainland of Tasmania. Robinson continued this pattern until 1839 when he was appointed Chief Protector of Aborigines and was stationed at Port Phillip on mainland Australia. The Flinders Island Mission was moved to Oyster Cove, south of Hobart, where "minimal expenditure and

⁵² The painting has also been appropriated by Sydney printmaker Rew Hanks who based his exhibition, *Robinson's Reflective Reticence*, on it in order to draw attention to the expansion of the colony and its impact on the Indigenous population – all hidden in the "naïve and ludicrous irony" of Duterrau's painting which Hanks argued was "riddled with hypocrisy." The fact that Duterrau's painting was still subject to critical appropriation more than ten years after Parr's *National Picture Reticence*, exh.cat., Legge Gallery, Sydney, 1999, n.p.

⁵³ Duterrau's painting was actually a sketch for a larger work. See Tim Bonyhady, "The First Aboriginal Memorial", in Tim Bonyhady & Andrew Sayers (eds), *Heads of the People: A Portrait of Colonial Australia*, exh.cat., National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, 2000, pp.13-27; Stephen Scheduling, *The National Picture*, Random House, Milsons Point, NSW, 2002.

⁵⁴ Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, 1996, pp.4-5.

⁵⁵ See Ryan, "Robinson the Conciliator, 1829-30" and "From Conciliator to Captor", *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, 1996, pp.124-159.

neglect" on the part of the government persisted. Children were sent to orphanages and able-bodied men were set to work. For those who remained conditions continued to deteriorate until all the old people were dispersed and eventually died.⁵⁶ Importantly however, this did not signal the complete obliteration of Tasmania's Indigenous population, as was believed at the time. The islands of Bass Strait, as Lyndall Ryan has demonstrated, were still home to many Indigenous people.⁵⁷ Moreover, as Julie Gough has highlighted:

Tasmanian Aboriginal people are also associated by family with particular regions where connections have been established and maintained over the past two centuries. These regions together encompass the entire State, including the Furneaux Islands. While some families associate most strongly with Cape Barren Island and the muttonbirding islands, others have lived for generations in the Huon Valley and on the north-west coast.⁵⁸

What both Ryan and Gough establish is that despite the resolve of colonial authorities to remove the Indigenous people from Tasmania the desired result remained elusive and the Indigenous people withstood the onslaught of colonisation.

This brief outline of the story behind Duterrau's painting represents a much condensed history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous interactions in Tasmania which were characterised by great violence. Parr's critique of Duterrau's painting, exhibited in the *Sydney Perspecta*, 1985 and again in *A Changing Relationship* 1988, highlights a number of themes already examined above including its depiction of mathematical instruments of mapping and the use of a Charles Woolley image of Trukanini. Despite these similarities, the outcome is quite a different work. It is a staged photograph which recreates, in its entirety, the scene of Duterrau's actual painting.⁵⁹ Moreover, when it was exhibited in *Perspecta* it was accompanied by a small reproduction of Duterrau's painting so that there was no confusion in the eye of the viewer as to the source of the works.

The most obvious subversion in Parr's work is the role reversal manifested by his white students standing in for the Indigenous people that Duterrau depicted.⁶⁰ Parr gives agency to the Palawa people by placing Trukanini in the central location once occupied by George Augustus Robinson, the chief 'conciliator' of the Tasmanian Aborigines. Moreover, he uses the cast of the tableau to further draw attention to her through their physical pointing – "there is the real hero" they indicate.⁶¹ Using a historical image of Trukanini serves as a link between past and present and that which needs to be acknowledged before reconciliation can be achieved. As Roslyn Poignant has argued, Trukanini's "expression, which is the classic one of anger, represents the past that must be confronted; her image is held as both a mask

⁵⁶ See Ryan, "The Fragments", *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, 1996, pp.205-221.

⁵⁷ Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, 1996, p.222.

⁵⁸ Gough, "Time Ripples in Tasmania", 1998, p.108.

⁵⁹ Duterrau's *The Conciliation* (1840) was actually a study for a larger work which he called *The National Picture*. It is not known whether this painting was completed, and if it was, where it is located.

⁶⁰ For other discussion of this work see also Kerr "Colonial Quotations", 1996, p.382; Kerr, "Past Present" in Thomas & Losche (eds), *Double Vision*, 1999, pp.236-7; Elizabeth Gertsakis, "A National Picture", in Anthony Bond (ed), *Perspecta '85*, exh.cat., AGNSW, 1985, p.50.

⁶¹ Gertsakis, "A National Picture", in Bond (ed), *Perspecta '85*, 1985, p.50.

and an icon by a present-day Aborigine."⁶² This relationship between past and present, mediated through Parr's re-creation, represents visually what Gary Lehman referred to earlier when he argued that for contemporary Tasmanians Trukanini is an icon of survival. For her image has transcended time and found its way into this 1980s tableau.

Finally Parr draws the viewer's attention to the contrived western vision that inspired this valorisation of Robinson in Duterrau's work by lucidly demonstrating the constructed nature of his own work. Parr achieves this through the very artificiality of set which includes elements from the original work reproduced and cut-out and used as props. This exposes the scene for what it really is; a painted backdrop in which actors participate in creating a contrived scene. It is highly staged and not in any way taken from nature. The all-pervading sense that mapping and depicting land was a project analogous with ownership is also present in this image. Of this work Elizabeth Gertsakis has noted that:

The awkward classical geometry of Duterrau's picture is an expression of the white man's gift and folly, the measuring mind. Parr's work sees this in the use of objects which are the real weapons of conquest and control, survey staffs, trigonometric tripods and directional lines.⁶³

So it is by replacing spears with measuring devices that Parr has drawn attention the fact that the people pictured in Duterrau's painting were disenfranchised, removed from their land and traditional ways of life and that land was then appropriated by the settler state. Parr's work, as such, is "based upon a new agreement about a land hand back."⁶⁴ Importantly Parr placed himself within the work, in the position of the white protagonist, foregrounding the need for individuals to take responsibility for their own actions. The only other individual that he identifies is the seated blond woman in front of the corrugated iron who was the only Indigenous person in the scene – Tasmanian Aboriginal artist Karen Casey. Parr states that "in *The Conciliation*, this figure is thought to be that of the diminutive Trukanini, who would have been about 17 years old when Duterrau worked on his painting."⁶⁵

Deconstruction and reconstruction

The constructed nature of colonial imagery has also been a theme in the work of Imants Tillers who placed the notion of an untouched wilderness, open for exploration, as the subject of contention in his work *Mount Analogue* (1985) [Plate 107]. In this work Tillers appropriated Eugene von Guérard's *North-east View from the Northern Top of Mount Kosciusko* (1863) [Plate 108]. This painting documents a scientific expedition that von Guérard took part in under the leadership of Georg von Neumayer, a German geophysicist. From examinations of von Guérard's sketches for this painting it is apparent that he embellished the rock formations that frame the work to the left of the expedition party.⁶⁶ This embellishment becomes extremely significant in light of Tillers' appropriation. Tillers

⁶² Poignant, "Surveying the Field", in Edwards (ed), *Photography and Anthropology*, 1992, p.46.

⁶³ Kerr, "Colonial Quotations", 1996, p.382.

⁶⁴ Geoff Parr, "The National Picture", unpublished pamphlet, 2000.

⁶⁵ Parr, "The National Picture", 2000.

⁶⁶ See Tim Bonyhady, *Australian Colonial Paintings at the Australian National Gallery*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, 1986, pp.189-94.

literally deconstructs von Guérard's painting by breaking up the image and repainting it on 165 individual canvas boards. In the process of reconstruction Tillers injects a vibrancy and atmosphere lacking in the original. He embellishes the already embellished landscape. The scale of this appropriation is also much more monumental than the original work by von Guérard; at nearly three metres high, the viewer is literally overwhelmed by the enormity of the landscape depicted.⁶⁷

The title of Tillers' work refers to a novel by René Daumal whose "story is of an expedition to an invisible mountain."⁶⁸ Is Tillers' *Mount Analogue* actually indicative of the landscape it represents or does it remain invisible, shrouded by the vision of von Guérard, who sought to illustrate a picturesque landscape, and further masked by Tillers himself who recreates this landscape, not from life, but from a reproduction. To further highlight this point the landscape is literally overlaid with the grid of western perception, determined by the boundaries of each individual canvas board. Although this painting is less overtly concerned with the impacts of colonisation on Australia's Indigenous population than the work of Parr and Bennett discussed above, it is still clear that such a landscape image of exploration and conquest was intimately tied to the process of colonisation and in turn the dispossession of the Aboriginal people of their homelands. This is further reiterated by Coulter-Smith who has drawn attention to a lesser known complement to *Mount Analogue* titled *The View From K* (1997-98) in which Europeans and the names that they imposed upon the landscape are juxtaposed against Aboriginal names for geographical locations. Coulter-Smith argues that "by superimposing names onto the landscape Tillers is referring to issues of colonisation and ownership of the land"⁶⁹ thus he contributes to the same debates that have been evoked by Bennett and Parr above. Tillers' work directly challenges the scientific intent of von Guérard's painting, the aim of which was, as Bonyhady has suggested, to provide an accurate depiction of hitherto unexplored parts of the country. He highlighted the fact that the landscape was embellished and enhanced by colonial painters, at the same time as it was being explored, named and possessed in turn contributing to the dispossession of Indigenous people and knowledge.

In contrast to these large-scale landscape images Narelle Jubelin emphasised the effects of colonisation by rendering images of 'progress' static within her *Now Falls the Shadow of the Bicentenary* (1987) series. Jubelin's work is characterised by a conflation of high and low art practices through the appropriation of colonial landscapes (to depict / survey the land is to own the land) which are transformed into the subject of petit point. Petit Point is a type of embroidery in which all of the stitches are sewn in the same diagonal direction. It is known

⁶⁷ Howard Morphy has recounted his experience viewing Tillers' painting: "I remember walking around the room amazed by its scale, intrigued by its construction... I saw Tillers' original before I saw von Guérard's. The reproductions of von Guérard's painting that I had seen in books conveyed to me a work of a similar scale to *Mount Analogue*. And yet it is so much smaller. I have never been able to look at von Guérard's original without seeing it as a diminished work." Howard Morphy, "Imants Tillers and the Dislocation of the Avant-Garde", in Howard Morphy & Nigel Lendon (eds), *Synergies*, exh.cat., Drill Hall Gallery, Australian National University, Canberra, 2003, p.43.

⁶⁸ Coulter-Smith, *The Postmodern Art of Imants Tillers*, 2002, p.195.

⁶⁹ Coulter-Smith, *The Postmodern Art of Imants Tillers*, 2002, p.196.

for its "small-scale, ordered, orthodox, contained, even 'prim'" nature.⁷⁰ High art becomes embroidery – women's work – which is then further corrupted by the inclusion of found objects in her installations. *North Terrace and Environs: A Distanced View* (1987) [Plate 109] was part of this *Bicentenary* series which included appropriations of panoramic views of Sydney and Adelaide and its environs as well as smaller-scale representations of sites of exploration beyond the realm of the burgeoning colonies. The panorama was a popular activity which operated slightly outside of the world of high art. Gordon Bull has demonstrated that the panorama was an effective mechanism of exerting a controlling gaze over the landscape – from the panoptical viewpoint it was possible to see everything without being seen.⁷¹

The fact that Jubelin's imagery is rendered in petit point is in itself declaring the basis of her practice in appropriated images. For it is required to have the image planned before beginning to execute such a task. Petit point is not a medium through which change and spontaneity can result. The act of rendering such an image in petit point also draws attention to the labour intensive process of the task. In doing so it highlights the time spent in constructing this colonial vision whereby each stitch is carefully calculated and the final image is predetermined. The heavy framing of Jubelin's work emphasises the diminutive form of the actual petit point – highlighting the distance from which these views of landscape and development were created, counters this. The fact that she copied such an image also signals the lack of acknowledgement for colonial works created by women in media other than painting or drawing.

Conclusion

In all of these contemporary histories it is the blind romanticism of the nineteenth century images that is a major point of contention. These contemporary artists illustrate, through the combination of historical references and allusions to the Eurocentric vision that was embodied in perspective diagrams, mapping and charting, that the frontier of settlement was neither an Aboriginal or pastoral arcadia and nor was it an untouched wilderness. Rather these images were constructions concealing the realities of life on the frontier which, when seen from a different perspective, was characterised by violence, bloodshed, hardship and inequality.

It is in no way a surprise that these contemporary histories, with their specific references to landscape and colonisation, occur within such close proximity to each other. As has been outlined in Part Two of this thesis, Australia in the 1980s was characterised by a preoccupation with alternative perspectives on Australian history stimulated by a number of contributing factors, the bicentenary of white settlement, the increase in awareness of land rights for Indigenous Australians and a greater understanding of the magnitude of inequality

⁷⁰ Catherine Harper, "Narelle Jubelin at Goldsmiths College, London", *Textile*, vol.1 #3, August 2000, pp.210-229.

⁷¹ Gordon Bull, "Taking Place: Panorama and Panopticon in the Colonisation of New South Wales", *Australian Journal of Art*, vol.12, 1994-95, p.84.

between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians were just some of these factors. In terms of the art world, debates around postmodernism, postcolonialism and the recognition of Indigenous art combined with the socio-political circumstances outlined in Part Two, created an atmosphere in which such historical revisions were possible.

Finally all have been up front about their sources. In their aim to draw attention to the fabrication of Australian history through the imaging of the land and its development, each artist has been careful to reveal their own form of construction. In the case of Bennett and Parr this was achieved through the relatively disparate elements of their work which were juxtaposed against each other and failed to come together as a coherent whole. Parr's second work relied on the literal juxtaposition of original and appropriation, as well as visual elements within the work in order to make his sources evident. Tillers and Jubelin have similarly exposed their sources by way of their method of construction – Tillers by taking an iconic work from the permanent collection of the NGA, deconstructing and then reconstructing it and Jubelin by her very process which by necessity needed an existing image in order to exist itself. As will be developed in the following chapter, these construction lines, laid bare for the viewer to interpret, are a recurrent trait seen in the appropriative histories of Australia.

Chapter Ten

Impersonation and self-portraiture: The self as other

The oscillation between art object and human subject, represented so personally, is what gives portraits their extraordinary grasp on our imagination. Fundamental to portraits as a distinct genre in the vast repertoire of artistic representation is the necessity of expressing this intended relationship between the portrait image and the human original.¹

In Australia, the use of portraiture has enabled unique and personal examinations of shifting identities resulting from the peculiarities of the colonial experience. This examination has not simply been confined to a re-assertion of an Indigenous presence within the annals of history (though this has been important) but can also be seen in white artists' explorations of their own identity and its relation to an Indigenous past and their own search for belonging. This chapter will focus primarily on three examples of portraits with others used to supplement the discussion. In the first example I discuss appropriation has allowed for a succinct means of illustrating the myopic nature of colonial vision. The two following examples indicate that while colonising structures regulated the forms of expression available to Indigenous Australians this hegemonic rule was not without its subversions. In addition to presenting a commentary on the way Indigenous identity has been figured in the visual archive of Australian art, the appropriative portraits discussed here also provide a space for an examination of subjectivity within contemporary Australian identity politics.² In particular they address the fraught relationship between the original custodians of this continent and those who immigrated post 1788.

Unlike conventional portraiture, or the self-portrait, the appropriative portrait possesses an added dimension – that of the historical subject remembered – which complicates the usual relationship between sitter and subject or artist and their reflection. This third dimension indicates the intricate manner in which the represented subjects are connected to, and influenced by, the historical conditions which informed the original artwork that they quote. In each of the examples discussed in detail here, it is possible to argue that they reveal as much about this historical dimension as they do about the contemporary subject of the work.

But who are the subjects, historical and contemporary, of these works of art? The first is a Badtjala woman from Fraser Island 'captured' by the lens of an industrious white photographer in the 1890s and re-figured by another Badtjala woman, Fiona Foley, in the

¹ Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1991, p.7.

² Anita Callaway has revealed historical precedents to these contemporary appropriative portraits. The tableau vivant was a type of performance art, seen in Australia during the nineteenth century, in which the performers mimicked compositions from well-known paintings. See Anita Callaway, "Posing As Painting", *Visual Ephemeria: Theatrical Art in Nineteenth-Century Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000, pp.59-84.

1990s. The second is a Ku-ring-gai man painted in a regal portrait by an esteemed white artist in Sydney in the 1820s who becomes a white Melbourne artist, Stephen Bush, in a different landscape in the 1980s. Finally an Aboriginal mission student whose portrait was commissioned by a white patron in Adelaide in the 1850s has been impersonated by a female Aboriginal writer, and photographed by another female Aboriginal artist, Destiny Deacon. In describing these subjects the complex relationships of power between settler and indigene are apparent – all of the original subjects were Indigenous and their observers European. In the case of Foley and Deacon, the hierarchies of the gaze have been subverted, replacing the colonial white vision of the original creator with that of an Indigenous perspective in the new work. As a white artist, however, Bush's work seems to reaffirm the colonial vision of the white observer but he does so with a degree of empathy – that is, he places himself in the position of his subject. He also articulates the ambivalence of the settler subject who remains between the authority of imperial rule and that of the long history of Indigenous presence within the landscape. Describing these subjects has also served to introduce the three artists whose works are the main focus of this chapter; Fiona Foley, Stephen Bush and Destiny Deacon. These artists do not constitute a discrete group but rather provide examples of relatively separate practices which have resulted in these related works being produced. To further establish the breadth of this practice of postcolonial appropriative portraiture I will also cite examples of other artists who have produced similar work.³ The nineteenth century subjects of the original works, which form the basis of these artists' twentieth century works will also be examined.

The Colonial Experience and Identity Politics

As has been discussed throughout this thesis, the idea of an Australian identity (or identities) has been a major concern of artists in Australia during the period under investigation. In part, this has been because of the prominence of events such as the bicentenary of white settlement, the centenary of Federation and the Sydney Olympic Games. Moreover this introspection has been advanced by the increased politicisation of Indigenous Australians and as a result the growing awareness of, and sensitivity to, alternative perspectives on the history of this nation which have come to be embodied in the term Aboriginal history.

This unique identity is informed by the structure of the settler colony which saw the imperial authority and Indigenous presence at either end of a spectrum of power in which the new settler occupied the space in between. Terry Goldie has written about the desire of the settler subject to become 'native', to feel at home in their new land, a process which he called "indigenization". He has also outlined the ambivalence of the settler subject in a Canadian context and the terms he uses could equally be related to the Australian situation and are worth recounting in order to make the situation clear:

³ Other well known appropriation artists such as Gordon Bennett have also experimented with self portraiture as can be seen in *Self Portrait (But I Always Wanted to Be One of the Good Guys)* but this is not the main focus of his oeuvre. Bennett has been discussed extensively in the previous chapter and as such will not be considered in detail here.

The white Canadian looks at the Indian. The Indian is Other and therefore alien. But the Indian is indigenous and therefore cannot be alien. So the Canadian must be alien. But how can the Canadian be alien within Canada?⁴

This feeling of alienation within one's own country and the desire to forge new identities in new lands has also been described by Alan Lawson as the double inscription of the settler state. Lawson argues that the "settler [is] caught between... the originating world of Europe... and that of the First Nations, whose authority the settlers not only effaced and replaced but also desired."⁵ This desire can be regarded in Goldie's terms as "indigenization", as a search for belonging. This is in contrast to what has become known as the Third World or developing nations from which the colonial authorities have withdrawn.

In Australia, as Nicholas Thomas has stressed, "there has been no decolonization... native peoples [have] experienced no independence from their immediate colonizers".⁶ This had led, as Thomas continues to argue, to "an intimate connection between the foundation of settler societies and the dispossession of prior occupants" making it necessary to coexist in some symbiotic form.⁷ So the basis of the settler colony, as opposed to other postcolonial (Third World) nations can be seen as one of negotiation. The peculiar nature of the colonial heritage of Australia, which is shared by countries such as Canada and New Zealand / Aotearoa, has been described by Lawson as the "Second World", or "that part of colonial space occupied by the postimperial, so-called settler colonies".⁸ He also highlights this idea that the settler society is bound by a set of complex relations rather than a simple binary self/other divide. He argues that:

The Second World postcolonial subject does not simply resist a discursive power that is (or has been) imposed from outside. In writing back against the representations of experience of 'this' place, this subject opposes that which is internal to itself in a dual sense – its own history of apprehensions and its own history of representations.⁹

In other words, the settler subject is intrinsically embedded in the matrix of cross-cultural relations that resist black and white divides. It is this uneasy negotiation between the settler subject, imperial and Indigenous authorities that is acted out in the theatre of postcolonial appropriative portraiture discussed here.

Many of these works resist any sense of authenticity in that they betray their own sources, they leave clues to fact that they are recreations (appropriations). In doing so they also resist the settler / imperial / Indigenous divide and in turn challenge the possibility of a fixed identity while also affirming a continuity of Indigenous presence within the historical/visual archive. This is in line with other examples of appropriation in Australia whereby I argue

⁴ Terry Goldie, "The Representation of the Indigene" (1989), in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin (eds), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Routledge, London, 1995, p.234.

⁵ Alan Lawson, "Postcolonial Theory and the 'Settler' Subject", in *Essays on Canadian Writing*, vol.56 Fall 1995, pp.20-36, ProQuest document #9210149, accessed 10/03/04, [<http://proquest.umi.com.virtual.anu.edu.au>].

⁶ Thomas, *Possessions*, 1999, p.11.

⁷ Thomas, *Possessions*, 1999, p.11.

⁸ Lawson, "Postcolonial Theory and the 'Settler' Subject", in *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 1995.

⁹ Lawson, "Postcolonial Theory and the 'Settler' Subject", in *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 1995.

that their aim was not to deceive the audience but rather to draw attention to the space *between* the quoted work and the new work.

Mining the Archives: Nineteenth century photography in the twentieth century

The trade in postcards – photographic images – was substantial in the nineteenth century. The process of photography required little interaction with the subject as exposure times were reduced to fractions of a second. The introduction of the dry plate, in use by a few photographers in Australia in the 1870s and commercially manufactured by Phillip Marchant from 1880 onwards, allowed the photographer to take a photograph in the field without the need to develop it instantaneously. This made outdoor photography much more convenient. Dry plates were also "much more sensitive than wet plates" allowing for much shorter exposure times when compared with the several seconds that wet plates required.¹⁰ As such, many of these photographic subjects remained nameless – "to personalise would have been to humanise" and this was not what the European market demanded.¹¹ Instead they demonstrate the "rage for curiosity"¹² in which images of exotic others were voraciously consumed.

These nineteenth century photographs also depict what Indigenous curator Brenda L. Croft has called "the haunted faces of our ancestors"¹³, and it is this ancestral lineage that forms the basis of Fiona Foley's photographic self-portraits. Foley is an internationally renowned artist who draws strongly on her Badtjala heritage in the creation of her art. Many of her works are concerned with her homelands around Hervey Bay and Fraser Island in North Queensland. Importantly, Foley has also been vocal in the political arena and in particular in gaining recognition for urban-based Indigenous artists. This photographic work is part of her extensive portfolio which consists of prints, installations and large-scale public commissions.

Foley has created two series of works in which she is both the subject and an actor portraying a historical figure seen here in *Native Blood* (1994) [Plates 110 & 111] and *Badtjala Woman* (1994) [Plates 112 & 113]. Whilst she did not actually 'take' the photographs herself she was responsible for the original concept, their staging, costume and composition.¹⁴ It is because of this active involvement in the production of the works that it is possible to consider them within the realm of self-portraiture – she dictated how she would be represented. Foley based her self-portraits on archival images of her forebears found in the John Oxley Library in Brisbane. A series of photographs of one woman from around 1899 have been central to Foley's historical appropriations. She states:

¹⁰ Anne-Marie Willis, *Picturing Australia: A History of Photography*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, NSW, 1988, p.74.

¹¹ Annear, *Portraits of Oceania*, 1997, p.5.

¹² Richard Neville, *A Rage for Curiosity*, exh.cat., State Library of NSW.

¹³ Croft, "Laying Ghosts to Rest", in Annear, *Portraits of Oceania*, 1997, p.14.

¹⁴ In most publications Foley is given the artist credit for these works and the photographers are given a secondary credit. Sandy Edwards was the photographer of Foley's *Native Blood* series and Greg Weight was the photographer of her *Badtjala Woman* series.

Within my retrieval of Badtjala archival material there was a mysterious and striking image of one of my forebears. Her gaze was averted. No name. No birth. No death.¹⁵

The only information that was recorded was that the woman was from Fraser Island. Each work, *Native Blood* and *Badtjala Woman*, consists of three photographs in which Foley has recast herself as the subject of the colonial photographer's gaze by assuming the guise of the unidentified woman described above.

By focusing on these archival images of her ancestors Foley has been able to take them out of their original anthropological context and re-insert them into a fine art arena in which there is continuity between Foley, her ancestors and importantly, their land. Although it may be almost impossible to identify some of the original subjects of such anthropological photographs, the process of research and re-staging has taken them out of the realm of the unidentified and instead placed them within the realm of revered survivor with an identified lineage. This research has also physically altered the archive whereby the original photograph is now also identified. Through this process of appropriative portraiture, not only has an Indigenous perspective on representation been ventured but a gap in the archive filled.

The very physiognomy that was of interest to many colonial photographers was, ironically, what enabled Foley to identify the unnamed subject of the photographs as someone with whom she felt she had a familial connection. As Diane Losche has illuminated, "hidden in the humiliation of the colonizer's gaze is a gift, the shape of a breast, an unearthed story and a victory over colonization."¹⁶ This physical resemblance enabled the anonymous woman's identification as a Badtjala woman.

Foley sought to re-inscribe authority to, and respect for, those who were marginalised or in her words "silenced" by forces of colonisation. Foley lamented the fact that there had not been any prominent or public recognition of the efforts of Indigenous Australians, particularly women, to strengthen and reclaim important cultural heritage. This search for Indigenous matriarchal role models was part of the aim of *Native Blood*.¹⁷ Unlike the nineteenth century woman, Foley explicitly confronts the viewer with her gaze, meeting them with a measure of confidence in all but one of the *Native Blood* photographs. The most often reproduced of the series is the reclining figure with platform shoes [Plate 114]. Foley described this image:

The skirt I wear in the photograph titled 'Native Blood' is from Maningrida. Like the shell and reed necklaces, these objects were made by Aboriginal women coming from a remote Australian community. The red, black and

¹⁵ Fiona Foley (1996) cited in Diane Losche, "Badtjala Woman – Fiona Foley's *Native Blood* and *Native Hybrid*" in Engberg, *Colonial Post Colonial*, 1996, p.34.

¹⁶ Losche, "Badtjala Woman" in Engberg, *Colonial Post Colonial*, 1996, p.34.

¹⁷ Fiona Foley, "A Blast From the Past", in Ian McNiven, Lynette Russell & Kay Schaffer (eds) *Constructions of Colonialism: Perspectives on Eliza Fraser's Shipwreck*, Leicester University Press, London, 1998, p.167.

yellow hand-painted platform shoes symbolize the Aboriginal land rights flag.¹⁸

By her use of props, Foley has also asserted her own identity within this colonial construct. The nineteenth century woman, mediated by Foley and her own political resistance to colonisation, becomes representative of all the Indigenous women who withstood the tide of colonisation and the decimation of culture that it heralded. In a way the reclining figure is the most successful of the series as it does not simply re-state the original colonial photograph from an Indigenous perspective. The potential ambiguity of re-stating rather than critiquing the original image has been noted by Ian McLean who questions whether "she is merely repeating the politics of colonial desire."¹⁹ But it is the additions to Foley's composition that elevate beyond repetition – this is found in the inclusion of the platform shoes. Not only because they are painted with the colours of the land rights flag, and thus evoke a whole history of the politicisation of Aboriginal people in their quest for social justice, but also because they give the work a contemporary edge. Moreover, Foley's use of colour within this photograph deems it contemporary and separates it from the nineteenth century image that she has appropriated. The past remains present within this new work but the present is also discernable. Even to the unfamiliar audience, this photograph is not simply a nude photograph of a beautiful Indigenous woman. The shoes are a clue, a gift, as was the shape of the breast in the original photograph, that enables the viewer to access the image's political dimension.

Like Foley's reclamation of her ancestors by mining institutional archives, Gamilaroi / Wailwan artist r e a has also transformed stereotypical photographic representations of Indigenous people – an example of which can be seen in her series *Don't Shoot till you see the Whites of Their Eyes* (1999) [Plate 115]. As introduced earlier, the man depicted in the original photograph is Gwoya Jungarai who was known as 'One Pound Jimmy' [Plate 116].²⁰ The image r e a has appropriated was subsequently reproduced in a variety of forms including on postcards and postage stamps.²¹ Alongside this photograph of Jungarai r e a has juxtaposed a photograph of herself – both of which have been overlaid with shooting range targets and gun sights.²² The following text is also repeated:

¹⁸ Foley, "A Blast From the Past", in McNiven, Russell & Schaffer (eds) *Constructions of Colonialism*, 1998, p.167.

¹⁹ Ian McLean, "Racism and Postmodernism: Australian Art and its Institutions", *Art Monthly Australia*, #103, September 1997, p.18.

²⁰ Jungarai (also spelt Tjungurrayi) was father to the important western desert painter Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri (c.1932-2002). See Vivien Johnson, *Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri*, exh.cat., Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2003, pp.45-48. Gordon Bennett has also used this image of Jungarai in his painting *Australian Icon (Notes on Perception No. 1)* (1989). In this work Jungarai is depicted within a perspective drawing of a box which is projected from the eye of Captain James Cook. See Gordon Bennett, "Australian Icons: Notes on Perception", in Thomas & Losche (eds), *Double Vision*, 1999, pp.252-256.

²¹ See Sarah Schmidt, *Postmark Post Mabo*, exh.cat., Australia Post Philatelic Group, Post Master Gallery, Melbourne, 2002, p.9.

²² As suggested in Chapter Seven these gun scopes could be seen to allude to the Coniston massacre of 1928. For a discussion of the massacre see Bill Wilson & Justin O'Brien, "'To Infuse An Universal Terror': A Reappraisal of the Coniston Killings", *Aboriginal History*, vol.27, 2003, pp.59-78. Also see Elder, "The Coniston Massacre – 1928", *Blood on the Wattle*, 1988, pp.141-153.

when I was a little girl I asked my mother: who are those people in that glover picture. She told me that they were my ancestors

Through this visual juxtaposition *re a* draws attention to the manner in which Indigenous Australians have been depicted since colonisation; in colonial paintings like those of John Glover, in anthropological photographs of the early twentieth century and, in the late twentieth century where, through such self-portraits, artists are able to determine the way in which they are represented. By inserting her self-portrait into the picture *re a* demonstrates a line of continuity between herself and the history of representing Indigenous people in Australian art practice.²³

Trawlwoolway artist Julie Gough has undertaken a similar project in her series *Re-Collection* (1997) in which she inserted a bas-relief portrait of her own head at the end of a series of photographic reproductions of similar portraits produced by Benjamin Duterrau as studies for his paintings. In so doing she highlighted the *contemporary* presence of Indigenous people in Tasmania which was in direct contrast to previously held opinions that deemed Trukanini to be the last of the Indigenous Tasmanians. As Hannah Fink has highlighted, each of Duterrau's original plaster bas-relief portraits was created as an expression of a single emotion rather than with the intention of depicting multifaceted individual portraits that revealed something of the character of the sitter.²⁴ As such, Gough's intervention forces viewers to consider how contemporary Indigenous identity has been figured.

Non-Indigenous artists have also examined this history through their appropriation of images from the vast archive of pseudo-scientific photographs, as can be seen in the work of Linda Sproul. Sproul positioned herself as the subject of her work depicting herself impersonating 'Ellen' "a twenty two year old South Australian Aboriginal woman",²⁵ originally photographed around 1870, in her 1997 installation *Difficult to Light: The White Woman Variation #2* at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.²⁶ In this installation Sproul juxtaposed images of herself, mimicking 'Ellen', with images of herself dressed as iconic female celebrities, Betty Grable and Cristine Keeler. The contrast became one of the Indigenous woman, naked for scientific scrutiny as compared to the seductively nude (or partially nude) white woman as object of a desire. The use of measuring devices, as seen in both the original and the appropriative portraits, demonstrate the nineteenth century photographer's interest in the pseudo-scientific practice of anthropometry. This discipline

²³ Digital technology has been integral to *re a*'s art. See Christine Nicholls, "Indigenous New Media Arts: Part 2. Digital Indigeneity", *Realtime*, #52, December 2002 / January 2003, p.20

²⁴ Hannah Fink, "Bad Memory: Art, Collecting and the Mercurial World of Julie Gough", *Siglo*, #10, Autumn / Winter 1998, p.6.

²⁵ Leigh Astbury, "Constructing the Other: Race and Representation", *Photofile*, #51, p.8.

²⁶ The photographs of 'Ellen' that Sproul appropriated are illustrated in an article by Frank Spencer, "Some Notes on the Attempt to Apply Photography to Anthropometry During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century", Edwards (ed), *Photography and Anthropology*, 1992, pp.99-107.

sought to measure the living human body in order to distinguish patterns of growth and development – particularly between people of different racial origins.²⁷

In contrast to this scientific aim, many nineteenth century photographers created images for the popular market, including J.W. Lindt whose photographs have been appropriated by Alan Cruickshank. Cruickshank's exhibition *Museum of the Colonial Post Colonial* at the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide (1997) comprised of digitally altered photographs appropriating those originally produced by Lindt – from his *Album of Australian Aborigines* produced in the 1870s [Plate 117]. Unlike those discussed so far however, Cruickshank did not place himself in the picture.²⁸ Cruickshank's subversion was a simple one; he digitally replaced the faces of the original Aboriginal subjects with those of white men.²⁹ Nevertheless in this simple reversal a complex range of issues were illuminated including the fact that Lindt did not just photograph Indigenous Australians but also illustrated non-Indigenous settlers in similarly contrived environments. Cruickshank also motivates the viewer to consider the situation if roles really were reversed – if Indigenous Australians were the photographers how might they perceive / depict non-Indigenous people? These varying interpretations were illustrated by Philip Jones who also argued that by replacing the faces of Indigenous subjects with those of colonialists Cruickshank drew attention to the changing perception of these ethnographic photographs within Indigenous communities.³⁰ As an indication of this change in attitude he referred to other exhibition such as *Portraits of Oceania*, introduced in Chapter Seven of this thesis. *Portraits of Oceania*, and others exhibitions such as *Portraits of Our Elders*, curated by Michael Aird at the Queensland Museum, brought critical attention to these photographs. Moreover, the scholarship presented within the catalogues to these exhibitions, facilitated new readings of nineteenth century photographs. While these original photographs still resonate with a poignancy related to their subject / observer hierarchy, they have also become positive images symbolising a continued Indigenous presence. They represent "a proud people who have continued with dignity and a strong sense of identity and survival."³¹ What is problematic about Cruickshank's subversions is that they seem hollow. Unlike the artists discussed above,

²⁷ Frank Spencer, "Some Notes on the Attempt to Apply Photography to Anthropometry During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century", Edwards (ed), *Photography and Anthropology*, 1992, fn.1, p.106.

²⁸ Some of Lindt's photographs were exhibited in *Portraits of Oceania* discussed in Chapter Seven. Cruickshank's digitally manipulated images, which considered the place of non-Anglo Saxon Australians in the history of this country's visual archives, were also seen in his shows *Arcanum* (1992) and *The Arcanum Museum* (1995) at the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide.

²⁹ In another exhibition, *Arcanum (Extracts from the Archive)* (1992), he used images of white Australians as the basis for new works onto which he superimposed Indigenous faces. This series drew attention to the white Australia policy which was in operation at the time the original photographs were taken. See Catharine Lumby, "Reviewing the Archive: Alan Cruickshank", *Photofile*, #37, November 1992, pp.20-23.

³⁰ Philip Jones, *Museum of the Colonial Post Colonial*, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, 1997.

³¹ Alana Harris in Harris and Cooper "Dignity or Degradation" in Annear, *Portraits of Oceania*, 1997, p.20.

he has not implicated himself in the image – his work, as such, is devoid of the urgency and personal engagement that other artists have achieved through their use of self-portraits.³²

Revisiting the 'characters' of colonial narratives

Photography, by its very immediacy, was more effective as a popular means of rendering subjects and was obviously more prolific than studied portraits in oil which were usually restricted to the more affluent members of the colony. As such, there is a vast gulf between appropriating a photograph of an unknown Aboriginal woman and two well-known Aboriginal men immortalised in oil paintings as can be seen in the work of Stephen Bush and Destiny Deacon.

Painted portraits required a more sustained relationship between the artist and the sitter and were usually only completed on a commission basis. As such there are far fewer paintings of Aboriginal people than there are photographs. Where paintings do exist, they are more likely to depict well-known (identified) subjects rather than the usually unidentified people seen in colonial photographs. This is evident in both of the oil paintings which form the basis of Bush's and Deacon's works in that they are more personal – if only due to the fact that both of the individuals are acknowledged as such through the process of naming the works. The oil painting is the most esteemed form of representation – photography was for the masses.

The Melbourne based artist Stephen Bush has re-presented a twentieth century audience with perhaps one of the best known, and certainly one of the most documented, Indigenous men in Australian history – Bungaree, introduced in Chapter Three – in his painting *No Title* (1989) [Plate 118].³³ Of all of the portraits of Bungaree (seventeen in total) Bush chose to appropriate the oil painting created by Augustus Earle c.1826 – the most iconic, the most accomplished, and certainly the only portrait of Bungaree that could be compared to other major oils of the time depicting colonial dignitaries [Plate 35]. This painting by Earle was

³² Another contemporary artist who has appropriated nineteenth century photographic images of Indigenous Australians is Brook Andrew. Andrew used Charles Kerry's photographs as the basis of his *I Split Your Gaze* (1997) and *Sexy and Dangerous* (1996). Like Cruickshank, Andrew's manipulations were digital, but in this case the alterations to the original images were obvious. Also like Cruickshank, Andrew toyed with the composition of the images rather than creating a new portrait of a contemporary subject. Time does not allow a full analysis of this work though it is certainly an important area for future investigations. Christine Nicholls has discussed Andrew's use of new media in his practice. See Christine Nicholls, "Brook Andrew: Seriously Playful", *Realtime*, #54 April-May, 2003 p.28.

³³ Other artists have also appropriated the image of Bungaree. Juan Davila has made reference to Bungaree on a number of occasions in works such as *Portrait of Bungaree* (1991) and in his large-scale installation *Juanito Laguna* (1994). The later work was highly complex including many references in addition to that of Bungaree. Darwin-based non-Indigenous artist Therese Ritchie also appropriated images of Bungaree and Nannultera in an exhibition titled *Ship of Fools* seen at Karen Brown Gallery in Darwin in 2003. Finally Clinton Nain, who will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter appropriated Bungaree in his work *Dream Run* (1997) which was exhibited in *Flesh + Blood: A Sydney Story 1788-1998* discussed in Chapter Six. These portraits are all fruitful areas of interest but lie outside of the concern of this chapter which is focused on how identities have been substituted in contemporary appropriative history paintings and how that has enhanced a critique of narratives of colonial history.

not a commission and it is a testament to Bungaree's renown that Earle *chose* to devote a canvas to him.

Official colonial narratives of exploration and expansion, as seen in history painting, were of particular interest to Bush at the time and this work represents a very small part of a significant body of images that use academic narrative or history painting as their basis. Many of these works were exhibited in his show *Claiming: An Installation of Painting by Stephen Bush* curated by Naomi Cass at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne in 1991. The show also toured to South Australia and the United States of America. Appropriation played a major role in this exhibition with many of the works devoted to depictions of historical figures and / or landscapes. Bush did not borrow exclusively from Australian history painting either – in fact the evolution of this work is to be found in an exploration of American myths of the 'Wild West' as depicted in academic painting.

Bush's *modus operandi* is uniform in this series of paintings – he painted himself into his works, posing as different characters in each of his paintings. This is clearly evident in his *No Title* where he awkwardly greets the viewer in the guise of Bungaree. In doing so, this work is the only example discussed here in which the subject / artist actually transgresses the boundaries of cultural identification and completes the process of 'indigenization' proposed by Goldie whereby the settler subject desires to become native. What's more, he does so in a deliberately unconvincing manner. Bush has painted himself with blackened face built up with thick brushstrokes implying the boot polish (or equivalent) with which he has darkened his complexion.³⁴ Yet his hands and feet have not been similarly darkened indicating the superficiality of his impersonation. As a result, it is clear that this is a painting of Bush dressed as Bungaree rather than an attempt at a convincing likeness.³⁵ As David Cross has noted Bush relies on the recognisable nature of Bungaree as a set of signs; officer's coat, cocked hat and greeting, in order to be identified.³⁶ His costume is not accurate but the combination of signs marks him unmistakably as Bungaree. His seemingly clumsy impersonation can be read as a deliberate tactic, drawing attention to the non-Indigenous desire for belonging, and revealing its superficiality. This is contrasted with his technical ability as a painter. In this way Bush imitates, in a masterly manner, the style of academic grand narrative painting. His style can be compared to the academic manner in which Bungaree was originally depicted by Earle.

³⁴ For a discussion of historical instances of non-Indigenous impersonations of Indigenous Australians see Callaway, *Visual Ephemera*, 2000.

³⁵ Bush's cultural cross dressing could be compared to Malcolm Cole assuming the guise of Captain Cook in the 1988 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Cole was aboard the 'Captain Cook float' with other Indigenous gays and lesbians leading the parade in 1988. Cole, like Bungaree, was subverting colonial authority in a highly dramatic manner. Turning Australia's history into a colourful parade that actively attempted to challenge the dominant culture and its stereotypical attitudes. See Wendy Brady and Gary Lee, "Alternative Sexualities", in Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000, pp.294-5.

³⁶ David Cross, "Irony's Edge – Stephen Bush's *No Title*" in Engberg, *Colonial Post Colonial*, 1997, pp.28-9.

Bungaree was described by Matthew Flinders as "a worthy and brave fellow"³⁷. As discussed earlier, he was employed, at Flinders' request, to mediate between the sailing party and any Indigenous people they encountered on their journey. Bungaree's journey on the *Investigator* made him the first Australian-born person to circumnavigate the country. Despite Bungaree's extensive travels he never went to Victoria, which is significant given that Bush has taken Bungaree out of his original context and placed him in another constructed landscape originally painted by Eugene von Guérard and depicting the banks of the Yarra River [Plate 119]. The original setting of Earle's painting, Sydney Harbour, was obviously significant to the subject of the work – it was his home, it illustrated the maritime culture with which he was a part and it demonstrated the awkward clash of cultures experienced in the early years of the colony. By taking Bungaree out of this context, and placing him in the newly explored and depicted (claimed) landscape of von Guérard Bush figures Bungaree as that explorer, as the familiar men who grace the walls of art galleries in front of the land they have surveyed. Yet Bungaree has 'no title', no claim to the land.

By casting himself as the subject of this work Bush has thus implicated himself in the narrative that ensues. Bush himself represents that ambiguous figure – the white settler subject – that, as we saw earlier, Lawson identified as the second world subject. This subject, and the texts they produced, are characterised by ambiguity and double coding. Thus Bush's second world text revels in its ambiguity – is Bush making a mockery of his audience with this insensitive (racist) costume drama in which he assumes the guise of the indigene? Or, is he appositely signalling the double bind in which Bungaree found himself – playing the fool to command recognition? Perhaps it is both. Bush's painting appears to be a blatant attempt at "indigenization" which obviously demonstrates the farcical nature of this desire. His attempt at becoming Indigenous is literally superficial and the fact Bush himself is the subject of all of his works suggests that his own identity not easily rescinded.

As with Bush's painting, humour plays an important role in Destiny Deacon's photographs – quite often it is an acidic tongue-in-cheek style of irony which is used to convey a sense of the realities of urban Indigenous life. Deacon is a Melbourne-based Indigenous artist from the KuKu and Erub/Mer groups of North Queensland and the Torres Strait. She is perhaps best known as a photographer though she has worked across a number of media including performance, video art, writing and broadcasting. Her subjects are kitsch representations of Aboriginal people and culture, black dolls, boomerangs, stuffed toys and tea towels always depicted with a satirist's eye. Unlike the Foley work discussed previously, Deacon does not present the audience with a self-portrait but rather depicts the Indigenous playwright Eva Johnson in the guise of Nannultera as seen in a painting at the National Gallery of Australia. Deacon wrote of her first encounter with Nannultera and her aim in creating a new work:

³⁷ Flinders, *Terra Australis*, 1814 in Smith, *King Bungaree*, p.51.

I felt sorry for Nannultera when I first saw him at the NGA... Now Nannultera won't have to be alone; Eva Johnson, writer will keep him company.³⁸

In her work, *Portrait of Eva Johnson, Writer* (1995) [Plate 120], Deacon has reconstructed the set of J.M. Crossland's painting *Nannultera, a young cricketer of the Natives' Training Institution, Poonindie* (1854) [Plate 121]. Nannultera was a student at the Poonindie Mission located near Port Lincoln in South Australia. Unusually, his portrait was commissioned by the Archdeacon of Adelaide, Mathew Hale, who was also the man responsible for establishing the mission. The purpose of the settlement at Poonindie was to administer "religious instruction and moral training [to] the Aboriginal natives."³⁹ Learning from the lessons of other colonies this settlement was established so that Aboriginal graduates of the various native training institutions could "be removed from 'the contamination' of the city and placed"⁴⁰ in Hale's words:

in a little community... where they may be kept under regular Christian instruction... given daily employment... and a due admixture of relaxation and amusement... to make them [aware] of the value of a settled mode of life.⁴¹

Cricket provided the main means of relaxation and amusement and came to represent a very important part of the mission's existence. Leisure pastimes such as cricket were also seen as civilised activities that would improve those who participated. By all accounts the Indigenous teams of cricketers excelled at the sport and were often taken to Adelaide to participate in matches against local non-Indigenous colleges.⁴² It is believed that Crossland's painting was executed while Nannultera was on one such excursion to Adelaide with the cricket team to play in the annual match against St Peter's College.⁴³

The painting is one of two works depicting Poonindie students produced by Crossland and illustrating the civilising missions of the settlement, religious instruction and rational recreation. The other work is a portrait of an older student Samuel Kandwillan who, instead of a cricket bat, holds a Bible as a testament to the success of the Christian instruction that Hale sought to impress upon his students. It is assumed that because Hale commissioned the work, he also had authority over its subject matter and sought a depiction of the students in a positive light in order to highlight the mission's success. The painter, John Michael Crossland, was a renowned portraitist in Adelaide and had completed commissions of well known public figures such as the Governor of the day, Sir Henry Young and his wife, as well as the explorer Charles Sturt.

³⁸ Destiny Deacon, [Artist's Statement], *Re-Take: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Photography*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 1998, accessed 09/08/04, [http://www.nga.gov.au/Retake/retake_art2/0000000f.htm].

³⁹ Mathew Hale 1850 cited in John Daly, "'Civilising' the Aborigines: Cricket at Poonindie, 1850-1890", *Sporting Traditions*, vol.10 #2, May 1994, p.59.

⁴⁰ Daly, "'Civilising' the Aborigines", *Sporting Traditions*, 1994, p.61.

⁴¹ Mathew Hale 1850 cited in Daly, "'Civilising' the Aborigines", *Sporting Traditions*, 1994, p.61.

⁴² See Daly, "'Civilising' the Aborigines", *Sporting Traditions*, 1994, pp.59-67.

⁴³ See Barbara Perry, "Nannultera" in Julian Faigan, *Uncommon Australians: Towards an Australian Portrait Gallery*, exh.cat., Art Exhibitions Australia Ltd, Sydney, 1992, p.144.

From Deacon's own account the evolution of her polaroid portrait was as much about depicting Nannultera as it was about Eva Johnson. Johnson is almost incidental in Deacon's story – she happened to be in the right place at the right time just as Deacon needed to fulfil a deadline for an exhibition.

I looked about. Eva was at my place. Virginia Fraser too... From begging Eva (to pose) and Virginia (to make the set), it took less than an hour to get the image right. Improvising in the laundry.⁴⁴

Despite the incidental nature of her description, the connection between Nannultera and Johnson goes deeper than initially credited. Johnson is from the Malak Malak language group in the Daly River region of the Northern Territory.⁴⁵ Like Nannultera her upbringing was one of institutionalisation in which assimilation was attempted through the segregation of Aboriginal people.⁴⁶ Johnson was removed from her mother at two years of age and spent her infancy at the Methodist Mission on Crocker Island. She was subsequently transferred to an orphanage in Adelaide at the age of ten where she saw out her childhood. So where Nannultera was depicted as a successful example of the civilising effects of education and sport, through the viewfinder of Deacon's revisionist history Johnson is able to symbolically liberate him, by the very fact that her presence signifies his resistance. Despite efforts to assimilate Aboriginal people, to smooth the dying pillow, these attempts clearly failed. Where Nannultera is obviously posed for the portrait, his cricket bat poised in a rather staid manner, Johnson, far from appearing as the subject of colonial domination, exhibits more force over her chosen weapon (an axe) in a defiant stance.⁴⁷ As Joan Kerr has put it, far from appearing as evidence of colonialism's success, Nannultera and Johnson are now both the "upholder and destroyer of colonial mission values".⁴⁸

Deacon's photograph was made as a companion piece to the work she appropriated in order to provide comfort to this lone figure. What is important to note, from Deacon's comments, and her intention for her work, is that she did not see this original painting as static or stuck in the past, rather it was seen as an available site of exchange. It was not the painting with which she identified – itself a testament to the control that church and state wielded over

⁴⁴ Deacon, [Artist's Statement], *Re-Take*, 1998.

⁴⁵ Deacon's foray into appropriative portraiture is not limited to this Johnson / Nannultera image. Deacon has completed a number of portraits along similar lines. These include representations of Peter Blazey as the figure from William Dobell's *The Boy at the Basin* (1932) and Fiona Hall as Grace Cossington-Smith's *The Sock Knitter* (1915). She has also completed portraits of Richard Bell and Gary Foley all of which were on display in the recent retrospective *Walk and Don't Look Blak* at the MCA in 2004.

⁴⁶ Some of these experiences were translated for the stage in Johnson's play *What Do They Call Me*. See V. Crowley, "Aboriginality and Feminism", *Social Alternatives*, vol.12 #1, 1993, pp.13-15.

⁴⁷ Christian Bumbarra Thompson has also used weapons, in this case Indigenous artefacts from museum collections, in a similar rebuke to colonial authority in the series *Emotional Striptease* (2003). In this series he posed his friends, and himself, wielding artefacts in an often defiant manner. His subjects were dressed in fragments of theatrical costume – a ruffled collar, a bustle skirt frame a frilled lapel – and were set against highly urban backdrops including the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne. This drew attention to the constructed nature of photographic representations, such as those by J. W. Lindt discussed above, where people were photographed in artificial surrounds.

⁴⁸ Kerr, "Colonial Quotations", 1996, p.386.

Indigenous people. Rather it was the subject of the work, Nannultera, a figure isolated by colonisation, his familial network severed. Despite the fact that both the National Gallery (who display the original) and the National Library (who own the original) purchased a copy of Deacon's polaroid her work is not displayed alongside Nannultera: he still remains alone.⁴⁹ This reinforces the hegemonic narratives of these institutions, guided by chronology and the presentation of grand narratives of history as opposed to the innovative exhibitions which juxtaposed historically disparate works discussed in Part Two of this thesis.

Conclusion

Whereas Indigenous artists Deacon and Foley sought to illustrate a line of continuity between images of the past and current formulations of Indigenous identity, non-Indigenous artist Bush is faced with the dilemma of finding a place for himself within that narrative. Where does the non-Indigenous, native Australian nonetheless, fit into this story? In part I believe the crux of the tension lies in possibilities of recognising the counter history of colonisation, the Aboriginal history that has been the subject of such great debate in recent times. While the implications of Australia's past have obviously had profound effects on the Indigenous peoples of this land, such that personal explorations of family history are of paramount political importance, non-Indigenous Australians like Bush have also sought to find a personal connection with that past.

These works are predicated on the personal acceptance of what Bain Attwood has called the 'new history' in which Aboriginal narratives and perspectives on historical events have been opened for debate and in some instances accepted into the canons of mainstream history.⁵⁰ Accepting this new history, as we well know, has been a major stumbling block in recent years particularly evident in the Howard government's refusal to apologise (and thus accept responsibility for) the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families under the assimilationist policies of past governments. This refusal served to emphasise the distance between past governments and the present and in turn absolve them of any sense of responsibility.

Conversely, the appropriative portrait, or self-portrait, reduces that distance between past and present and enables the artists, and their audiences, to take part in a discourse on those historical encounters. All of the artists discussed here are actively taking part in the colonial theatre that produced the original images that they quote from. Certainly, they are ensuring that these people depicted, and the circumstances which informed these representations, are not forgotten.

⁴⁹ In response to this absence, Crossland's portrait of Nannultera and Deacon's portrait of Johnson are seen together on the cover of the publication *Crossing Cultures: Politics, Culture, Identity*, edited by Sylvia Kleinert and published in 2006. A shortened version of the present chapter also appears in this publication and was the catalyst for the juxtaposition on the cover.

⁵⁰ Bain Attwood, "The Burden of the Past in the Present", Michelle Grattan (ed), *Essays on Australian Reconciliation*, p.265.

These examples highlight an emphasis on the individual in recent articulations of the past and in particular how, as contemporary Australian citizens, they relate to those individuals as a means of accessing our past and analysing our present. That is, by humanising individuals from the past a more empathetic view of history may be possible. This has been achieved by identifying and personally engaging with people from the past – cultivating a contemporary memory of these forgotten figures. As Thomas argues, because it is unlikely that there is ever going to be a formal 'decolonization' of this country, it is essential to negotiate a means by which coexistence between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is possible.⁵¹ This may well be through the recognition of the importance of these forgotten people of the past and by drawing attention to the space between these colonial representations and their post-colonial counterparts. Despite having all the odds stacked against them, the subjects of these colonial works have triumphed – their images remain with us and have become the basis of new investigations – of new recognition in a new history. Appropriative portraits enable this by compressing time and presenting multiple perspectives – historical and contemporary, Indigenous and non-Indigenous – all played out within the one image.

⁵¹ Thomas, *Possessions*, 1999, p.11.

Chapter Eleven

Kitsch subversions

All things which might be called domestic in origin or function have been severely undervalued in the larger history of the development of Australian arts.¹

Popular culture representations of Indigenous motifs and people have provided a vast archive, outside of the realm of fine arts, upon which contemporary artists have drawn in the creation of appropriative histories. This chapter examines how these artists have appropriated from a range of images and objects prominent in twentieth century visual culture, from kitsch tourist curios to advertising images, film, product logos and commercial art. In all cases the contemporary artists have attempted to highlight the pejorative and often racist intent of the original. I argue that these artists subvert such kitsch imagery by drawing on its familiarity. That is, the use of common objects and images from the recent past provides an accessible means of communication with a broad audience for whom these images are familiar. Despite the fact that these images are taken from the realm of popular culture, rather than the art historical archive as has been discussed up until this point, the function of the appropriation remains the same. That is, past attitudes are foregrounded through the process of quotation which illustrates a shift in attitude between past and present. Popular representations of Aboriginality, mainly from the post-war period in Australia, can be found across a number of mediums including decorative arts, advertising, theatre and film. These images have been taken up by Indigenous artists many of whom highlight the paradox behind these white kitsch representations of Aboriginality which, as Brenda L. Croft has argued, is at once familiar, conjuring up "fond memories" of a bygone era, and at the same time repugnant and narrow-minded.²

In this chapter I examine works by Indigenous artists Tracey Moffatt, Destiny Deacon and Brook Andrew, all of which have appropriated popular representations of Indigenous Australian people and cultures. In doing so they disrupt the familiarity of these representations and draw attention to the implicit racism upon which they were founded. Non-Indigenous artist Ross Moore is subsequently considered as a counterpoint to these examples. I question how his use of similar source material differs from that of the Indigenous artists discussed previously. In the last part of the chapter I review work by Gordon Bennett and Christian Bumbarra Thompson. Both have used early twentieth century advertising images for soap as the basis of their critiques. In addition, Clinton Nain has

¹ Jennifer Isaacs, *The Gentle Arts: 200 Years of Australian Women's Domestic and Decorative Arts*, Lansdowne Press, Sydney, 1987, p.7.

² Brenda L. Croft, "You Must Remember This...", in Claire Baddeley, *Motif and Meaning: Aboriginal Influences in Australian Art 1930-1970*, exh.cat., Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat Vic., 1999, p.19.

extended the appropriation of soap advertisements to include actual cleaning products like bleach in order to present a similar critique of assimilationist policies as proffered by Bennett and Thompson.

Popular culture and the depiction of Aboriginal Australia

Since early colonial times references to Indigenous Australian people and culture could be found in the broad arena of Australian visual culture. In addition to more traditional accounts of the representation of Indigenous people in Australian art, Anita Callaway has argued that "non-traditional art forms were capable of disseminating the same cultural ideals and ideologies" as their "High Art" counterparts.³ Moreover, they reached a wider audience than their fine art equivalents. It is perhaps this broad appeal that has been responsible for the relegation of visual culture to the domain of kitsch, accused of appealing to the mass market through stereotypes and sentimentality. The art historian Clement Greenberg has described kitsch as "popular, commercial art and literature... magazine covers, illustrations, ads, slick and pulp fiction, comics... tap dancing, Hollywood movies, etc. etc."⁴ He placed kitsch culture in a subordinate role to what he termed "genuine culture", or what we might think of as high art.⁵ Greenberg argued that universal kitsch culture had infiltrated many colonies of the world and was being embraced by those cultures over and above their own "native art". What Greenberg failed to acknowledge was the local character that these kitsch cultures assumed. Whilst kitsch culture may have been evident universally, the specific forms that it took throughout the world were local. In contrast to the vast gulf between kitsch culture and the avant-garde identified by Greenberg, many of the artists working in Australia from the 1930s onwards, when kitsch representations of Aboriginal people and culture were most prominent, were involved in the production of commercial art as well as more traditional fine art. In part, this was related to the specific circumstances in Australia which saw women artists at the forefront of experiments in modern art.⁶ These same women were also involved in popular women's publications such as *Home* magazine which promoted the decorative arts. Within this realm of visual culture, a distinction can be made between representations of Indigenous people and representations of Indigenous cultures, which often took the form of appropriations of designs.

In Australia in the first half of the twentieth century representations of Aboriginal people and culture became an immensely popular subject for non-Indigenous artists working in decorative, commercial and applied arts.⁷ Such was the popularity of this practice that

³ Callaway, *Visual Ephemera*, 2000, p.xi.

⁴ Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (eds), *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1992, p.533.

⁵ Although Greenberg went on to argue that kitsch was particularly useful in totalitarian regimes as a form of propaganda his basic definition and history of kitsch remains a useful one to consider here.

⁶ See Janine Burke *Australian Women Artists 1840-1940*, Greenhouse Publications, Collingwood, Vic., 1980.

⁷ This was in direct contrast to the representation of Indigenous people and culture in fine art which was confined to the work of relatively few artists. While some artists incorporated Indigenous motifs into their practice it was rare to see Indigenous people depicted as individuals within the fine arts arena. The most prolific artists of this time who did depict Indigenous people were Noel Counihan, Yosl Bergner, Russell Drysdale, James Cant, David Boyd and Arthur Boyd. For a comprehensive list

Roman Black devoted the entire second half of his book to the examination of "new Aboriginal art", or, white artists appropriating Indigenous Australian designs within their own practice.⁸ Brenda Factor has collectively identified this type of work as "Aboriginal-style", Marcia Langton has called it "Aboriginalist" art and yet others again have identified it as "Aboriginalia".⁹ That such collective terms have been devised to describe this work indicates the extent of the practice at the time. Black's book provides a contemporaneous inventory of artists who had, in his view, successfully incorporated Aboriginal designs into a variety of mediums including painting, graphic design, pottery, textiles as well as other items aimed at the tourist market such as playing cards and placemats.¹⁰

In addition to highlighting the work of Margaret Preston, discussed in Part One of this thesis, Black also examined others pursuing a similar artistic project including Byram Mansell, Douglas Annand, Gert Sellheim and Elizabeth Durack. Mansell is a good example of an artist whose practice shifted between commercial mass produced items, such as greeting cards, and unique pieces such as paintings, the majority of which used Aboriginal art and culture as their main source of inspiration. Mansell based his Aboriginal style works on a set of photographs that were given to him by C. P. Mountford after his 1948 expedition to Arnhem Land. This inspiration found form in many murals and public commissions around Sydney, in regional NSW and as far a field as Denmark.¹¹ In his paintings he sought to emulate the qualities of Aboriginal art by creating his own pigments from ochre, bound with cactus juice, and applied with hand-made bird feather brushes [Plate 122].¹² His commercial works were executed in a variety of media including ceramic tiles which were used as inlays in murals and furniture and textile pieces, produced through his commercial studio in Sydney, as fabrics and as scarves. He also carried out interior design commissions which demonstrated his interest in Aboriginal art very clearly. Like Mansell, Douglas Annand also completed commissions for interiors, the most prominent of which was a mural he created for the Orient liner the *Orcades* [Plate 123].¹³ In his discussion of Annand, Black was concerned to highlight the extent of his work which ranged from mural painting, book illustrations and design to Christmas cards, exhibition design for agricultural shows and international fairs. Others like Gert Sellheim were strongly involved in the graphic arts executing designs for Qantas and Australia Post. Finally Black examined the work of

see Geoffrey Dutton, *White on Black: The Australian Aborigine Portrayed in Art*, Macmillan, Vic., in association with the Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1974.

⁸ See Black, *Old and New Australian Aboriginal Art*, 1964, pp.121-166.

⁹ Factor, "Marketing an Australian Identity", *Olive Pink Society Journal*, 1991, p.20; Marcia Langton, "Black Humour in the Art of Destiny Deacon", *Art and Australia*, vol.34 #3, 1997, p.104; Ross Moore, *Black Bodies as Décor: Dear Primitive*, exh.cat., Temple Studio, Melbourne, 1994, n.p.

¹⁰ An area not discussed by Black is the depiction of Aboriginal people, as opposed to the appropriation of Indigenous designs, on decorative art objects. The ceramics of Brownie Downing provide an excellent example of this type product which was characterised by its romanticised depictions of Indigenous Australians, often children, produced post Second World War.

¹¹ Martin Terry, "Aboriginality in the Art of Byram Mansell", *Art and Australia*, vol.24 #1, Spring 1986, p.88.

¹² Black, *Old and New Australian Aboriginal Art*, 1964, p.131.

¹³ Powerhouse Museum, *Decorative Arts and Design from the Powerhouse Museum*, Powerhouse Publishing, Haymarket, NSW, 1991, p.130.

Elizabeth Durack, who, prior to her adoption of the persona of Eddie Burrup, was known for her own book illustrations and paintings executed in an Aboriginal style. She also depicted Aboriginal people in her illustrations for her sister Mary Durack's books.

The second area that Black identified as providing fruitful ground for the execution of "new Aboriginal art" was ceramics where a major expansion was occurring with new potteries opening at a great rate. Operating in Sydney, Martin Boyd Pottery was established by brothers Guy and David Boyd,¹⁴ and was one of the first studios set up for commercial production of Aboriginal style ceramics in 1946 [Plate 124]. It set a precedent for other Sydney studios such as Essexware, Gynea and Studio Anna.¹⁵ Studio Anna was one of the most prolific producers of Aboriginal style ceramics for domestic use at the time. The studio was established by Carl Jung Virt in 1952 and continued to produce Aboriginal style ceramics; ashtrays, tea and coffee sets, salt and pepper shakers and so on, until 1984.¹⁶

It has been argued that the rapid increase in this genre was a result of an embargo being placed on "the importation of cheap ceramics from Japan" in the aftermath of the Second World War.¹⁷ Glenn R. Cooke has argued that local potteries, and thus the demand for their products, emerged as a result of a gap in the market created by this embargo. This argument explains the potteries emergence but does not necessarily attend to their choice of Aboriginal style as their subject matter. Black also noted that other arenas in which the representation of Aboriginal art and culture had occurred heightened the popularity of Aboriginal style works in decorative arts. Black stated that according to one of Sydney's major producers of Aboriginal style ceramics "the popularity of pottery decorated with aboriginal designs has increased since the staging of the magnificent *Corroboree* ballet."¹⁸ *Corroboree* evolved out of a musical score into two different ballet productions that toured the country as part of the Commonwealth Jubilee Year program of events in 1951. Catrina Vignando has demonstrated how, in a similar manner to that seen in the visual and decorative arts, Aboriginal culture was appropriated in order to establish a uniquely Australian tradition within the performing arts.¹⁹

The jubilee anniversary of federation provided a catalyst for artistic and cultural events in 1951 in a similar way to the anniversaries discussed in previous chapters. In response to the lack of Indigenous representation in the events scheduled in Victoria, and in an attempt to seize some power, members of the Australian Aborigines League threatened organisers with disruptive protests if the under representation was not addressed. Eventually they were

¹⁴ Of the well renowned Boyd family that also produced one of Australia's best known painters Arthur Boyd. Brenda Niall, *The Boyds: A Family Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2002.

¹⁵ Glenn R. Cooke, "Aboriginal Motifs in the Decorative Arts, 'An Art for Australia from Australians'", in Baddeley, *Motif and Meaning*, 1999, p.11.

¹⁶ Factor, "Marketing an Australian Identity", *Olive Pink Society Journal*, 1991, p.21.

¹⁷ Glenn R. Cooke, "Kitsch or Kind: Representations of Aborigines in Popular Art", *Artlink: Australian Contemporary Art Quarterly*, vol.15 #4 Summer, 1995, p.14.

¹⁸ Black, *Old and New Australian Aboriginal Art*, 1964, p.157.

¹⁹ Catrina Vignando, "Corroboree: Aboriginal Inspiration in Contemporary Australian Ballet", *Olive Pink Society Journal*, vol.3 #2, 1991, pp.10-14.

recognised by the Melbourne City Council who provided funds and professional support to assist with the production of an Indigenous performance titled *An Aboriginal Moomba*.²⁰ To a degree this performance raised awareness of living Indigenous people and culture (as opposed to an abstracted and often decontextualised Indigenous art/culture as seen in non-Indigenous productions). This was also the case with the film *Jedda* released in 1955 and produced and directed by Charles Chauvel [Plate 125]. The film was an extremely high profile production and was the first to utilise Indigenous people in the lead roles played by Rosalie Kunoth-Monks and Robert Tudawali. It was shot largely on location in various parts of the Northern Territory and was also the first feature film in Australia to be shot using colour film stock.²¹

It is important to remember that the period outlined above was also the time during which Indigenous artists such as Albert Namatjira, discussed in Part One of this thesis, were practicing and gaining exceptional popular (as opposed to critical) support. Moreover, Indigenous organisations in the southeast of the country, like Aboriginal Enterprises, were operating alongside these non-Indigenous excursions into "Aboriginal style" objects. Aboriginal Enterprises was established by Bill Onus (father of artist Lin Onus) in 1952.²² Bill Onus was also an activist and the president of the Australian Aborigines League (Victoria) and campaigned strongly for the "yes" vote in the 1967 referendum. Aboriginal Enterprises functioned as a meeting place for Indigenous artists offering "employment and training and 'a good cultural way'."²³ The range of objects they marketed included "boomerangs, scarves, boomerang-shaped coffee tables, stools, greeting cards and pottery."²⁴ While the objects that Aboriginal Enterprises marketed were similar to those discussed above (made by non-Indigenous artists), their function, when produced by Indigenous artists, became quite different. As Sylvia Kleinert has highlighted, "for Aborigines in the southeast, tourism was crucial to their cultural survival – a way of 'keeping culture'".²⁵ Tourism itself was an escalating industry, particularly in Victoria where Bill Onus was operating. In part this was related to the Olympic Games which were held in Melbourne in 1956. As Cooke has noted, Aboriginal motifs were extremely prominent during the celebrations, not only within official ceremonies but also more broadly across the city.²⁶

The broad representation of Indigenous people and art across the spectrum of visual culture has provided contemporary artists with a vast archive upon which to draw in creating appropriative works. Where these works differ to those that appropriate from the more

²⁰ For a full discussion of the staging of this production and the responses to it see Sylvia Kleinert, "An Aboriginal Moomba: Remaking History", *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, vol.13 #3, 1999, pp.345-357.

²¹ For a discussion of Chauvel's approach to the production see Susanne Chauvel Carlsson, "Jedda: New Life for a Fifties Classic", *Metro*, #144, 2005, pp.50-53.

²² Cooke, "Aboriginal Motifs", in Baddeley, *Motif and Meaning*, 1999, p.12.

²³ Sylvia Kleinert, "Rear-Vision Mirror: A Koori Context", in Margo Neale (ed), *Urban Dingo: The Art and Life of Lin Onus 1948-1996*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2000, p.27

²⁴ Cooke, "Aboriginal Motifs", in Baddeley, *Motif and Meaning*, 1999, p.12.

²⁵ Kleinert, "Rear-Vision Mirror", in Neale (ed), *Urban Dingo*, 2000, p.27.

²⁶ Cooke, "Aboriginal Motifs", in Baddeley, *Motif and Meaning*, 1999, p.12.

confined realm of mainstream art historical accounts is that they often refer to a more recent past. Moreover, the source material is often itself an appropriation of Indigenous identity, art and culture. There is also a distinction to be made here between the kitsch nature of the objects and images being appropriated and the new work that is created in a contemporary fine art context. For, when contemporary artists appropriate from the annals of kitsch culture they subvert it, fully aware of the irony of their subversion which places low art in a high art context. Kitsch therefore becomes something to be co-opted, and, through its re-presentation, becomes a site for critique.

Finding an Aboriginal Presence

What is important to draw out of this discussion of the popularity of "Aboriginalia" in kitsch culture within Australia is that it provided representations, albeit often racist and stereotypical, of Indigenous Australian identities and cultures. Common to their practice is a sense that these kitsch representations, whilst steeped in racist overtones due to the lack of individuality evident in the figures presented, provide a continuity of presence that defies the image of Indigenous Australians as a dying race seen in the photography of the 1880s. As Brenda L. Croft has argued:

There exists a paradox: retaining fond memories of this kitsch ephemera and its links with our childhood, coupled with the fact that these bastardised versions of Aboriginal visual culture were, for many displaced, dispossessed Indigenous people, the only visual representation of our culture.²⁷

It is this love / hate relationship with "Aboriginal style" and "Aboriginalia" that is played out by the appropriative artists who reference these images. It is also this fact that has determined the importance of these images to the contemporary artists who appropriate them. As curator Tess McLennan has argued these kitsch objects are highly valued and take on new meanings when combined by artists with irony and wit:

Walk into the lounge rooms of Aboriginal people today and you will find past images of white constructions of Aboriginal Australia from the media and advertising now reclaimed and reinvented as 'Black Kitsch'... used in art practice with cynicism and humour [these images are] playing a major role in the acceptance of Black Art.²⁸

For Indigenous artists like Tracey Moffatt this process of reclamation has been twofold. In the first instance she has appropriated images of Aboriginality, as outlined above, from the annals of popular culture. In the second instance she has referenced the cultural production of Aboriginal artists that were once relegated to this class of tourist kitsch or curiosity, as was the case with Namatjira's work. As discussed in Chapter Three, Namatjira has attained a level of reverence and recognition beyond his initial value, which, within white society, was based on his ability to paint competent watercolour representations of landscape. Moffatt, a photographer and filmmaker, is one of Australia's most internationally acclaimed artists who made her mark in the 1980s with films such as *Nice Coloured Girls* (1987) and *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1989) [Plate 127]. She was a founding member of Boomalli Aboriginal

²⁷ Croft, "You must remember this...", in Baddeley, *Motif and Meaning*, 1999, p.19.

²⁸ McLennan, "Black Humour" in O'Neill & Barney, *Black Humour*, 1997, n.p.

Artists Co-operative and was very politically active amongst her Indigenous peers during this time.²⁹ Moffatt's early films and photographs were concerned with both the representation of Indigenous Australians and the reality of contemporary life as an Indigenous person.

Her short film, *Night Cries*, reflected this dual concern. It took the fictional Aboriginal character of Jedda, from Charles Chauvel's 1955 feature film of the same name, and her white foster mother as its starting point. In Chauvel's film Jedda was torn between her white adoptive parents, Sarah and Doug, and the lure of Marbuk, "the handsome black outlaw/seducer" who was pitted against Joe "the sensible, civilised half-caste ringer to whom Jedda should have been *attracted* and become married."³⁰ Jedda, however, was seduced by Marbuk who led her to her death, "dragged over a cliff" in an effort to elude Joe.³¹ Some have argued that Jedda's role "calls into question the wisdom of assimilationist discourse" which was signalled by her "desire for more contact with Aboriginal people."³² But Indigenous scholars such as Marcia Langton see the film as "sickening and, at the same time, laughable in its racism."³³ It is precisely this multilayered scope for criticism and interpretation that has ensured its longevity within critical discourses on representations of Indigenous Australians. Moffatt explained her motivation in extending the premise of *Jedda*:

I... took two of the films characters, Jedda, the black woman, and her white mother, and aged them as if thirty years had past. In the original film, Jedda is thrown off a cliff and killed. I wanted to resurrect her, and place the two of them back in the homestead situation, living out their days.³⁴

The film, however, also became autobiographical – from this initial inspiration, Moffatt went on to describe that the narrative, which revolves around the relationship between the invalid white mother and the Aboriginal daughter who had to care for her, increasingly reflected her own relationship with her white adoptive mother.³⁵

Moffatt's film is set in a dilapidated homestead which Langton, who starred in the film as the aged Jedda, has described as "so reminiscent of Aboriginal poverty."³⁶ Moffatt's homestead is in direct contrast to Chauvel's homestead – "an exhibition of the wealth extracted from the slave labour of the Aboriginal men and women on the Australian pastoral station."³⁷ The

²⁹ For example Moffatt protested at the departure of the First Fleet re-enactment when it left Portsmouth, UK, in 1987 bound for Australia and the bicentennial celebrations. In particular she challenged the flying of the Aboriginal flag aboard the re-enactment fleet. See Yvonne Preston, "Aboriginal Anger Shadows Ships Of The New First Fleet", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 May 1987, p.5.

³⁰ Marcia Langton, *'Well I Heard it on the Radio and I Saw it on the Television...': An Essay for the Australian Film Commission on the Politics and Aesthetics of Filmmaking by and About Aboriginal People and Things*, Australian Film Commission, Woolloomooloo, NSW, 1993, p.46.

³¹ Langton, *Well I Heard it on the Radio*, 1993, p.46.

³² Dave Palmer & Garry Gillard, "Aborigines, Ambivalence and Australian Film, *Metro*, #134, 2002, p.130.

³³ Langton, *Well I Heard it on the Radio*, 1993, p.47.

³⁴ Tracey Moffatt, cited in Murray, "Night Cries and Tracey Moffatt", 1990, p.22.

³⁵ Tracey Moffatt, cited in Murray, "Night Cries and Tracey Moffatt", 1990, p.22.

³⁶ Langton, *Well I Heard it on the Radio*, 1993, p.47.

³⁷ Langton, *Well I Heard it on the Radio*, 1993, p.47.

daughter, herself a middle aged woman, is left to look after her decrepit mother, a task which she carries out with much disdain and bitterness as she dreams of another place. The film cuts between scenes inside the homestead and the homestead's exterior as well as flashbacks from Jedda's childhood. Interspersed amongst these sets are scenes of Indigenous performer Jimmy Little singing a Christian inspired song in his characteristically upbeat manner.

When Jedda does leave the house an artificial landscape scene is revealed within which a highly polished floor is contrasted with a painted landscape backdrop. Moffatt has acknowledged the influence that Albert Namatjira's watercolours had on the construction of the set.³⁸ Accordingly, Moffatt's appropriation is twofold, in the first instance the stereotypical representation of Aboriginal Australians, as seen in films like *Jedda*, was assumed. In the second instance the paintings by Namatjira, who was active as an artist at the time of *Jedda's* release, provides another layer of appropriation. Although Chauvel's white narrative provided the domestic setting of the homestead and the initial characters, the landscape was characterised by an Indigenous presence found in Namatjira. By appropriating the familiar but artificial nature of the 1950s aesthetic seen in popular representations of outback life Moffatt subverts the white myth of a romantic bucolic fantasy and instead presents one particular reality of life on the land. By doing so she also draws attention to what has since become known as the stolen generations of Aboriginal people who were taken from their families and forced to live in white foster families.

While depictions of Aboriginal art and culture were becoming more prominent, as seen in films like *Jedda* and through Aboriginal style decorative art objects and images, Aboriginal people themselves were subjected to government policies of assimilation aimed at absorbing the Aboriginal population into the dominant settler culture.³⁹ The official policy of assimilation continued until the 1970s and, as discussed in Part Two of this thesis, was only recently acknowledged within the public domain via the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's report *Bringing Them Home* (1997). The stolen generations also figure in the work of Destiny Deacon. Deacon's practice reframes the terms of reference for kitsch objects in order to draw attention to the inherent racism upon which they were founded. In Deacon's oeuvre, it is the black doll that draws the most attention. As Indigenous curator Hetti Perkins has explained:

The dolls are not pretty empty-headed playthings; they are invested with the intent of their artist puppet-master, are objects of wit and whimsy, relics of Aboriginal kitsch, and radiate a familiarity that we all engage with: touchstones of our dreams and childhood.⁴⁰

³⁸ Moffatt cited in Murray, "Night Cries and Tracey Moffatt", 1990, p.22.

³⁹ "During the 1950s and 1960s even greater numbers of Indigenous children were removed from their families to advance the cause of assimilation. Not only were they removed for alleged neglect, they were removed to attend school in distant places, to receive medical treatment and to be adopted out at birth." *Bringing Them Home*, Part Two: Tracing the History, National Overview, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997, accessed 09/03/06, [<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen/stolen08.html>].

⁴⁰ Hetti Perkins, "Dollywood", in Natalie King, *Destiny Deacon: Walk & Don't Look Blak*, exh.cat., Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2004, p.105.

Like Croft, Perkins highlights the familiarity of these objects associated with memories and childhood. Deacon's photograph *Meet Us Outside* (1994) plays upon this familiarity while she simultaneously inflects the image with a sinister edge. With its depiction of a black doll stretching beyond the confines of its cot this photograph conjures up many of the personal accounts, reproduced in *Bringing Them Home*, of children who were institutionalised at a young age. One of these confidential accounts illustrated the confinement that was common as punishment in such institutions:

They used to lock us up in a little room like a cell and keep us on bread and water for a week if you played up too much.⁴¹

The bars of the cot visually parallel the bars of cells and highlight the fact that Indigenous rates of incarceration remain disproportionately high when compared to the non-Indigenous population.⁴² In its title, Deacon's work also speaks of the hope of breaking the cycle and meeting up with friends and family on the outside. The innocence of the child, its podgy little hand thrust through the cot masks, initially, the acidic and scathing critique of government policy presented here. This is a common characterisation of Deacon's work whereby seemingly innocuous and humorous images deliver a hefty political commentary.

In addition to reconfiguring white kitsch representations of Aboriginality through her staging of "Aboriginalia" as characters in her reconstructions, she has also engaged more directly with that archive in her installation *Welcome to Never Never* (1995). This work presented a museum cabinet packed full of the type of "Aboriginalia" discussed in earlier parts of this chapter: salt and pepper shakers, mugs, ashtrays, placemats, spoons, bowls, scarves, wall hangings, figurines and postcards to name a few. The context of this material is altered by the circumstances of this exhibition. For Deacon, to depict this material is to present it as a critique of the original objects and the circumstances under which they were created – as opposed to the way they were utilised at the time of their creation. But it is also a means of acknowledging the paradox that Croft spoke of whereby these objects are at once valued, worthy of display in a glass museum case, but also despised as evidence of the way Indigenous Australians were objectified in times past. It is tempting to compare the display of this kitsch material, where Deacon is the protagonist and active agent, with the 1941 exhibition organised by McCarthy where no Aboriginal people were consulted on how their cultural objects were to be displayed or what they thought of the 'applications' of Aboriginal art also exhibited. It is also possible, however, to mount the same critique of Deacon's installation as was offered by Penny Mason and Julie Gough in response to the exhibition

⁴¹ Confidential evidence 358b, South Australia: man removed as a baby in the 1950s; first placed at Koonibba Mission, then a Salvation Army Boys' Home where he experienced above punishments, then on to reform school and prison. *Bringing Them Home*, Part Three: Consequences of Removal, Children's Experiences, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997, accessed 09/03/06, [<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen/stolen18.html>].

⁴² One of the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was that institutionalisation during childhood greatly increased the chance of institutionalisation in adulthood as well. *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody*, National Report: Volume Two – Multiple Offending, 1991, accessed 29/09/06, [<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/rciadic/national/vol2/122.html>].

Motif and Meaning.⁴³ That is, by merely re-presenting these kitsch objects in an art gallery context there is potential for the viewers to be left unaware of the distinction between the original context and Deacon's critique. In part this is determined by the specific context in which the installation is viewed. For example, when seen as part of her retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, this contextual shift was impossible to overlook as it was seen in relation to her larger oeuvre in which the absurdity of such kitsch objects was patently clear. Without the context of her other work however, in which she stages these kitsch objects within unlikely, and as such unmistakably contrived, tableaux, this installation could be open to misinterpretation.

Ross Moore's installation *Dear Primitive* (1994), one of the few examples of a non-Indigenous artist who has appropriated examples of kitsch "Aboriginalia", could be similarly criticised for its ambiguity. Moore's work was originally exhibited at Temple Studio in Melbourne in 1994. The work was also recreated for the 1996 exhibition *Colonial Post Colonial* discussed in Part Two of this thesis. Moore is a Melbourne based artist who has lectured in Art History at Monash University. His work has primarily been concerned with sexual identity and representation and he has participated in shows related to raising AIDS awareness. In the catalogue for *Dear Primitive* Moore recounted how, in the wake of the political correctness of the 1980s, much of the "Aboriginalia" that informed this particular installation was obscured [Plate 130]. He went on to note that "All school library texts 'picturing' aborigines 'in an unfavourable light' were offloaded."⁴⁴ He argued that there was a similar obscurity afforded to any instances of sexual discrimination evident in historical accounts. This type of politically correct selection of texts (and histories) that suited the story being promoted denied any acknowledgment of the way in which Australia had treated marginalised sectors of the community.

Dear Primitive specifically engaged with the tradition of white artists representing Indigenous people and imagery as discussed above. Chris Healy described the viewer's experience of the installation thus:

High up on the walls of the entrance to the gallery were hung a number of very roughly painted banners featuring crude Aboriginal figures which might once have adorned a shop selling Aboriginal 'curios' in Alice Springs. From this antechamber, the visitor could hear the second component of the exhibition, a soundtrack swelling from within the gallery, a room constructed to conjure the aura of the museum, which contained a number of simulated shields on display plinths. A further room contained a floor-piece consisting of many white tiles each printed with an identical image featuring three 'dancing Aborigines'.⁴⁵

As with Stephen Bush, Moore's position as a non-Indigenous Australian is fraught with ambiguity. For this is not a clear-cut case of reclamation, as can be argued with the work of Deacon and Moffatt. It is more akin to Bennett's and Thompson's work aimed at exposing

⁴³ Mason, "Inconstant Values?", 2001, p.268.

⁴⁴ Moore, *Black Bodies as Décor*, 1994, n.p.

⁴⁵ Chris Healy, "Dear Primitive", *Agenda: Australian Contemporary Art*, #41, March 1995, p.15.

the racist underbelly of Australia. Moore candidly described an encounter from his childhood, growing up in Broken Hill in far western NSW, which illuminated his position:

Our family went for a drive to Menindee and a 'bunch of Abos' (this being the parlance of the time) were 'hanging around like flies' outside Maiden's Beer Garden. Mum grabbed my hand to drag me past... 'Bloody nigger bastards' Dad said and plunged powerfully forward... inside things were suddenly OK because there were only whites.⁴⁶

Such an admission, that racism was not perpetrated by others but by his own family, seems to go some way to acknowledging the dark side of Australian history that came under scrutiny in the last two decades of this century. Furthermore, unlike Bush, Moore implicated himself, and his family, in that history. Moore's aim was precisely to highlight these racist images in order to acknowledge past attitudes and, in turn, transcend them. He argued that political correctness had obscured any acknowledgment of the racist nature of Australian history and that rather than trying to hide from this past it would be better to familiarise people with it.⁴⁷ Thus he asked the viewer to consider how representations of Aboriginality have been shaped by non-Indigenous forces. Moore was careful to draw attention to the fact that the images from which he appropriated were exclusively white constructions: "I have eschewed all aboriginal voices and mark-making... This is quite literally the white man's story."⁴⁸ In so doing however he ignored the fact that although these images were made by non-Indigenous Australians, and represent non-Indigenous attitudes toward Indigenous people at that time, it was still Indigenous people that were depicted. Indigenous Australians were the ones that were the subject of this racist material. His installation could be seen as analogous to *Motif and Meaning*, whose critical stance, as Penny Mason argued, was not clearly articulated within the visual display but more clearly outlined in the catalogue essay.⁴⁹

Perhaps the most successful aspect of Moore's installation was found in the repetition of motifs seen in the floor piece consisting of screen-printed ceramic tiles [Plate 131]. The motifs on the tiles, three figures dancing, recall the figure on Eileen Mayo's 1956 poster *Discover Australia* commissioned by the Australian National Travel Association [Plate 132]. They also, however, recall the image on the cover of the exhibition catalogue for Albert Namatjira's first show – designed by the artist himself [Plate 133].⁵⁰ His repetition of the tiles reflected the repetition of stereotypes that perpetuated the notion of Aboriginal identity as fixed and other, as opposed to multifarious – a criticism that was also made by Brook Andrew, to be discussed below. In their repetition, Moore gave the audience a clue, like Fiona Foley and her platform shoes, that this work was not merely restating the attitudes of the original makers but rather demonstrating that the repetition of these images creates stereotypes and patterns that have little relationship to reality. His installation highlighted a

⁴⁶ Moore, *Black Bodies as Décor*, 1994, n.p.

⁴⁷ Moore, *Black Bodies as Décor*, 1994, n.p.

⁴⁸ Moore, *Black Bodies as Décor*, 1994, n.p.

⁴⁹ Mason, "Inconstant Values?", 2001, p.268.

⁵⁰ See Bill Gammage & Peter Spearritt (eds), *Australians: A Historical Library. Australians 1938*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Broadway, NSW, 1987, p.125.

question that is central to acknowledging history and identity in Australia – how do non-Indigenous people come to terms with the racist history that Moore has perceived, and indeed been a part of? Like Indigenous artists discussed earlier, Moore's installation was part of an exploration of his own identity, in an attempt to come to terms with the racist attitudes seen in the outback town that he grew up in. But perhaps mere re-presentation was too simplistic a method to critique this material? In discussing the work of Julie Gough, who has also incorporated kitsch into her practice, Hannah Fink has argued that the successful reframing of kitsch is reliant on the status of the appropriator. Gough used a black doll, for example, in her work *Physiological Adaptation to Cold* (1994) which commented on experiments that were carried out on Indigenous Australian people in the 1950s.⁵¹ Fink claims that "the meaning of the objects changes according to whoever owns them, and they are only 'funny' when in the possession of an Aboriginal person."⁵²

The repetition of a kitsch aesthetic was also seen in the work of Wiradjuri artist Brook Andrew. In Andrew's *Reconstructing More Whiteman's Kitsch 1788-?* (1994) [Plate 134] the aesthetic of the tourist souvenir has been appropriated to the extent that it is almost mistakable for the cheap tea towels (still) available at many low price tourist outlets. His tea towel is an amalgam of advertising trademarks. The central motif depicts a kookaburra on a branch with a worm in its mouth and the date, January 26, printed beside it [Plate 135].⁵³ The kookaburra is surrounded by a number of other images: an Australian flag, a map of Australia, a Banksia flower and an Aboriginal figure holding a spear in one hand and a boomerang in the other [Plate 136].⁵⁴ Andrew has re-presented these individual motifs with few changes from their original contexts. His intervention is subtle, he printed the Aboriginal flag over the Australian flag in the left hand corner of the tea towel and stamped a date to the right of the kookaburra. This format was reproduced two hundred times with only the date stamp changing. On each tea towel the years between 1788 and 1988 were printed. Andrew presented these tea towels as a reclamation of each year that Indigenous Australians have suffered since the establishment of a British colony in Sydney in 1788.⁵⁵ Andrew stated that:

In reconstructing and placing the Aboriginal flag over the Australian flag, I have given the space for an Aboriginal voice to reclaim and reconstruct false histories and identities perpetuated in Australian / Aboriginal history.⁵⁶

By presenting 200 of these tea towels Andrew highlighted the fact that, apart from the date, they are all the same. This in turn reiterated his claim that the image of the "noble savage" that he included on the bottom right corner effectively obscured "the diversity and dynamics

⁵¹ See Michael Denholm, "The Artist as Detective: The Art of Julie Gough", *Periphery*, #33, Summer, 1997, pp.23-25.

⁵² Fink, "Bad Memory", 1998, p.5.

⁵³ An obvious reference to Australia and the landing of Captain Cook.

⁵⁴ Of these motifs that Andrew appropriated, the Kookaburra was taken from a stove advertisement, the figure is from a 1921 shirt advertisement, the Banksia is from a liquor advertisement of 1917 and even the map of Australia refers an advertisement for sewing machines from 1909. All of these images are illustrated in Mimmo Cozzolino, *Symbols of Australia*, Penguin Books Australia, Ringwood, Vic., 1980, pp.149, 129, 66, 20.

⁵⁵ This work was exhibited in Croft & Perkins, *True Colours* discussed in detail in Chapter Eight.

⁵⁶ Andrew, "Artist's Statement", in Croft & Perkins, *True Colours*, 1994.

of Aboriginal culture."⁵⁷ As with Moore's installation, it was through the *repetition* of the appropriation, that the shift in perspective was most evident. Andrew effectively emphasised the power of kitsch representations to form stereotypical and sentimental views on Australian history that were in contrast to individual experiences.⁵⁸

Cultural Cleansing: Attempts at Erasing that Presence

Although the "noble savage" that Andrew appropriated, which was taken from an advertisement for shirts, was stereotypical and sentimental it was not as explicitly racist as other advertising images prominent during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mimmo Cozzolino's book, *Symbols of Australia*, reveals a multitude of trademarks in which Indigenous people were used to advertise products as diverse as paint, fruit, pharmaceuticals, meat, musical instruments and soap.⁵⁹ One of the most shocking of these advertisements was for Nulla-Nulla soap registered as a trademark by M. O'Riordan & Sons in Sydney in 1920.⁶⁰ The method of address in this ad was direct and unsophisticated. An Aboriginal person, is personified as "dirt", a 'king plate' around their neck tells the viewer this in clear writing. A white hand whacks "dirt" on the head with a nulla-nulla (a club or hitting stick). The slogan interprets the scene to reiterate the point: "Nulla-Nulla: Australia's white hope, the best household soap. Knocks dirt on the head." At the time this ad was created the white Australia policy enjoyed widespread support as "a nationalist doctrine which embodied Australia's desire to maintain itself as a white, British nation."⁶¹ A parallel can be made between this type of advertising imagery, depicting Indigenous Australians, and appropriations of Aboriginal art at the time. In both, it is evident that Indigenous people and culture provided a point of reference for non-Indigenous people on one level, but they were excluded from mainstream social and political life on another level. Both Gordon Bennett and Christian Bumbarra Thompson have appropriated this image.

Bennett referenced the Nulla-Nulla soap advertisement in his installation *The Aboriginalist (Identity of Negation: Flotsam)* (1994) [Plate 137]. The work has two components, a painting hung on the wall, and a sculptural piece positioned on the floor in front. In the painting Bennett depicts a white settler, emerging from a capsized boat onto dry land clutching his box of Nulla-Nulla soap, ready to take on the task of knocking dirt on the head. Allusions to the process of colonisation are impossible to ignore here, as are the overtones of cultural cleansing implied by the fact that the soap's slogan provided customers with hope that a white Australia was possible. However the image of the settler bringing his soapbox ashore

⁵⁷ Andrew, "Artist's Statement", in Croft & Perkins, *True Colours*, 1994.

⁵⁸ It should be noted that Andrew's artistic production has since departed significantly from this early work. He is still concerned with cultural difference but, through a series of overseas residencies, has been able to produce work which considers cultural difference on a much more global scale. He predominantly works in photographic and digital technologies. Like Tracey Moffatt, Andrew has expressed a desire to be known as an Australian artist rather than being identified, and valued, only on the basis that he is Indigenous.

⁵⁹ Mimmo Cozzolino, *Symbols of Australia*, Penguin Books Australia, Ringwood, Vic., 1980, pp.45-48.

⁶⁰ Cozzolino, *Symbols of Australia*, 1980, p.47.

⁶¹ Gwenda Tavan, "The Dismantling of the White Australia Policy: Elite Conspiracy or Will of the Australian People?", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol.39 #1, March 2004, p.111.

is also metaphorical and is reflected in Bennett's construction of an actual soapbox, also depicting the Nulla-Nulla advertisement, which sits in front of the painting. The soapbox Bennett created is rendered useless by the fact that the lid is detached – it is impossible to get up on this soapbox – impossible to use it as a platform to spruik the racist attitudes represented in the appropriated ad. Significantly the lid of the box is lined with mirrors encouraging inward contemplation rather than the outward berating associated with soapbox commentary.

In a more literal way, Thompson, a Bidjara artist from the Carnarvon Gorge region of Southwest Queensland, has attempted to reflect these racist attitudes back onto Australian society in his appropriation of the same advertisement. He has achieved this through repetition, the same tactic employed in Andrew's work, discussed above. Thompson's *Nulla Nulla Australia's White Hope* (undated) [Plate 138] re-presents the advertisement, repeated six times, surrounded with cakes of actual soap.⁶² He has captioned each of the reproductions of the ad with "Soap advertisement, 1920s". In a way this appropriation is overly simplistic, for, in re-presenting the ad is he merely asking his viewers to consider the racist nature of the original without offering any sort of commentary, or shift in perspective. The original may shock viewers but Thompson's intent in reproducing it is not clear – is he suggesting that there has been no change in attitude since the 1920s, that Australian society is just as racist in the late twentieth century? Perhaps in light of the discourse on racism that emerged at the time, instigated by Pauline Hanson and her political party One Nation, it was not an unlikely parallel to draw.⁶³

Whiteness, and the whitewashing of Australian history (and an Indigenous presence within that history), was also a concern of Clinton Nain who appropriated the domestic bleaching product White King as a metaphor for cultural cleansing [Plate 139]. There is a clear difference here between the appropriation of a historical advertising image depicting Indigenous Australians and the appropriation of a commercial product, still readily available contemporary Australian society, and seemingly unrelated to Indigenous history, representation or politics. Where artists discussed so far in this chapter have appropriated from popular representations of Aboriginality, Nain inverted this process to consider depictions of whiteness within Australian society. Nain drew on Pop art in order to valorise everyday domestic products – next to Andy Warhol's soup cans are Nain's bleach bottles. But for Nain the bleach bottle has a much more sinister undercurrent. He uses bleach as a

⁶² Thompson's work was illustrated in Bronwyn Bancroft & Ken Watson, "Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative. Fact or Fantasy: You Decide!", *Artlink*, vol.20 #1, 2000, p.79. Other artists, such as Julie Gough have also used soap in their work. Gough used soap in her installation for the 1995 Australian Perspecta, a motif that was also used in another work *Imperial Leather* (1994) which obviously played on the allusion to the soap brand as well as imperialism more broadly. See Judy Annear, *Australian Perspecta 1995*, exh.cat., Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, p.46-47; Marita Bullock, "Melancholy Debris: Black Humour and Colonial Memory in *Grids* by Julie Gough", *Southerly*, vol.65 #1, pp.35-44.

⁶³ This work appears to be quite an early work in Thompson's oeuvre and he has since moved into working primarily with photographic installations. As well as working as an artist he has also curated exhibitions and written on contemporary Indigenous Australian art.

symbol of assimilationist policies in which the White King has attempted to dissolve the existence of the "Blak Queen".⁶⁴ White King bleach bottles figure in his evocatively titled works including *It Reigns White King* (1999) and *Bleaching Of My Existence* (1999). In these works the bleach bottle becomes symbolic of the colonial regime and its attempt to assimilate Aboriginal people by bleaching their Indigenous identity. But, as Nain has noted:

If not washed out [bleach] will rot and eat itself. Leaving stains and shadows of existence. While memories remain, I cannot be extinguished or bleached out of existence... Bleach usually turns things white, but whitewashing blakness – chaotically – makes only stains and shadows. It doesn't blot out or extinguish the blak.⁶⁵

Moreover, having established the symbolism of the White King bleach bottle as a motif within his installations, Nain continued the metaphor by painting in bleach and combining that process with historical referencing from high art. In *Ramming the Blak Rams* (2001) [Plate 140] Nain appropriated Tom Roberts' iconic painting, *Shearing the Rams* (1889-1890), and integrated it within his discourse on the bleaching of Indigenous presence within representations of Australian history. This work comprised of two elements, a piece of bleached Indian cotton and an NGA poster of Roberts' painting, making it both subtle and blatant. It is subtle in the fact that Nain required the viewer to make a connection between the bleaching of the cotton and government policies of assimilation which have been equated with an attempt at genocide, at bleaching out Indigenous people.⁶⁶ It is blatant in the fact that Nain has modified Roberts' work of art by painting the sheep black, which, through the process of being shorn effectively renders them white. While these elements are quite different, the message remains the same – blackness is whitewashed under colonial regimes. As John Harding (Nain's brother) maintained, Indigenous people were "bleached of their languages, bleached of their children, bleached of their pride, bleached of their very way of life" and yet, as he continued, "we are still here".⁶⁷ Nain's use of bleach provides a more sophisticated example of how everyday objects have been appropriated for the purposes of critiquing the treatment of Indigenous Australians since settlement.⁶⁸

Conclusion

Where the artists discussed in the two previous chapters have appropriated from the canon of Australian art history, those discussed here have drawn on broader sources from the sphere of visual culture. Although the creation of kitsch "Aboriginalia" indicates a paternalistic

⁶⁴ Blak Queen is "a reference to both Nain's gay pride and the mother of creation". See John Harding, *Whitens, Removes Stains, Kills Germs!*, exh.cat., Sherman Galleries, Sydney, 2001. The spelling of "Blak", first used by Destiny Deacon in 1991, is employed as an alternative to "Black". The term has since been adopted into popular nomenclature as a means of self-definition amongst some urban Indigenous artists. See Clare Williamson & Hetti Perkins, *Blakness: Blak City Culture!*, exh.cat., Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, South Yarra, Vic., & Boomalli, Sydney, 1994, p.20.

⁶⁵ Clinton Nain cited in Gary Lee, "Clinton Nain" in Croft, *Beyond the Pale*, 2000, pp.46-8.

⁶⁶ See Sue Stanton, "Time for Truth: Speaking the Unspeakable – Genocide and Apartheid in the 'Lucky' Country", *Australian Humanities Review*, July 1999 [<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-July-1999/stanton.html>].

⁶⁷ Harding, "Whitens, Removes Stain, Kills Germs!", 2001.

⁶⁸ Recently Nain has gone on to engage more literally with Indigenous history and assimilationist policies by investigating the experiences of people directly affected by institutionalisation. See *Clinton Nain: Living Under the Bridge*, exh.cat., Sherman Galleries, Sydney, 2003.

naivety peculiar to the specific time period in which it was created, the contemporary artists who have appropriated this material highlight its menacing undercurrent which is often masked by the very familiarity of such images. In a similar manner to the artists who appropriated landscape images discussed in Chapter Nine, the artists discussed here have been concerned to illuminate the foundations upon which these images were based. The very one-dimensional nature of these original images, however, leaves little room for the appropriative artist. For, in re-presenting such images it has been difficult to indicate the shift in perspective that was seen when artists appropriated from the realm of high art. Where this has occurred more successfully has been in the repetition of such kitsch forms. Through repetition artists like Andrew and Moore were able to demonstrate that their new works were in fact exaggerating those stereotypes in an attempt to critique those familiar images. Perhaps to an even greater extent, it has been the metaphorical appropriation of bleach by Nain that has proved most effective in critiquing narratives of colonial history.

What this final part of the thesis has served to highlight is the specific nature of the appropriative histories. It has achieved this through the presentation of an examination of the details of these works – their constituent parts, their themes, their commonalities. Where the historical works created by non-Indigenous artists, and appropriated by contemporary artists, were concerned to conceal the realities of life in a colonised country, in the hands of the appropriative artists this "reality" has been unveiled. There has been no attempt to mask the appropriative foundations of the artworks. That is, all of the artists discussed above have been rather blatant about their sources, leaving clues even for an uninformed audience. It is this fact that separates these appropriative histories from other forms of appropriation in Australia and overseas. It is also this fact that has enabled a consideration of these works as a discrete current identifiable within Australian art history that has, up until this point, not been identified in such a manner.

Conclusion

The tradition continues or a return to conservatism?

History is always our most useful tool and guide, because knowing our past helps us to divine our future.¹

The 'new history' that Bain Attwood spoke of, which took into account Indigenous perspectives, seems to have fallen by the wayside.² Australia has been under the leadership of a conservative government for more than ten years which has seen a reversal of the advancements of the nineties in relation to raising awareness around issues of Indigenous Australian history. In 2006, 77 per cent of Australian students in year ten did not know what event was remembered on Australia Day. Not only have debates around whether Australia Day should be celebrated or mourned been obscured but the significance of the day itself has been forgotten. These year ten students were born two or three years after the bicentenary of white settlement was marked on 26 January 1988. They were around ten years of age when, as I argued in Part Two, public awareness of, and interest in, narratives of colonial and Indigenous history reached their pinnacle. Moreover, it has not just been children who have not been ignorant of these details. Carmel Tebbutt, the NSW Minister for Education, also confused the significance of Australia Day, wrongly stating that it marked the anniversary of the federation of the Australian states into a nation.³ If there is any evidence that the interest in Australian history has waned, this is most compelling.

Concrete factors have influenced this turnaround. The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation disbanded at the end of 2000 and the absence of the unified national approach it provided during the "decade of reconciliation" is obvious.⁴ CAR's ability to muster the enthusiasm and support of the public has been missed and highlights the responsibility of governments to fund bodies that can inspire action. Indigenous representative bodies, such as ATSIC, have also been dismantled by the government, a fact that caused grave fears amongst Indigenous leaders as to their continued ability to lobby the government from a unified standpoint.⁵ While advances in Indigenous social welfare continued on a grassroots level,

¹ Paul Keating, "The Attack on Our Future", *Age*, 4 September 2003, p.15.

² Attwood, "The Burden of the Past in the Present", Grattan (ed), *Essays on Australian Reconciliation*, 2000, p.265.

³ Carmel Tebbutt cited in Dean Bertram, "Tebbutt A Creature of Our Culture", *Australian*, 29 November, 2006, p.16.

⁴ Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Reconciliation Australia's Challenge*, 2000, p.9.

⁵ See "The End of the 'Experiment'", *ATSIC News*, June 2004, pp.4-9.

there have been no national declarations of support such as were seen in the nineties. The move towards 'practical reconciliation', advanced by the Howard government, has taken attention away from the grand public gestures of support for Indigenous issues that were promoted by CAR.⁶ Moreover, 2001 was the last in a line of national celebrations that provided a unique platform for publicly funded reflections on the past and the nature of identity in Australia. In this sense, the party is over. Since 2001, world events have drawn attention away from local politics and towards issues of border security, terrorism, war and more recently global warming.

This thesis has followed how the shared history of Australia's Indigenous and non-Indigenous people was taken up and engaged with by artists in Australia from the 1980s to 2001. One of the ways that this history was brought into public view, it has been argued, was through a process of historical referencing or appropriation. The aim has not been to collapse Indigenous and non-Indigenous art production into an uncritical whole but rather to consider where the points of intersection have occurred – to examine where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists have employed the same tactics in order to acknowledge the shared history of the nation.

Like the more general fading of interest in Australian and Indigenous history, many of the artists discussed in this thesis have moved on to other areas of inquiry within their practices. Of the artists focused on in Part Three, for example, none have continued to use appropriation in the same way. Gordon Bennett has increasingly incorporated more diverse sources within his appropriative works that look toward American art and culture as much as they do Australian.⁷ This has also been the case with Fiona Foley whose recent series *No Shades of White* (2005) examined racial hatred in a global context as opposed to the specifically local imagery that provided the basis of her appropriations discussed here. Clinton Nain continues to be concerned with Indigenous history though appropriation has figured little in his recent work which has turned towards a more expressive painterly style as seen in his show *The Dirty Deal Ain't Clean* (2005). Destiny Deacon remains one of the few artists to maintain a practise based in appropriation, which in her case has focused on kitsch depictions of "Aboriginalia" discussed in chapter Eleven. Within this however, an outward concern for global issues is still evident in works such as *Border Patrol* (2006) for example, with its allusions to migration, refugee intake and the threat of terrorism. World events have also pervaded Brook Andrew's recent work seen in his Melbourne show *Peace and Hope* (2005) which employed an overwhelmingly graphic style to oppose the war on terror and the increasing gulf between Muslims and Christians.

⁶ See John Howard, "Practical Reconciliation", in Grattan (ed), *Essays on Australian Reconciliation*, 2000, pp.88-96.9

⁷ This began with his *Notes to Basquiat* (2001) series and has been followed by series related to the terrorist attacks that occurred in the United States of America on 11 September 2001 and even more recently his *Camouflage* (2003) series has been concerned with the war in Iraq. His most recent exhibition in Sydney eschewed all representation consisting of an array of abstract lines, which nonetheless reference Indigenous art but are not constructed around the critique of colonial history in the same way that his early paintings were.

Across the time period that this thesis has considered non-Indigenous artists have also changed their direction. This has been seen in the work of Imants Tillers who shifted his position from one of unqualified appropriation to a more respectful engagement with Indigenous art based on collaboration.⁸ Ross Moore has not revisited the themes of *Dear Primitive* but sustained his examination of concepts of Queer identity. Geoff Parr has continued his concern with environmental issues and has combined this with an investigation into the form and nature of digital imaging but has not created any more history paintings. Stephen Bush maintains an interest in monumental landscapes, as seen in earlier history paintings, but has shifted the setting of these paintings to more ambiguous locations with architectural features depicted on lusciously painted abstract grounds.

While the shift in direction of these artists could be seen as a natural progression it also indicated that this radical period of awareness around acknowledging the shared history of Australia's Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens has diminished. There are some Indigenous artists who are still attempting to educate audiences through alternative perspectives on history via a use of appropriation. Three examples come to mind. Daniel Boyd, a Kudjla/Gangalu artist, recently appropriated John Webber's portrait of *Captain James Cook* (1782), re-presenting the explorer as a pirate. A subsequent work appropriated David R. Horton's map *Aboriginal Australia*⁹ over which the words Treasure Island were painted. Together these works portray explorers such as Cook as merely pillaging "unexplored" lands in search of potential treasure. Christopher Pease has also looked to colonial history to, in this case, represent early interactions between explorers and the Minang people, of whom he is a descendant.¹⁰ The "dynamics and tensions of early colonial engagements" was also the subject of a new series of work created by Yamatji-Badimaya painter Julie Dowling¹¹ Amongst these tributes to individuals like Walyer, Yagan and Pemulwuy, was a portrait of Bungaree that appropriated the figure from Augustus Earle's portrait of around 1826.

Perhaps these three artists are isolated examples, or perhaps they indicate a rekindling interest in Australia's cross-cultural colonial history – they will be watched with interest. Examples of non-Indigenous artists engaging in representations of Australian colonial history, as seen through the use of appropriation, have certainly diminished following the decades that this thesis has considered. At the beginning of the 1980s the way in which non-Indigenous artists could engage with the work of their Indigenous counterparts was not clearly defined. As the frequency of such engagements increased so did awareness of cultural protocols that would determine a respectful engagement. It is as a result of the very education that these works set out to achieve that artists are more aware of the protocols

⁸ For a discussion of Tillers' collaboration with Michael Jagamara Nelson see: Eather, *Shoosh! The History of the Campfire Group*, 2005.

⁹ The map was reproduced on the inside front cover of Kleinert & Neale (eds), *OCAAC*, 2000.

¹⁰ See Christopher Pease, *New Water Dreaming*, (2005)

¹¹ Carol Dowling, "Bal Goort Gootun Gunyuing (Her Heart Has Broken)", *Julie Dowling: Widi Boornoo (Wild Message)* exh.cat., Brigitte Braun Art Dealer, Melbourne, 2006.

involved in the appropriation of Indigenous art and the subsequent representations of Indigenous history that this entails. As non-Indigenous curator Michael Eather was warned when he decided to organise *Balance 1990*, "you'll get shit thrown at you from white fellas, you'll get shit thrown at you from black fellas."¹² Such comments highlight the hazards of working within cross-cultural arenas. But Eather was not deterred and the resulting exhibition was instrumental in educating the public on the extremely diverse forms of Indigenous art then in production. Moreover Richard Bell has fervently denounced the appropriation of Indigenous art, describing it categorically as "stealing", however, within his assertive and emotive argument he also pointed to some of the more complex issues that characterise the ethics of appropriation:

There are several causes of distress arising from appropriation... Firstly, the artist may not be the sole owner of the copyright of the 'story' or the imagery contained in the artwork. Secondly, the 'sharing' of imagery between the coloniser and the colonised is suggestive of an equitable agreement between the artists. Not true... Thirdly, Aboriginal People all over the world are adamant that their respective cultures are not for sale – that our cultures are the only things we still own and that we will own and that we will struggle mightily to maintain that ownership.¹³

Bell has, as winner of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award, clearly asserted his opinions about appropriation to a large audience – opinions that are difficult to ignore. More formal declarations as to the way that non-Indigenous artists should observe protocols have been laid out in documents such as *Valuing Art, Respecting Culture* and *Our Cultures Our Futures*.¹⁴ Such an awareness of protocols appears to be having an impact on the visual arts arena. However this shift is not so black and white, as another of Bell's statements illuminates: "We couldn't care less about Western artists appropriating one another."¹⁵ While this statement, on first reading seems unproblematic, as this thesis has shown, the appropriation of artworks created by "western" artists that depict Indigenous Australian people and / or cultural heritage, is a much more complex issue. Not only does it raise questions about who owns the past, the work's subject or its creator, but it also draws attention to the interconnectedness of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as a result of this shared history. It is negotiating a means of traversing that shared history that remains to be resolved within the artistic arena of appropriative histories.

Despite the fact that the way artists appropriate may have differed over the course of the period under examination, the question of illuminating alternative views on Australian history has remained. Appropriation in Australia has been used effectively to draw attention to the past and mount a critique of that past by depicting a change in attitude or perspective between historical representations of colonialism and how those same events are perceived

¹² Eather, *Shoosh!*, 2005, p.43.

¹³ Bell, "Bell's Theorem", 2002, n.p.

¹⁴ Mellor & Janke, *Valuing Art, Respecting Culture*, 2001; Terri Janke, *Our Culture Our Future: Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights*, prepared for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies & the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Michael Frankel & Company, Solicitors, Surry Hills, NSW, 1998

¹⁵ Bell, "Bell's Theorem", 2002, n.p.

in contemporary circumstances. These works, or appropriative histories as I have termed them, constitute a distinct body of works discernable within the larger history of postmodern appropriation in Australia. Their distinction has been determined by their use of existing images to both highlight a shift in perception and the changing attitude towards colonial history. I have argued throughout this thesis that this body of work has come about because of a confluence of the increase in awareness of Indigenous Australian art, the reflective nature of Australian society towards its own history, and the rise in prominence of both postcolonial and postmodern theories.

...

This thesis was divided into discrete parts in order to analyse the particular ways in which what I have called appropriative histories have functioned within an art historical discourse. I began by taking into account the history of appropriation as a postmodern phenomenon and juxtaposed this against the history of cultural appropriation in Australia. Second the artworks were examined within the public arena through an analysis of the exhibitions that displayed them and thirdly common themes were identified within the body of appropriative histories identified. Despite the shift in context within these parts, the analysis of historically engaged appropriative artworks has remained paramount as the primary focus.

In Part One I argued that, due to a combination of factors, including the influence of postmodernism, the higher profile of Indigenous Australian art, the interest in postcolonialism and identity politics as well as the more general awareness of Australian history, that a space was created in which appropriative histories could flourish. I began Chapter One by charting the art historical reference points for appropriation as a postmodern phenomenon. I sought to determine what appropriation was and how it was theorised in relation to postmodernism. This chapter also served to highlight the fact that absent from art historical considerations of appropriation was any socio-political context which, in the case of Australia at least, had enormous bearing on the type of artworks produced.

I went on to consider early Australian instances of appropriation in Chapter Two and argued that they reflected local conditions and concerns in addition to working within a postmodern framework. I highlighted the various ways that international theory on appropriation had infiltrated the local art scene and determined that it was the tension between the local and international, the centre and periphery, that characterised much of the work from this period. Moreover, the examples of appropriation discussed in this chapter introduced the complex relationship that was developing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists as a result of the elevated status of Indigenous practitioners and their art. It was shown that appropriation within commercial arenas was, and continues to be, a highly problematic area in which artists were exploited via the unauthorised appropriation of their work resulting in legal action and compensation, neither of which could account for the pain and suffering caused to the artists by the appropriation. Such cases did, however, set precedents for acknowledging the specific nature of Indigenous copyright which continues to be developed.

Within the fine art arena however, the boundaries of appropriation were much less clearly defined. So while Imants Tillers was criticised by his peers for appropriating the work of Michael Jagamara Nelson his work also inspired a visual dialogue – a point of reference for artists like Gordon Bennett and Richard Bell who went on to use appropriation as a tactic of resistance.¹⁶

In Chapter Three I began to augment this discussion by considering a more complex history of appropriation in Australia. I first examined how contemporary Indigenous artists had employed appropriation, not of historical imagery but of other contemporary Indigenous art styles, as a means of affirming cultural heritage specifically considering the work of Lin Onus and Trevor Nickolls. Subsequently I looked into the history of intercultural appropriation in Australia and how it either confirmed or critiqued colonial attitudes. In the case of Bungaree, Barak and Albert Namatjira, various forms of cultural appropriation were seen to afford these individuals a modicum of power within the dominant colonialist regime. At the same time Margaret Preston's quest to raise the profile of Indigenous art by using it as the basis for a national style, was impervious to the fact that her appropriation was highly paternalistic. The historical use of appropriation by Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists was analysed in order to identify a precedent for the use of appropriation by contemporary artists. It also served to introduce the notion that appropriation could function in an educative manner, by alerting the viewer to the discrepancies between original and appropriation.

The intersecting histories of artistic postmodern appropriation, outlined in Chapters One and Two, and the broader history of intercultural exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, as discussed in Chapter Three, were combined in Chapter Four in order to see Australian artistic appropriation within an historically and socio-politically aware paradigm. The aim in merging these hitherto for separate histories was to create a space in which a more complex and nuanced analysis of appropriation could be offered. The resulting analysis was focused on how artists in the last two decades have employed this tactic to critique narratives of settlement and colonisation. As such I ventured that these types of artworks, with their historically illuminative intent, could be more adequately described as appropriative histories drawing on the western tradition of history painting. By shifting the nomenclature, I argued that both the postmodern and postcolonial intentions of this work were equally highlighted. Moreover, I attempted to distance this work from a broader consideration of appropriation in Australia, for, as I went on to argue in Parts Two and Three, these works were characterised by their use of very similar themes and tactics and were intrinsically related to the socio-political climate of the time.

Part two established the prolific nature of appropriative histories during the last two decades of the twentieth century by analysing their public display. I argued that while a thorough analysis of historically focused appropriations was lacking in academic literature at the time, it was recorded in exhibitions and their catalogue essays. Moreover, by looking at the public

¹⁶ While Michael Jagamara Nelson was initially left out of this dialogue, he took the opportunity to enter into it with Tillers in their collaborative works of initiated by the Campfire Group in 2001.

context in which these exhibitions occurred it was possible to link them to wider social and political concerns, thus highlighting the political motivations behind much of the work. This was achieved by examining exhibitions which included appropriative histories and linking them to key moments of historical reflection beginning with the bicentenary of white settlement in 1988. The bicentenary provided many opportunities for the display of Australian art within an analytical framework. Such large-scale survey shows were instrumental in creating a greater awareness of Australian art history. I argued that despite efforts to convey a sense of self congratulatory pride in the achievements of the nation during this anniversary year, counter narratives emerged through a series of exhibitions that displayed appropriative histories alongside a range of other artworks – historical, contemporary, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Moreover, even in official exhibitions appropriative histories that challenged romantic narratives of colonial life were evident.

Depicting an alternative perspective to the mainstream narratives of colonialism continued to be a focus of exhibitions in the 1990s. During this time it was possible to identify individual narratives and experiences as crucial themes within exhibitions of appropriative histories. It was also in the 1990s that appropriations were seen alongside the original artworks that they were appropriating for the first time. Curators like Ace Bourke established a physical relationship between past and present. The political climate of the 1990s pervaded both the exhibitions and the artworks seen within them with particular reference to the Mabo and Wik decisions on land rights, commentary on Pauline Hanson and One Nation, and the public acknowledgment of the stolen generations. It was no accident, I have argued, that in order to comment on these issues artists employed appropriation and curators positioned these critiques within a continuum of historical images of colonisation. Again, this highlights the shift in perspective between original and appropriation.

The Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 and the Centenary of Federation on 1 January 2001 provided the focus for Chapter Seven and represented, as I argued, the high watermark of general interest in and support for Indigenous issues. This high point was also aided by the prominence of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and events that they staged, including Bridgewalks all around the country, as well as the representation of Aboriginal art and culture at the Sydney Olympic Games. The history wars also reached the public domain with the opening of the National Museum of Australia. As with the bicentenary exhibitions discussed in Chapter Five, appropriative histories found their way into some of the official exhibitions, but in the main it was outside of the blockbuster exhibitions that these alternatives flourished. There was also much greater discourse on the politics of appropriation, in relation to reconciliation, brought about by an increased awareness of issues as a result of the reconciliation movement.

I concluded Part Two with an analysis of exhibitions in an international context. The tone of these international shows often differed greatly from their Australian counterparts in order to provide an audience unfamiliar with Australian politics, history or society with a context in which to view the images on display. The most obvious difference however was the lack of

exhibitions which included both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives. There were only three large-scale international exhibitions from the period considered that included the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists which provided commentaries on the history of Australian settlement and colonisation through the use of appropriation. It could be argued, that Aboriginal art has become the pre-eminent representation of 'Australianness' overseas – that is, it is more popular than non-Indigenous artworks.¹⁷ This interest in Indigenous art, as representative of all Australian art, has determined that International exhibitions of contemporary histories consisted of more exhibitions of exclusively Indigenous art than the hybrid multicultural forms of expression discussed in the previous two chapters.

Part Three moved beyond this wide-ranging examination to focus on the analysis of particular works which demonstrated similar tactics in order to highlight that it was not simply the subject matter that was comparable but also the manner in which these works were produced. Overall this part of the thesis argued that appropriative histories in Australia have been characterised by their lack of interest in concealing the sources of their appropriation. In marked contrast to the many artists who employed appropriation in other contexts as a means of playing postmodern tricks on their audiences, artists in Australia who have been concerned with the critique of colonial history, have not entered into this game. In order for the critique of narratives of colonisation to be apparent, the fact that the work is based in appropriation needs to be evident. It may be the case that not all audiences are in a position to cite the reference being made in its exactitude, but in all of the work discussed in Part Three, there have been clues left behind to aid the viewer in recognising the work as a critique, and not a repetition, of colonialist ideologies.

Explicit appropriative content was discernable within a number of thematically arranged artworks. In Chapter Nine I argued that appropriative artists employed western conventions of image making as a means of symbolically representing colonisation. This strategy was intensified when artists combined metaphor with appropriation, that is, the combination of a critical use of image-making techniques and appropriative references to the history and settlement of Australia. The use of appropriation provided an historical underpinning for these works and provided them with a localised point of reference. In Chapter Ten I shifted attention to the creation of appropriative portraits in Australia, which I argued, allowed unique and personal examinations of shifting identities resulting from the peculiarities of the colonial experience. I argued that these works effectively brought the past into the present by humanising the audience's interaction with historical images – by encouraging the audience to ask who these people are/were and what is their significance? In addition I highlighted the fact that the appropriative portrait was not simply a medium through which Indigenous artists could assert their presence within the archives but that it was also an arena in which non-Indigenous artists participate. As such the complex nature of identity within Australia's

¹⁷ Ian North has argued that Indigenous art is the pinnacle of Australian. See Ian North, "StarAboriginality", in Charles Green (ed), *Postcolonial + Art: Where Now?*, Artspace Visual Art Centre, Sydney, 2001, n.p.

multicultural colonial society was emphasised. Finally I looked to how narratives of colonial history had been challenged via appropriations from within the domestic or popular art arenas. The vast archive of popular representations of Indigenous art and culture provided artists with considerable scope for appropriation with the intent of highlighting the pejorative nature of the originals. It was the very familiarity of these original objects, I argued, that made them suitable for appropriation in line with the idea that the source of the appropriation remains evident. This chapter represented a slight shift in focus from the fine arts arena into that of popular culture but, as I argued, the function of the appropriation remained the same. That is, through the process of quotation a shift in perspective was demonstrated.

Shifting perspective is at the core of this thesis. Not only is it evident in the artworks themselves but also in the approach employed to understand them. I have provided a new and in depth comparative analysis of these works as well as a broad analysis of their place within the social context out of which they were created. This has been achieved by bringing together studies on Indigenous art, postmodernism, postcolonialism and identity politics, Australian history, social commentary and exhibition history. By altering the way that appropriation has been analysed in Australia, from its larger postmodern context to a more specifically local one, I have been able to identify this body of work within Australian art that has hitherto for been subsumed. It has been an innovation of this thesis to draw attention to this work and the circumstances which informed its production.

Providing a critical analysis of the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists in the same context has been a vital outcome of this thesis and is still an area lacking in Australian art history. *The New McCulloch's Encyclopedia of Australian Art* (2006) provides a case in point with its segregation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists into a discrete section at the front of the publication. What purpose does such a segregation serve, especially when, as this thesis has demonstrated, there are fundamental connections between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists' work who are the subject of this thesis? Such connections have been seen in relation to intent, subject-matter, mediums, themes and so on. Moreover, as has also been demonstrated here, the exhibition of these works is very often integrated, so the way in which the public experiences these works on a physical level is contrary to the way the works are interpreted and analysed within academic arenas. Finally, how will these categorisations be maintained in the future? Such questions are not meant to imply that Indigenous Australian art should be uncritically subsumed within the all-encompassing discourse on Australian art, for it is acknowledged that it has its own history and identity, but it is at the very points of intersection, which this thesis has illuminated, that such categorisations can be seen as problematic.

In addition to the comparison between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists work, this thesis has also provided an analysis of artworks across time – bringing the nineteenth images of colonisation and their twentieth century commentaries into the same discussion. The works quoted by contemporary artists are forever changed by the act of quotation and the shift in perspective that this act demands. In a similar way to Indigenous and non-Indigenous

artists' work, there is a relationship formed between the historical and contemporary work through the act of appropriation. To analyse one without the other is to overlook a vital aspect of each image's existence, this has been addressed in the detailed analysis offered in Part Three. As such this study brings these works together, making that shift in perspective explicit.

Moreover, because this thesis has ventured a more detailed analysis of a specific aspect of historically focused appropriation in this country it makes way for subsequent studies to consider how other historically concerned artists have engaged in this discourse without employing appropriation. Indigenous artists such as Rover Thomas have created 'history paintings' that depict massacre sites, Robert Campbell Junior consistently painted on the theme of Indigenous / non-Indigenous relations, Paddy Fordham Wainburranga has depicted his interpretation of the arrival of Captain Cook and Gabriel Maralngurra has created works on the theme of contact between Indigenous people and anthropologists in Arnhem Land. The work of these artists has been beyond the parameters of this thesis but certainly constitutes a fruitful area for future investigation.

Perhaps Margaret Preston was right in encouraging Australians to look locally, to the visual histories of their own country for inspiration in seeking out their origins, identity, history and, as was noted by Paul Keating at the beginning of this conclusion, by implication their future. Where her approach was deficient was in not understanding that this could entail many narratives – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – that could conflict with, and criticise, previous accounts. This desire to seek out more local narratives on which to base artistic undertakings was also expressed by Fiona Foley, in an entirely different time and context. She suggested that artists "have to be true to themselves, research their own history and where they came from and look at the images from their particular area and then branch out."¹⁸ Her comments were aimed at Indigenous artists who appropriated from within the realm of Indigenous art. They have a larger implication however, for all Australian artists concerned with representing the past. What she was calling for was an acknowledgement of individuals' personal connections with the past – a seeking out of their own flesh and blood – and perhaps this is the only way to negotiate the complex terrain of Australia's shared history.

¹⁸ Fiona Foley & Jennifer Isaacs, "Fiona Foley on Aboriginality in Art, Life and Landscape. From a discussion with Jennifer Isaacs", in Wally Caruana & Jennifer Issacs (eds), *Art Monthly Australia – The Land, The City – The Emergence of Urban Aboriginal Art*, special supplement, 1990, p.12

Appendix One

A selection of key artist's biographies

It has been an aim of this thesis to analyse Indigenous and non-Indigenous art in an equitable fashion. Considering how particular artworks may be seen in new light when the perspective of the analysis is altered has also been important. It is for this reason that I have included this appendix which distinguishes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous and provides brief biographical notes on many of the artists discussed above. Their perspective colours the works they have created and it is imperative to acknowledge this individual identity.

Where there are multiple spellings of individual names I have used the spelling given in *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture* (2000).

Brook Andrew	1970-	Wiradjuri artist who works with photographic images and installation. Has also curated exhibitions and lectured.
Marshal Bell	1956-	Gamilaraay artist active in Brisbane and involved in <i>Balance 1990</i> . Brother to Richard Bell.
Richard Bell	1953-	Gamilaraay artist working in painting and mixed media. Bell is a member of the Campfire Group and is closely associated with the Fireworks Gallery in Brisbane. He was the winner of the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award in 2003.
Gordon Bennett	1955-	Bennett was born in Monto, Queensland. His Indigenous heritage comes from his mother who was raised on Cherbourg Mission. Bennett works primarily within the realm of painting though he has also worked in installation, photography and digital mediums.
Daniel Boyd	1982	A Kudjla/Gangalu painter represented in the NGA by his appropriation of Captain Cook.
Stephen Bush	1958-	A non-Indigenous painter born in Colac, Victoria currently living and working in Melbourne, Bush is represented by Sutton Galleries.
Robert Campbell Junior	1944-1993	Ngaku painter from Kempsey in northern NSW. Campbell Junior developed his own very unique style of painting despite having no formal art school training or Indigenous tutelage.

Brenda L. Croft	1964-	Gurindji artist working in photographic and digital media. She has also worked extensively on curatorial and written projects. She is currently the Senior Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the NGA.
Alan Cruickshank	1953-	Non-Indigenous artist born in, and currently working from, Adelaide; also edits <i>Broadsheet</i> , a contemporary art magazine, published out of Adelaide.
Juan Davila	1946-	Davila, who works mainly in painting, mixed media installations and video, was born in Santiago Chile and migrated to Australia in 1974 where he currently lives in Melbourne.
Destiny Deacon	c.1956-	Erub/Mer/Kuku artist based in Melbourne who works primarily in photography, installation and video art.
Julie Dowling	1969-	Yamatji-Badimaya visual artist (primarily portrait painter). First Aboriginal woman to graduate from Fine Arts Painting at Curtin University.
Elizabeth Durack	1915-2000	Non-Indigenous artist from the Pilbara region of Western Australia who was known for her book illustrations but came into public view in the mid 1990s when she created the character of 'Eddie Burrup', a supposedly initiated Indigenous elder, under whose name she painted.
Fiona Foley	1964-	Badtjala printmaker, sculptor and installation artist who has been active in gaining recognition for urban based Indigenous artists.
Julie Gough	1965-	Trawlwoolway artist and academic who has utilised kitsch Aboriginalia and found objects in her art practice.
Gordon Hookey	1961-	Waanyi artist known for his overtly political style of painting which incorporates language to critique colonial constructs.
Tim Johnson	1947-	Johnson is a non-Indigenous painter who initially worked in conceptual and performance art. Since the late 1970s he has maintained an interest in collaborative processes.
Diann Jones	1966-	Nyungar artist working in photographic mediums and currently exhibiting with Niagara Galleries in Melbourne.

Narelle Jubelin	1960-	Born in Sydney and currently residing in Madrid, Jubelin's art practice has been concerned with colonisation in a worldwide context. She executed petit-point renditions of colonial Australian panoramas in the 1980s.
Peter Kennedy	1945-	Conceptual/performance artist. One of the first to undertake said style of art in Sydney. Director of performance/art space Inhibodress in the early 1970's .
Leah King-Smith	1957-	Gamilaraay/Koamu photographer who gained recognition after completing a residency at the State Library of Victoria which resulted in the production of her series <i>Patterns of Connection</i> (1991).
Fiona MacDonald	1956-	Born in Rockhampton, Queensland, non-Indigenous artist MacDonald was active in Sydney in the 1990s working in collaged forms derived from historical images.
Tracey Moffatt	1960-	An internationally renowned photographer and filmmaker who began her career commenting upon her Indigenous heritage. She was also a founding member of Boomalli.
Ross Moore	1954-	A Melbourne academic and artist represented by Span galleries, Moore is one of the few non-Indigenous artists to have appropriated Aboriginalia in his work.
Clinton Nain	1971-	Meriam Mer-Ku Ku artist working in performance as well as visual arts represented by Sherman Galleries in Sydney.
Trevor Nickolls	1949-	Primarily a painter, Nickolls' mixed heritage has informed his art practice in an attempt to reconcile Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures.
Lin Onus	1948-1996	Yorta Yorta artist and activist, who was Chairman of the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council from 1989 to 1992.
Geoff Parr	1953-	Parr is a professor at the University of Tasmania. His work provides one of the earliest examples of a non-Indigenous artist who has appropriated historical images to critique colonial history.
Christopher Pease	1969-	A painter descended from the Minang people of the Nyoongar nation working out of Perth. He has incorporated a number of appropriative references in his work from the annals of Australian art history.

Byron Pickett	1955-	Printmaker from the Nyoongar people (Katanning group) of Western Australia.
Avril Quail	1958-	Nunugal-Goenpul artist and curator whose country is North Stradbroke Island. She was a founding member of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative and has also been a curator at the NGA.
r e a	1962-	Gamilaroi / Wailwan digital artist who has employed appropriation in her practice, much of which is based on self-portraiture.
Geoffrey Samuels	1956-	A painter and founding member of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative whose painting was used as the basis for a segment of the Sydney Olympic Games Opening Ceremony.
James Simon	1959-	Indigenous artist working out of Redfern, Sydney in the 1980s. Was represented in the <i>Biennale of Sydney</i> 1986, following his inclusion in <i>Koori Art '84</i> .
Darren Siwes	1968-	Photographer of Ngalkban and Dutch heritage whose practice has been based in self-portraits. His work was included in the <i>Beyond the Pale</i> in 2000 and subsequent <i>Biennale of Sydney</i> in 2002.
Linda Sproul	1958-	Non-Indigenous artist born in Brisbane but living in Melbourne. Her practice has involved performance and photography.
Gordon Syron	1942-	Indigenous painter and printmaker active in Sydney in the 1980s. He was a co-founder of the Eora Centre. His work was explicitly concerned with the representation of colonisation featuring in shows like <i>Koori Art '84</i> but it did not employ appropriation.
Harold Thomas	c. late 1940s-	Luritja artist and designer of the Aboriginal land rights flag in 1971.
Christian Bumbarra Thompson	1978-	Bidjara photographer / installation artist who has also worked as a curator.
Imants Tillers	1950-	Australian born, and of Latvian descent, Tillers has based his extremely prolific career as an artist almost entirely on his use of appropriation.
Ruth Waller	1955-	Born in Sydney and currently living and working in Canberra, Waller is Head of Painting at the Canberra School of Art (ANU).
Anne Zahalka	1957-	A Sydney photographer with migrant heritage who began her career with an interest in appropriation.

Appendix Two

Exhibitions of contemporary histories

In the course of research I have identified a number of exhibitions concerned with the representation of Australian settler/colonial/invasion history. They are listed below. I have focused on group exhibitions often in smaller publicly funded institutions. I have not included large annual or biennial exhibitions unless they were specifically devoted to this theme. They have been arranged chronologically in order to give an idea of the distribution of these shows between 1983 and 2001.

1983

Murphy, Bernice *XVII Bienal de Sao Paulo: Australia (Australian Representation at the Sao Paulo Biennale)*, Sao Paulo, Brazil: Parque Ibirapuera, October - December, 1983

1984

Johnson, Tim & Johnson, Vivien *Koori Art '84*, Surry Hills, New South Wales: Artspace, 5 - 29 September, 1984

1985

Two Worlds Collide: Cultural Convergences in Aboriginal and White Australian Art, Artspace, Sydney, 1985

1987

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Flesh + Blood

Appropriation and the Critique of Australian Colonial History
in Recent Art Practice

Volume Two - Illustrations

Anna Louise Lawrenson
The Centre for Cross-Cultural Research
The Australian National University
Canberra

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

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Richard Prince, *Untitled (Cowboy)*, 1980-84, ektacolor print, no dimensions

Plate 13

Sherrie Levine, *After Eliot Porter*, 1981, colour photograph, 25.2 x 20.3cm.

Plate 14

Imants Tillers, *Conversations With the Bride*, 1974-5, gouache and Resene Imperite acrylic epoxy on chrome plated aluminium with mirrored backs mounted on aluminium stands, images: 8.5 x 12cm, stands: 163cm (height)

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Juan Davila, *Gulf*, 1983, oil on canvas, 274.3 x 274.3cm

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Michael Jagamara Nelson, *Possum Dreaming*, 1985, synthetic polymer on canvas, 122 x 182cm

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Tim Johnson, *Visit to Papunya II*, 1983, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 130 x 90cm

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Lin Onus, *White Man's Burden (Mosquito Series)*, 1979-1982, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 161 x 74.5cm

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Felicity Wright (ed), *Artlink – Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art*, vol.10 #1 & 2, 1990 (reprinted 1992)

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Lin Onus, *Twice Upon a Time*, 1992, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 182 x 182cm

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Alana Harris, *26th January, 1988, Hyde Park*, 1988, colour photograph

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An Animal of New Holland, engraving after George Stubbs, 20 x 24.5cm, in *Hawkesworth's Voyages*, vol.iii, 1773

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Brisbane Poster Group, *I Want Your Food: Let's Have a Drink and Celebrate*, 1987, screenprint, 56.5 x 72cm

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Byron Pickett, *Descendents*, 1987, screenprint, 56 x 75.5cm

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Untitled photograph captioned: *Aboriginal people were arrested, chained and escorted into town for trial. The photograph was possibly taken at Derby, n.d., photograph*

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John Glover, *The Last Muster of the Aborigines at Risdon*, 1836, oil on canvas, 121.8 x 182.6cm

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Gordon Bennett, *Eddie Mabo (after Mike Kelley's 'Booth's Puddle' 1985, from Plato's Cave, Rothko's Chapel, Lincoln's profile)*, 1996, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 168 x 152.5cm

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Robert Campbell Junior, *Hands of Time (Assimilation and Integration)*, 1987, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 130 x 232.5cm

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Gordon Bennett, *Terra Nullius*, 1989, acrylic on canvas, 75 x 225cm

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Brenda Palmer, *Signs of the Times*, n.d., mixed media - laser photocopied images processed from archival material, wood, drafting film, acrylic paint, no dimensions

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Brook Andrew, *I Split Your Gaze*, 1997, digital image, 100 x 100cm

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Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australia: Black Responses to White Dominance 1788-2001*, 3rd ed., Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2002

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Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Reconciliation Australia's Challenge*, Commonwealth of Australia, December 2000

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Craig Beifus, *Sydney 28 May 2000*, 2000, colour photograph

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John McDonald, *Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2001

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Trevor Nickolls, *Deaths In Custody*, 1990, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 150 x 150cm

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Avril Quail, *Trespassers Keep Out!*, 1982, colour screenprint on paper, 49 x 72cm

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Gordon Bennett, *Web of Attrition* (detail), 1989, oil on canvas - five panels, 100 x 500cm

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Augustus Earle, *Natives of New South Wales as Seen in the Streets of Sydney*, 1830, lithograph - hand coloured with watercolour on paper, 19.8 x 28.8cm

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Gordon Hookey, *King Hit (For Queen and Country)*, 1999, punching bag, acrylic on leather, mixed media, dimensions variable

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Gordon Hookey, *Ten Point Scam*, 1998, oil on canvas, 223 x 178cm

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Gert Sellheim, *Design Featuring Aboriginal Rock Carving of Crocodile*, 1948, pen, ink, gouache on white card, 29.2 x 23.4cm

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Christine Nicholls, *From Appreciation to Appropriation: Indigenous Influences and Images in Australian Visual Art*, exh.cat., Flinders University Art Museum City Gallery, Adelaide, 2000

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Peter Kennedey, 1983, *On Sacred Land* (detail), oil on canvas

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Tommy McRae, *Dancers With Weapons; Hunting and Fishing; European House and Couple*, pen and ink on blue paper, 23 x 33.4cm

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Tracey Moffatt, *Some Lads I*, 1986, gelatin silver photograph, 45.5 x 46.5cm

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Geoff Lowe, *Impersonation*, 1983-1984, acrylic on linen, 152 x 122cm

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Ian North, *Seasons, Australia, 1987 (Kangaroo), I-IV* (detail), 1987, acrylic, type C photographs - four pieces, 38.5 x 48.5cm each

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Geoff Parr, *Place II* (detail), 1983/1988, photographic transparencies mounted on lightboxes - six pieces, 75.5 x 93.5 x 15cm each

Plate 89

Governor Arthur's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1st Nov. 1828, 1828, oil on wood panel, 36 x 22.8cm

Plate 90

Fiona Foley, *Survival*, 1988, from a series of four, photo etching and collage, 57 x 38cm

Plate 91

Leah King-Smith, *Untitled No.3* from the series *Patterns of Connection*, 1991, cibachrome photograph, 102 x 102cm

Plate 92

Brenda L. Croft & Hetti Perkins, *True Colours: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists Raise the Flag*, exh.cat., Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, 1994

Plate 93

Destiny Deacon, *Regal Eagles*, 1994/2004, light jet print from polaroid - two pieces, 100 x 80cm each

Plate 94

Gordon Bennett, *Untitled*, 1989, oil and acrylic on canvas - six pieces, 30 x 30cm each

Plate 95

An English View of the Myall Creek Massacre, The Chronicles of Crime, 1841

Plate 96

Attributed to Charles Rodius or John Carmichael, *Scene in a Sydney Street*, c.1830, lithograph

Plate 97

Gordon Bennett, *Death of the Ahistorical Subject (Vertigo)*, 1993, acrylic on linen, 182 x 182cm

Plate 98

Native Police Dispersing the Blacks, n.d.

Plate 99

Brunelleschi viewing the mirror reflection of his first perspective picture, developed c.1420s

Plate 100

Gordon Bennett, *Triptych: Requiem; Of Grandeur; Empire*, oil on canvas, photograph, 120 x 120cm; 200 x 150cm; 120 x 120cm

Plate 101

Ian McLean & Gordon Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, Craftsman House, Roseville East, NSW, 1996

Plate 102

C. A. Woolley, *Portrait of Truganini*, 1866, photograph

Plate 103

Geoff Parr, *Spaceman*, 1987, synthetic polymer paint, charcoal on canvas, 160 x 450cm

Plate 104

William Arthur Devis, *Portrait of Captain Wilson of Antelope*, c.1782, oil on canvas, 74 x 60.8cm

Plate 105

Geoff Parr, *The National Picture*, 1985, Nekko print on canvas, 275 x 425cm

Plate 106

Benjamin Duterrau, *The Conciliation*, 1840, oil on canvas, 121 x 170.5cm

Plate 107

Imants Tillers, *Mount Analogue*, 1985, oilstick, synthetic polymer paint on 165 canvasboards, 279 x 571cm

Plate 108

Eugene von Guérard, *North-east View From the Northern Top of Mount Kosciuszko*, 1863, oil on canvas, 66.5 x 117cm

Plate 109

Narelle Jubelin, *North Terrace and Environs: A Distanced View*, 1987, found English oak frame, cotton petit point, 22 x 59.7cm

Plate 110

Fiona Foley, *Native Blood*, 1994, hand painted type C photographs, edition of 15, 50 x 40cm, 40 x 50cm, 50 x 40cm

Plate 111

Tosca Studios, *Canando, West Queensland Aboriginal*, c.1900, photograph, 13.4 x 21cm

Plate 112

Fiona Foley, *Badtjala Woman*, 1994, type C photographs, edition of 15, 45 x 35cm each

Plate 113

Bain Studio, *Fraser Island*, c.1899, photograph, 20.2 x 13.6cm

Plate 114

Fiona Foley, *Native Blood*, 1994, hand painted type C photograph, edition of 15, 40 x 50cm

Plate 115

Rea, *Don't Shoot Till You See The Whites Of Their Eyes*, 1999, Jimmy - Red, Yellow, Black; Rea - Blue, Green, Red, digital photographs, dimensions variable

Plate 116

Australian Geographical Walkabout Magazine (detail), September 1950, front cover featuring Roy Dunstan portrait of "One Pound Jimmy"

Plate 117

Exhibition advertisement, Alan Cruickshank, from the series *Museum of the Colonial Post Colonial*, 1997, unique digital photograph, 140 x 100cm

Plate 118

Stephen Bush, *No Title*, 1989, oil on canvas, 121.5 x 83.5cm

Plate 119

Eugene von Guérard, *Natives Chasing Game*, 1854, oil on canvas, 46.5 x 37cm

Plate 120

Destiny Deacon, *Portrait of Eva Johnson, Writer*, 1994/2004, light jet print from polaroid, 100 x 80cm

Plate 121

J. M. Crossland, *Nannultera, a young cricketer of the Natives' Training Institution, Poonindie*, 1854, oil on canvas, 99 x 78.8cm

Plate 122

Byram Mansell working in his studio on a picture called *Hibiscus and Honey Ants' Nest*. In the foreground is a shield from north-eastern Queensland, n.d.

Plate 123

Unknown photographer, Douglas Annand, *Kangaroo Hunt* mural in the first class cafe of the Orient Liner Orcades, 1949, colour photograph,

Plate 124

Martin Boyd Pottery Limited, *Dish*, c.1955, earthenware painted with underglaze colours, 2.3 x 30.7cm

Plate 125

Publicity poster for Jedda, 1955

Plate 126

Albert Namatjira, *Ullambaura Haasts Bluff*, c.1946, watercolour on paper, 37 x 55cm

Plate 127

Tracey Moffatt, still from *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy*, 1989, 17 minute, 35 mm

Plate 128

Destiny Deacon, *Meet Us Outside* (detail), 1994, laser print from colour polaroid

Plate 129

Destiny Deacon, *White Australia's Aboriginal Artefacts*, 1995, mixed media, dimensions variable

Plate 130

Ross Moore, *Black Bodies as Décor: Dear Primitive*, exh.cat., Temple Studio, Melbourne, 1994

Plate 131

Ross Moore, *Dear Primitive* (detail), 1994, screen-printed ceramic tiles, dimensions variable

Plate 132

Eilcen Mayo, *Discover Australia*, commissioned by the Australian National Travel Association, 1956, photolithograph on paper, 100 x 62cm

Plate 133

Albert Namatjira: *Central Australian Watercolours: 1938*, exh.cat., Art Society Gallery, Melbourne, 1938

Plate 134

Brook Andrew, *Reconstructing More Whiteman's Kitsch 1788-?* (detail), 1994, acrylic, ink on 200 screenprinted tea towels, 73 x 45cm each

Plate 135

Metters Ltd., Sydney, *Early Kooka*, (stove trademark), n.d.

Plate 136

E. E. Whitmont, Sydney, *Chief*, (shirts & clothing trademark), 1921

Plate 137

Gordon Bennett, *The Aboriginalist (Identity of Negation: Flotsam)*, 1994, mixed media, dimensions variable

Plate 138

Christian Bumbarra Thompson, *Nulla Nulla Australia's White Hope*, n.d. c.2000

Plate 139

Clinton Nain, *Swallow it All*, 2001, plastic, 27 x 27 x 29cm

Plate 140

Clinton Nain, *Ramming the Blak Rams*, 2001, NGA poster, gouache, bleached Indian cotton (collaboration with Tom Roberts), 86.5 x 114cm

List of Abbreviations

Art Gallery of New South Wales	AGNSW
Art Gallery of South Australia	AGSA
Art Gallery of Western Australia	AGWA
Art Monthly Australia	AMA
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies	AIATSIS
Australian National University	ANU
Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation	ANTaR
Centre for Cross-Cultural Research	CCR
Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation	CAR
Institute of Modern Art	IMA
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory	MAGNT
Museum of Contemporary Art	MCA
Museum of Sydney	MoS
National Gallery of Australia	NGA
National Gallery of Victoria	NGV
National Library of Australia	NLA
National Museum of Australia	NMA
National Portrait Gallery	NPG
Powerhouse Museum	PHM
Queensland Museum	QM
State Library of New South Wales	SLNSW
State Library of Queensland	SLQ
State Library of Victoria	SLVIC
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery	TMAG

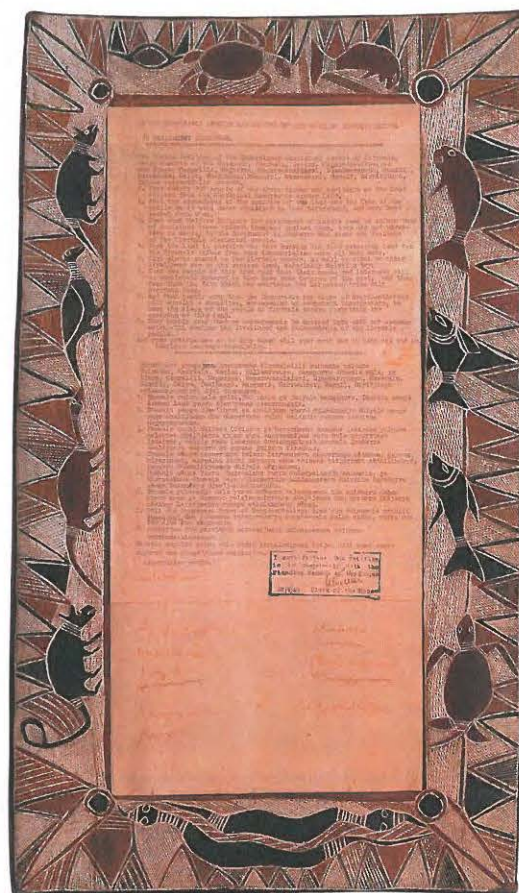
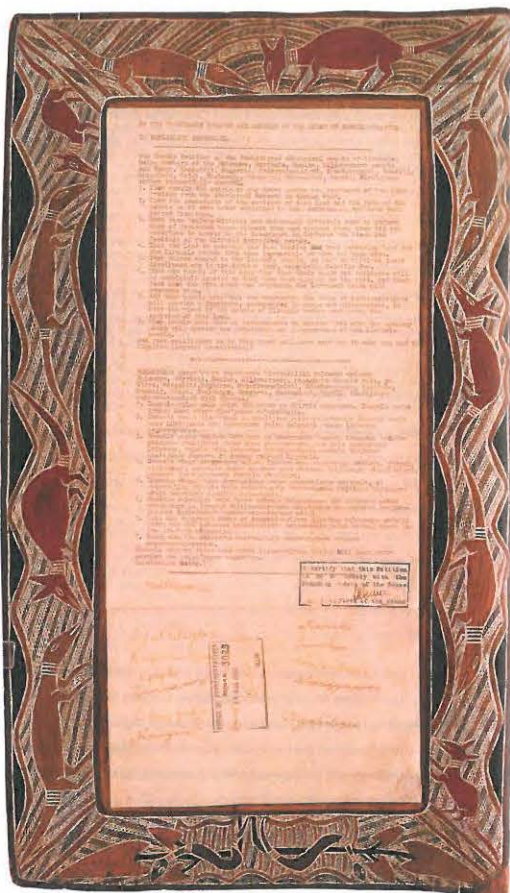


Plate 1

Various artists, *Yirrkala Bark Petition*, 1963, ochres on bark, paper, 59 x 34cm, Parliament House Collection, Canberra. Source: Howard Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, Phaidon Press, London, 1998, pp.256-257.



Plate 2

Mervyn Bishop, *Prime Minister Gough Whitlam pours sand into the hands of traditional landowner Vincent Lingiari, Northern Territory*, 1975, direct positive colour photograph, 76 x 51cm, NGA, Canberra. Source: John McDonald, *Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001*, NGA, Canberra, 2001, p.190.

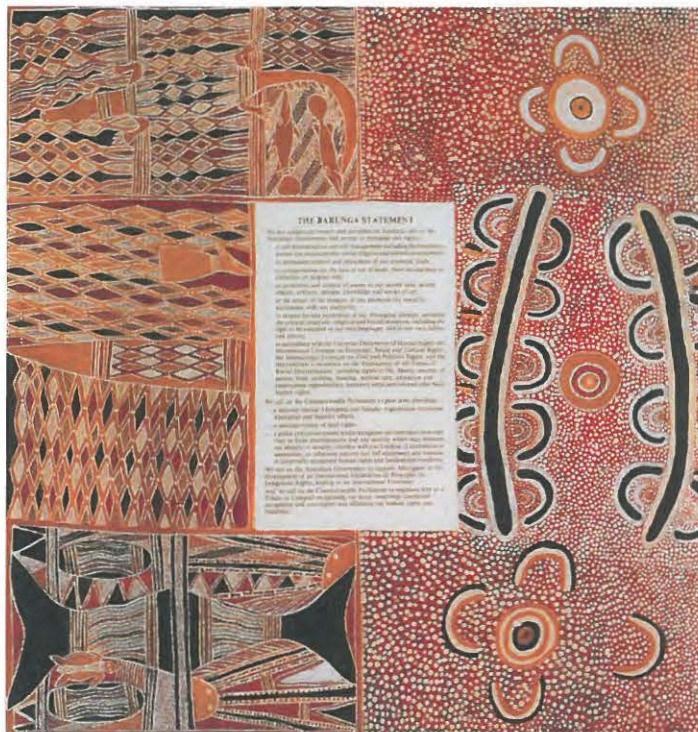


Plate 3
Various artists, *The Barunga Statement*, 1988, ochres on composition board, collage of printed text on paper, 122 x 120cm, Parliament House Collection, Canberra. Source: Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 1998, p.258.



Plate 4
Joan Kerr, "Colonial Quotations", *Art and Australia*, vol.33 #3, 1996, pp.376-377, featuring Governor Arthur's *Proclamation to the Aborigines of Tasmania 1816*, c.1866, oil on board, 42.3 x 25.2cm, TMAG, Hobart (left) and Richard Crichton, *Governor Arthur's Proclamation*, 1978, acrylic on board, 183 x 122, private collection (right).

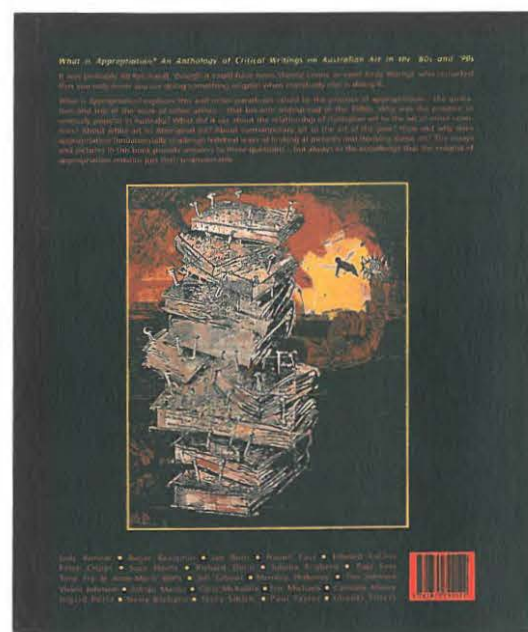
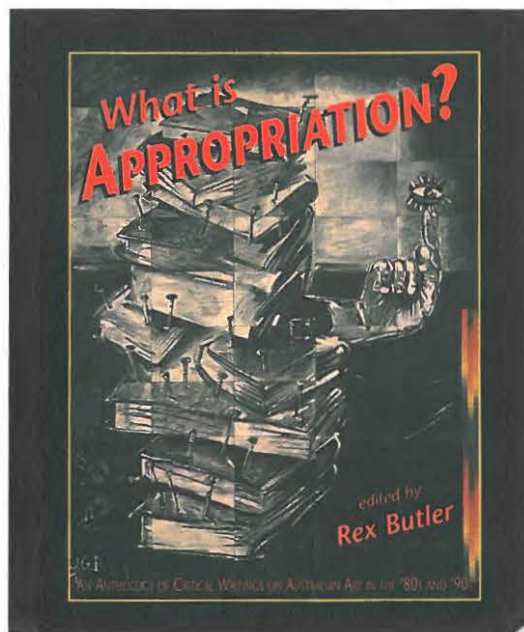


Plate 5

Rex Butler (ed), *What Is Appropriation? An Anthology of Critical Writing on Australian Art in the '80s and '90s*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane and Power Institute, Sydney, 1996, featuring Imants Tillers, *The Decentred Self*, 1985 on the front cover and Gordon Bennett, *The Recentred Self*, 1994 on the back cover.

POPISM

16 June - 25 July 1982, National Gallery of Victoria

Howard Arkley	Robert Rooney
David Chesworth	Jane Stevenson
Ian Cox	The Society for Other Photography
Juan Davila	Imants Tillers
Richard Dunn	Peter Tyndall
Paul Fletcher	Jenny Watson
Maria Kozic	→ 4 →

The National Gallery of Victoria welcomes the opportunity of this exhibition to reaffirm its interest and concern with contemporary art and with the living artist. As a public gallery it has a responsibility to exhibit the latest developments in the visual arts so that people unfamiliar with the idiom of recent art can begin to come to terms with it. One crucial function of a public gallery is to provide a bridge between the living artist and the community which is frequently baffled by the experimental edge of art.

Discovering contemporary art can be a challenge. It requires an open mind as well as a critical one. I invite the gallery goers to this exhibition, to share the excitement and the challenge contemporary art offers.

Patrick McCaughey
Director
4.82

1982.048
PAT

1 and catalogue essay by Paul Taylor:
241.0085

This exhibition was made possible by a financial grant from the Victorian Ministry for the Arts

603566

Plate 6

Paul Taylor, *Popism*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1982, front cover.



Plate 7

Juan Davila, *Hysterical Tears*, 1979, oil on canvas, 178 x 661.5cm. Source: Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.58.



Plate 8

Imants Tillers, *Suppressed Imagery*, 1981, pencil on 49 canvasboards, 178 x 267cm, private collection. Source: Graham Coulter-Smith, *The Postmodern Art of Imants Tillers: Appropriation En Abyme 1971-2001*, Fine Art Research Centre, Southampton & Paul Holberton Publishing, London, 2002, p.45.



Plate 9

Imants Tillers, *Suppressed Imagery*, (detail), 1981, pencil on canvasboard. Source: Paul Taylor, *Popism*, 1982, p.8.



Plate 10

Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still*, 1978, black and white photograph, 21.3 x 26cm, private collection. Source: Brian Wallis (ed), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York in association with David R. Godine, Publisher Inc, Boston, 1984, p.180.



Plate 11

Barbara Kruger, *Untitled*, 1981, photo-collage, 94 x 127cm. Source: Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Playing in the Fields of the Image", *Afterimage*, Summer 1982, p.10.

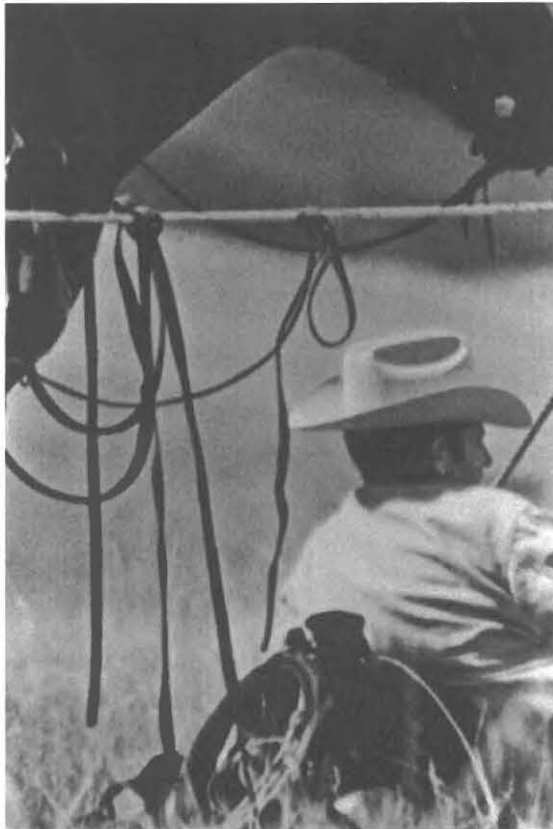


Plate 12
Richard Prince, *Untitled (Cowboy)*,
1980-84, ektacolor print, no dimensions,
Barbara Gladstone Gallery. Source:
Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography
at the Dock: Essays on Photographic
History, Institutions, and Practices*,
University of Minnesota Press,
Minneapolis, 1991, p.142.



Plate 13
Sherrie Levine, *After
Eliot Porter*, 1981, colour
photograph, 25.2 x 20.3cm.
Source: Wallis (ed), *Art After
Modernism*, 1984, p.28.



Plate 14

Imants Tillers, *Conversations With the Bride*, 1974-5, gouache and Resene Imperite acrylic epoxy on chrome plated aluminium with mirrored backs mounted on aluminium stands, images: 8.5 x 12cm, stands: 163cm (h), AGNSW, Sydney. Source: Coulter-Smith, *The Postmodern Art of Imants Tillers*, 2002, p.4.

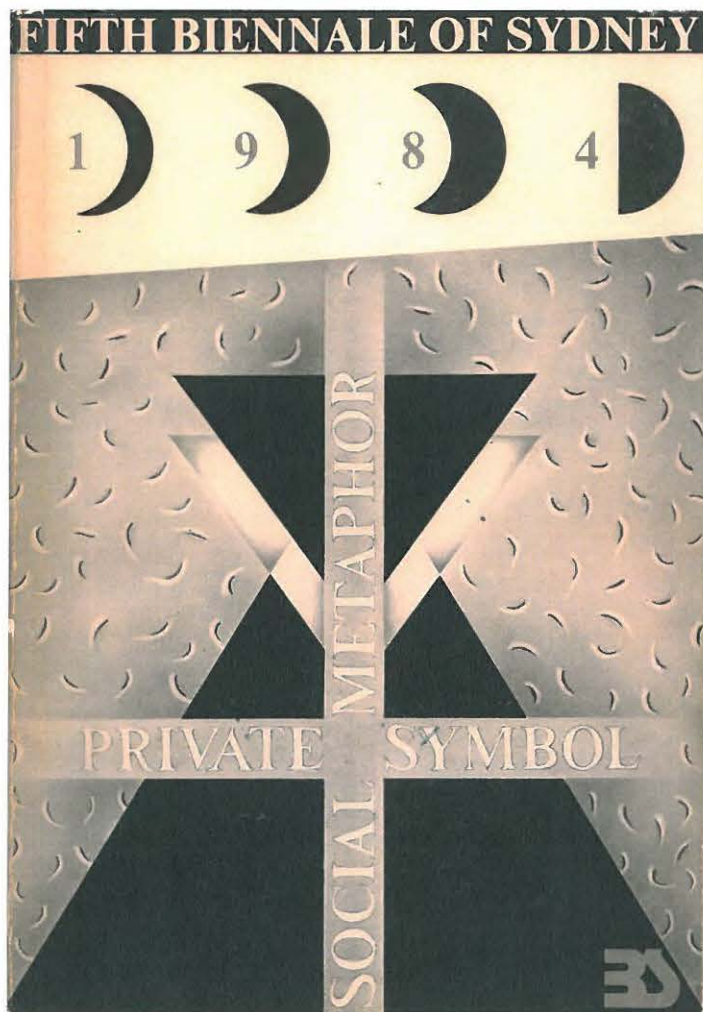


Plate 15

Fifth Biennale of Sydney: Private Symbol, Social Metaphor, exh.cat., Biennale of Sydney Limited, Sydney, 1984, front cover.

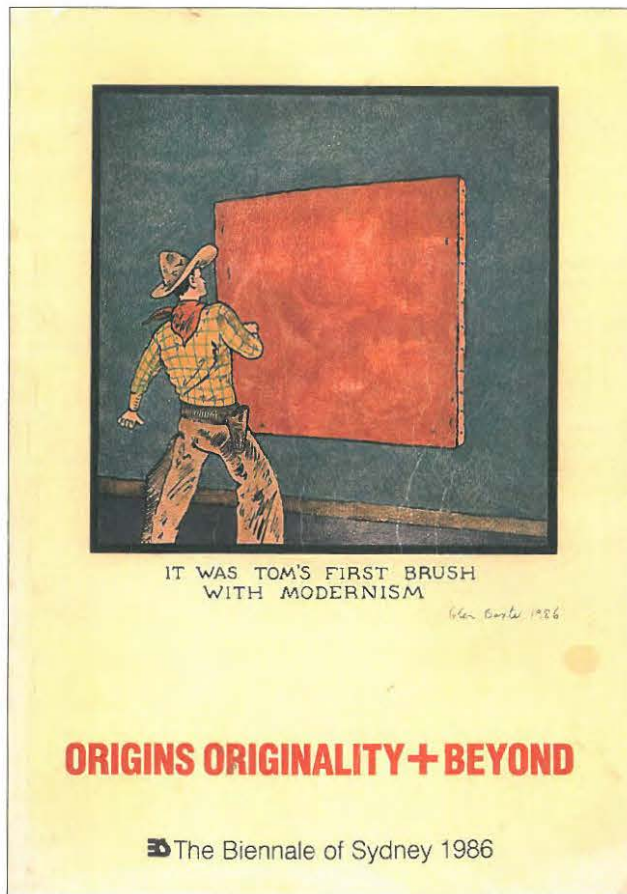


Plate 16

Sixth Biennale of Sydney: Origins, Originality + Beyond, exh.cat., Biennale of Sydney Limited, Sydney, 1986, front cover featuring Glen Baxter, *It was Tom's First Brush With Modernism*, 1986, ink and crayon on paper, 79 x 57cm.

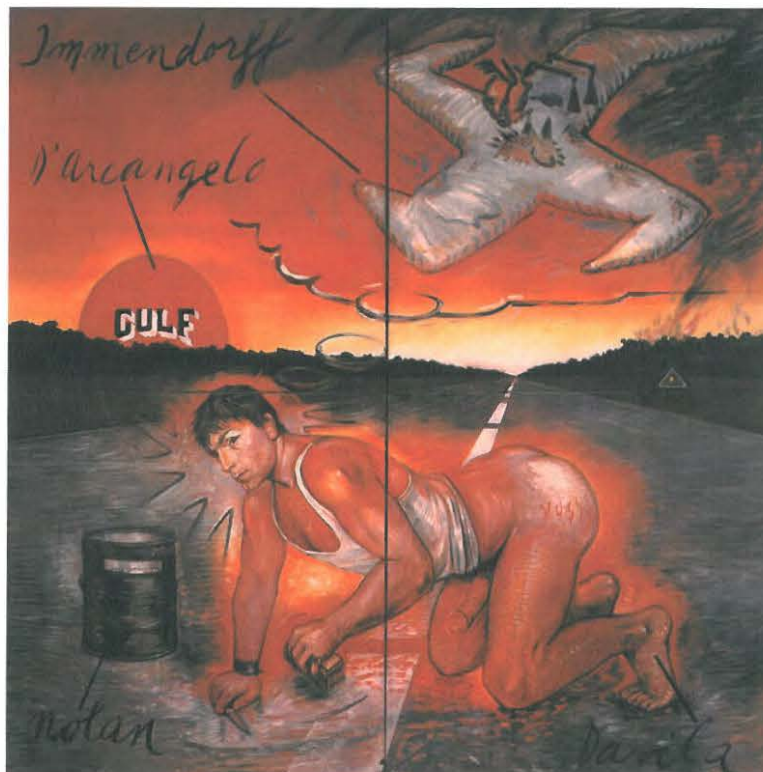


Plate 17

Juan Davila, *Gulf*, 1983, oil on canvas, 274.3 x 274.3cm. Source: *Fifth Biennale of Sydney*, 1984, n.p.



Plate 18
Imants Tillers, *Nine Shots*,
1985, oilstick, acrylic on 91
canvas boards, 330 x 267cm,
Sherman Galleries, Sydney.
Source: *Sixth Biennale of
Sydney*, 1986, p.271.



Plate 19
Michael Jagamara Nelson, *Possum Dreaming*, 1985, synthetic polymer on canvas,
122 x 182cm, private collection. Also referred to as *Five Dreamings* - see Bernard
Smith & Terry Smith, *Australian Painting 1788-1990*, 3rd ed, Oxford University Press,
Melbourne, 1995, p.505). Source: *Sixth Biennale of Sydney*, 1986, p.273.



Plate 20

Tim Johnson, *Visit to Papunya II*, 1983, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 130 x 90cm, private collection, Melbourne. Source: Merryn Gates, *Tim Johnson: Across Cultures*, University of Melbourne Art Museum, Ian Potter Gallery, Melbourne, 1993, p.11.

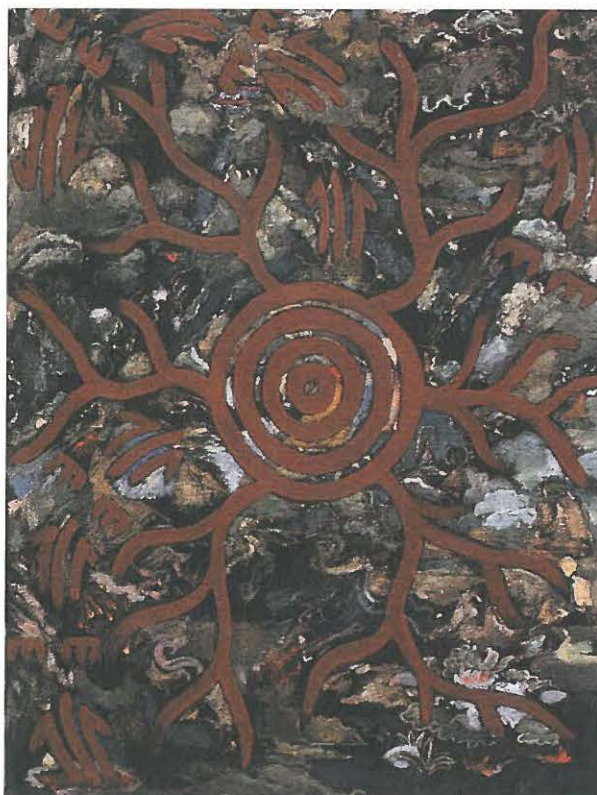


Plate 21

Tim Johnson & Michael Jagamara Nelson, *Yam Dreaming*, 1989-1992, acrylic on linen, 44 x 32cm, Mori Gallery, Sydney. Source: Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation?*, 1996, p.65.

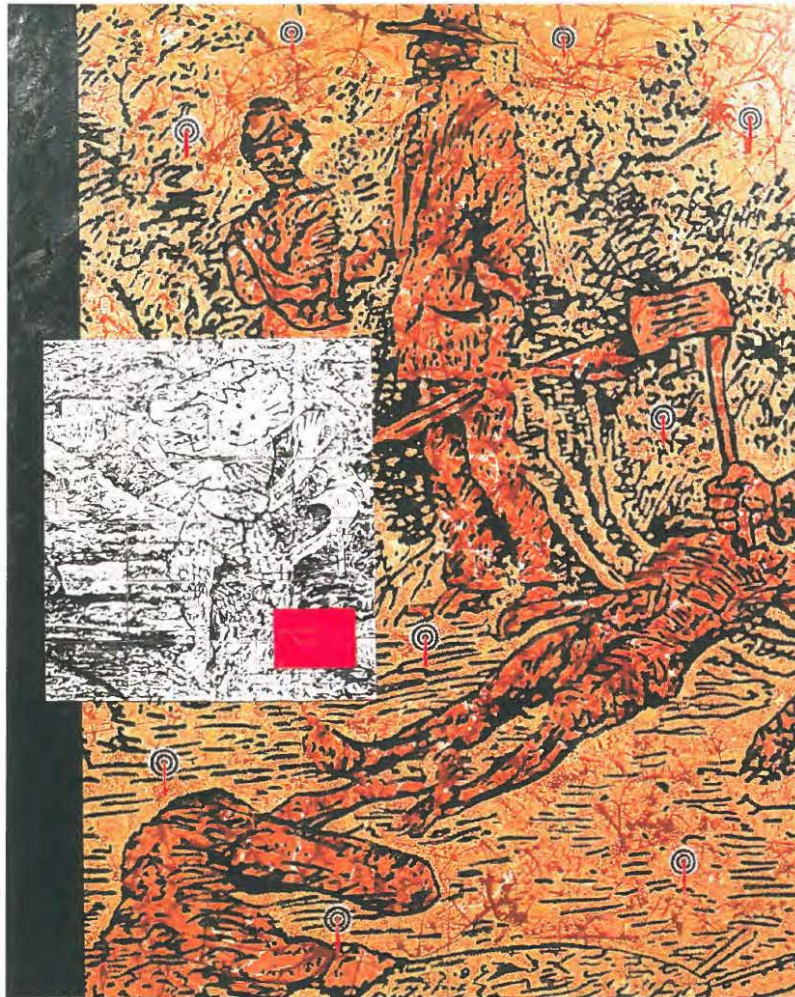


Plate 22
Gordon Bennett,
The Nine Ricochets
(*Fall Down Black
Fella Jump Up White
Fella*), 1990, oil and
acrylic on canvas
and canvasboards,
220 x 182cm, private
collection. Source:
Smith & Smith,
Australian Painting,
1995, p.557.



Plate 23
Queensland Squatters Dispersing Aborigines, frontispiece in Arthur James Vogan, *The Black Police: A Story of Modern Australia*, Hutchinson, London, 1890. Source: Bruce Elder, *Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and Maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians since 1788*, Child & Associates, Frenchs Forrest, NSW, 1988, p.106.



Plate 24

Michael Jagamara Nelson & Imants Tillers (with Campfire Group), *Nature Speaks (Possum Dreaming): Y*, 2001, synthetic polymer paint, gouache on 16 canvasboards, 100 x 140cm. Source: Michael Eather, *Shoosh! The History of the Campfire Group*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2005, p.88.



Plate 25

Richard Bell, *Scientia E Metaphysica (Bell's Theorem)*, 2003, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, MAGNT, Darwin. Source: *20th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, exhibition pamphlet, 2003.



Plate 26

Richard Bell, *This Black and White Thing*, 1991, synthetic polymer paint, paper photocopy and shellac on canvas, 152 x 122cm, Campfire Consultancy, Brisbane. Source: Timothy Morrell, *Unfamiliar Territory: 1992 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 1992, p.13.



Plate 27

Antoine Fauchery, *Aboriginal Man Ornamented for Corroboree* (detail), c.1865, albumen silver photograph, 24.1 x 19.5cm, La Trobe Picture Collection, SLVIC, Melbourne. Source: Joy Murphy-Wandin, Judith Ryan & Carol Cooper, *Remembering Barak*, exh.cat., National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2003, p.39.

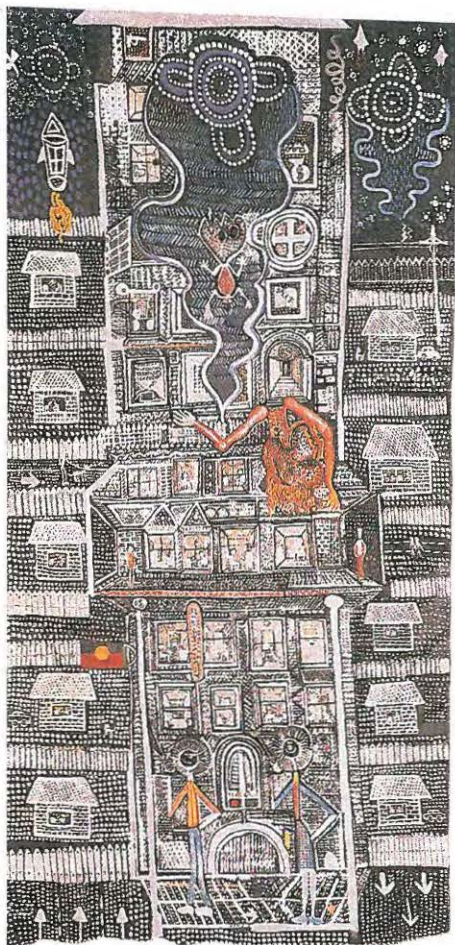


Plate 28

Trevor Nickolls, *Machinetime Dreamtime*, 1981, oil on canvas, 122 x 61cm, NGA, Canberra.

Source: McDonald, *Federation: Australian Art and Society*, 2001, p.91.



Plate 29

Lin Onus, *Weekend at Garmedi I*, 1988, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 91.5 x 150cm, private collection. Source: Margo Neale, (ed), *Urban Dingo: The Art and Life of Lin Onus 1948-1996*, exh.cat., Craftsman House in association with Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2000, p.72.

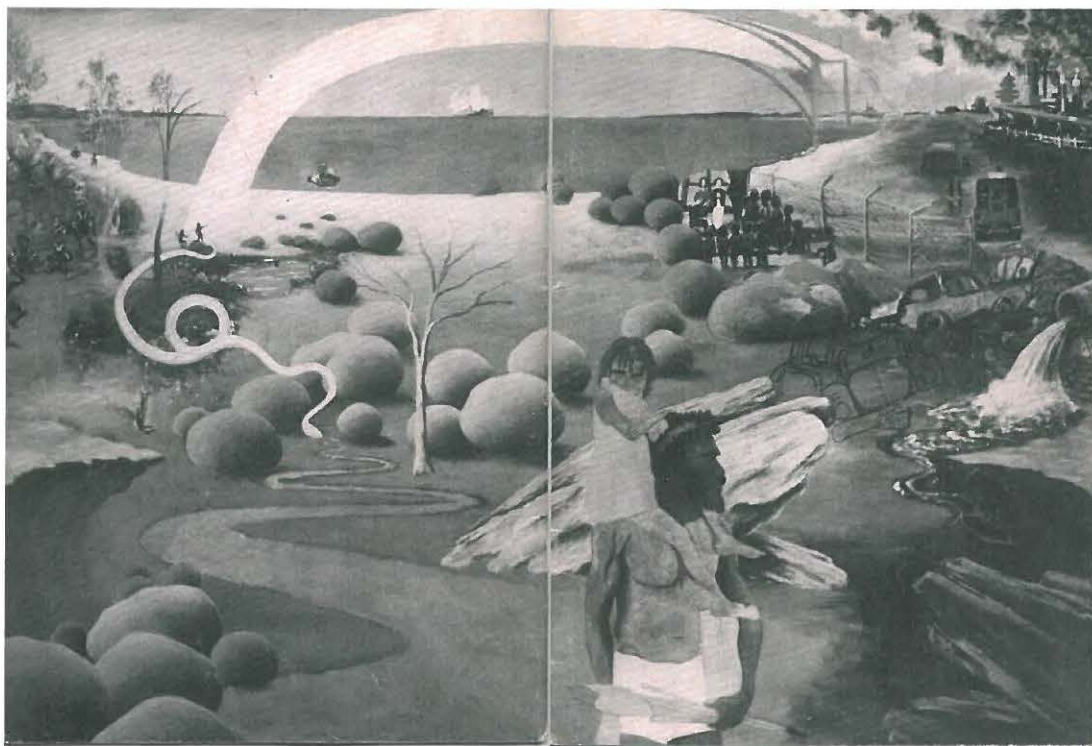


Plate 30

Koori Art '84, exh.cat., Artspace, Sydney, 1984, front and back covers featuring “an unfinished painting by Terry Shewring, Jim Simon, Andrew Saunders and others at the Eora Centre.”



Plate 31

Lin Onus, *White Man's Burden (Mosquito Series)*, 1979-1982, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 161 x 74.5cm, Aborigines Advancement League, Melbourne. Source: Neale, (ed), *Urban Dingo*, 2000, p.63.

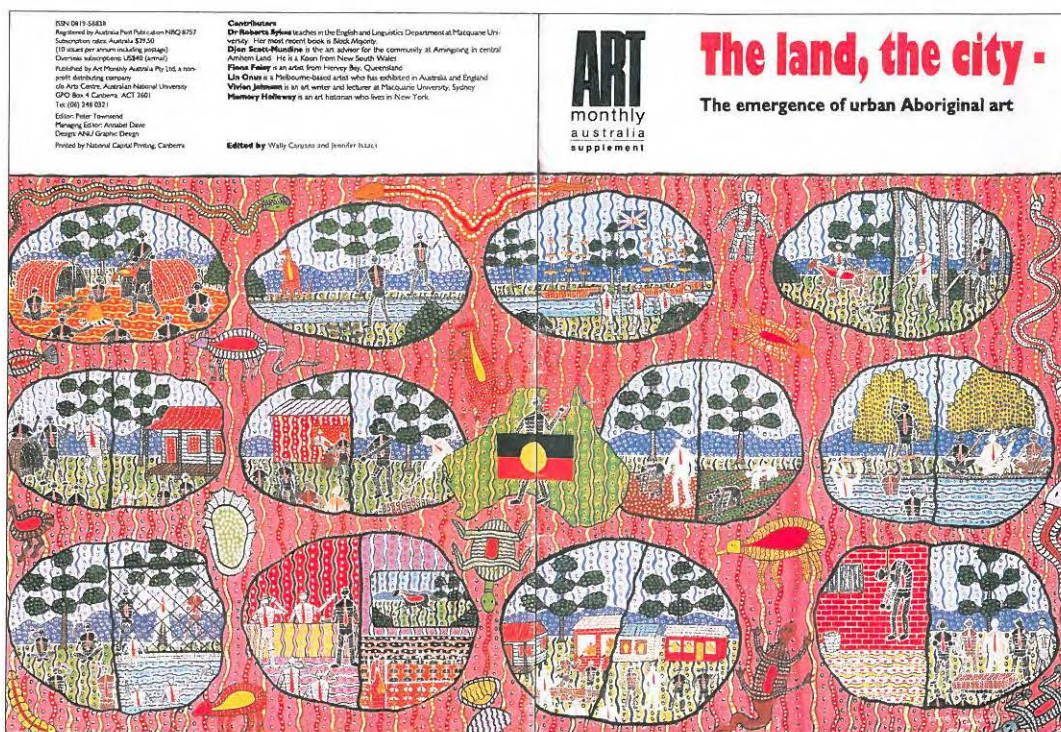


Plate 32

Wally Caruana & Jennifer Issacs (eds), *Art Monthly Australia – The Land, The City – The Emergence of Urban Aboriginal Art*, special supplement, 1990, front and back covers featuring the work of Robert Campbell Junior, *Aboriginal History (facts)*, 1988, synthetic polymer paint on canvas 130 x 200cm, NGA, Canberra.

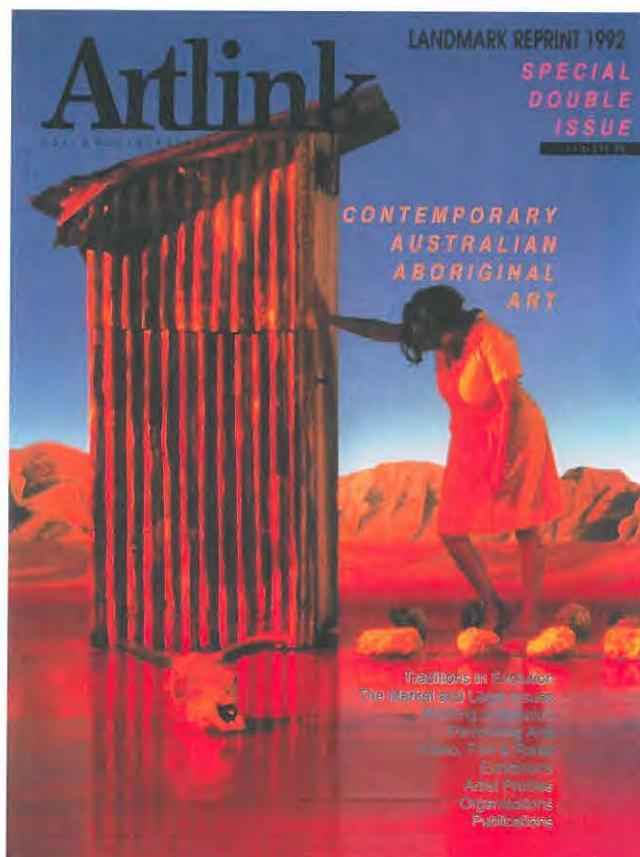


Plate 33

Felicity Wright (ed), *Artlink – Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art*, vol.10 #1 & 2, 1990 (reprinted 1992), front cover featuring the work of Tracey Moffatt, *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy*, 1989, still from 35mm film.



Plate 34

James Simon, *On The Mission*, 1984, oil on canvas, 123 x 183cm. Source: *Sixth Biennale of Sydney*, 1986, p.261.

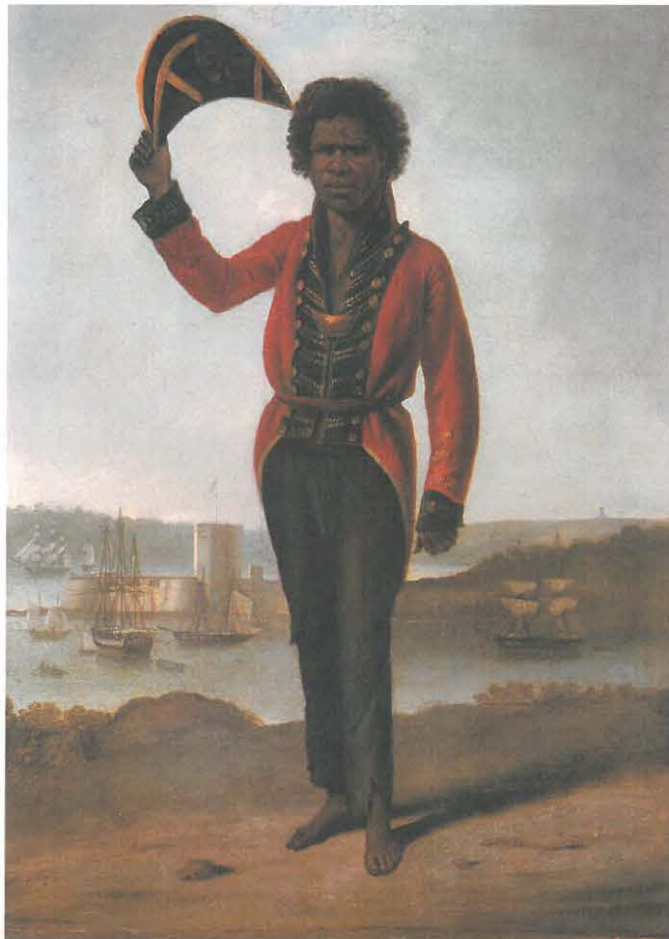


Plate 35

Augustus Earle, *Portrait of Bungaree, A Native of New South Wales, with Fort Macquarie, Sydney Harbour, in Background*, c.1826, oil on canvas, 68.5 x 50.5cm, Rex Nan Kivell Collection, NLA & NGA. Source: Keith Vincent Smith, *King Bungaree: A Sydney Aborigine Meets the Great South Pacific Explorers 1799-1830*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1992, p.40.

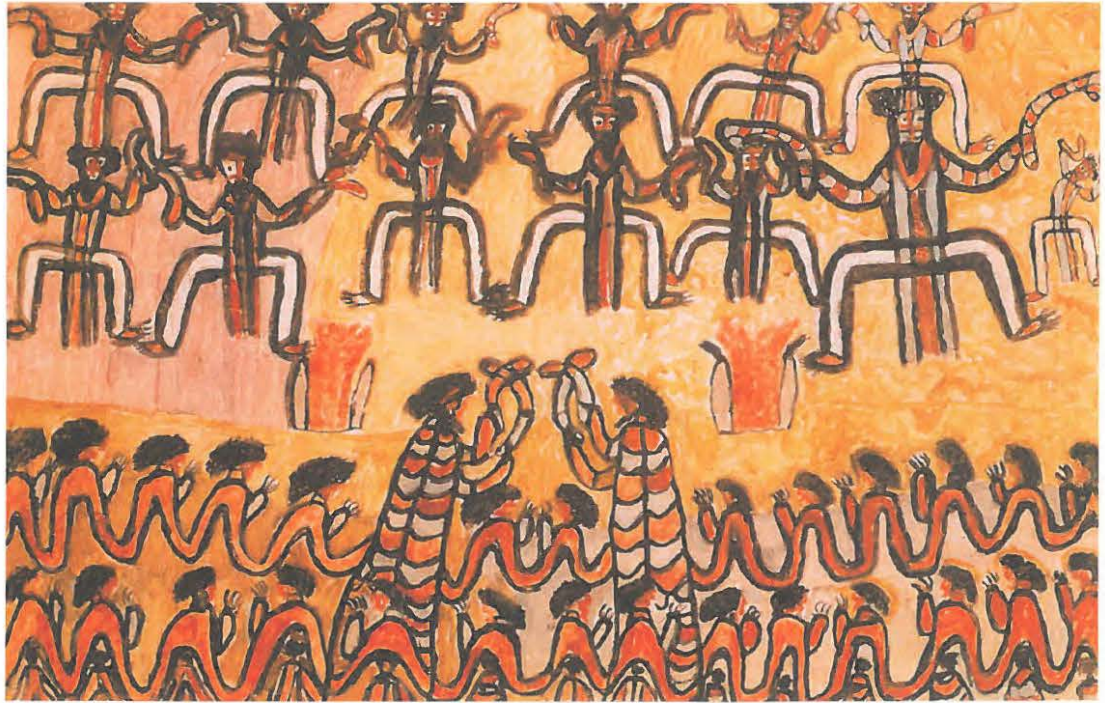


Plate 36

William Barak, *Ceremony*, n.d., pencil, wash, ground charcoal/wash solution, 57 x 88.8cm, NGV, Melbourne. Source: Andrew Sayers, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p.19.

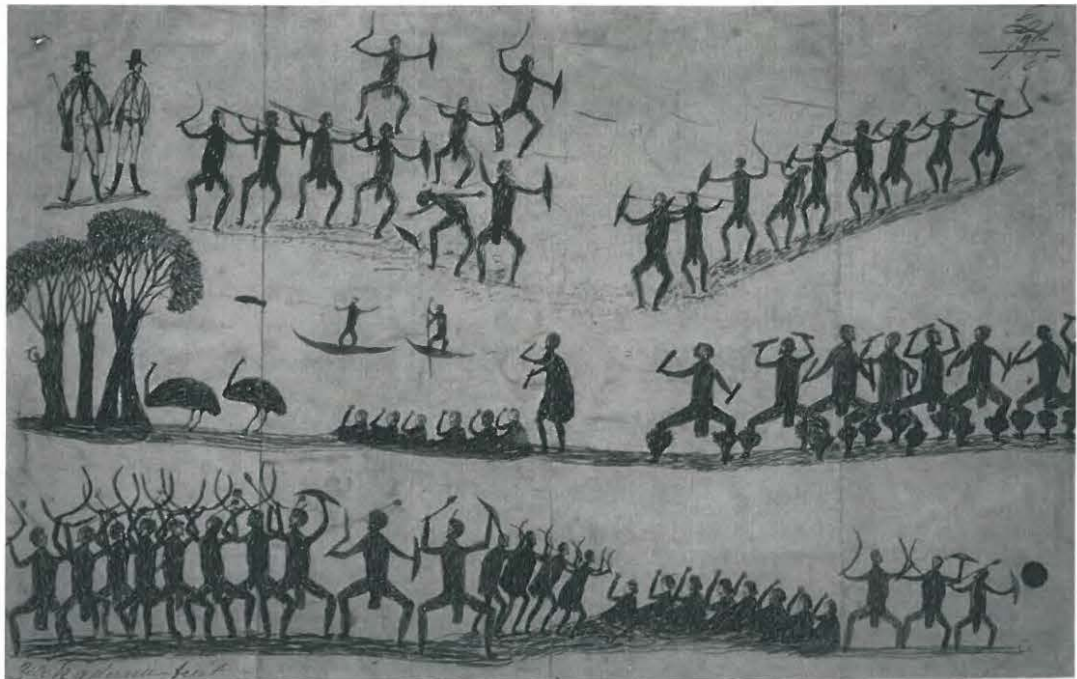


Plate 37

Tommy McRae, *Scenes of Aboriginal Life with Squatters*, 1865, pen and ink on paper, 21 x 35.5cm, SLNSW, Sydney. Source: Andrew Sayers, *Australian Art*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2001, p.74.



Plate 38

Albert Namatjira, *River Gum and Mount Gillen*, 1951, watercolour over pencil on paper, 35.6 x 35.6cm, private collection. Source: Alison French, *Seeing the Centre: The Art of Albert Namatjira 1902-1959*, exh.cat., National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2002, p.135.



Plate 39

Australian Aboriginal Art and Its Application, installation photograph, 1941, David Jones Department Store, Sydney. Source: Nicholas Thomas, *Possessions: Indigenous Art / Colonial Culture*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1999, p.121.

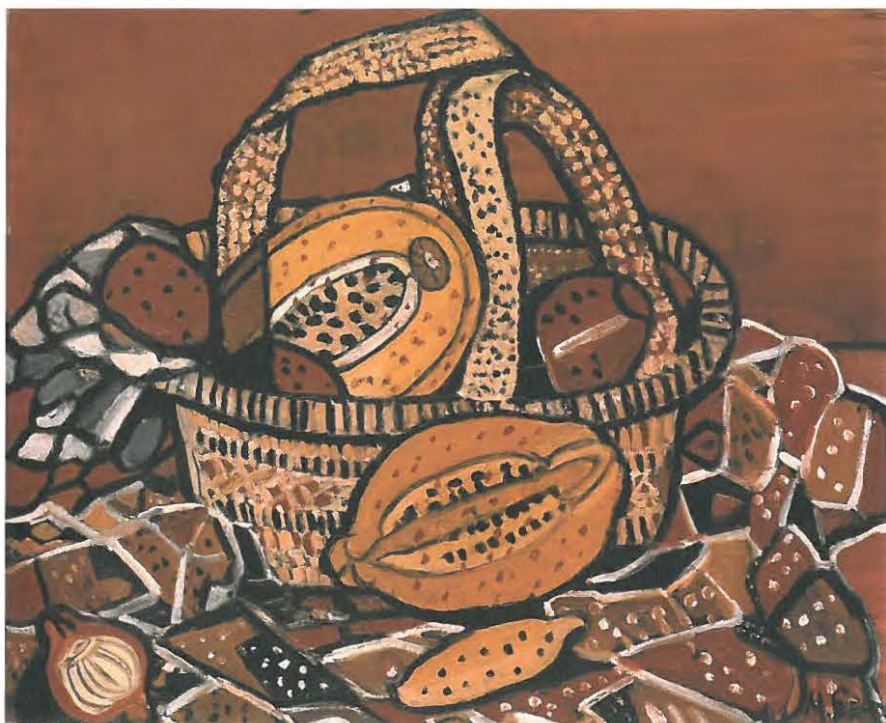


Plate 40

Margaret Preston, *Still Life: Aboriginal Design*, 1941, oil on canvas, 43 x 53.3cm, NGA, Canberra. Source: Catherine DeLorenzo and Dinah Dysart, *A Changing Relationship: Aboriginal Themes in Australian Art c.1938-1988*, exh.cat., S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney, 1988, p.26.

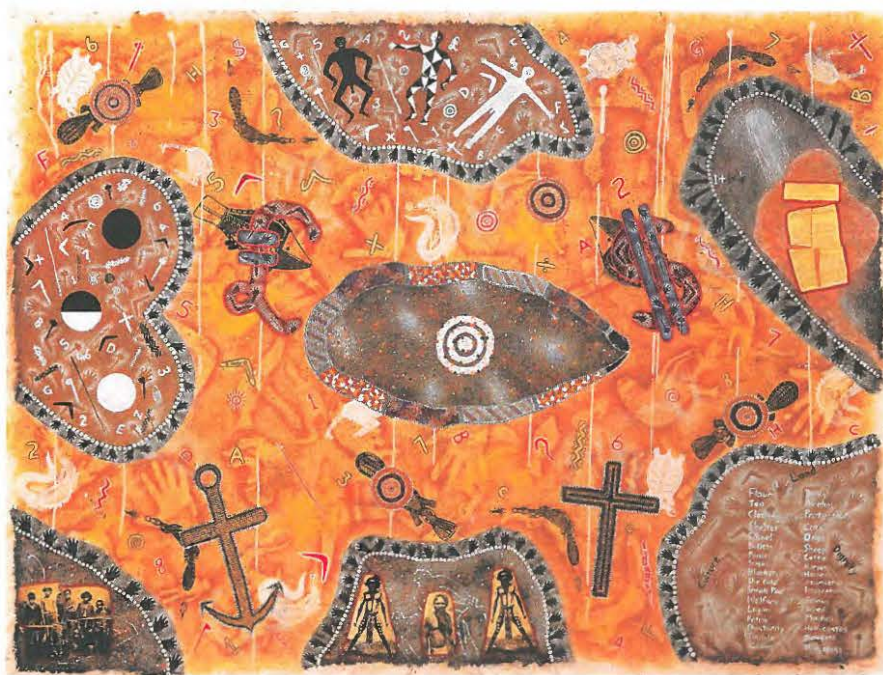


Plate 41

Richard Bell, *Crisis: What to do About This Half-Caste Thing*, 1991, synthetic polymer paint and collage on canvas, 180 x 250cm, NGA, Canberra. Source: *Flash Pictures by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists* (exh.cat.), National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 1991, n.p.

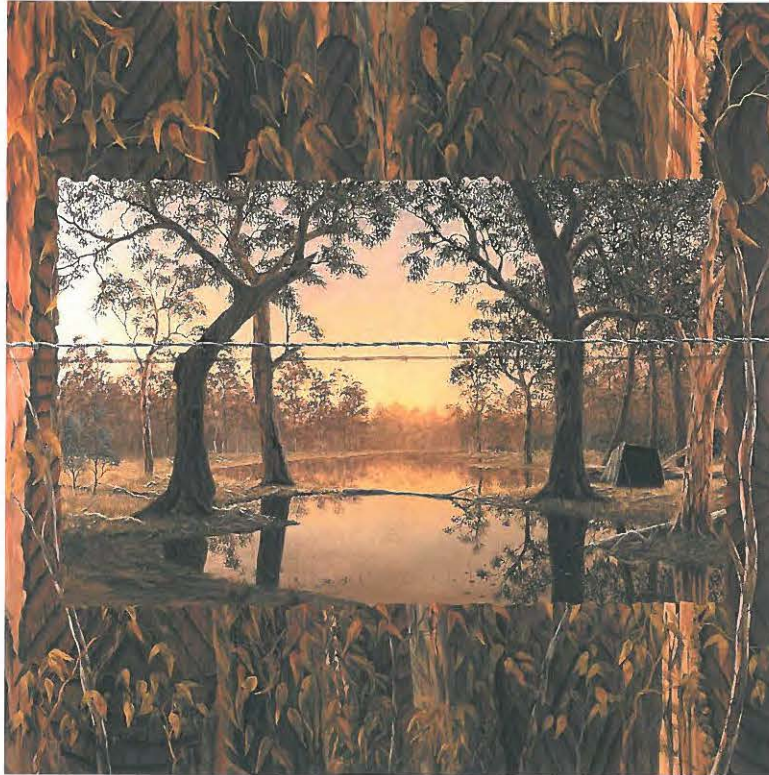


Plate 42
 Lin Onus, *Twice Upon a Time*, 1992, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 182 x 182cm, private collection.
 Source: Neale, (ed), *Urban Dingo*, 2000, p.24.



Plate 43
 H. J. Johnstone, *Evening Shadows: Backwater of the Murray, South Australia*, 1880, oil on canvas, 120.6 x 184.1cm, AGSA, Adelaide. Source: Ron Radford & Jane Hylton, *Australian Colonial Art*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 1995, p.135.



Plate 44

Unknown photographer, 26th January, 1988, Bradleys Head (Sydney Harbour), 1988, colour photograph. Source: collection of the author.



Plate 45

Alana Harris, 26th January, 1988, Hyde Park, 1988, colour photograph. Source: Alana Harris, *Australia's Too Old to Celebrate* (Galarrwuy Yunupingu 1988), Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1988, n.p.

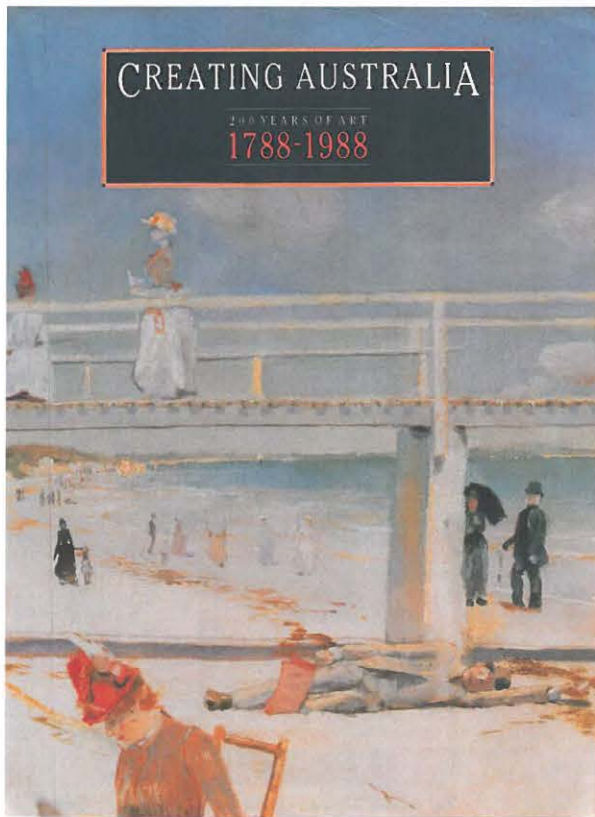


Plate 46

Daniel Thomas (ed), *Creating Australia: 200 Years of Art 1788-1988*, International Cultural Corporation of Australia in association with the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 1988, front cover featuring Charles Conder, *A Holiday at Mentone*, 1888, oil on canvas, 46.2 x 60.8cm, AGSA, Adelaide.

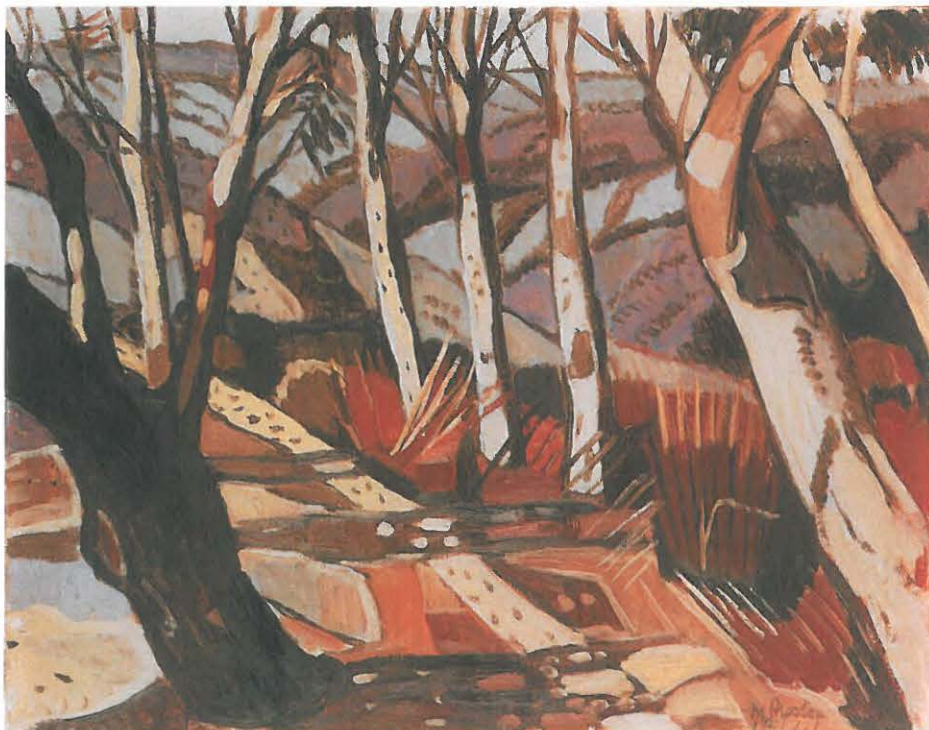


Plate 47

Margaret Preston, *Aboriginal Landscape*, 1941, oil on canvas, 40 x 52cm, AGSA, Adelaide. Source: Thomas (ed), *Creating Australia*, 1988, p.143.



Plate 48

Imants Tillers, *Kangaroo Blank*, 1988, oilstick, gouache, oil, synthetic polymer paint on 78 canvasboards, 213 x 195cm. Source: Thomas (ed), *Creating Australia*, 1988, p.227.



Plate 49

An Animal of New Holland, engraving after George Stubbs, 20 x 24.5cm, in *Hawkesworth's Voyages*, vol.iii, 1773. Source: Smith & Smith, *Australian Painting*, 1995, p.2.



Plate 50

Anne Zahalka, *An Early Morning Shoot*, 1983, type C photograph, 25 x 35cm, Griffith University Collection, Nathan Qld. Source: *The Face of Australia – The Land The Present*, Fine Arts Press & Australian Bicentennial Authority, Sydney, 1988, p.85.



Plate 51

Elioth Gruner, *Spring Morning*, 1917, oil on canvas, 40 x 29cm, Newcastle Regional Gallery, Newcastle, NSW. Source: *The Face of Australia*, 1988, p.70.



Plate 52

Ramingining Artists, *The Aboriginal Memorial (200 Burial Poles)*, 1987-1988, wood, ochres, dimensions variable, NGA, Canberra. Source: Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 1998, p.38.

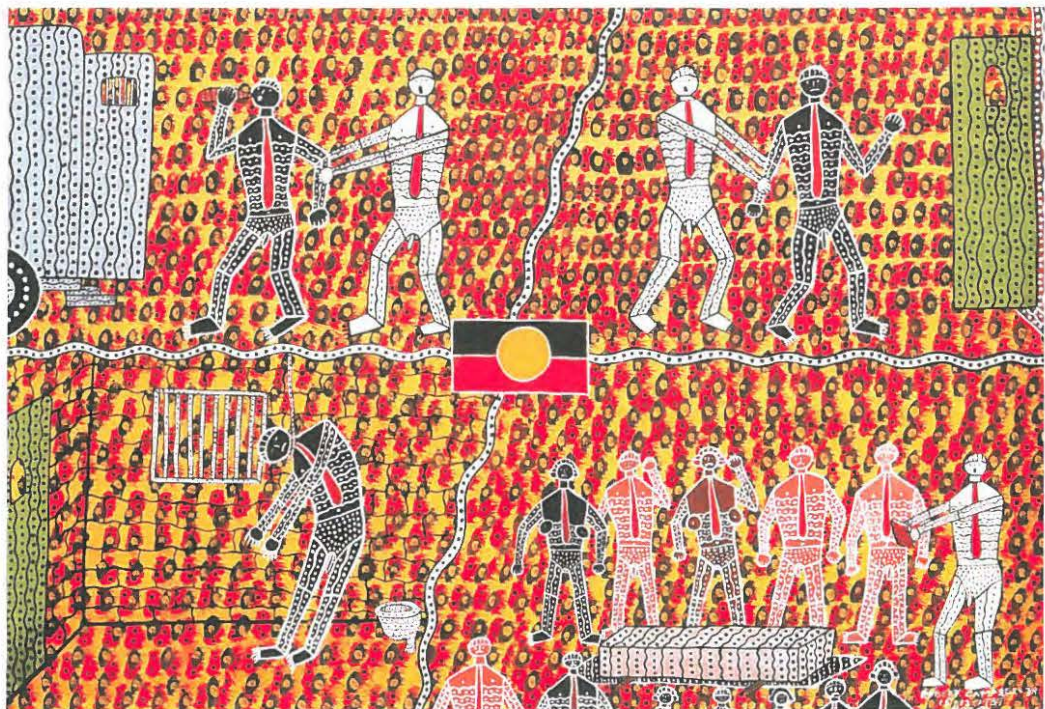


Plate 53

Robert Campbell Junior, *Death in Custody*, 1987, acrylic on canvas, 81 x 120cm, The Robert Holmes à Court Collection, Heytesbury, WA. Source: DeLorenzo & Dysart, *A Changing Relationship*, 1988, p.27.

I WANT YOUR FOOD



and your trees and soil. I want the manly men and all the women. Your kids. I want your knowledge and skill. Stop your dreaming. I want you to be like me. What's wrong with that. Of course I know we're equal. But I'm better.

LETS HAVE A DRINK AND CELEBRATE

Plate 54

Brisbane Poster Group,
*I Want Your Food:
Let's Have a Drink
and Celebrate*, 1987,
screenprint, 56.5 x 72cm.
Source: Julie Ewington,
& Lee-Anne Hall,
*Right Here Right Now:
Australia 1988*, Co-
Media, Adelaide, 1988,
n.p.



Plate 55

Nathaniel Dance, *Captain Cook, F.R.S.,
Who was Killed by the Natives at Owhyhe
in the South Seas, February 14th 1779*,
Dixson Galleries. Source: Anne Robertson,
*Treasures of the State Library of New South
Wales: The Australian Collections*, Collins
Publishers, Australia in association with the
State Library of NSW, Sydney, 1988, p.130.



Plate 56

Byron Pickett, *Descendents*, 1987, screenprint, 56 x 75.5cm. Source: Ewington, & Hall, *Right Here Right Now*, 1988, n.p.

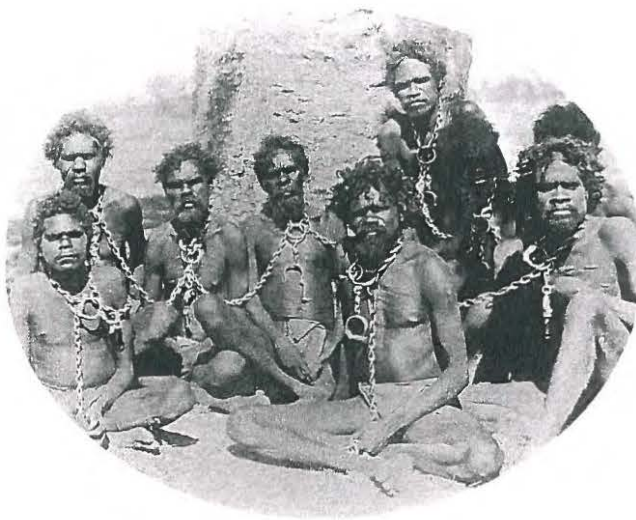


Plate 57

Untitled photograph captioned: *Aboriginal people were arrested, chained and escorted into town for trial. The photograph was possibly taken at Derby, n.d., photograph, Battye Library of West Australian History. Source: Neville Green & Susan Moon, *Far From Home: Aboriginal Prisoners of Rottnest Island 1838-1931* (Dictionary of Western Australians vol.10), University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, W.A., 1997, p.46.*

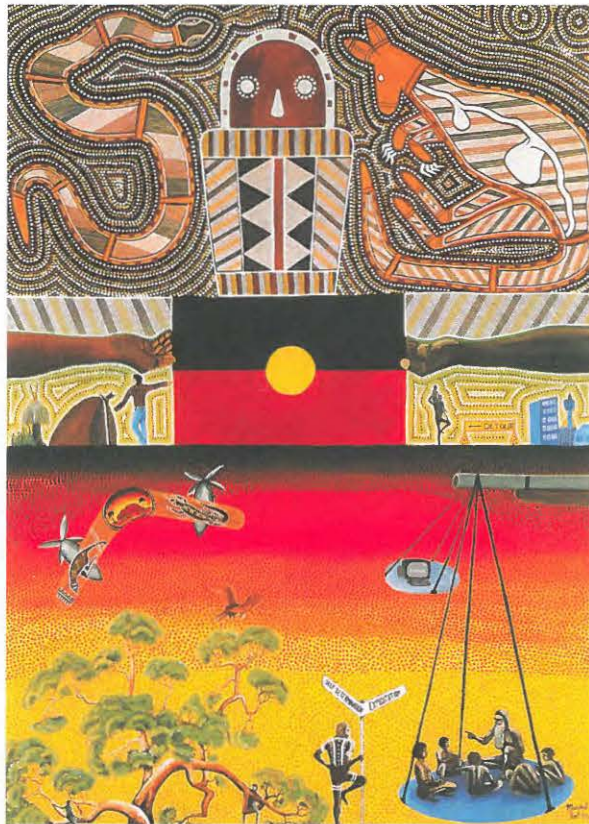


Plate 58

Marshall Bell, *Lounge Room Painting*, 1989, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 165 x 135cm. Source: Michael Eather & Marlene Hall, *Balance 1990: Views, Visions, Influences*, exh.cat., Queensland Art Gallery, 1990, p.47.



Plate 59

John Glover, *The Last Muster of the Aborigines at Risdon*, 1836, oil on canvas, 121.8 x 182.6cm, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston. Source: Elizabeth Johns, Andrew Sayers, Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser with Amy Ellis, *New Worlds From Old: 19th Century Australian and American Landscapes*, exh.cat., National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford Connecticut, 1998, p.125.

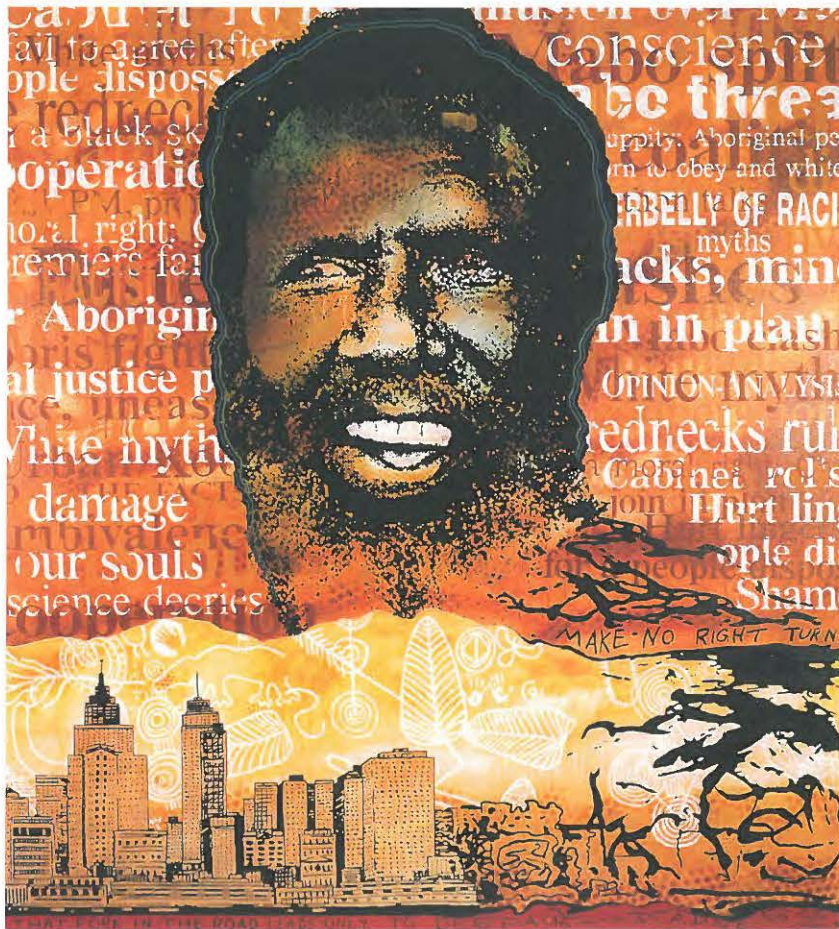


Plate 60
Gordon Bennett,
Eddie Mabo (after
Mike Kelley's
'Booth's Puddle'
1985, from Plato's
Cave, Rothko's
Chapel, Lincoln's
profile), 1996,
synthetic polymer
paint on canvas,
168 x 152.5cm,
NPG, Canberra.
Source: Vivien
Gaston, "Faces
in Dialogue: An
Interview with
Andrew Sayers",
Art & Australia,
vol.38 #3, 2001,
p.417.



Plate 61
Robert Campbell Junior, *Hands of Time (Assimilation and Integration)*, 1987, synthetic
polymer paint on canvas, 130 x 232.5cm, AGWA, Perth. Source: Djon Mundine, & Fiona
Foley, *Tyerabarrbowaryaou: I Shall Never Become a White Man* (exh.eat.), Museum of
Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1992, p.12-13.

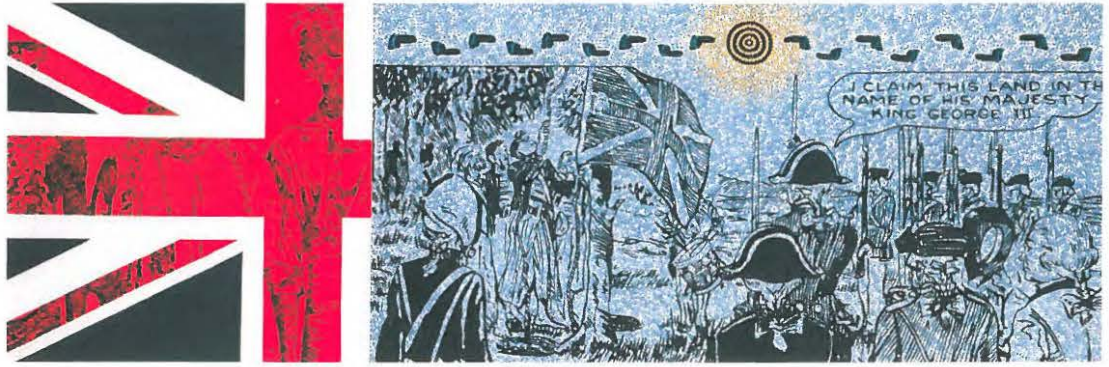


Plate 62

Gordon Bennett, *Terra Nullius*, 1989, acrylic on canvas, 75 x 225cm, The Centre Gallery, Gold Coast. Source: Ian McLean & Gordon Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, Craftsman House, Roseville East, NSW, 1996, p.88.



Plate 63

Brenda Palmer, *Signs of the Times*, n.d., mixed media - laser photocopied images processed from archival material, wood, drafting film, acrylic paint, no dimensions. Source: Neville John O'Neill, & Jane Barney, *Black Humour*, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra, 1997, n.p.



Plate 64
Leah King-Smith, *Untitled No.10* from the series *Patterns of Connection*, 1991, cibachrome photograph, 120 x 120cm, edition of 25. Source: Gabrielle Pizzi, *Beyond Myth - Oltre Il Mito*, Palazzo Papadopoli, Venice, 1999, p.36.

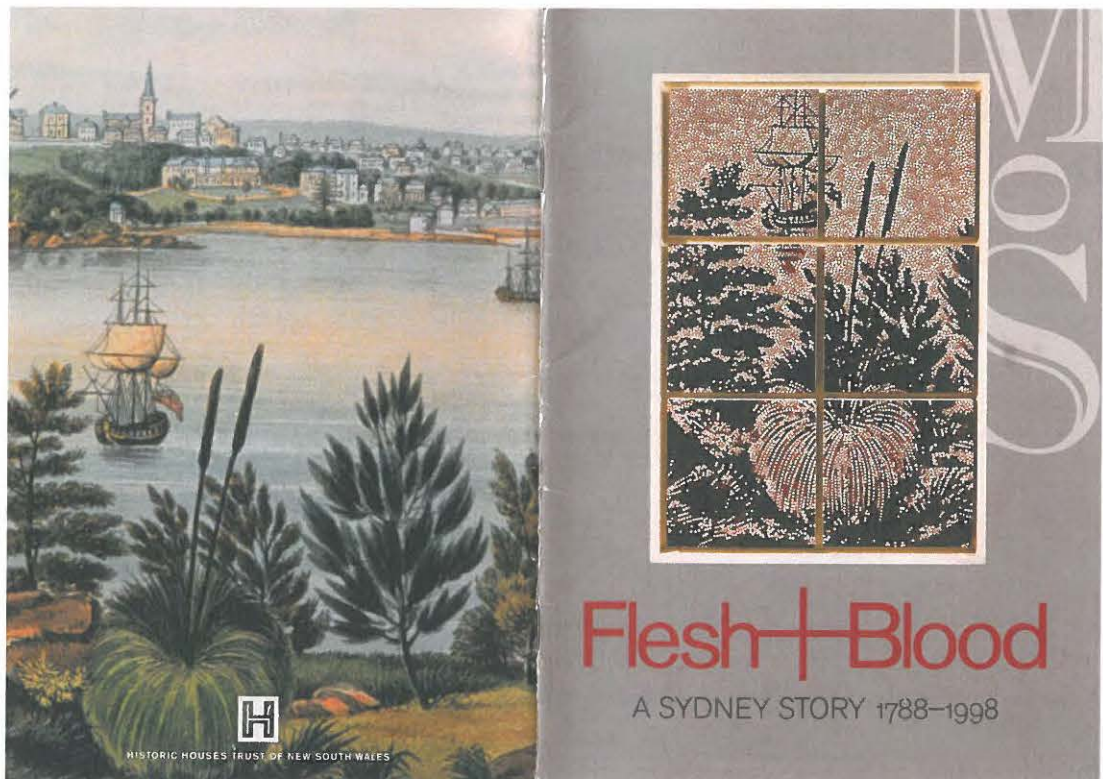


Plate 65
Ace Bourke, *Flesh + Blood: A Sydney Story 1788-1998*, exh.cat., Museum of Sydney, Sydney, 1998, front cover featuring Gordon Bennett, *Metaphysical Landscape no.2*, 1990, acrylic on canvas, private collection. Back cover featuring Joseph Lycett, *North View of Sidney[sic], New South Wales* (detail), 1822, hand coloured aquatint, MoS, Sydney.

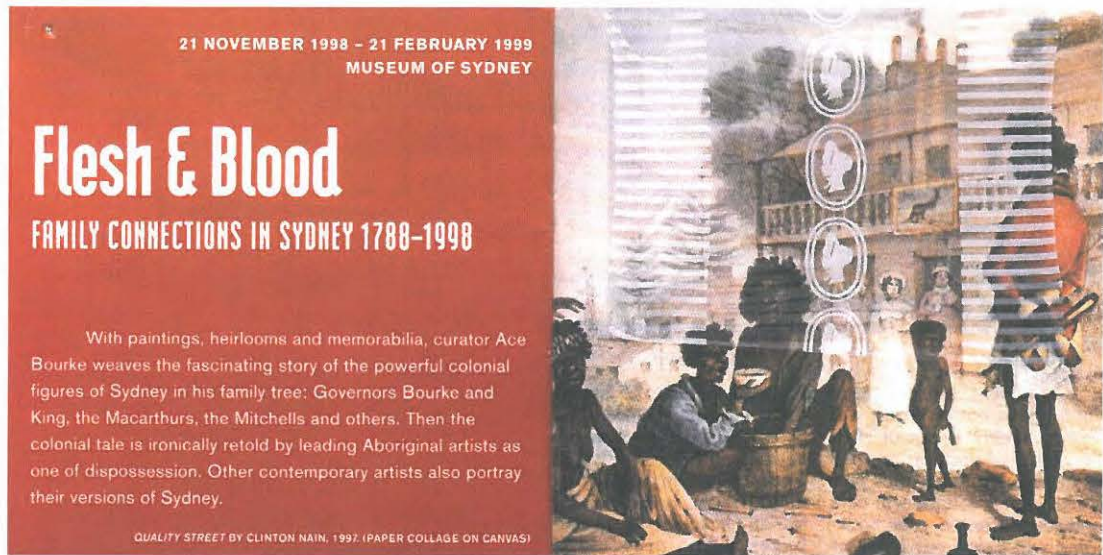


Plate 66

Museum of Sydney Exhibition Calendar advertising *Flesh + Blood*, 1998, featuring Clinton Nain, *Quality Street* (detail), 1997.

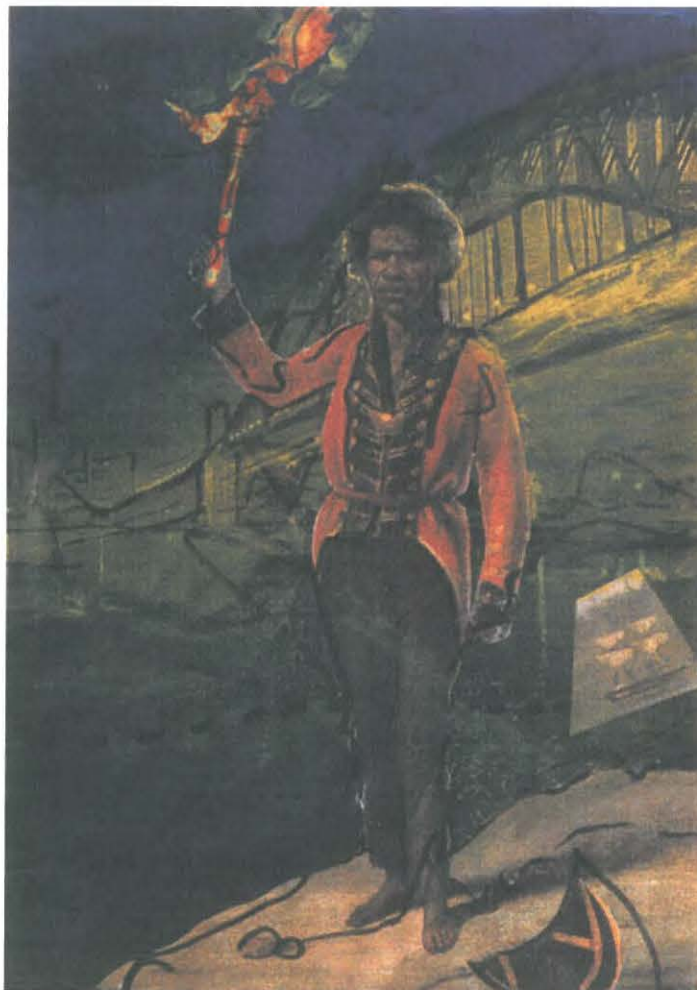


Plate 67

Clinton Nain, *Dream Run* (detail), 1997, bubble jet print, 38 x 58cm, collection of the artist. Source: Bourke, *Flesh + Blood*, p.14.



Plate 68

Brenda L. Croft, *Oh Yes, I Remember That Now, He Said*, 1998, from the series *In My Father's House*, Ilfachrome print, 50 x 75cm. Source: Pizzi, *Beyond Myth*, 1999, p.33.

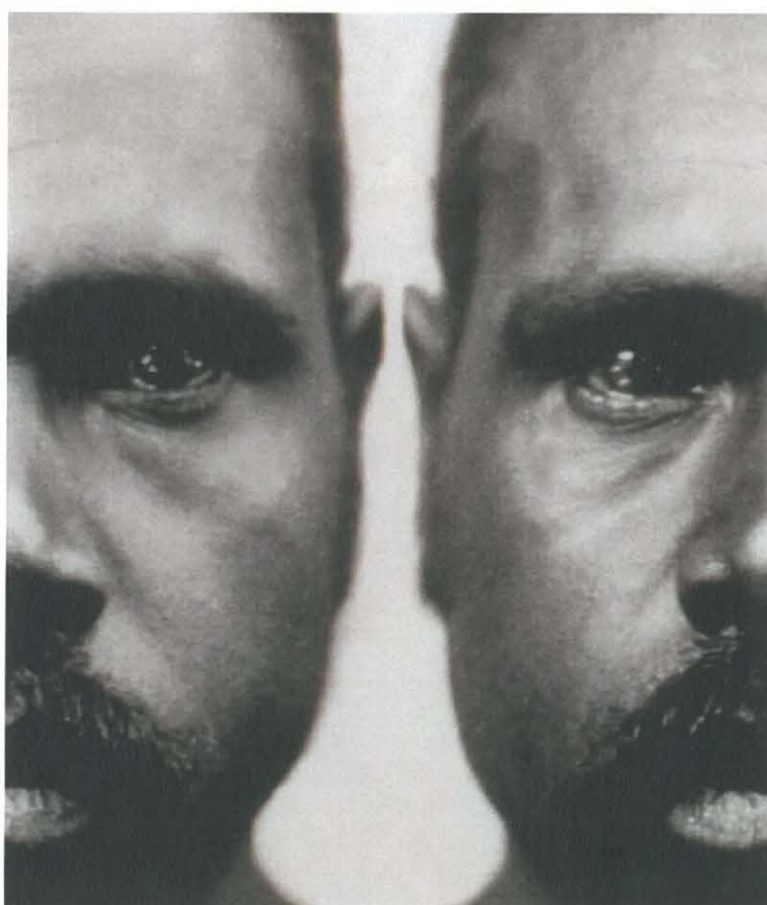


Plate 69

Brook Andrew, *I Split Your Gaze*, 1997, digital image, 100 x 100cm. Source: Pizzi, *Beyond Myth*, Venice, 1999, p.23.

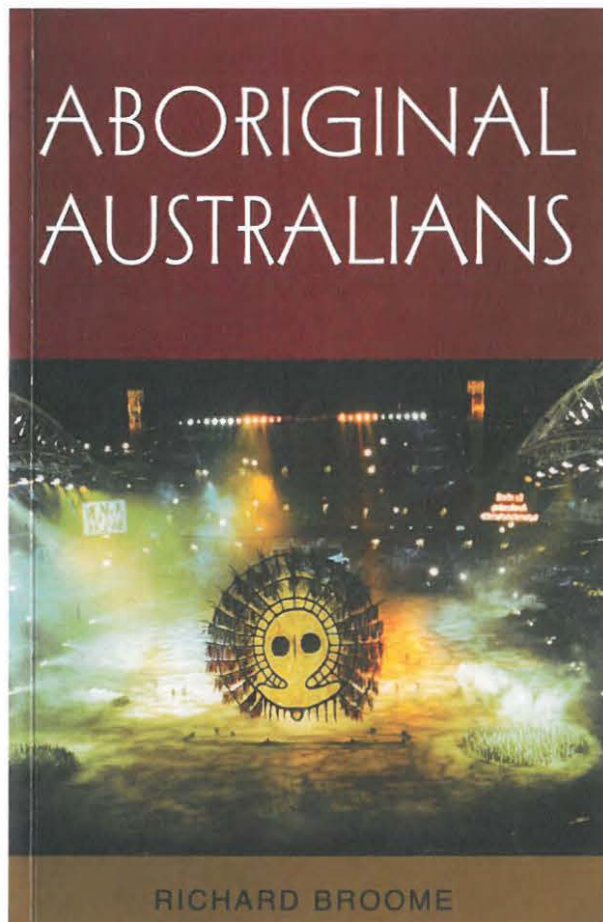


Plate 70

Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australia: Black Responses to White Dominance 1788-2001*, 3rd ed., Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2002, front cover featuring Newsphotos Limited image of "Awakenings", Sydney Olympic Games Opening Ceremony, 2000.

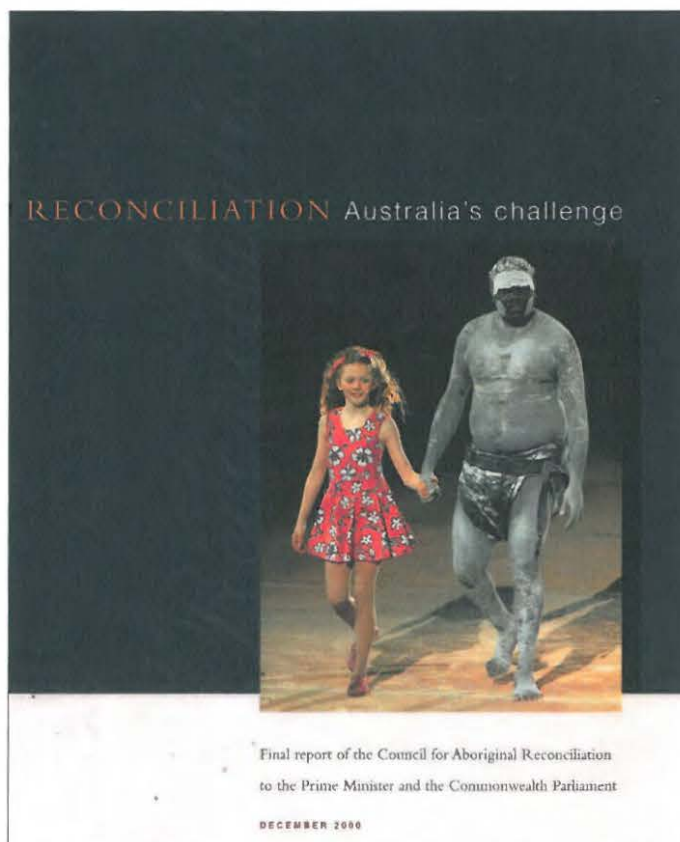


Plate 71

Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Reconciliation Australia's Challenge*, Commonwealth of Australia, December 2000, front cover featuring News Limited / Craig Borrow, *Djakapurra Munyarryun and Nikki Webster walk together at the Opening Ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games*, 2000.



Plate 72

Craig Beifus, *Sydney 28 May 2000*, 2000, colour photograph. Source: Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Reconciliation Australia's Challenge*, 2000, p.xi.



Plate 73

John McDonald, *Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2001, front cover featuring W. B. McInnes, *Miss Collins*, 1924, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 78.6cm, AGSA, Adelaide.

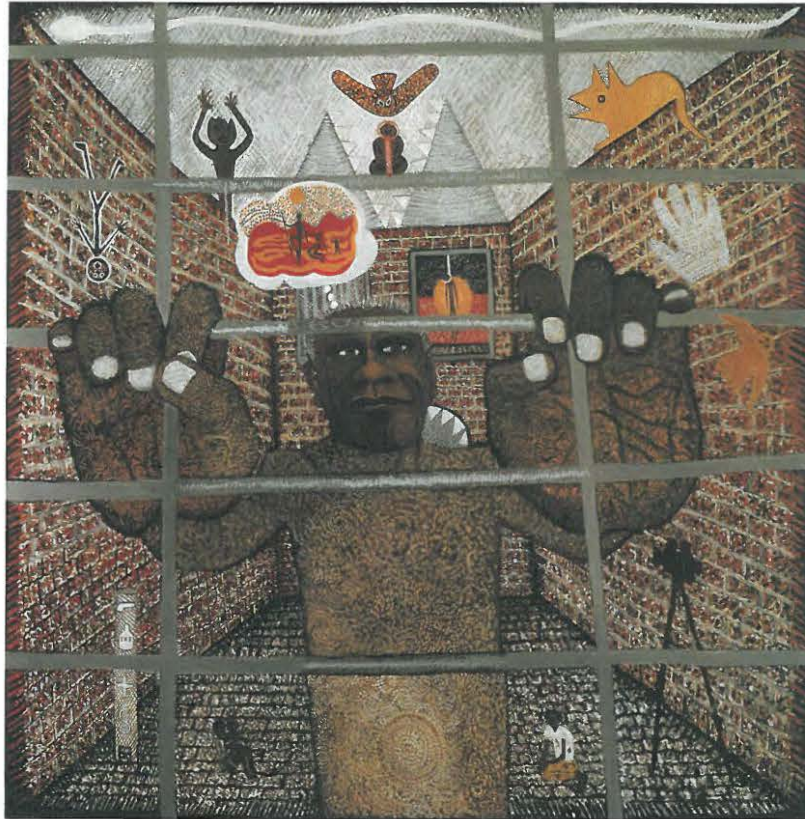


Plate 74
Trevor Nickolls,
Deaths In Custody,
1990, synthetic
polymer paint
on canvas, 150
x 150cm, NGA,
Canberra. Source:
McDonald,
*Federation:
Australian Art and
Society*, Canberra,
2001, p.205.



Plate 75
Avril Quail, *Trespassers Keep Out!*, 1982, colour screenprint on paper, 49 x 72cm, NGA,
Canberra. Source: McDonald, *Federation: Australian Art and Society*, 2001, p.193.

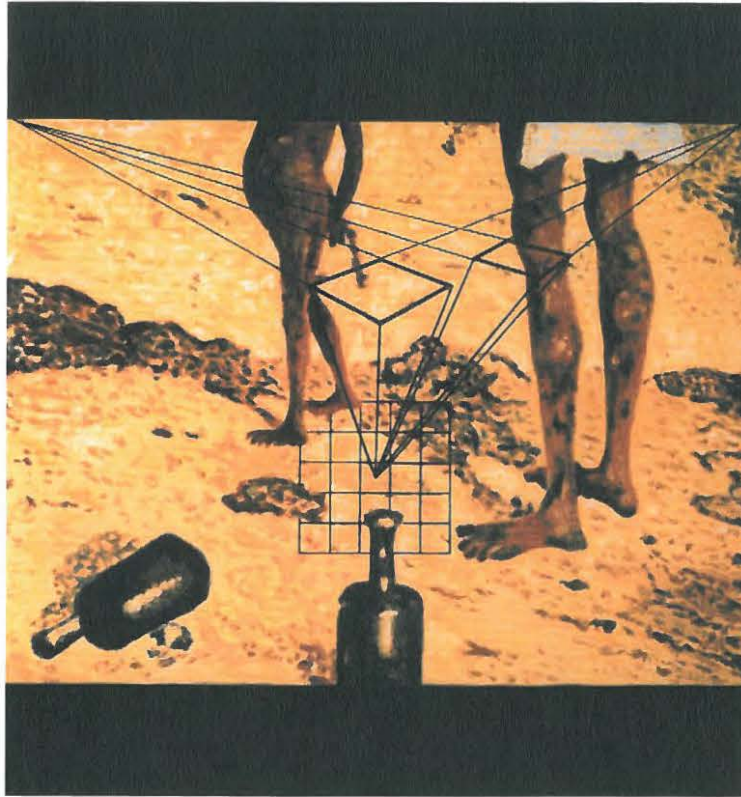


Plate 76
Gordon Bennett, *Web of Attrition* (detail), 1989, oil on canvas - five panels, 100 x 500cm, Moët & Chandon Fund, NGA, Canberra. Source: McDonald, *Federation: Australian Art and Society*, 2001, p.203.



Plate 77
Augustus Earle, *Natives of New South Wales as Seen in the Streets of Sydney*, 1830, lithograph - hand coloured with watercolour on paper, 19.8 x 28.8cm. Source: Radford & Hylton, *Australian Colonial Art*, 1995, p.37.



Plate 78

Top: Fiona Foley, *Annihilation of the Blacks*, 1986, plywood and wood, height, 210cm, NMA, Canberra. Bottom: Arthur Pambeagan Sr & Arthur Pambeagan Jr, *Fish on Poles*, 1962, wood, natural pigments, string, 140 x 216.5 x 9cm, NMA, Canberra. Source: Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 1998, p.393.



Plate 79

Gordon Hookey, *King Hit (For Queen and Country)*, 1999, punching bag, acrylic on leather, mixed media, dimensions variable. Source: Brenda L. Croft, *Beyond the Pale: 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2000, p.35.

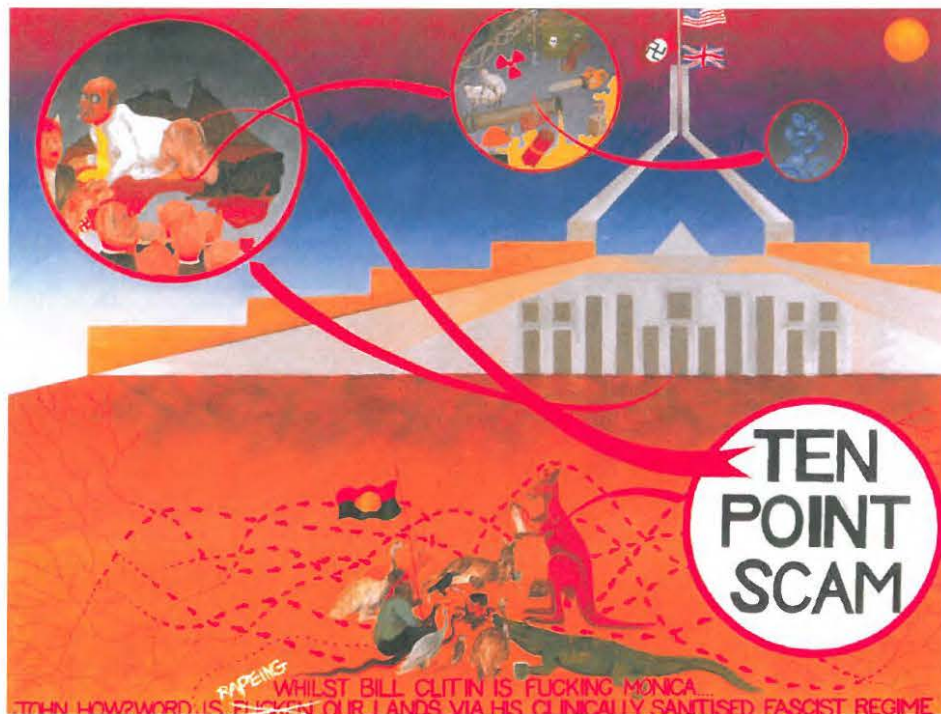


Plate 80

Gordon Hookey, *Ten Point Scam*, 1998, oil on canvas, 223 x 178cm. Source: Croft, *Beyond the Pale*, 2000, p.36.

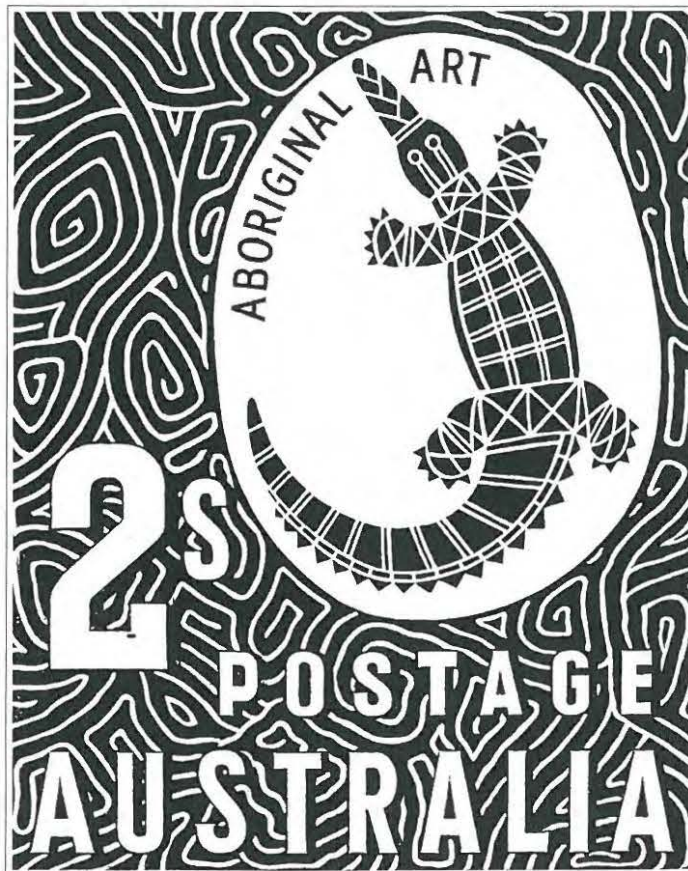


Plate 81

Gert Sellheim, *Design Featuring Aboriginal Rock Carving of Crocodile*, 1948, pen, ink, gouache on white card, 29.2 x 23.4cm, National Philatelic Centre, Melbourne. Source: Claire Baddeley, *Motif and Meaning: Aboriginal Influences in Australian Art 1930-1970*, exh.cat., Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat Vic., 1999, p.8.

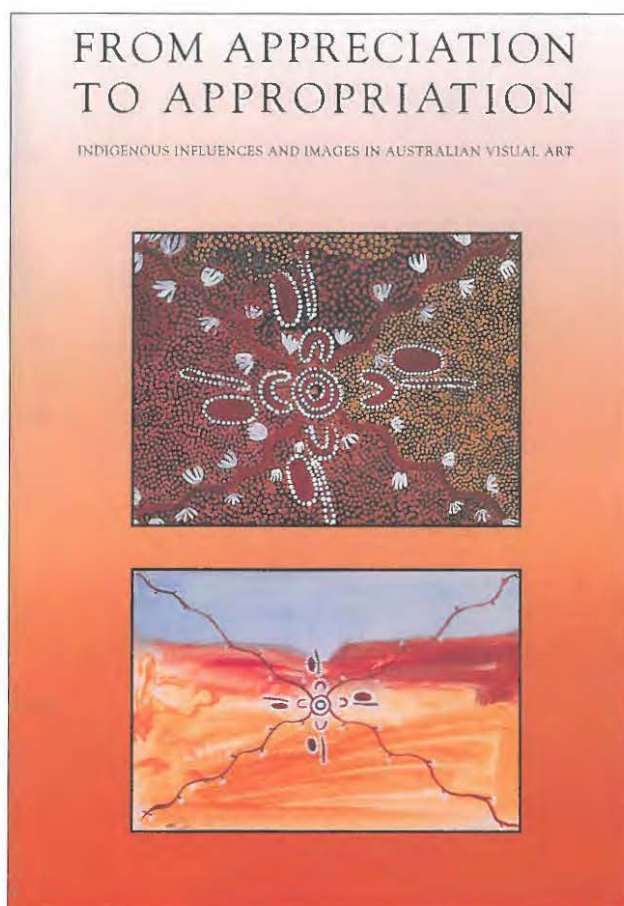


Plate 82

Christine Nicholls, *From Appreciation to Appropriation: Indigenous Influences and Images in Australian Visual Art*, exh.cat., Flinders University Art Museum City Gallery, Adelaide, 2000, front cover featuring Kaapa (Mbitjana) Tjampitjinpa & Tim Johnson, *Women's Story and Yam Dreaming*, 1987, synthetic polymer paint on canvas board, 45.3 x 30.3 and 40.5 x 30.3cm, Flinders University Art Museum.



Plate 83
Peter Kennedy, 1983, *On Sacred Land* (detail), oil on canvas. Source: Kerr, "Colonial Quotations", 1996, p.382.



Plate 84
Tommy McRae, *Dancers With Weapons; Hunting and Fishing; European House and Couple*, pen and ink on blue paper, 23 x 33.4cm, La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne. Source: Sayers, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, 1994, p.125.

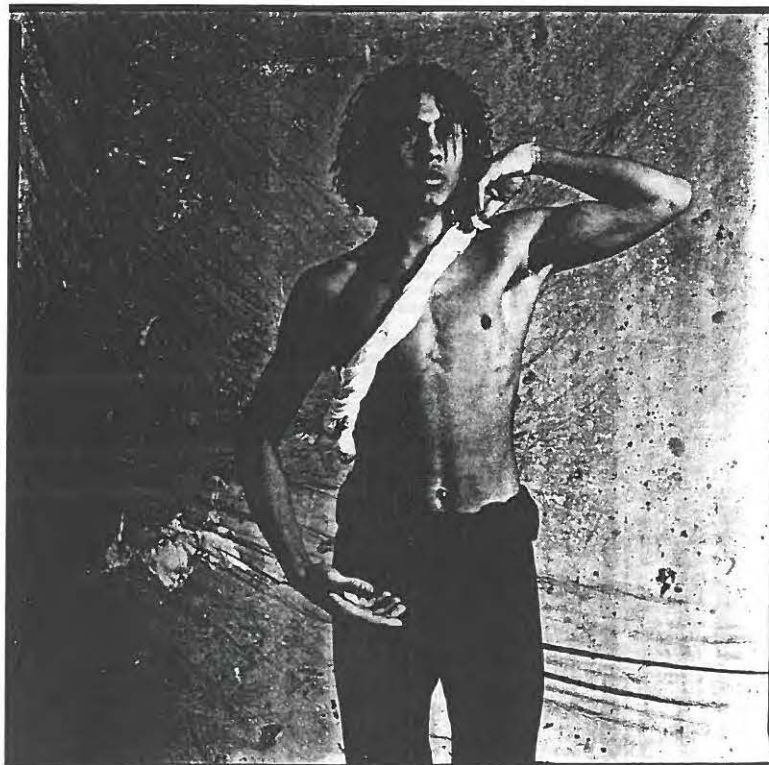


Plate 85
Tracey Moffatt, *Some Lads I*, 1986, gelatin silver photograph, 45.5 x 46.5cm. Source: *Art and Aboriginality 1987*, Aspex Gallery, Artspace Portsmouth, UK, 1987, n.p.



Plate 86
Geoff Lowe, *Impersonation*,
1983-1984, acrylic on linen,
152 x 122cm. Source: Jonathan
Watkins, *Stories of Australian
Art*, exh.cat., Commonwealth
Institute & Australian Studies
Centre; London, 1988, p.53.



Plate 87
Ian North, *Seasons, Australia, 1987 (Kangaroo)*, I-IV (detail), 1987, acrylic, type C
photographs - four pieces, 38.5 x 48.5cm each, Australian Centre for Photography,
Sydney. Source: Watkins, *Stories of Australian Art*, 1988, p.91.



Plate 88

Geoff Parr, *Place II* (detail), 1983/1988, photographic transparencies mounted on lightboxes - six pieces, 75.5 x 93.5 x 15cm each. Source: Watkins, *Stories of Australian Art*, 1988, p.32.



Plate 89

Governor Arthur's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1st Nov. 1828, 1828, oil on wood panel, 36 x 22.8cm, NLA, Canberra. Source: Bain Attwood & Stephen Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2003, p.178.

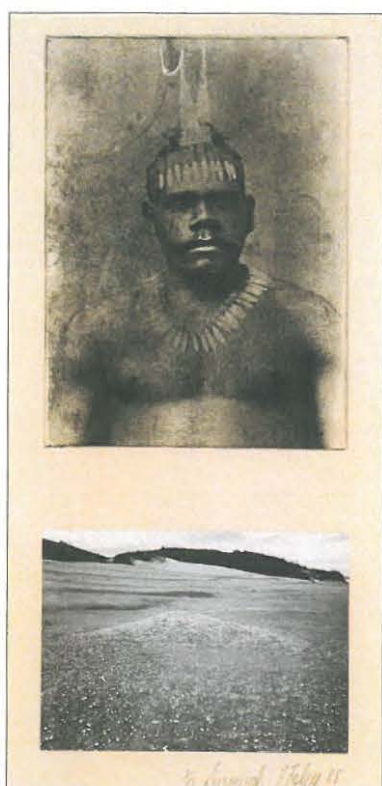


Plate 90

Fiona Foley, *Survival*, 1988, from a series of four, photo etching and collage, 57 x 38cm. Source: Christine Watson, "The Bicentenary and Beyond: Recent Developments in Aboriginal Printmaking", *Artlink* vol.10 #1 & 2, 1990, p.70.



Plate 91

Leah King-Smith, *Untitled No.3* from the series *Patterns of Connection*, 1991, cibachrome photograph, 102 x 102cm. Source: Juliana Engberg, *Colonial Post Colonial*, exh.cat., Museum of Modern Art, Heide, Vic., 1996, p.47.

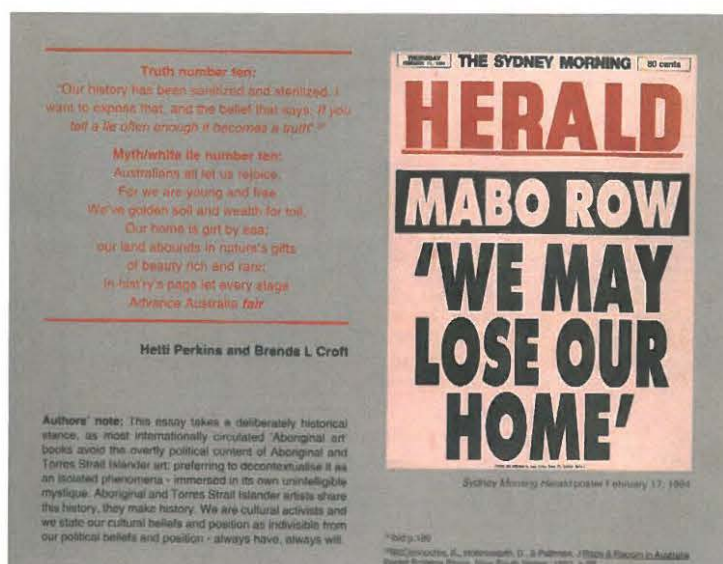


Plate 92
 Brenda L. Croft & Hetti Perkins, *True Colours: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists Raise the Flag*, exh.cat., Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, 1994, n.p.



Plate 93
 Destiny Deacon, *Regal Eagles*, 1994/2004, light jet print from polaroid - two pieces, 100 x 80cm each. Source: Natalie King, *Destiny Deacon: Walk and Don't Look Blak*, exh.cat., Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2004, p.94.



Plate 94

Gordon Bennett, *Untitled*, 1989, oil and acrylic on canvas - six pieces, 30 x 30cm each, MCA, Sydney. Source: McLean & Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, NSW, 1996, p.89.



Plate 95

An English View of the Myall Creek Massacre, *The Chronicles of Crime*, 1841, London or *The Newgate Calendar*, 1841, London. Source: Elder, *Blood on the Wattle*, 1988, p.81.

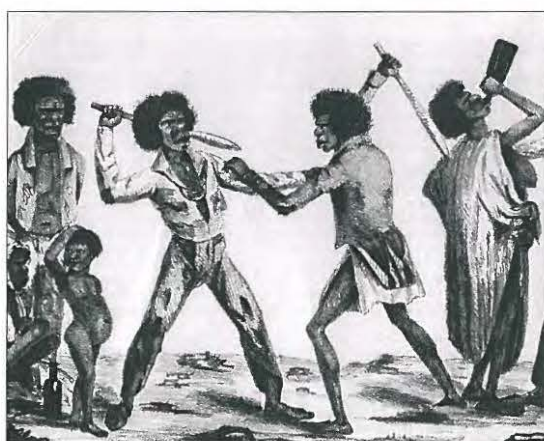


Plate 96

Attributed to Charles Rodius or John Carmichael, *Scene in a Sydney Street*, c.1830, lithograph, Rex Nan Kivell collection, NLA, Canberra. Source: Elder, *Blood on the Wattle*, 1988, p.14.

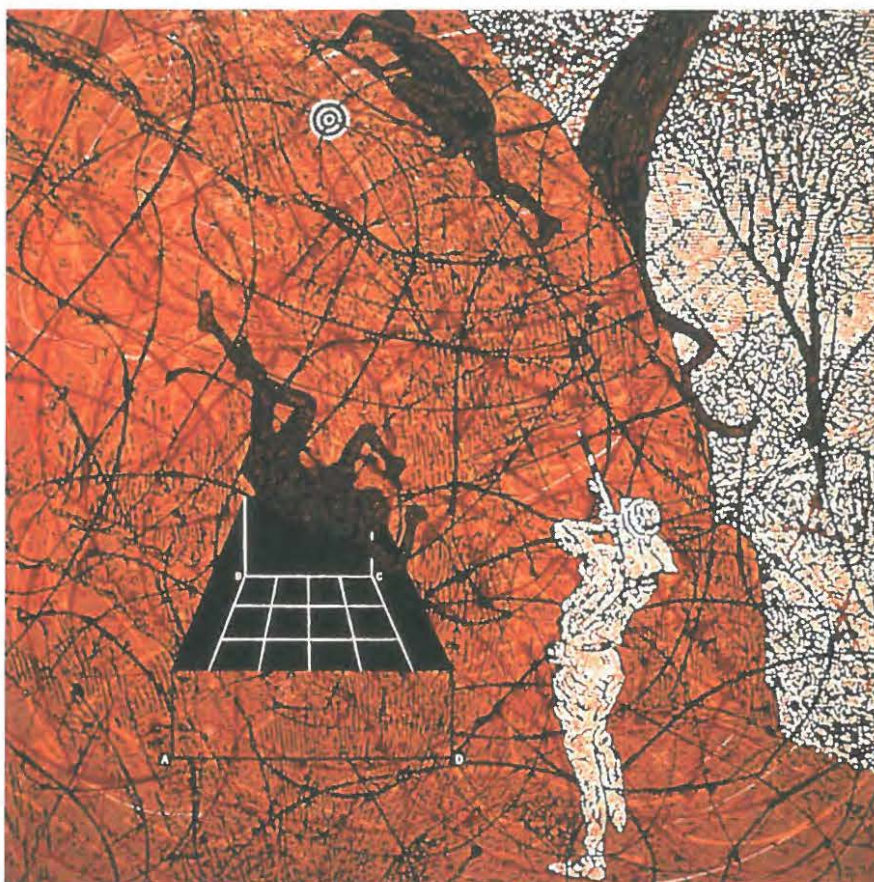


Plate 97

Gordon Bennett, *Death of the Ahistorical Subject (Vertigo)*, 1993, acrylic on linen, 182 x 182cm, private collection. Source: McLean & Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, 1996, p.47.



Plate 98

Native Police Dispersing the Blacks, n.d.

Source: Elder, *Blood on the Wattle*, 1988, p.81.



Plate 99

Brunelleschi viewing the mirror reflection of his first perspective picture, developed c.1420s. Source: Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr, *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry*, Cornell University Press, 1991, p.106



Plate 100

Gordon Bennett, *Triptych: Requiem; Of Grandeur; Empire*, oil on canvas, photograph, 120 x 120cm; 200 x 150cm; 120 x 120cm, QAG, Brisbane. Source: McLean & Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, 1996, pp.90-91.

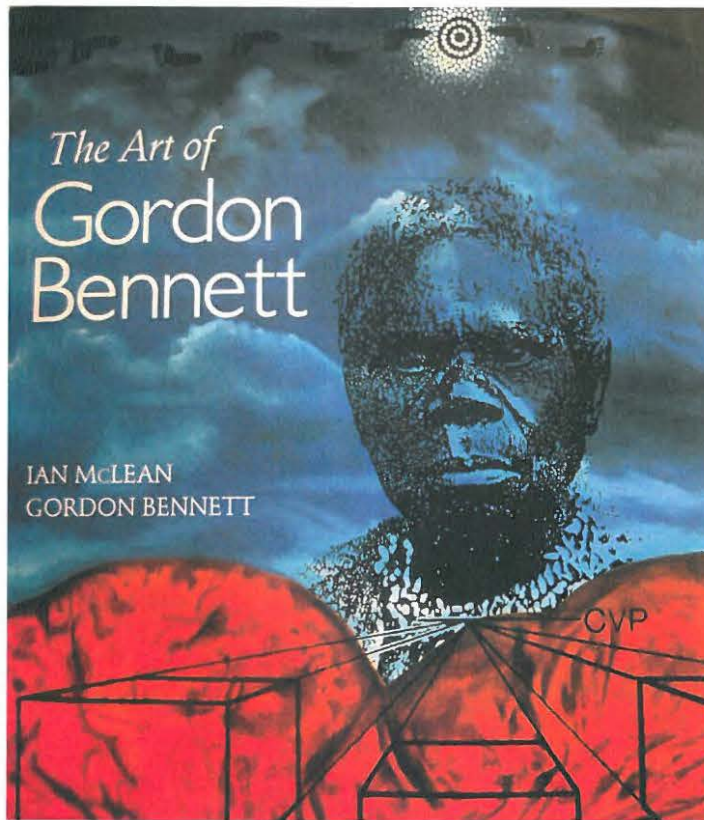


Plate 101
 Ian McLean & Gordon Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, Craftsman House, Roseville East, NSW, 1996, front cover featuring Gordon Bennett, *Triptych: Requiem* (detail), 1989, oil on canvas, 120 x 120cm, QAG, Brisbane.



Plate 102
 C. A. Woolley, *Portrait of Truganini*, 1866, photograph, NLA, Canberra.
 Source: Elder, *Blood on the Wattle*, 1988, p.31.



Plate 103

Geoff Parr, *Spaceman*, 1987, synthetic polymer paint, charcoal on canvas, 160 x 450cm, QAG, Brisbane. Source: Eather & Hall, *Balance*, 1990, p.59.

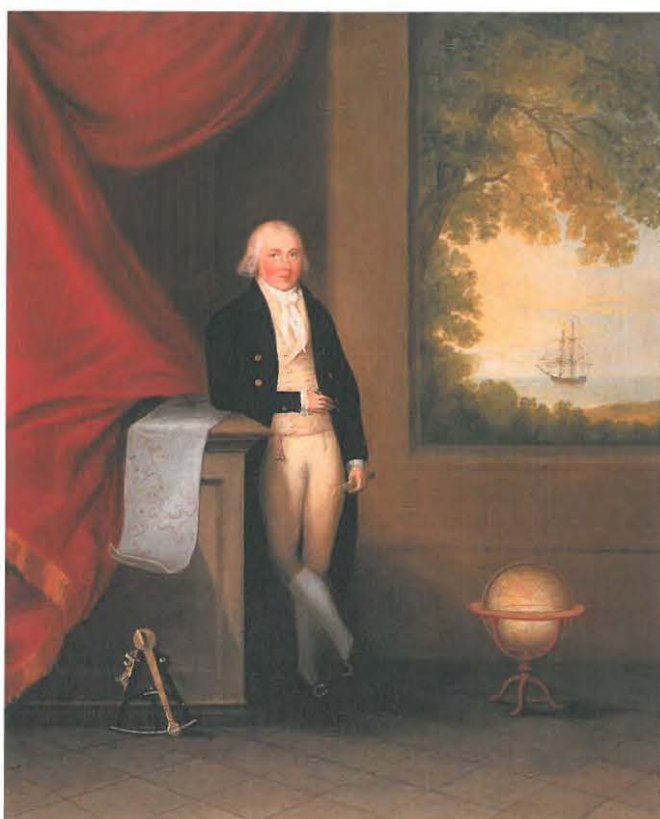


Plate 104

William Arthur Devis, *Portrait of Captain Wilson of Antelope*, c.1782, oil on canvas, 74 x 60.8cm, Rex Nan Kivell Collection, NLA, Canberra. Source: National Library of Australia, *Paradise Possessed: The Rex Nan Kivell Collection*, NLA, Canberra, 1998, p.58.



Plate 105

Geoff Parr, *The National Picture*, 1985, Nekko print on canvas, 275 x 425cm, MCA, Sydney. Source: DeLorenzo & Dysart, *A Changing Relationship*, 1988, p.38.

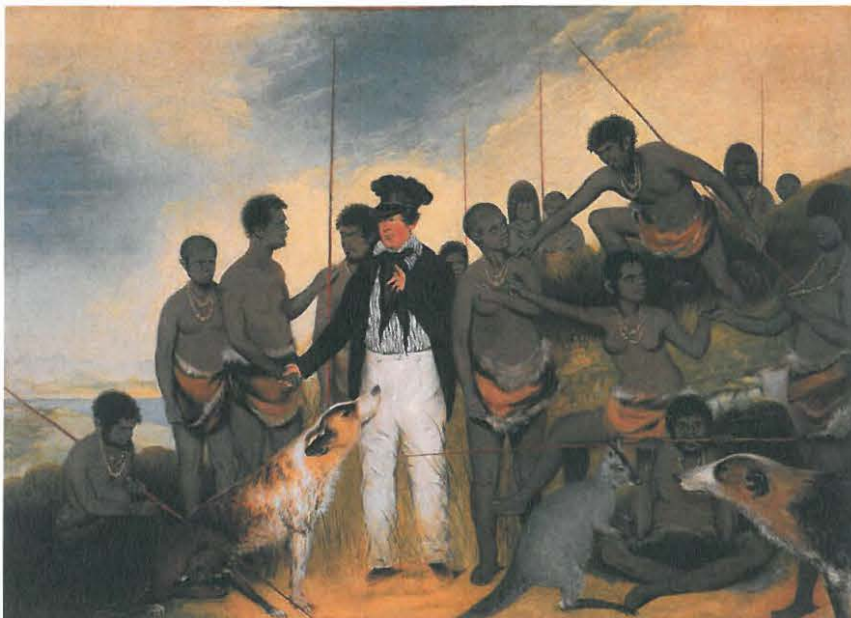


Plate 106

Benjamin Duterrau, *The Conciliation*, 1840, oil on canvas, 121 x 170.5cm, TMAG, Hobart. Source: Christopher Allen, *Art in Australia: From Colonization to Postmodernism*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1997, p.32.



Plate 107

Imants Tillers, *Mount Analogue*, 1985, oilstick, synthetic polymer paint on 165 canvasboards, 279 x 571cm, NGA, Canberra. Source: Wynstan Curnow, *Imants Tillers and the 'Book of Power'*, Craftsman House, North Ryde, NSW, 1998, p.73.



Plate 108

Eugene von Guérard, *North-east View From the Northern Top of Mount Kosciusko*, 1863, oil on canvas, 66.5 x 117cm, NGA, Canberra. Source: Johns, Sayers, Kornhauser with Ellis, *New Worlds From Old*, 1998, p.157.

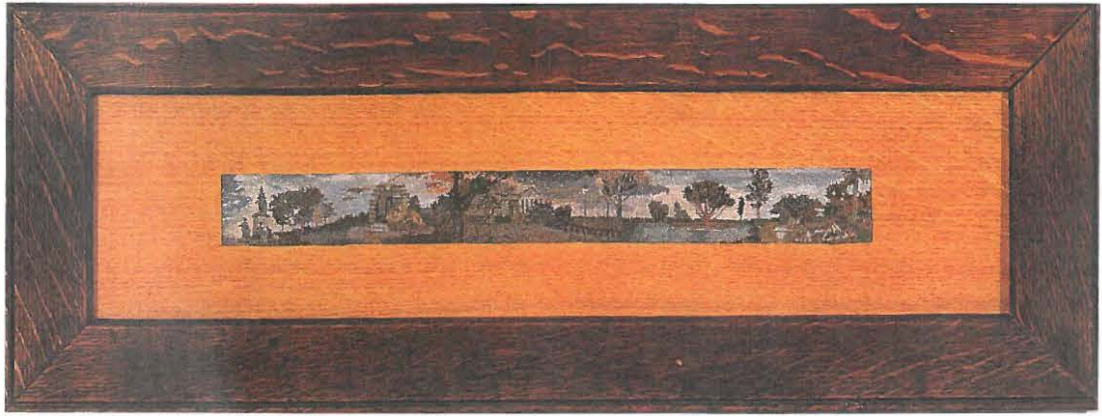


Plate 109

Narelle Jubelin, *North Terrace and Environs: A Distanced View*, 1987, found English oak frame, cotton petit point, 22 x 59.7cm, private collection. Source: Engberg, *Colonial Post Colonial*, 1996, p.45.



Plate 110

Fiona Foley, *Native Blood*, 1994, hand painted type C photographs, edition of 15, 50 x 40cm, 40 x 50cm, 50 x 40cm, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne. Source: Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 1998, p.405.

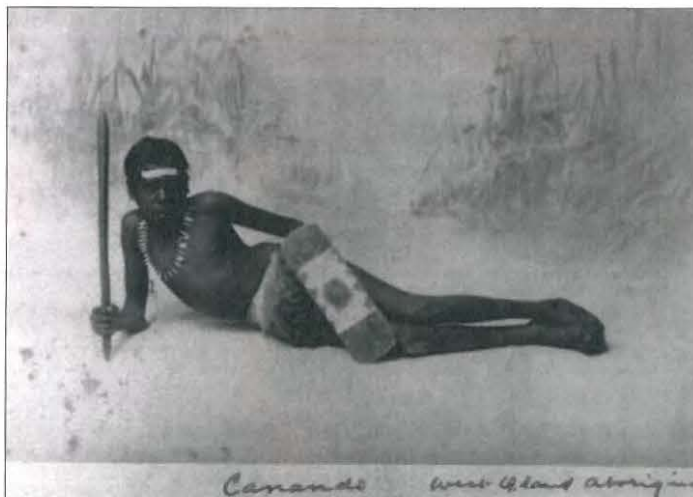


Plate 111

Tosca Studios, *Canando, West Queensland Aboriginal*, c.1900, photograph, 13.4 x 21cm, Queensland Museum, Brisbane. Source: Michael Aird, *Portraits of Our Elders*, Queensland Museum, Brisbane, 1993, p.16.



Plate 112

Fiona Foley, *Badtjala Woman*, 1994, type C photographs, edition of 15, 45 x 35cm each, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne. Source: Benjamin Genocchio, *Fiona Foley: Solitaire*, Piper Press, Annandale, NSW, 2001, p.68.



Plate 113

Bain Studio, *Fraser Island*, c.1899, photograph, 20.2 x 13.6cm, Queensland Museum, Brisbane. Source: Aird, *Portraits of Our Elders*, 1993, p.14.



Plate 114

Fiona Foley, *Native Blood*, 1994, hand painted type C photograph, edition of 15, 40 x 50cm, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne. Source: Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 1998, p.405.



Plate 115

Rea, *Don't Shoot Till You See The Whites Of Their Eyes*, 1999, Jimmy - Red, Yellow, Black; Rea - Blue, Green, Red, digital photographs, dimensions variable. Source: Croft, *Beyond the Pale*, 2000, p.71.

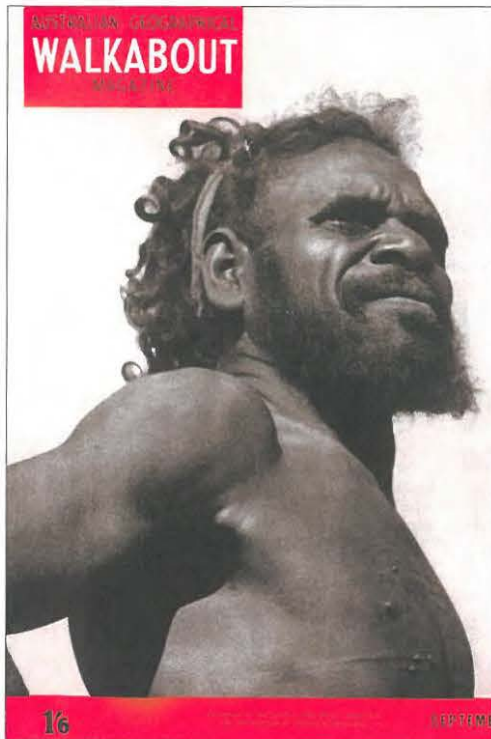


Plate 116

Australian Geographical Walkabout Magazine (detail), September 1950, front cover featuring Roy Dunstan portrait of "One Pound Jimmy". Source: Vivien Johnson, *Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2003, p.46.

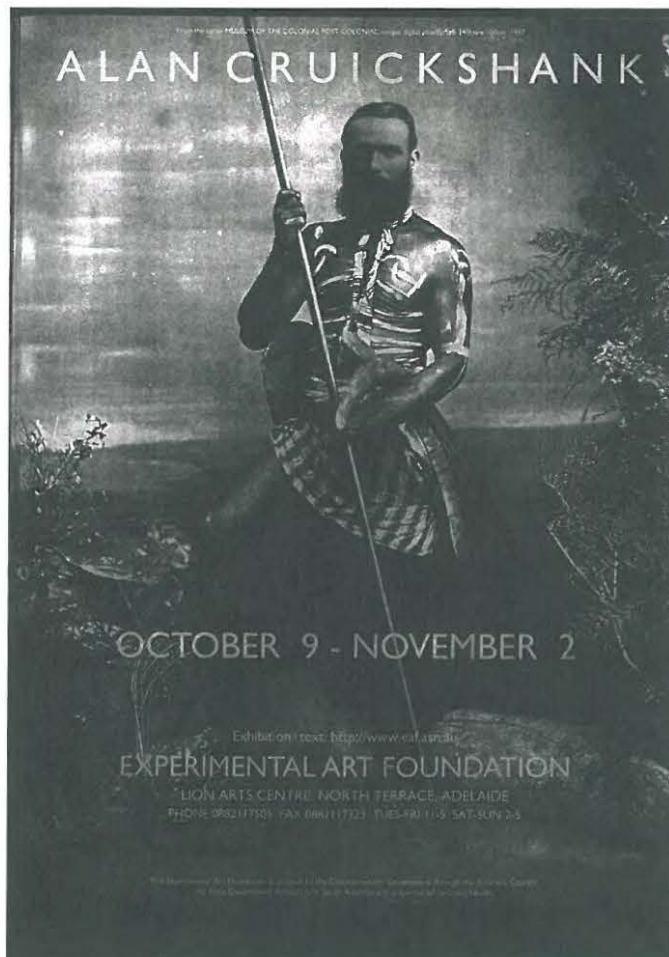


Plate 117

Exhibition advertisement, Alan Cruickshank, from the series *Museum of the Colonial Post Colonial*, 1997, unique digital photograph, 140 x 100cm. Source: *Art / Text*, #59, 1997, p.24.

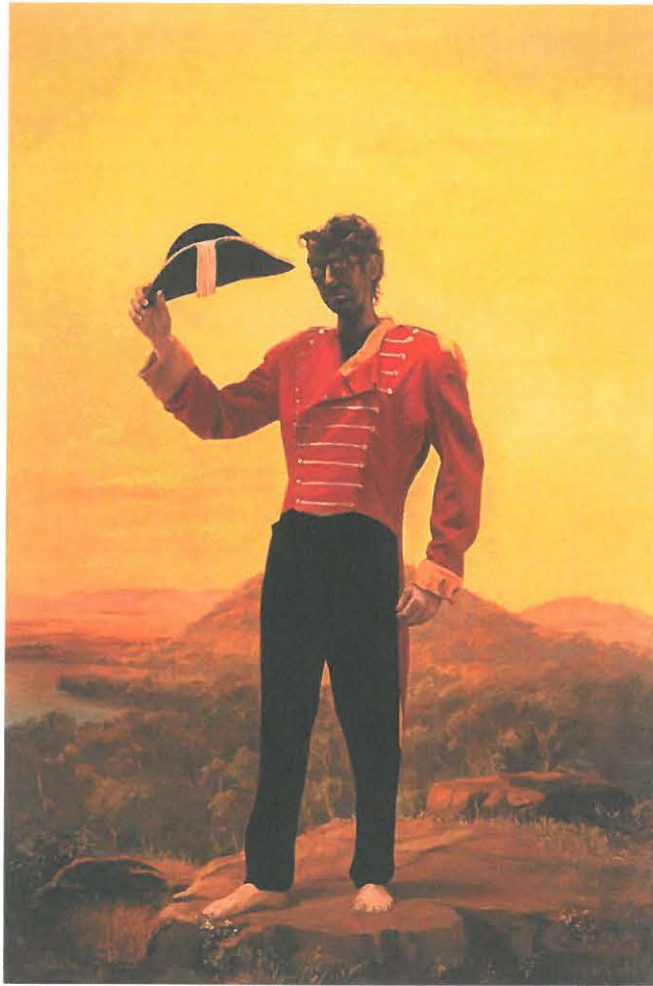


Plate 118
Stephen Bush, *No Title*, 1989,
oil on canvas, 121.5 x 83.5cm,
Monash University Collection,
Melbourne. Source: Engberg,
Colonial Post Colonial, 1996,
p.29.

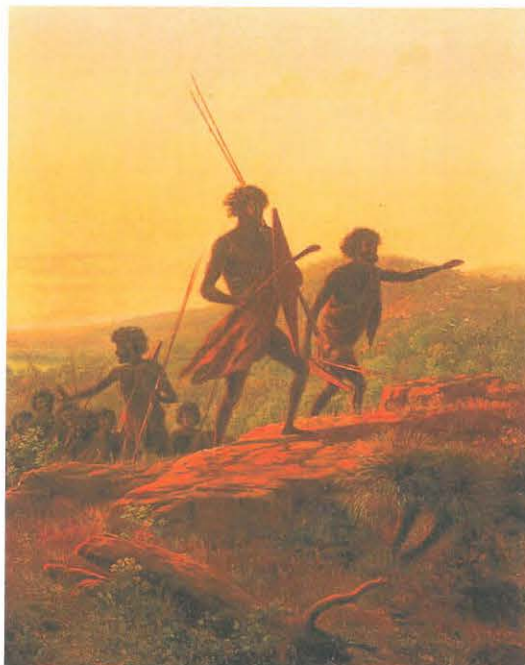


Plate 119
Eugene von Guérard, *Natives Chasing
Game*, 1854, oil on canvas, 46.5 x
37cm, Rex Nan Kivell Collection, NLA,
Canberra. Source: National Library of
Australia, *Paradise Possessed*, 1998, p.58.



Plate 120
Destiny Deacon, *Portrait of Eva Johnson, Writer*, 1994/2004, light jet print from polaroid, 100 x 80cm, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney. Source: King, *Destiny Deacon*, 2004, p.77.

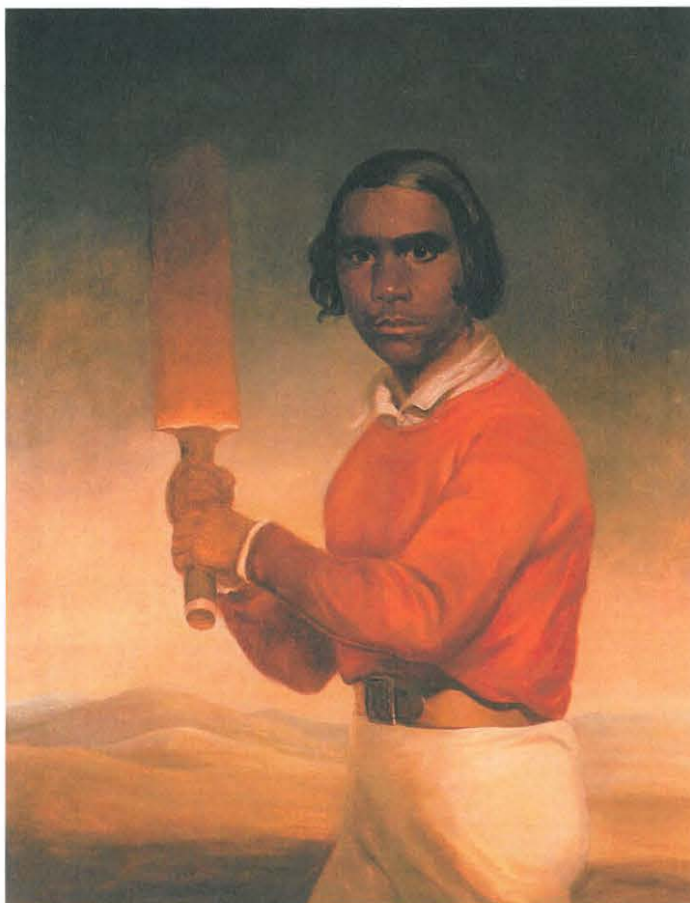


Plate 121
J. M. Crossland, *Nannultera, a young cricketer of the Natives' Training Institution, Poonindie*, 1854, oil on canvas, 99 x 78.8cm, Rex Nan Kivell Collection, NLA, Canberra. Source: Julian Faigan, *Uncommon Australians: Towards an Australian Portrait Gallery*, exh.cat., Art Exhibitions Australia Ltd, Sydney, 1992, p.144.



Plate 122

*Byram Mansell working in his studio on a picture called Hibiscus and Honey Ants' Nest. In the foreground is a shield from north-eastern Queensland, n.d. Source: Roman Black, *Old and New Australian Aboriginal Art*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1964, p.132.*



Plate 123

Unknown photographer, Douglas Annand, *Kangaroo Hunt* mural in the first class cafe of the Orient Liner Orcades, 1949, colour photograph, PHM, Haymarket, NSW. Source: Powerhouse Museum, *Decorative Arts and Design from the Powerhouse Museum*, Powerhouse Publishing, Haymarket, NSW, 1991, p.130.



Plate 124
Martin Boyd Pottery Limited, *Dish*,
c.1955, earthenware painted with
underglaze colours, 2.3 x 30.7cm,
PHM, Haymarket, NSW. Source:
Powerhouse Museum, *Decorative
Arts and Design*, 1991, p.123.

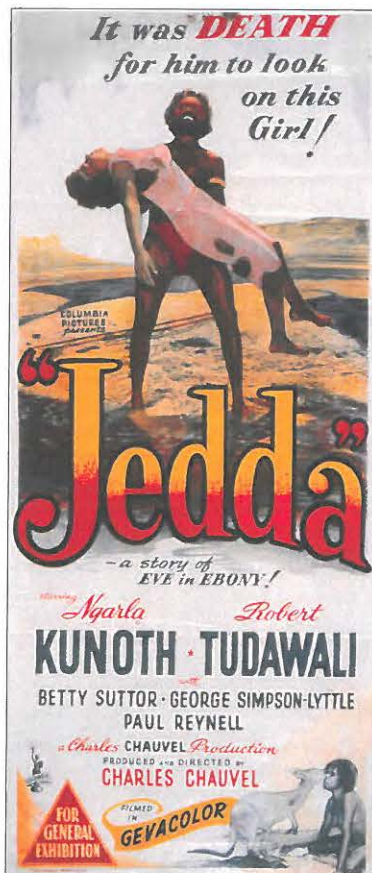


Plate 125
Publicity poster for *Jedda*, 1955. Source: Ann Curthoys,
A. W. Martin & Tim Rowse (eds), *Australians: A
Historical Library. Australians from 1939*, Fairfax, Syme
& Weldon Associates, Broadway, NSW, 1987, p.238.

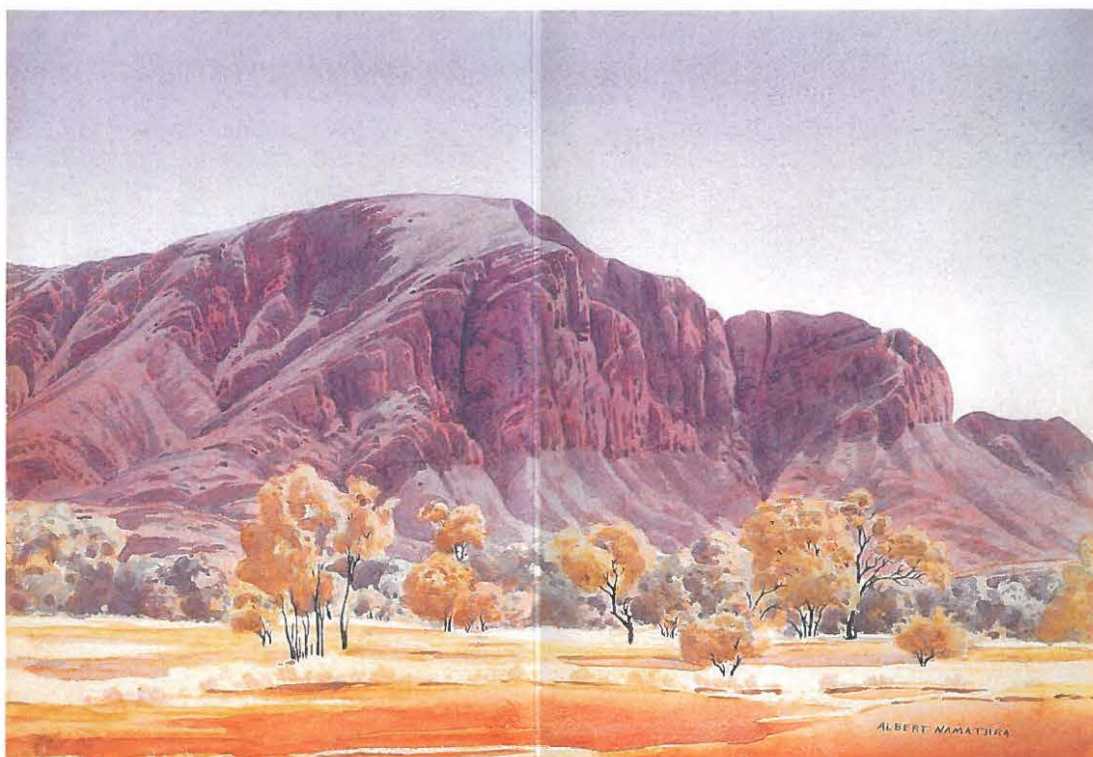


Plate 126

Albert Namatjira, *Ullambaura Haasts Bluff*, c.1946, watercolour on paper, 37 x 55cm, AGWA, Perth. Source: Brenda L. Croft, *Indigenous Art: Art Gallery of Western Australia*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, 2001, inside front cover.



Plate 127

Tracey Moffatt, still from *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy*, 1989, 17 minute, 35 mm. Source: *Artlink*, vol.10 #1&2, Autumn/Winter 1990 (reprinted 1992), inside front cover.



Plate 128

Destiny Deacon, *Meet Us Outside* (detail), 1994, laser print from colour polaroid. Source: Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 1998, p. 408.



Plate 129

Destiny Deacon, *White Australia's Aboriginal Artefacts*, 1995, mixed media, dimensions variable. Installation view from *Welcome to Never-Never*, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne. Source: King, *Destiny Deacon*, 2004, p.14-15.

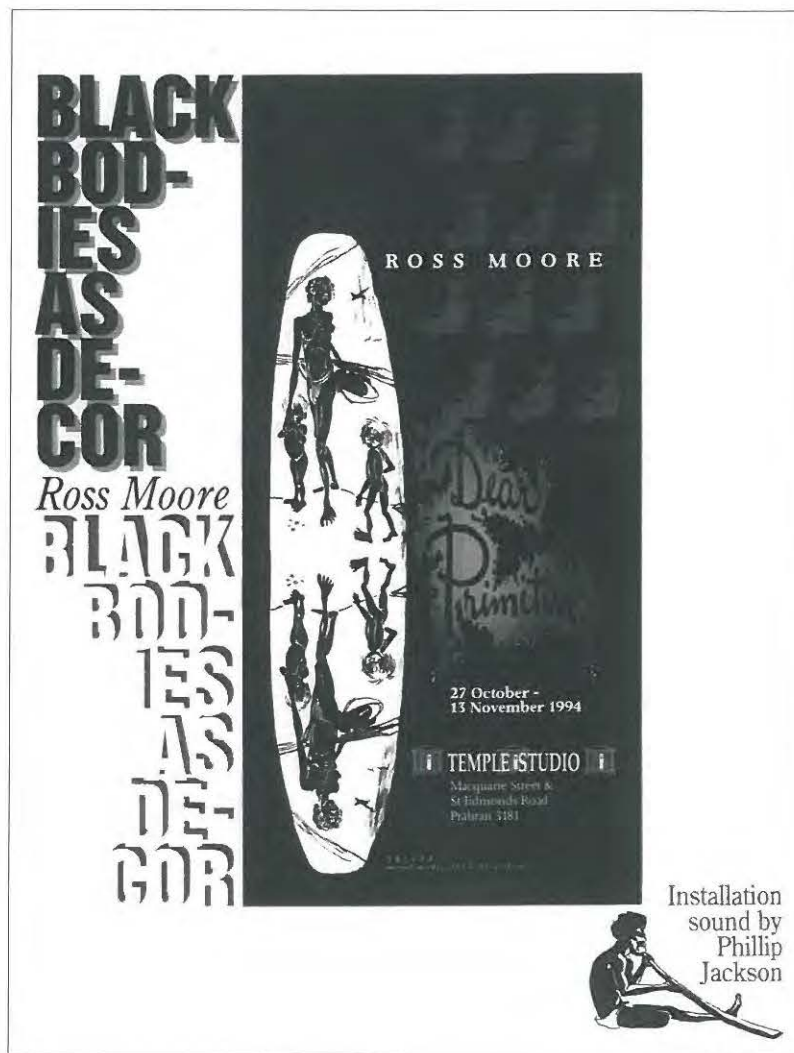


Plate 130
 Ross Moore, *Black Bodies as Décor: Dear Primitive*, exh. cat., Temple Studio, Melbourne, 1994, n.p., front cover.

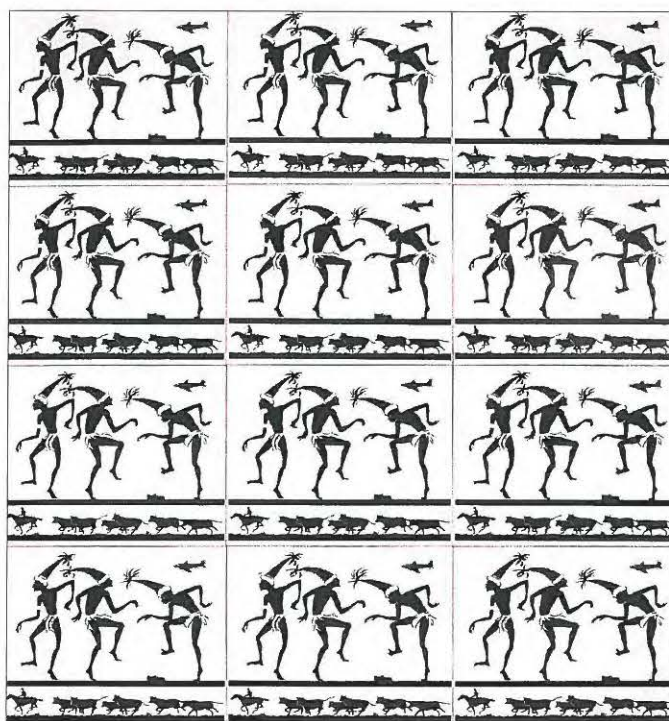


Plate 131
 Ross Moore, *Dear Primitive* (detail), 1994, screen-printed ceramic tiles, dimensions variable. Source: Engberg, *Colonial Post Colonial*, 1996, p.51.

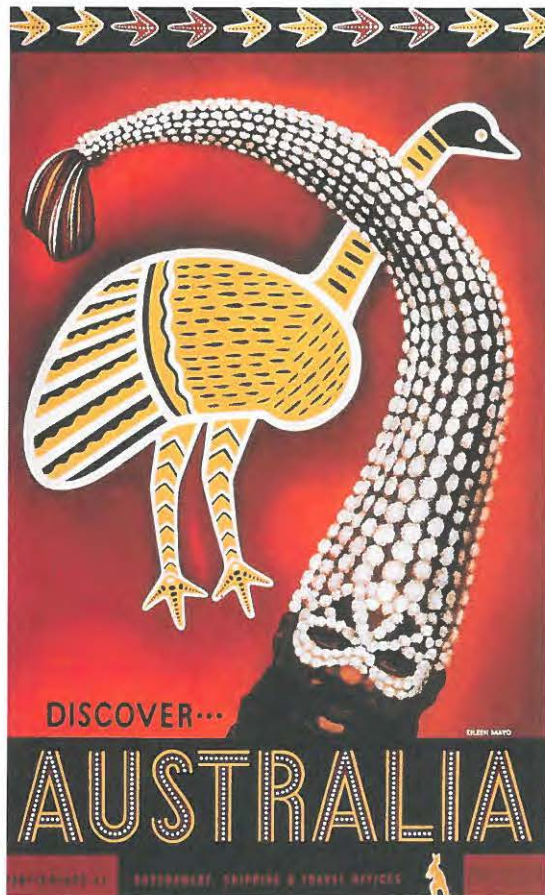


Plate 132

Eileen Mayo, *Discover Australia*, commissioned by the Australian National Travel Association, 1956, photolithograph on paper, 100 x 62cm, PHM, Haymarket, NSW. Source: Powerhouse Museum, *Decorative Arts and Design*, 1991, p.131.

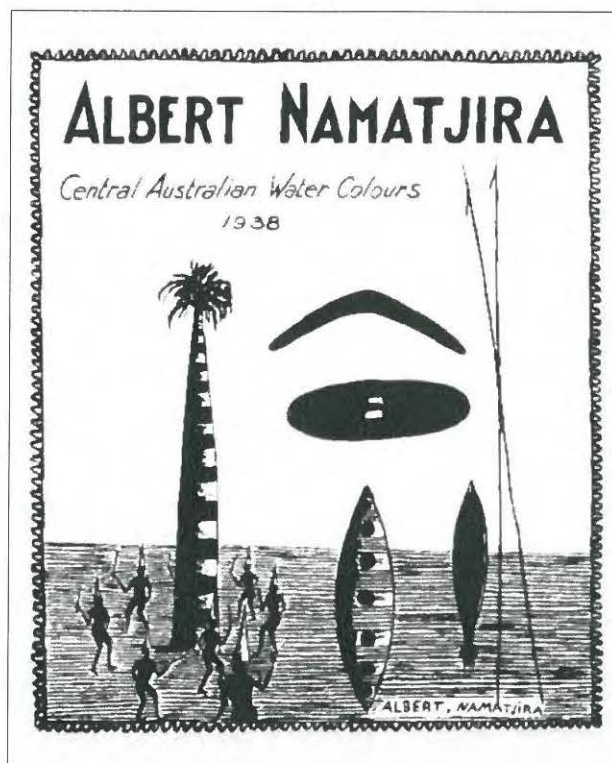


Plate 133

Albert Namatjira: *Central Australian Watercolours: 1938*, exh.cat., Art Society Gallery, Melbourne, front cover featuring design by Namatjira. Source: Bill Gammage, Peter Spearritt & Louise Douglas (eds), *Australians a Historical Library: Australians 1938*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Broadway NSW, 1987, p.125.



Plate 134

Brook Andrew, *Reconstructing More Whiteman's Kitsch 1788-?* (detail), 1994, acrylic, ink on 200 screenprinted tea towels, 73 x 45cm each. Source: Brenda L. Croft & Hetti Perkins, *True Colours: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists Raise the Flag*, Bluecoat Gallery & Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, 1994, n.p.



Plate 136

E. E. Whitmont, Sydney, *Chief*, (shirts & clothing trademark), 1921. Source: Cozzolino, *Symbols of Australia*, 1980, p.149.



Plate 135

Metters Ltd., Sydney, *Early Kooka*, (stove trademark), n.d. Source: Mimmo Cozzolino, *Symbols of Australia*, Penguin Books Australia, Ringwood, Vic., 1980, p.149.

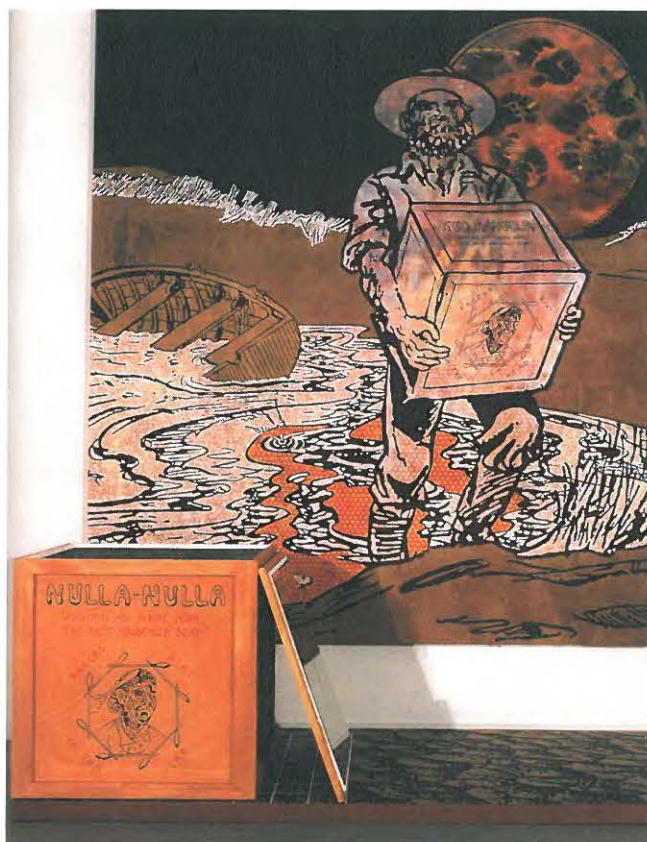


Plate 137
Gordon Bennett, *The Aboriginalist (Identity of Negation: Flotsam)*, 1994, mixed media, dimensions variable, Museum of Modern Art, Heide, Vic. Source: McLean & Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, 1996, p.30.



Plate 138
Christian Bamburra Thompson, *Nulla Nulla Australia's White Hope*, n.d. c.2000. Source: Bronwyn Bancroft & Ken Watson, "Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative: Fact or Fantasy: You Decide!", *Artlink*, vol.20 #1, 2000, p. 79.



Plate 139

Clinton Nain, *Swallow it All*, 2001, plastic, 27 x 27 x 29cm, Sherman Galleries, Sydney. Source: John Harding, *Whitens, Removes Stains, Kills Germs!*, exh.cat., Sherman Galleries, Sydney, 2001, n.p.



Plate 140

Clinton Nain, *Ramming the Blak Rams*, 2001, NGA poster, gouache, bleached Indian cotton (collaboration with Tom Roberts), 86.5 x 114cm. Source: Harding, *Whitens, Removes Stains*, 2001, n.p.