
Australian Aboriginal Art: Changes in Museums' Exhibition Approaches and the Reception of its Art

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Introduction

The Ishibashi Foundation has been collecting contemporary Australian art for the past several years, including quite a few collection of Aboriginal art by Indigenous peoples of Australia. Looking ahead, in order to collect, preserve, research and exhibit Aboriginal art in the future, it is vital to understand the history of how Aboriginal art has been exhibited and received at museums thus far. This is because the history of Aboriginal art involves a 180-degree pivot from having been regarded as the "art of others," completely separated from Western art, to recognition as one of the foremost fields of Australian contemporary visual art, and changes in the modes of exhibition and interpretation at museums have been instrumental in bringing about this shift in perception. Understanding the history of these past developments forms a basis for application of proper criteria to collecting, researching, preserving and exhibiting Aboriginal art.

This essay will begin with a brief overview of the nature of Aboriginal art and its history, and will then examine the historical background of Aboriginal art's exhibition at museums, specifically ethnographic museums in the late 19th century and the ways in which it was presented. Next, the essay will look at the transitional period for reception of Aboriginal art, from the 1950s to the 1980s, from the perspectives of society, politics, economics and art history, and offer a multifaceted overview of trends during this era. Then, it will consider how Aboriginal art has been exhibited in art museums and interpreted since the 1980s, and how in the late 1980s, Aboriginal art evolved into a fully accepted genre of contemporary art.

Also, this essay will touch on the significance and prospects of "the new museology of the twenty-first century,"¹ the phrase with which Margo Neale, Head of the National Museum of Australia's Indigenous Knowledges Curatorial Centre,² describes recent changes in museology surrounding Aboriginal art. Examination of this new and still evolving museology of Aboriginal art offers crucial insights, and it entails understanding the latest developments in Aboriginal art and how museums are endeavoring to interpret this art and disseminate it to society. This essay will discuss the outlook for implementation of a "new museology" vis-à-vis Aboriginal art and wider popularization of this art in Japan, which is geographically and culturally distant from Australia and where Aboriginal art is not yet well known.

Indigenous Peoples of Australia

Who makes up the community that produces Aboriginal art? This community consists of Indigenous peoples of Australia, known as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who have inhabited the Australian continent and the Torres Strait Islands (approximately 270 islands between Australia and Papua New Guinea) for an estimated 50,000 years or longer.³

They are believed to have reached the Australian continent via Southeast Asia, making their way from island to island. Their traditional lifestyle is based on a hunter-gatherer model with a simple material culture, not settling in one place and erecting no large structures.⁴ Prior to British colonization, more than 250 different languages (or more than 800 dialects) were spoken by Indigenous peoples, but as of 2016 about 120 languages were in use, and it is predicted that with new generations replacing their forebears, in the future only about 10% of these, i.e. 12 languages, are likely to survive.⁵

The term "Aborigines," referring to Indigenous peoples of Australia, means "original inhabitants," and is derived from the Latin *ab* (from) and *origine* (origin, beginning).⁶ Coined around the 16th century, the word was first used with reference to Indigenous peoples of Australia in 1789.⁷ However, the collective noun "Aborigines" has a history of discriminatory usage and is now rarely used in public.⁸ The adjective form "Aboriginal," which contains more diversity of meaning, is preferred, and is in broad general use in phrases such as "Aboriginal people / person," "Aboriginal community," and "Aboriginal artists." The terms Indigenous and First Nations People are also in common use.⁹ In this essay, Indigenous peoples of Australia are collectively referred to as Aboriginal, and "Indigenous peoples of Australia" and "Aboriginal" are employed synonymously.

Aboriginal Art

Aboriginal art has one of the longest histories of any art form in the world. The traditional culture has been maintained through a range of artistic activities including ceremonies, dances, songs, body painting, rock murals, and sand paintings. A cave painting newly discovered in Western Australia in 2021, dating from approximately 17,000 years ago, was announced as the oldest known work of Aboriginal art.¹⁰ Even older examples of human activity have been found, including mark-making on cliff faces from 25,000 to 30,000 years ago, and a red ochre crayon from 45,000 years ago discovered in Kakadu National Park.¹¹

Designs and patterns that vary by region and community have been applied to everything from daily items to sacred objects used in ceremonies. Through art, Aboriginal people have built deep relationships with their ancestors and with their land, or Country, rooted in their community.

Aboriginal Art and Dreaming

Aboriginal art strongly reflects the people's distinctive vision of religion, life and death, and the world around them. The central concept underpinning their world view is known as Dreaming, and most prominently gives Aboriginal art its unique character. Dreaming refers to a narrative of the time when ancestral spirits traveled over the earth, creating it as they went. The spirits of ancestors are represented by humans, animals, and plants, and can also be objects or phenomena. They not only created the earth, but also gave names to their creations. Along the way the traveling spirits sang, danced, fought, had intercourse, helped one another, and at the end of the journey transformed into craggy mountains, stars, and springs of water. Such places are still considered sacred by Aboriginal communities, but for them Dreaming is by no means a past event but eternal and ongoing to this day. This is because they live on and in harmony with the land that Dreaming created, and the land is a manifestation of Dreaming.¹² Regarding the relationship between Aboriginal art and Dreaming, the art historian Howard Morphy wrote in *Aboriginal Art* (2003):

Dreaming is vital to understanding of Aboriginal art. Art is a means of approaching Dreaming, and enables contact with its spiritual dimension. Moreover, the art itself is a product of Dreaming.¹³

Dreaming is a way of viewing the world that comprehensively governs the Aboriginal spiritual landscape, social order, and intimate relationships with the land, and Aboriginal art is a manifestation of that worldview.

Encountering the West: British Colonization

In 1770, when the British Navy Lieutenant James Cook landed in Botany Bay near Sydney on the east coast of Australia, the first European to set foot on the continent, he described Australia as *Terra nullius* (Latin for "nobody's land"), i.e. a land without owners, and declared it British territory (fig. 1). In 1788 a total of 11 British ships, including the first boatload of convicts along with colonial vessels, arrived in Sydney Bay, and the colonization of Australia was underway. As it progressed there were clashes between Indigenous Aboriginal people and colonists in various parts of the country, and violence, massacres, and infectious diseases brought by the colonists drastically reduced the Aboriginal population. For example, in Tasmania the number of Aboriginal people dropped from about 4,500 to just 18 between 1788 and 1861.¹⁴ The last of these died in 1876, and full-blooded Aboriginal people of Tasmania vanished from the earth.

To prevent further conflict, the colonists implemented policies of separation, and later of assimilation, toward Aboriginal people in each Australian state. It was thought that

what was known at the time as the "Aboriginal problem" would be resolved in the future by the extinction of full-blooded Aboriginal people and the "biological absorption" of those of mixed Aboriginal and white parentage.¹⁵ The idea was that contact with highly civilized Western society would naturally phase out culturally and racially inferior full-blooded Aboriginal people, thought to be destined for eventual extinction, and the "Aboriginal problem" would be solved by educating and assimilating the mixed-race children already possessing partially Western blood, so they could adapt to Western society and live as members of it. In 1937, the Australian federal government and the ministers of Indigenous affairs in each state formally proposed a policy of assimilation, and in 1951, it was agreed that the policy would promote assimilation of full-blooded Aboriginal people as well.¹⁶ This assimilation policy remained in place until the 1970s. This unilateral relationship between British colonists and the Aboriginal colonized broadly reflected the British colonialist social mentality of the day.

This mentality was based on the theory of social evolution, commonly known as "social Darwinism," which flourished in the West. It applied Charles Darwin's theory of biological evolution to progress in human society, and was reinforced through contact with Aboriginal people. Social Darwinists categorized Aboriginal society as "Stone Age,"¹⁷ the least evolved rung on the ladder of human cultural evolution, and thought of it as having a "primitive" structure. They asserted that Western society was culturally and socially superior, and that "undeveloped" Aboriginal society had to be civilized according to Western social standards.¹⁸ As Morphy notes, a critical point here is that these theories positioned Aboriginal people as "other," thoroughly distinct from Western society.¹⁹ This "otherness" has always been present as a factor that reinforces Western principles and the colonialist mentality. The Australian colony was no exception, and by applying the schema of "others = outsiders" and "Westerners = insiders" to the Aboriginal and colonial cultural groups, the colonizers of Australia were united and were able to advance colonization without sympathy for Aboriginal people. This internalized sense of "the other" rapidly accelerated Australian colonial development.

Such social attitudes are deeply related to how Aboriginal art was interpreted and exhibited in the past.

19th Century Aboriginal Art: "Primitive" Art

Social Darwinism held that inferior civilizations would be replaced by dominant, advanced civilizations, and this meant there needed to be places that collected, preserved, and studied the cultural relics of disappearing societies like the Aboriginal one before they were swallowed up by Western civilization.²⁰ Museums of ethnography were intended to fulfill this mission.

As described above, the culture of Indigenous people was set apart from Western culture, and Aboriginal art was also considered to be outside the context of Western art history.²¹ As art museums were a venue for display of Western fine art, there was no place there for Aboriginal art, and instead collecting, preserving, researching, and exhibiting the art of the "other" culture was the province of ethnographic museums. Thus, during the colonial era such museums played a crucial role as the only facilities dealing with Aboriginal material culture.

Art by Aboriginal people was viewed as expression of humankind in a primordial state, and came to be known as an example of "primitive art." This fully reflected the highly prejudiced and yet curious gaze Western society directed toward Aboriginal society as wholly "other" than its own.

The museum did not place importance on the identities of the original owners, creators, or other individuals involved with the works it acquired, but rather prioritized the authentically Aboriginal quality of the items in its collection. The purpose of the collection was to ensure the legitimacy and authenticity of ethnographic history, and to prove that it "showed the true essence of that culture."²² Museum exhibition procedures during this period had several distinct characteristics. The first was museums' method of classification, which they based on taxonomies of zoology and mineralogy established in the mid-19th century.²³ Museums of natural history adhered to these systems of taxonomy more strictly than other museums, and the situation was somewhat different at the ethnohistorical museums where products of Indigenous cultures were exhibited. While ethnohistorical museums gradually adopted the modes of classification prevalent at that time, they maintained the quality of the "cabinets of curiosities" that were among museums' predecessors. The second characteristic was the sheer volume of material on display. The anthropologist Leonn Satterthwait has focused on the practice of presenting huge quantities of exhibits simultaneously, and points to this as a specific and distinctive museum approach. Works classified according to style, material, technique, application, region and so forth exert a powerful presence when they are exhibited in large amounts.²⁴ A third characteristic is precise contextualization of exhibits. To present the culture of "others" alien to the West requires reference illustrations, commentary, maps, dioramas, and even mannequins to place the works in context. Of course, the contextualization of these exhibits is based on a one-sided perspective. Ethnographic museums' approach to exhibition at that time consisted of contextualization that ignored the creator's intentions, with works assigned interpretations that backed up the theory of social Darwinism in which Western society was invested. In Morphy's analysis, museums needed to showcase the works in their collection morphologically so as to show the evolution of culture, emphasizing cultural difference and presenting objects as "real-world" manifestations of information representing historical relationships between different societal models.²⁵

He further discusses the role of these museums in terms of the relationship to Aboriginal art, which was defined as "primitive art":

[...] More than a means of teaching Aboriginal aesthetics to Western audiences and recognizing the value of Aboriginal culture, such exhibits have become a means of denying the works proper appreciation as "art." The meaning of Aboriginal art to the people who created it was the realm of ethnography, and this way of thinking caused Aboriginal art to end up in museums of ethnography rather than museums of art.²⁶

Thus, ethnographic museums devoted their enthusiasm to collecting the most "authentic" works that represented the

most primitive human activities, and there was a mad rush to preserve the "backward" lifestyle of a perishing people before Aboriginal culture was swallowed up by the West.²⁷

Collections of uniformly arranged items, like biological specimens, sat in large glass cases in dimly lit rooms and remained unchanged for more than half a century. For example, at the South Australian Museum, which houses the nation's one of the largest collection of Indigenous material culture, the permanent exhibition did not change from 1914 to 1982.²⁸

The Evolution of Aboriginal Art: 1950s – 1980s, a Time of Transition

Museums' exhibition approaches stayed the same for more than half a century, but does that mean the reception and interpretation of Aboriginal art remained unchanged during that period? Actually, that is not the case.

At the beginning of this essay it was mentioned that perceptions of Aboriginal art shifted in the late 1980s, from "the art of others" to "contemporary art," but this did not occur overnight. A transitional period of decisive movement toward transformation had begun around the 1950s. Over the ensuing decades, Aboriginal art underwent changes in parallel with progress in society, thought, politics, economy, and art history. The following is an overview of this transitional period, from the perspectives of society, politics and economy, and art history, accompanied by examination of the evolution of Aboriginal art.

Society

The Australian Indigenous civil rights movement, which was particularly active in the late 1950s and 1960s, and its achievements played a vital role in changing perceptions of Aboriginal art. During the colonial era, Aboriginal people were denied all human rights, their traditional lifestyle and culture was suppressed, and they were deprived of their land. Since around World War II, as marginalized second-class citizens outside the mainstream of society, they sought restoration of their human rights, calling for citizenship, voting rights, equal wages, social welfare, and land rights, with an initial focus on people of mixed Aboriginal and white parentage who had been living in urban areas.²⁹

In the 1960s, the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigine and Torres Strait Islanders was highly active in calling for change. A key characteristic of this movement was that Aboriginal and white people worked side by side. Propelled by social activity involving members of mainstream Australian society, more than 90% voted Yes in a 1967 referendum on whether to amend the Constitution of Australia and include Aboriginal people in the national census. The primary objective of including them in the census was to restore Aboriginal rights in Australia, and this goal was thereby achieved.

Among the most important aspects of the restoration of Aboriginal human rights was the restoration of land rights. As described above, their worldview is inextricably tied to their Country, through which they connect with their ancestors, as the land is a manifestation of Dreaming. The land seizures and abuses of the colonial era propelled the Aboriginal land rights restoration movement from the 1960s onward. Of particular

note are the 1963 the Yirrkala bark petitions (fig. 2). Yirrkala is a town in Yolngu, the hometown of Nonggirnga Marawili, an artist whose work is in the Ishibashi Foundation collection. At the time, the federal government had granted bauxite (raw aluminum ore) mining rights to private companies without the permission of the community. To protest this, the local Aboriginal community claimed that Yirrkala belonged to them as land passed down from their ancestors for thousands of years, and submitted a petition claiming land ownership to the Australian Parliament in Yolngu and English. The petition was a rare example of a formal document submitted to Parliament by Indigenous people, and its format was derived from the traditional Yirrkala art of bark painting. The claim was dismissed, but it was a seminal event in that it was the first example of an Aboriginal claim of independence, self-determination, and land rights, and that a traditional art form was used to make the claim. The land rights movement subsequently made further progress, and in 1972, then-Prime Minister Gough Whitlam personally went to pour soil into the palm of Vincent Lingiari (the activist who had led the Wave Hill land rights movement since 1966) in a symbolic moment acknowledging the return of the land (fig. 3). The so-called Wave Hill Walk-Off case led to the later enactment of *the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976*.³⁰

These achievements in improving Aboriginal social status and restoring rights had a major impact on the future of Aboriginal art. Building on the right of self-determination, which is the foundation of all human rights, Aboriginal people themselves branded and promoted their art, kicking off a movement to release them from the externally applied stigma of “primitive art.”

Politics and Economy

It should be emphasized that Aboriginal art’s path to recognition as contemporary art was closely linked to Australian political and economic trends. And the Aboriginal right of self-determination, mentioned in the previous section, had a significant influence on these political and economic aspects. Starting in the 1970s there was an Aboriginal-led movement to promote Aboriginal art, and with political and economic factors intertwining, this fed into the acceptance of Aboriginal art as contemporary art in the 1980s. The following is a brief overview of the turning points for Aboriginal art from a political and economic perspective, primarily through case examples of the establishment of several groups that became key players, and of the political situation in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s.

The first of these key players was Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Pty Ltd., founded in 1971. The restoration of Aboriginal rights achieved through the 1967 referendum led to the decision to create a Department of Aboriginal Affairs within the federal government. Recognizing Aboriginal economic independence as one of its key issues, the federal government then established an Aboriginal arts and crafts company as part of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in 1971. The company promoted crafts, which were previously sold cheaply at souvenir shops, as a full-fledged art industry with especial importance for the economic independence of local communities. It boosted the value of

arts and crafts produced in Aboriginal communities while controlling market supply, and clearly stated that the products were intended to “encourage high standards of artistry and craftsmanship with a view to creating a greater appreciation of and respect for traditional skills and the preservation of the culture.”³¹ The company regulated the supply chain of works by purchasing them from the communities and reselling them to specialized distributors in major cities.

The second key player was the Aboriginal Arts Board, established in 1973 within the Australia Council for the Arts. The members of the board were all Aboriginal, and worked closely with the already established Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Pty Ltd. to pave the way for the international recognition of Aboriginal art. Particularly important roles of the board were the enforcement of policies and regulations on Aboriginal art, the subsidization of various Aboriginal artistic activities such as visual arts, literature, drama, dance, music, and film, and the hiring of professional Aboriginal art advisors so as to enhance the value of Aboriginal art and pursue marketing activities.³² Between 1974 and the early 1980s, the board organized 19 exhibitions in more than 40 countries.³³

The third key player was the Aboriginal Artists Agency, established in 1976 as part of the Aboriginal Arts Board. The agency dealt with copyright-related issues and promoted Aboriginal art in a manner that actively brought it to the forefront of the art scene. This led to the first Aboriginal artist’s participation in the Sydney Biennale, in its third edition in 1979.³⁴

It is clear that while these organizations went by different names, they all shared common purposes. These were to market Aboriginal art as contemporary art, to encourage artists to produce high-quality and highly priced art and crafts (which in turn led to financial independence for the artists), and to raise the market value of Aboriginal art by controlling the market to some extent. It must be clearly stated that these organizations, established in quick succession in the 1970s, were driving forces behind the “big bang” of Aboriginal art’s recognition as contemporary art, which was to come in the late 1980s. And, crucially, it was Aboriginal people who took the lead.

Of the organizations established in the 1970s, the most historic and subsequently consequential for the fate of Aboriginal art is the Papunya Tula Artists Cooperative, the first for-profit Aboriginal community-based organization in Australia, founded in 1972.

Papunya is an Aboriginal settlement created by the federal government in 1959 and located 240 kilometers west of the Central Desert city of Alice Springs. Government-established settlements had the objective of providing vocational training and education to Aboriginal people and assimilating them into mainstream society, in line with the official assimilation policy of the day.³⁵ Under this governmental policy, Papunya, which was created to counterbalance population growth in neighboring settlements, was flooded with people of various languages, cultures and backgrounds. However, Papunya’s environment at that time was quite harsh due to conflicts among different communities and infectious disease epidemics. Under these circumstances Geoffrey Bardon, a white teacher who taught art at an elementary school in Papunya in 1971, came up with the idea of painting traditional designs on the walls of the school.

Bardon approached the village elders with the idea, and the first mural was completed. Its design depicts the Honey Ant Dreaming, a scene with connections to the Papunya Country. The mural project was a huge success, the elders expressed their wish to have further works produced, and Bardon suggested that people paint on canvases or wooden panels with acrylic. These acrylic paintings were sold in Alice Springs, bringing in revenue of 1,300 AUD (Australian dollars).³⁶ This was a significant sum, especially in 1971 dollars, and had a major impact in that traditional designs originally in the form of sand paintings or body paintings for ceremonies were now taking a saleable form. Approximately 600 works were sold over the ensuing six months.³⁷ Then, in 1972, the Papunya Tula Artists Cooperative was founded as the first Aboriginal cooperative for commercial purposes.

Morphy points out two important aspects of Bardon's contribution. The first is that it made Aboriginal Desert art available to the outside world, in a form that helped to develop the market.³⁸ This was important in that Aboriginal art of the Desert region was originally in impermanent forms such as sand and body painting. The second aspect was timing.³⁹ The 1970s were a time when Aboriginal official groups were formed one after another with government backing, and a policy of promoting economic independence was announced. Papunya's acrylic paintings, emerging during this era, were purchased by the Aboriginal Arts Board and gained opportunities for exposure at international exhibitions that the board organized.⁴⁰

Taking a step back to get a long view of Australian national history, the period from the late 1970s to the late 1980s was also one in which the official policy changed from the so-called White Australia policy to that of Multiculturalism. The White Australia policy restricted immigration from other countries, with the aim of creating a society with British Anglo-Saxon ethnic makeup, but during this period the White Australia policy was at an impasse and it became necessary to review immigration policies. According to Kamada Mayumi, an expert on Australia and international affairs, underlying this policy shift was a political compromise to address a range of conflicts between non-British immigrants and the dominant culture, especially from the 1980s onward, and in her analysis it was the result of "making Asian policy a matter of domestic politics"⁴¹ to address the "Asianization" of Australian society. Recognizing that Australia is part of the Oceania region, and more broadly part of the Pacific Rim, the nation sought to address growing social issues surrounding non-British Australians by advocating a multiethnic and multicultural nation.

In promoting the formation of a new nation free from the influence of the UK, Aboriginal art was incorporated as part of a new national identity. The most prominent example was the adoption of the Papunya Tula artist Michael Nelson Tjakamarra's *Possum and Wallaby Dreaming* (1985) as a mosaic in the front garden of the Parliament House, which was newly built in the capital Canberra in 1988 (figs. 4, 5).

As described above, Aboriginal art underwent a transformation that was deeply intertwined with Australia's politics and economy. The next section will discuss the way in which Aboriginal art moved from "outside" to "inside" the narrative of Western art history, going back to the 1950s and

examining the transition chronologically.

Art History

The process by which Aboriginal art's place in the history of art transitioned from "primitive art" to "contemporary art" began in the 1950s. Interestingly, the change was facilitated by a paradox arising from anthropologists' and Western modernist artists' definition of Aboriginal art as primitive.

The art historian Ian McLean points to exhibitions focusing on the artistic value of Aboriginal art, which received widespread public attention especially during the decade from 1950 to 1960, as the first step toward changing perceptions.⁴² The anthropologist Philip Jones, a senior curator at the South Australian Museum, discusses this early transitional period in greater depth. Jones first saw an exhibition organized by the anthropologist Ronald Berndt at David Jones' Art Gallery in 1949. Jones describes this as "a turning point in the Australian public's attitudes toward Aboriginal art."⁴³ Then, in 1957, the exhibition *The Art of Arnhem Land* presented Aboriginal art not as anonymously produced ethnographic materials, but with the artists' names and descriptions of the traditions in which their art was rooted, and Jones emphasizes that this was a milestone in terms of approaches to exhibiting Aboriginal art.⁴⁴ In Jones's analysis, this was a crucial era in that society began to grasp Aboriginal art as creative expression.

Margaret Preston, one of the best-known Australian modernist artists of the 20th century, was among the first to focus on the aesthetic value of Aboriginal art and assert its importance to society.⁴⁵ The Abstract Expressionist Tony Tuckson, Deputy Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, also drew attention to the artistic qualities of Aboriginal art in the 1950s and 1960s.⁴⁶ However, despite this change of mentality towards Aboriginal art within the art world, as McLean underscores, Aboriginal art was still described as "primitive art" at the time and was excluded from Australian art history. Until the mid-1980s, Aboriginal art was at best viewed by mainstream society as "primitive fine art,"⁴⁷ a designation with implications for its perceived artistic value.

As described earlier, the 1970s was a period of significant change in the social circumstances of Aboriginal people. While the status of Aboriginal art appeared to begin evolving with the establishment of Papunya Tula Artists Cooperative in 1972, within the broader scope of art history, views of Aboriginal art remained virtually unchanged. The art historian Vivien Johnson describes the status of Papunya Tula works during this period as follows:

Throughout the 1970s, Papunya paintings languished in obscurity, rejected by art galleries as too ethnographic and by museums as not ethnographic enough. No public collecting institution in Australia was buying Papunya paintings in the 1970s. [...] Throughout 1970s Papunya Tula Artists was dependent for its survival on the support of the AAB, primarily through its commissions for canvases — really big canvases — for its exhibitions program.⁴⁸

The persistent stereotyping of Aboriginal art left Papunya

art with no place to go. In other words, Aboriginal cultural expression in the Western medium of acrylic painting on canvas did not meet standards of “legitimacy” as defined by ethnographic museums that pursued “authenticity,” while for art museums adhering to progressive modernist theory, while the art materials may have been of Western origin, the work too strongly reflected its makers’ culture, and as “too ethnographic,” was incompatible with a future-oriented vision of art. However, works produced in Papunya gradually began to carve out a niche collector’s market through an international exhibition program, organized by the Aboriginal Arts Board and focused on the artistic and contemporary nature of the work, and through strategic marketing.⁴⁹ The board’s efforts began to bear fruit, and in the early 1980s, perceptions of Aboriginal art within the art scene gradually progressed. In the anthropologist Fred R. Myers’s analysis, the 1980s were an era in which the process of legitimizing Aboriginal art as contemporary art unfolded.⁵⁰

A significant turning point came with the purchase of Papunya Tula works by Australia’s major art museums. In 1980 the National Gallery of Australia made its first Papunya Tula purchase, of the artist Mick Wallankari Tjakamarra’s *Honey Ant Dreaming* (1973) (fig. 6), and the same year the Art Gallery of South Australia also purchased its first Papunya Tula work.⁵¹ In 1981, Papunya Tula acrylic paintings were exhibited alongside other Australian contemporary art in *Australian Perspectives 1981: A Biennial Survey of Contemporary Australian Art* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.⁵²

In the mid-1980s, Aboriginal art gained wider exposure in many fields. Growing enthusiasm for Aboriginal art could be seen in the number of works acquired by major art museums, the increase in individual collectors, the outflow to the broader art market, and the large number of texts published in major Australian journals. The same period saw an explosion in the popularity of pointillist acrylic paintings on canvas produced in the Western Desert region, a trend sparked by Papunya Tula, and the market heated up with one sale after another not only in Australia but also overseas. This marked the emergence of acrylic dot paintings as an iconic archetype of Aboriginal art.

There are several reasons for acrylic paintings from the Western Desert region gaining an audience more rapidly than Aboriginal art produced elsewhere. First, Aboriginal art of the Desert is characterized by abstract designs that make it easier for outsiders to access and engage with works depicting Dreaming. Second, acrylic produces vivid colors that cannot be derived from traditional natural ochre pigment, conveying the artist’s unique sense of color and giving the work an individualized character, while the medium of paint on canvas made works portable and easy to display and store in art museums.

The decisive year when Aboriginal art finally arrived as a form of contemporary art came in 1988–89. 1988 marked the bicentenary of the arrival of the first European vessel on the Australian continent, and McLean notes that Aboriginal art was first presented as a genre of Australian art in the *Creating Australia: 200 Years of Art, 1788–1988* exhibition at the Art Gallery of South Australia that year.⁵³ According to McLean, “a fundamental paradigm shift in the national consciousness”⁵⁴ occurred around this time. Another important exhibition was *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, held in 1988–89. This

was a joint project of the Asia Society in New York and the South Australian Museum, and drew attention both at home and abroad as the first international exhibition to place Aboriginal art within the framework of contemporary art. As a result, works were purchased by the Brooklyn Museum in 1988 and by other museums in the US such as the Art Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York in 1989.⁵⁵ The fact that this exhibition was not organized by art gallery curators or art historians, but by a curatorial team led by the anthropologist Peter Sutton at the South Australian Museum, was important in that it positioned the work at the intersection of anthropology, i.e. its cultural context, and art, i.e. its aesthetic value.⁵⁶ Sutton and the team showed that Aboriginal art is an artistic activity embracing both tradition and the contemporary, including their relationships with land, worldview, ancestors, and colonial and post-colonial contexts.

Regarding the success of these Aboriginal art exhibitions in the late 1980s, Morphy describes an evolution of the definition of “art” in Western art history that took place in the 1970s and 1980s, and analyzes this phenomenon as strongly linked to challenges to Eurocentricity by various art forms flourishing in non-Western regions.⁵⁷ The rise of global art began around the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, and biennials and other international art festivals gained increasing prominence around the world. When non-Western art with local characteristics was interpreted in a global context on these platforms, Aboriginal art was accepted as an art form that quite perfectly encapsulated the character of global art.

In this way, Aboriginal art as contemporary art made rapid inroads around the world, driven by the synergistic effects of the Western Desert art movement’s momentum in Australia and changes unfolding in the international art scene.

Toward Contemporary Aboriginal Art: Exhibition at Art Museums

Ultimately, to fully transition from primitive art to contemporary art Aboriginal art needed approval from art museums rather than ethnographic museums. That gave rise to a need for recognition and assignation of meaning in art-historical terms, as Myers discussed.⁵⁸ Below, we will examine how art museums exhibited and interpreted Aboriginal art as contemporary art.

In the 1980s, art museums began to break away from sole focus on Western art, acknowledging multiple art forms practiced in non-Western regions and reflecting this recognition in the contents of exhibitions. Changes in exhibition approaches were also seen. For example, as in exhibitions like *Magicians of the Earth*⁵⁹ at the Centre Pompidou, Paris in 1989, there was frequent use of juxtaposition, in which works in different media, styles, from various regions and eras, and by diverse artists were shown side by side and tied together thematically.⁶⁰ Such exhibition approaches were highly effective in presenting complex and multifaceted art in a relativized manner, making the academic, unilaterally delivered museum experience more interactive, and attracting more viewers. Changes in exhibition approaches corresponded to changes in society, and art museums incorporated into their curatorial strategies various means of building relationships with diverse communities

and making their voices heard in exhibition spaces. Aboriginal art came to be shown at art museums amid this global move toward pluralism and relativism in art. Also, museums and art galleries partnered with Aboriginal communities to plan exhibitions, purchase works, and conduct surveys so as to put Multiculturalism, adopted as Australia's national policy in 1989, into practice.⁶¹ In this context, art museums developed conscious and systematic strategies for presentation of Aboriginal art as contemporary art.

The first of these was categorization of Aboriginal art as a specialized field. An early example was the National Gallery of Australia, which in 1981 renamed its Primitive Art collection as the Australian Aboriginal, African, Oceanic, and Pre-Columbian North American Indian Art collection. In 1984, this long collection name was changed to "Aboriginal Art," and today it is known as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art collection.⁶² Today, it is the norm for major Australian art museums to establish departments specializing in Aboriginal art, distinct from their departments of Australian art. The second strategy was appointment of curators with Indigenous backgrounds, which was given impetus by the Australian policy of Multiculturalism, the re-examination of colonial history from a post-colonial context, the need for close partnership with Aboriginal communities, and recognition of the Aboriginal right to self-determination. And the third strategy was the establishment of galleries dedicated to Aboriginal art, for example the Yiribana Gallery, established at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1994 (fig. 7). In the words of Hetti Perkins, who is of Indigenous descent and served as the gallery's Senior Curator of Aboriginal Art from 1989 until 2011, "The Yiribana Gallery celebrates Indigenous Australia's age-old, yet enduring, cultural heritage and its myriad contemporary expressions."⁶³

In 2010, galleries dedicated to Aboriginal art opened at the National Gallery of Australia. There are 11 rooms in total, and the director at the time, Ron Radford, declared it to be the world's largest exhibition space dedicated to Aboriginal art.⁶⁴ These gallery spaces dedicated to Aboriginal art paved the way for widespread recognition of Aboriginal art as contemporary art. In this way, Aboriginal art has gained a solid place in art museums as a leading Australian contemporary art form through art museums' strategic organization of infrastructure.

In terms of exhibition approaches as well, decontextualization was actively carried out in order to free Aboriginal art from past stigmatization. Application of the white-cube exhibition method to these works was intended to eliminate as much the cultural context that foregrounded the "ethnicity" of the work as possible, and focus instead on its aesthetics. This endeavor can be seen in the words of Radford, who as director when the dedicated Aboriginal art galleries were established at the National Gallery of Australia in 2010, declared that "the galleries are rooms consciously and unapologetically designed for permanent collection of art, not anthropology."⁶⁵

However, rapid incorporation of Aboriginal art into the art museum framework has on the other hand brought persistent challenges. For example, the Yiribana Gallery of Aboriginal art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales is located on the lowest floor of the gallery, and while the gallery boasts a vast exhibition space, it is not clear what percentage of visitors make it to this floor.⁶⁶ The Art Gallery of South Australia in Adelaide, which is

smaller than the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, has one of the country's largest collections of Aboriginal art, but still lacks a dedicated gallery for this collection. In art museums that do not have galleries dedicated to Aboriginal art, displaying the works in limited spaces presents a significant challenge.

Also, exhibition approaches remain a thorny issue. It is difficult to attain understanding of the essence of Aboriginal art when it is exhibited so as to be completely divorced from its cultural context. John Carty, professor at the University of Adelaide and head of anthropology at the South Australian Museum, has criticized the widespread approach of exhibiting works in a way that maximizes their aesthetic value while making every effort to exclude what are viewed as obstacles (i.e. anthropological aspects).⁶⁷ Morphy has also broadened the scope of his discussion to include decontextualization of works through art museum exhibitions. Morphy argues that in order to appreciate Aboriginal art and Western art equally, it is necessary to devise means of gaining proper access to the cultural and historical background of Aboriginal art, rather than simply hanging it on an unadorned white wall.⁶⁸

Of course, it is a fact that Aboriginal art gained acceptance as contemporary visual expression through its recognition as part of the discourse of art history, which involved decontextualization and exhibition approaches emphasizing aesthetic value. However, what Carty and Morphy criticize are the specific means by which cultural aspects of Aboriginal art are explored in art museum spaces.

Margo Neale, Head of the National Museum of Australia's Indigenous Knowledges Curatorial Center,⁶⁹ who has an Aboriginal background and experience as a curator at museums of both art and ethnography, acknowledges these criticisms, and has spoken about the development and significance of a new museology that is currently evolving, and that intertwines the exhibition approaches at which each type of museum excels.

Museology of the Twenty-First Century

The movement toward transformation of values relating to Aboriginal art, carried forward over many years by anthropologists, art historians, museum curators, and Aboriginal people themselves, has created a value system shared by art museums and ethnographic museums. This consists of a common understanding of the cultural and artistic values of Aboriginal art, and since the advent of this understanding, Aboriginal art has found a place in both types of museums, with their respective exhibition approaches, and has been interpreted as both a cultural product and an art form.

However, Carty and Morphy point out that the unadulterated application of Western-style exhibition methods prevalent at art museums to Aboriginal art can lead to inaccessibility of cultural understanding. Recognizing this risk, Neale advocates the potential and prospects of new museology that is currently being actively developed at art museums and at ethnographic museums. According to Neale, the dilemma of how to present Aboriginal art as Indigenous culture and also as contemporary art, as well as the sharing of values relating to art and culture that innately coexist in Aboriginal art, has given rise to new

dialogue between the two types of institutions (museums of art and of ethnography) that formerly operated with completely different frameworks, and this creative dialogue is giving impetus to the new museology of the twenty-first century.⁷⁰

This is to say that when Aboriginal art, which has an “ethnic” aspect, is shown and interpreted at ethnographic museums, it is a departure from one-size-fits-all art museology, which calls for art to be suitable for exhibition at art museums even when cultural context is stripped away and only the aesthetic value of the work is presented. The twenty-first century museology that Neale discusses promotes the intrinsic value of Aboriginal art, and our understanding of it, by fusing the values of Aboriginal art as perceived by art museums and ethnographic museums and combining the respective exhibition approaches in which they specialize. Neale’s analysis has common ground with Myers’s discussion,⁷¹ among others. And in recent years, exhibitions practicing this new museology have gained success.

Neale cites *The Painters of the Wagilag Sisters Story 1937–1997*, an exhibition held at the National Gallery of Australia in 1997, as an early example, and considers this exhibition’s implications for the new museology of the twenty-first century.⁷² And since the new century began, the number of exhibitions of Aboriginal art jointly planned by museums of art and ethnography has grown. For example, the 2009 exhibition *Ancestral Power and the Aesthetic: Arnhem Land Paintings and Objects from the Donald Thomson Collection* was co-organized by the Melbourne Museum and The Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne. It made extensive use of objects, materials, and stories that introduce cultural context, focusing on both the historical/cultural and artistic value of Aboriginal art of the Arnhem Land region. Aboriginal communities was also strongly involved with this exhibition.⁷³ Also, *Color Power: Aboriginal Art Post 1984*, an exhibition held in 2004–05, opened at the National Gallery of Victoria and then traveled to the National Museum of Australia, and this active collaboration between museums of two different types complemented the two inherent aspects of Aboriginal art. Neale describes the prospects for a new museology as follows:

It is similarly misguided to consider an emphasis on the aesthetic form of Indigenous objects as somehow diminishing of their cultural or historical value. Rather, it is when art gallery exhibitions and museum exhibitions both acknowledge the place of cultural context and find different ways of transmitting story that the boundaries between art and ethnography blur, and as such are not confined to any particular site.⁷⁴

The active involvement of Aboriginal communities is also important in implementing the new museology. Recent successes include the *Tarnanthi Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art*, held for the first time in 2015 at the Art Gallery of South Australia. With Nici Cumpston, the gallery’s Aboriginal Art curator and also an acclaimed Aboriginal artist, as artistic director, the gallery served as a platform for expression of culture and art, centered on the voices of Aboriginal communities.⁷⁵

While, as we have seen, a new museology related to Aboriginal

art is being actively practiced in Australia, it would be difficult to import this into Japan as is. In Japan, where recognition of Aboriginal art is still only partial, it is necessary first of all to understand the nature and the aesthetics of Aboriginal art. It is possible that the luminosity of these works will be dimmed if they are over-explained. There are significant challenges in terms of how to convey the voices of artists, the context of the works, and their intrinsic value at exhibition venues. In light of the geographical and cultural distance between Japan and Australia, another question is how Japanese viewers can experience a close connection to the voices of these artists and communities. Also, in Australia dialogue and development of vocabulary for discussion of post-colonialism are deepening, the history of the colonial and imperial era is being reviewed, and forums for constructive dialogue with Indigenous peoples are being secured. In Japan, progress in popularizing such discourse and dialogue remains limited.

However, the story is not only one of obstacles. Australian studies are advancing in Japan, and there are many specialists in the field of anthropology. Collaboration with these experts will be vital for introducing Aboriginal art in Japan. In addition, as a museum of art that continuously collects, preserves, researches and exhibits Australian contemporary art including Aboriginal art, the Ishibashi Foundation aims to further expand its Aboriginal collection. Taking a long-term perspective, it is a great advantage to be able to convey Aboriginal art to Japanese society in a deeper context, that is, it is possible to aim for enduring and not merely transient social recognition of Aboriginal art. In the process, it will be necessary to incorporate the new museology of the twenty-first century as pertains to Aboriginal art, which is being actively pursued in Australia, in a form that is compatible with Japanese society.

In Closing

There were a great many steps along the path of Aboriginal art’s transition from “primitive art” to contemporary art. These included departure from unilaterally defined viewpoints based on the social concepts of the colonial era, and change and active support not only in the field of art history but also in those of society and political economy. The cultural heritage and artistic value inherent in Aboriginal art and handed down over countless generations, transcending the boundaries of art museums and ethnographic museums as defined by Western society, has been discussed from diverse standpoints and perspectives, including those of anthropologists, art historians, museum curators, and Aboriginal people themselves, at each turning point along the way. The result has been a 180-degree shift from the “art of others” to contemporary art that is at the forefront of Australian visual art today.

Aboriginal art, now fully recognized as contemporary art, continues to be incorporated into the development of a new museology. Museology in the twenty-first century, as regards Aboriginal art, is concerned not with the issues of the past such as where to exhibit the works, but rather with how to exhibit the works while bringing together the visions of different types of museum institutions. The trajectory of Aboriginal art’s development, with its complex history, continues to move forward while addressing a range of challenges. As an

art museum that collects, preserves, researches and exhibits Australian contemporary art including Aboriginal art, it is vital that the Artizon Museum be actively involved in this dialogue, and take further steps in the future so as to practice twenty-first century museology in a manner compatible with Japanese society.

(Curator, Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation)
(Translated by Christopher Stephens)

Notes

- Margo Neale, "The 'white cube' changes colour: Indigenous art between the museum and the art gallery," *Museums Australia Magazine*, Vol. 23 (1) (Summer 2015): 21, https://issuu.com/museumsaustralia/docs/mam_vol23_1_-summer_2015_web.
- In addition to her senior curatorial role, Neale is Principal Advisor to the Director at the National Museum of Australia. She is also an Adjunct Professor in the Australian National University's Centre for Indigenous History.
- "Australian Aboriginal peoples," Britannica, accessed October 22, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Australian-Aboriginal>. "ABORIGINAL LIFE PRE-INVASION," University of Tasmania, accessed October 22, 2021, https://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/A/Aboriginal%20life%20pre-invasion.htm. "HISTORICAL CONTEXT - ANCIENT HISTORY," Bringing Them Home, accessed October 22, <https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/significance/historical-context-ancient-history>
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- Damien Finch. et al., "Ages for Australia's oldest rock paintings," *Nature Human Behaviour* no. 5 (March 2021): pp. 310–318, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-01041-0>.
- Djon Mundine, Japanese trans. by Sekine Kaoru, "Australian Aboriginal Culture and Art" (Special Issue: Australian History Wars – from White Australian, Aboriginal and Asian (NESB) Points of View), *Australian Studies* Vol. 17 (2005), pp. 2–4: https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/asaj/17/0/17_KJ00008934202/_article/-char/ja.
- With regard to Dreaming, cf. the following publications: Howard Morphy, *Aboriginal Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 2013); Kubota Sachiko, "The 'Discovery' of Aboriginal Art," *One Road: The World of Contemporary Aboriginal Art* (Tokyo: Gendai Kikakushitsu, 2016); Jennifer Isaacs, "Spirit Country," *Spirit Country: Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art*, Koyama Shuzo et al., eds. (Tokyo: Gendai Kikakushitsu, 2003).
- Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, p. 67.
- Kinda Akihiro, "White Settlers and Aboriginal Peoples," *Indigenous Peoples in a Multicultural Country: Australian Aboriginal Peoples Today*, Koyama Shuzo, Kubota Sachiko eds. (Kyoto: Sekai Shisoshsha, 2002), p. 106.
- Kamada Mayumi, "Aboriginal Peoples in the Nation-State," *Indigenous Peoples in a Multicultural Country: Australian Aboriginal Peoples Today*, Koyama Shuzo, Kubota Sachiko eds. (Kyoto: Sekai Shisoshsha, 2002), p. 133.
- Kamada, *ibid.*, p. 133.
- "The Stone Age Men Of Australia No.1 1933," British Pathé, accessed 31 July, 2021, <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/the-stone-age-men-of-australia-no-1>; Isaacs, "Spirit Country," p. 14.
- For social evolutionist perspectives on Indigenous peoples of Australia, cf. the following publications: Howard Morphy, "Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery," *Humanities Research* Vol. 8, no. 1 (2001). Ian McLean, *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art* (Brisbane; Sydney: Institute of Modern Art; Power Publications, 2011). Philip Jones, "Perceptions of Aboriginal Art: A History," in *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, ed. Peter Sutton (Ringwood: Viking in association with the Asia Society Galleries, 1988). Koyama Shuzo, Kubota Sachiko eds., *Indigenous Peoples in a Multicultural Country: Australian Aboriginal Peoples Today*, (Kyoto: Sekai Shisoshsha, 2002).
- Howard Morphy, "Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery," *Humanities Research* Vol. 8, no. 1 (2001): p. 38, 44.
- Janice Lally, "The Australian Aboriginal Collection and the Berlin Ethnological Museum," in *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*, ed. Nicolas Peterson, Lindy Allen and Louise Hamby (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008), 190.
- Morphy, "Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery," p. 38, 44.
- Isaacs, "Spirit Country," p. 16.
- Philip Jones, "The Idea Behind the Artefact: Norman Tindale's Early Years as a Salvage Ethnographer," in *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*, ed. Nicolas Peterson, Lindy Allen and Louise Hamby (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008), p. 316.
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- Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, pp. 26–27.
- Morphy, *ibid.*, p. 374.
- Lally, "The Australian Aboriginal Collection and the Berlin Ethnographic Museum," p. 190.
- Nicolas Peterson, Lindy Allen and Louise Hamby, *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008), p. 4.
- Kubota Sachiko, "Australia and Urban Aboriginal Art: Identity Conflicts, Resistance, and Negotiations," *Report of the Northern Peoples Cultural Symposium* No. 25 (2011), p. 38.
- This was Australia's first law permitting claims of land ownership if the applicant could provide verifiable evidence of a traditional connection to the land. Around 50% of the land in the Northern Territory is now recognized as under Aboriginal ownership.
- Nicolas Peterson, "Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Pty Ltd: a Brief History," in *Aboriginal Arts and Crafts and the Market*, ed. Peter Loveday and Peter Cooke (Darwin: Australian National University, North Australia Research Unit, 1983), p. 61.
- Ian McLean, *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art* (Brisbane; Sydney: Institute of Modern Art; Power Publications, 2011), p. 32. Myers, *Painting Culture*, p. 139.
- "Inroads offshore: The international exhibition program of the Aboriginal Arts Board, 1973–1980," reCollections, accessed July 22, 2021, https://recollections.nma.gov.au/issues/vol_4_no1/papers/inroads_offshore.
- Bark painter David Malangi from Arnhem Land and others participated for the first time. McLean, *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art*, p. 32.
- Myers, *Painting Culture*, p. 130.
- "Papunya Tula," National Museum of Australia, accessed July 22, 2021, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/papunya-tula>.

37. Ibid.
38. Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, p. 289.
39. Morphy, *ibid.*, p. 289.
40. "Inroads offshore."
41. Kamada, "Aboriginal Peoples in the Nation-State," p. 130.
42. McLean, *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art*, p. 26.
43. Philip Jones, "Perceptions of Aboriginal Art: A History," in *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, ed. Peter Sutton (Ringwood: Viking in association with the Asia Society Galleries, 1988), p. 174.
44. Jones, *ibid.*, p. 174.
45. Jones, *ibid.*, p. 174.
46. McLean, *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art*, p. 26.
47. McLean, *ibid.*, p. 23, 27.
48. Vivien Johnson, ed., *Papunya Painting Out of the Desert* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2007), pp. 29–30.
49. Myers, *Painting Culture*, p. 191, 194.
50. Myers, *ibid.*, p. 193.
51. Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri's *Man's Love Story* (1978), purchased at this time, was exhibited in the contemporary Australian art section.
52. Myers, *Painting Culture*, p. 193.
53. McLean, *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art*, p. 41.
54. McLean, *ibid.*, p. 41.
55. Isaacs, "Spirit Country," p. 17.
56. Myers, *Painting Culture*, p. 250.
57. Morphy, "Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery," p. 46.
58. Myers, *Painting Culture*, p. 253.
59. Nine Australian Aboriginal artists participated. There were three from the Arnhem Land region (John Mawurndjul, Jimmy Wululu, and Jack Wunuwun), and six from the Yuendumu Community: Paddy Jupurrurla Neloson, Paddy Japaljarri Sims, Paddy (Cookie) Japaljarri Stewart, Neville Japangardi Poulson, Francis Jupurrurla Kelly, and Francis Bronson Jakamarra Nelson.
60. Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 148.
61. Ian McLean, ed., *Double Desire: Transculturation and Indigenous Contemporary Art* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), p. 9.
62. McLean, *ibid.*, p. 27.
63. Jonathan Jones, Hetti Perkins, and Ken Watson, *Tradition Today: Indigenous Art in Australia / Art Gallery of New South Wales* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2004), p. 13.
64. Ron Radford, Director's foreword to *Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art: Collection Highlights, National Gallery of Australia*, ed. Franchesca Cubillo and Wally Caruana (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2010), p. 7.
65. Radford, *ibid.*, p. 7.
66. The Sydney Modern Project, a new art gallery scheduled for completion in 2022, will contain an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples art gallery, which will provide more space and a stronger presence than the current Yiribana Gallery. <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/sydney-modern-project/>
67. John Carty, "Yiwarra Kuju: Turning Space into Place at the National Museum of Australia," *Anthropologie et Sociétés* Vol.38, no. 3 (2014), pp. 210–211.
68. Morphy, "Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery," p. 38.
69. Neale has experience as a curator at the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and the Queensland Art Gallery.
70. Neale, "The 'white cube' changes colour," p. 21.
71. Myers, *Painting Culture*, p. 250, 253.
72. The works are hung on white walls under bright and even lighting, and it is evident that this exhibition was organized within the framework of the art museum, but the exhibition is not in chronological order or another format dictated by art history. Aboriginal artists took the lead in presenting works, taking depiction of places of cultural importance as a starting point. Margo Neale, "Whose Identity Crisis? Between the Ethnographic and the Art Museum," in *Double Desire: Transculturation and Indigenous Contemporary Art*, ed. Ian McLean (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), p. 304.
73. Neale, "The 'white cube' changes colour," p. 18.
74. Neale, *ibid.*, p. 19.
75. "Tarnanthi," Art Gallery of South Australia, accessed July 22, 2021, <https://www.agsa.sa.gov.au/whats-on/tarnanthi/>.

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- fig. 3 — Mervyn Bishop, *Prime Minister Gough Whitlam pours soil into the hands of traditional land owner Vincent Lingiari, Northern Territory*, 1975, printed 1999, type R3 photograph, 30.5 × 30.5 cm image; 33.9 × 33.9 cm sheet, Art Gallery of New South Wales
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- fig. 4 — Michael Jagamara, *Possum and Wallaby Dreaming*, 1985, Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, Parliament House Art Collection
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- fig. 5 — Kumantye Jagamara fabricated by William McIntosh, Aldo Rossi and Franco Colussi, *Forecourt Mosaic Pavement, Parliament House Canberra (Possum and Wallaby Dreaming)*, 1986–1987, Over 90,000 granite setts on cement, Reproduced with permission of the Artist through the Aboriginal Artists' Agency Ltd. Photograph courtesy of the Parliament House Art Collection, Canberra ACT.
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- fig. 6 — Old Mick Walankari Tjakamarra, *Honey Ant Dreaming*, 1973, Synthetic polymer paint on composition board, 122.0 × 94.0 cm, National Gallery of Australia
© the estate of the artist, licensed by Aboriginal Artists Agency Ltd
- fig. 7 — Yiribana Gallery, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Taken by the author in February, 2020