



Ancestral Modern Australian Aboriginal Art
May 31 Through Sept 2, 2012

BURNING ISSUES: Value and Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art
MAY 31, 2012 | SYMPOSIUM



**Ancestral
Modern**
**Australian
Aboriginal Art**
The Kaplan &
Levi Collection

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Support provided by Harvard University Committee on Australian Studies; United States Studies Centre at University of Sydney; Research School of Humanities and Arts at Australian National University; Jere L. Bacharach Professorship at the University of Washington; and SAM.

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

9:30AM

WELCOME

WINNIE STRATTON,
President, Seattle Art Museum Board of Trustees

OPENING REMARKS AND GENERAL FRAMING

ROGER BENJAMIN,
Professor of Art History, University of Sydney

9:50—11:00AM

PANEL 1: ARTISTS' VOICE

- How does the artist's work relate to the 'ancestral' as well as the 'modern'?
- What are the artist's aspirations for their art?

DISCUSSANTS:

DJAMBAWA MARRAWILLI,
Artist
LIYAWADAY WIRRPANDA,
Artist
PRESTON SINGLETARY,
Artist

11:00—11:15AM

COFFEE BREAK - Simons Board Room (Across the Hall)

11:15AM—12:30PM

PANEL 2: CROSS-CULTURAL AESTHETICS

- How important is knowledge of the originating cultural context, including narratives and ritual performance, to appreciating Indigenous Australian art?
- When the work resonates based solely on its aesthetic qualities, what is lost, and what is gained?
- Can the art of other cultures (e.g. Pacific Northwest, West Africa) provide models for the recognition and interpretation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands art?
- Museums as cross-cultural spaces: what emphasis should be given to narrative, oral history, speaking presence, and performance?

MODERATOR:

HOWARD MORPHY,
Director of Research School of Humanities and the Arts,
Australian National University

DISCUSSANTS:

SUSAN VOGEL,
Independent Scholar and Director, Prince Street Pictures

CHARLOTTE TOWNSEND-GAULT,
Professor of Art History and Research Associate,
University of British Columbia

BRENDA L. CROFT,
Senior Research Fellow, National Institute for
Experimental Arts, College of Fine Arts, University of New South
Wales

WALLY CARUANA,
Independent Curator

12:30—1:30PM

LUNCH - Simons Board Room (Across the Hall)

1:30—2:45PM

PANEL 3: VALUE/MARKET/CANON

- What local roles do artists and community art advisors play in establishing the criteria of value for the work?
- The process of individuating artists and the elevation of some as eminent is pervasive today. What are the implications of this?
- What are the varied considerations by which museum curators, dealers, auction specialists and collectors select work?
- Are critical procedures applied differently to Aboriginal artists? If yes, how and why? If not, when and why did things change?

MODERATOR:

ROGER BENJAMIN,
Professor of Art History, University of Sydney

DISCUSSANTS:

CHRISTOPHER HODGES,
Artist and Gallery Director, Utopia Art Sydney

WILL STUBBS,
Coordinator, Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre, Yirrkala

MICHAEL BRAND,
Director (Designate), Art Gallery of New South Wales

ROBERT KAPLAN,
Collector

2:45—3:00PM

COFFEE BREAK - Simons Board Room (Across the Hall)

3:00—4:15PM

PANEL 4: GLOBAL ART

- Has the idea of 'World Art' helped or hindered the cause of Indigenous Australian art?
- What are the impediments to Indigenous Australian art being collected in elite institutions of modern art (e.g. the Met, MOMA, and the Tate)?
- The acceptance of Indigenous Australian art as 'contemporary' is not complete in all quarters. Do recent academic definitions of the contemporary provide new tools to that end?

MODERATOR:

GERALD MCMASTER,
Frederick S. Eaton Curator of Canadian Art, Art Gallery of Ontario
/ Artistic Director, Biennale of Sydney

DISCUSSANTS:

STEPHEN GILCHRIST,
Curator of Indigenous Australian Art, Hood Museum of Art,
Dartmouth College

CHRIS MCAULIFFE,
Gough Whitlam & Malcolm Fraser Visiting Professor of Australian
Studies, Harvard University

LISA GRAZIOSE CORRIN,
Director, Block Art Museum, Northwestern University

4:15—4:45PM

SYNTHESIS AND CHAIRING OF FINAL DISCUSSION:

CHRIS MCAULIFFE,
Gough Whitlam & Malcolm Fraser Visiting Professor of Australian
Studies, Harvard University

SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANT BIOS

ROGER BENJAMIN is professor of art history at the University of Sydney. His primary research field is French modern art, in particular Matisse, and the history of colonial and Orientalist art. He has written key essays on the reception of Aboriginal art, Emily Kngwarreye and Papunya. His exhibition *Icons of the Desert: Early Aboriginal Painting from Papunya* toured the US in 2009.

DR. MICHAEL BRAND will assume the role of director of the Art gallery of New South Wales in Sydney on June 25. For the past eighteen months he has been consulting director of the Aga Khan Museum under construction in Toronto and scheduled to open in October 2013 as the only museum in North America devoted to the arts of Islamic civilizations. Dr. Brand previously served as director of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles from 2005 until 2010.

WALLY CARUANA is an independent curator, author and consultant specialising in Indigenous Australian art. From 1984 to 2001 was the Senior Curator of the Indigenous art collection at the National Gallery of Australia. He is the author and editor of several publications including *Aboriginal Art*, in the World of Art series, published by Thames and Hudson

LISA GRAZIOSE CORRIN is the Ellen Katz Philips Director of the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University. A curator of numerous exhibitions of contemporary art, she has previously served as the Director of the Williams College Museum of Art, Chief Curator of the Serpentine Gallery in London and Chief Curator of The Contemporary in Baltimore. From 2001-2005 she was the Deputy Director of Art and Jon and Mary Shirley Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Seattle Art Museum where she also served as the artistic lead for the Olympic Sculpture Park.

BRENDA L CROFT is from the Gurindji/Malgnin/Mudpurra peoples in the Northern Territory of Australia. She has been involved in the arts and cultural sectors for more than a quarter of a century as an artist, arts administrator, curator, writer, academic and consultant. In 2009 Brenda commenced as a lecturer at the University of South Australia. From 2002 – early 2009 Brenda was Senior Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the National Gallery of Australia. Brenda received a Master of Art Administration from the College of Fine Arts (UNSW) in 1995, an Alumni Award in 2001, and an Honorary Doctorate (Visual Art) from University of Sydney (Sydney College of the Arts) in 2009.

STEPHEN GILCHRIST is Curator of Indigenous Australian Art at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College. He is currently working on the upcoming exhibition *Crossing Cultures: The Owen and Wagner Collection of Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Art*. In Australia he has held curatorial appointments at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne and National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. He is from the Yamatji people of Northwest Western Australia.

CHRISTOPHER HODGES is an artist, collector and gallerist. He is an acknowledged expert on the Papunya Tula artists, representing them for nearly 25 years, pioneering the exhibition of their work in a contemporary context. His early work with the Utopia

artists and career long association with Emily Kame Kngwarreye and Gloria Petyarre places him as a leading authority on their work. His advocacy for indigenous artists to take their place in the pantheon of Australian art is ongoing.

SANDRA D. JACKSON-DUMONT plays dual roles at the Seattle Art Museum (SAM). She is adjunct curator in the Kayla Skinner Deputy Director for Education + Public Programs | Adjunct Curator, Modern & Contemporary Art Department overseeing public engagement programs at SAM's three sites. Prior to her appointment at SAM, Jackson-Dumont worked at the Studio Museum in Harlem and the Whitney Museum of American Art among other cultural organizations. Known for her ability to blur the lines between academia, popular culture and non-traditional art-going communities, Jackson-Dumont invested in curating experiences that foster dynamic exchanges between art/artists, past/present and people. She has organized numerous exhibitions, lectures, performances, symposia and education initiatives and she has contributed essays to a host of publications and worked with numerous artists. Her most recent project, *Theaster Gates: The Listening Room* is currently on view at SAM. Jackson-Dumont is also an independent curator/writer working across communities and sectors.

ROBERT KAPLAN is an attorney in private practice in Seattle, WA. He is the first sole practitioner to receive the Pro Bono Award of the Business Section of the American Bar Foundation. Kaplan serves on the Seattle Art Museum board of Trustees. He is also a member of the Advisory Committee of the Kluge-Ruhe Collection, a major collection of Australian Aboriginal art housed at the University of Virginia. Kaplan and his wife, Margaret Levi, have been actively collecting Australian Aboriginal art since 1991.

MARGARET LEVI is the Jere L. Bacharach Professor of International Studies, Department of Political Science, University of Washington; and she holds the Chair in Politics, United States Studies Centre, University of Sydney. She is a former President of the American Political Science Association and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is the general editor of *Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics* as well as of the *Annual Review of Political Science*. With her husband, Bob Kaplan, she is a collector of Australian Aboriginal art, and she serves on the Advisory Committee of Kluge-Ruhe Collection, University of Virginia. She also serves on multiple academic boards around the world and is the author of numerous books and articles in comparative political economy.

DJAMBAWA MARAWILI (born 1953) is an artist who has experienced mainstream success (as the winner of the 1996 Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art award Best Bark Painting Prize and as an artist represented in most major Australian institutional collections and several important overseas public and private collections) but for whom the production of art is a small part of a much bigger picture. Djambawa as a senior artist as well as sculptor and bark painter has produced linocut images and produced the first screenprint image for the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Printspace. His principal roles are as a leader of the Madarrpa clan, a caretaker for the spiritual well-being of his own and other related clans and an activist and administrator in the interface between non-Aboriginal people and the Yolngu (Aboriginal) people of Northeast Arnhem Land. He is first and foremost a leader, and his art is one of the tools he uses to lead.

CHRIS MCAULIFFE is the Director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne. He is the author of several books on contemporary Australian art and has worked as an art historian, critic, curator and media commentator on art. He is the Gough Whitlam and Malcom Fraser Visiting Professor in Australian Studies at Harvard University for 2011-12.

GERALD MCMASTER is a writer, artist and curator. Since 2005 he has been the Fredrik S. Eaton Curator, Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Along with Catherine de Zegher they are the Artistic Directors to the 18th Biennale of Sydney. His most recent exhibition at the AGO in 2011 was *Inuit Modern: The Samuel and Esther Sarick Collection*; it is now on at the McCord Museum. His next exhibition in 2013 is *Anishnaabe* co-curated with David Penney.

HOWARD MORPHY (BSc, MPhil London, PhD ANU, FASSA, FAAH, CIHA) is Director of the Research School of Humanities and the Arts at the Australian National University. Prior to returning to the Australian National University in 1997 he spent ten years as a curator at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. He is an anthropologist of art who has conducted extensive fieldwork with the Yolngu people of Northern Australia, and collaborated on many films with Ian Dunlop of Film Australia. His involvement in e-research and in the development of museum exhibitions reflect his determination to make humanities research as accessible as possible to wider publics and to close the distance between the research process and research outcomes.

The art of **PRESTON SINGLETARY** has become synonymous with the relationship between European glass blowing traditions and Northwest Native art. His artworks feature themes of transformation, animal spirits and shamanism through elegant blown glass forms and mystical sand carved Tlingit designs. Recognized internationally, Singletary's artworks are included in museum collections across America and Europe.

WILL STUBBS spent ten years as a criminal lawyer including five as an Aboriginal Legal Aid lawyer in remote Northern communities in Australia. For the last seventeen years he has worked as an art co-ordinator for the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre in Yirrkala in Arnhem land 700 kilometres east of Darwin. During this period the art centre has won 23 major national awards, initiated a media studio and been involved in several seminal projects including the Saltwater Collection, the Wukidi ceremony and Larrakitj- the Kerry Stokes Collection.

CHARLOTTE TOWNSEND-GAULT, Professor in the Department of Art History and Visual Arts at the University of British Columbia, has published widely on contemporary Indigenous arts and culture, most recently 'Sea-lion whiskers and spray-crete: the affect of Indigenous status in contemporary British Columbia.' *Journal of Material Culture*, 2011; 'Not a Museum but a Highway: Skwxwú7mesh Political Affect', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2011. "My World is Surreal" is due from *The Journal of Surrealism and the Americas* in August 2012. *The Idea of Northwest Coast Native Art: An Anthology*, co-edited with Jennifer Kramer and Ki-ke-in, is in press. She curated 'Backstory: Nuuchaanulth Ceremonial Curtains and the Work of Ki-ke-in' for the Belkin Art Gallery at UBC in 2010.

SUSAN VOGEL is a documentary filmmaker and Professor of Art History at Columbia University. Susan has published many books, and written a few, founded an art museum in New York — that survived her departure — and directed two museums. She then successfully completed two years as a MFA student in the New York University Graduate Film Department, and became a documentary film maker. Susan has a PhD in art history and is internationally recognized as a curator and African art expert. She has held the positions of curator for the African collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; founding Director of the Museum for African Art; and Director of the Yale University Art Gallery. Susan's last book *BAULE: African Art/Western Eyes* has been translated into French and received the Herskovits Prize, the African Studies Association's highest honor for a book of original research on Africa. It was also runner up for the Victor Turner Prize of the American Anthropological Association. Susan is professor of art history at Columbia University, and recently received the prestigious Leadership Award of the Arts Council of the African Studies Association.

LIYAWADAY WIRRPANDA is the third wife of Djambawa Marawili. She lives with him at his homeland of Yilpara where she has assisted him with most of his major works over the last ten years. She also helps with her mother, Galuma Maymuru, and her father, Dhukal Wirrpanda's work. It is often her role to complete the fine cross hatching or marwat with a fine brush made of a few human hairs. She has worked for her father, mother and husband. She has consistently produced work in her own right drawing on her own Dhudi Djapu clan designs which her father has shared with her. Liyawaday is the granddaughter of the famous artist Narritjin Maymuru. Her first exhibition was at Annandale in 2009 and marked her coming of age as an artist.

Value and Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art | May 31, 2012

BLC:	Brenda L. Croft	RB:	Roger Benjamin
LC:	Lisa Graziose Corrin	RK:	Robert Kaplan
CH:	Christopher Hodges	SD:	Sandra Jackson-Dumont
CTG:	Charlotte Townsend-Gault	SG:	Stephen Gilchrist
CM:	Christopher McAuliffe	SV:	Susan Vogel
DM:	Djambawa Marrawilli	WC:	Wally Caruana
GM:	Gerald McMaster	WS:	Winnie Stratton
HM:	Howard Morphy	WSS:	Will Stubbs
MB:	Michael Brand	ZZ:	Person from audience asking question/talking
PS:	Preston Singletary		

WELCOME/OPENING REMARKS AND GENERAL FRAMING

WINNIE STRATTON, President, Seattle Art Museum Board of Trustees

ROGER BENJAMIN, Professor of Art History, University of Sydney

WS: Good morning everyone. I am Winnie Stratton, President of the Board of Trustees of the Seattle Art Museum, and I am in awe of who is here today. Thank you so much for coming. We're very much looking forward to this symposium. I want to welcome you to *Burning Issues: Value and Contemporary Australian Aboriginal Art*, a special symposium held in conjunction with the opening of *Ancestral Modern: Australian Aboriginal Art from the Bob Kaplan and Margaret Levi Collection*, which is a stunning exhibition of 120 works of Aboriginal art created from 1970 through 2009. These works showcase what has been called the artistic renaissance of the world's oldest living culture. While this art adapts visual languages that evolved over centuries, the look and feel of these paintings is amazingly modern. It gives us all a chance to see Australia from a unique vantage point. It was a stroke of fate when Bob Kaplan and Margaret Levi, two Seattle collectors, decided to focus on collecting Australian Aboriginal art in the early 1990s. All of the works in this show have been promised to the Seattle Art Museum, given generously by Margaret and Bob, and we could not be more pleased to celebrate this milestone by presenting this wonderful exhibition. Their incredible devotion to this museum and to this field with a major body of work was extremely fortunate not only for SAM and Seattle but also for the entire United States, as this exhibition opens the door for recognition of this artistic movement on a national level.

WS: I want to acknowledge the commitment and creativity of the international team who curated this show, beginning with Pam McClusky, who is the African and Oceanic art curator here at SAM. She collaborated with Wally Caruana, the highly respected curator and renowned author who is here from Canberra, and with Stephen Gilchrist, here as well, who is currently the curator of indigenous Australian art at the Hood Museum of Art, at Dartmouth.

WS: I want to talk about our sponsors. This show could not be possible without them so I'm going to list them for you. Generous support is provided by the Visionary Circle here at SAM. A lead grant was provided by Art Mentor Foundation of Lucerne. Exhibition sponsor is the Seattle Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs.

Major support, is provided by the Seattle Foundation. Patron support is provided by the Embassy of Australia, the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, and the United States Studies Center at the University of Sydney. Additional support is provided by Alida and Chris Latham and members of SAM's Contributors Circle annual fund. Media sponsor is King 5 television, and the official hotel sponsor is the Grand Hyatt of Seattle. I know many of you have traveled a great distance to be here and we are thrilled to have the opportunity to host such an incredible group of historians, anthropologists, curators, artists, and critics. It's really wonderful to have you here and I hope that the rain clears up by the time this is over so you get to see Seattle in its full glory. The symposium is funded by the Committee on Australian Studies at Harvard University, the Jere L. Bacharach Professorship at the University of Washington, the United States Studies Center at the University of Sydney, the School of Humanities at the Australian National University, and the Seattle Art Museum. I want to acknowledge our co-conveners Roger Benjamin, who is the professor of art history at the University of Sydney, and Chris McAuliffe, who is the chair of Australian Studies, Harvard University. I would like to introduce Roger Benjamin, whose primary research field is French modern art, and in particular Matisse and the history of colonial and Orientalist art. He's written key essays on the reception of Aboriginal artist, Emily Kgnawarre. And Papunya, his exhibition *Icons of the Desert: Early Aboriginal Paintings from Papunya*, toured the US in 2009. So Roger, it's wonderful having you here. And we're going to have Sandra come up and do a couple of housekeeping things first. Thank you very much for your patience.

SD: Good morning. I'm Sandra Jackson Dumont, I'm the deputy director for education and public programs here at the Seattle Art Museum. We are so grateful and enthused by your presence. I am here to just do some basic housekeeping, so out of the door to the right are bathrooms, really key thing. So if you look at the ceiling, sometimes people go out and they don't notice them but if you look at the ceiling you'll see signs. Across the hall you can get water throughout the day with the little snacks and then we'll also have lunch over there. In your packets there is an outline of the schedule. There is also a 20% discount in the SAM Shop. There's a Remix ticket for tomorrow night. There are other things that I think are obvious what they are. In your bags are materials about museums and cultural institutions from around the city and activities you might be interested in. The same is true for in your packet. And then finally, if you're presenting, if you could periodically look to the back of the room and you may see a sign that comes up that says five minutes. We all know how we can be. So we're all passionate about our subject areas and so if you could just look to the back of the room periodically and you'll see five minutes for the panel and so we're just going to ask that all moderators keep that in mind and we really do mean five minutes because we actually already are behind schedule. Thank you so much for today and so Roger Benjamin thank you for coming up.

RB: Okay, thank you very much. Let's, let's get into my, don't laugh. Could we have the first slide off please? It's wonderful, wonderful to be here this morning. And I want to, as an Australian visiting Seattle, it's actually the second time, but I want to take the opportunity to pay my respects to the elders of this area, the Suquamish, Tulalip, Muckleshoot, Squaks, Snoqualmie, and Duwamish peoples,

and to welcome you all. I think it's a lovely room. It's going to be a really great day. We have a great range of speakers and it's my task just to make some introductory remarks and framing remarks. The first thing I want to say is, "Wow!" The show upstairs, the collection would be the envy of any major museum in the world. It's hard to imagine a more impressive representation of remote Aboriginal art of the last 20 years. It's not comprehensive; perhaps like all good collections it's partial. It has its partialities. And there are areas of contemporary indigenous production that it doesn't address quite so directly. But that's, in a sense, the strength of this great show. We actually ask in the last session of today, "How is it that you get Aboriginal art to storm the barricades of major modern art institutions?" And the answer seems to be, "Get Bob and Margaret. Have them on your team." You need local collectors with the determination and the foresight that they have shown, and the collaboration obviously of an institution that has agreed to become the proud possessor of this great gift.

RB: Now our first slide please. Is it up to me? No, it's them. I mean the US, I just wanted to spend a moment explaining that the US has always seen and collected well ahead of its time. A century ago it was the Boston Brahmins and the bigwigs of New York and Philadelphia collecting French Impressionism long before the French state began to do so seriously. There's a rich history waiting to be written of the place of American collectors and scholars in how Aboriginal art has been interpreted and acquired, going right back to the American-Australian Expedition to Arnhem Land of 1848, 1948, oops, 1948, we're in the modern period, to this great exhibition that some of you may have seen, *Dreamings*, commissioned by the Aegis Society in 1988. And that was an exhibition really that I think launched the new Aboriginal art movement worldwide. The late John Kluge was inspired by that exhibition, apparently. Richard Kelton of Los Angeles was already collecting contemporary Aboriginal art in a very big way. The Kaplan/Levis, if I can call them that, have been collecting since the early 1990s, as you know. John and Barbara Wilkerson of New York, and if I can just show you some images from the recent exhibition based on their specialized collection of early Papunya boards they began collecting around 1995, '96. And also in this country there are major interpreters of Aboriginal art, like Professor Fred Myers, head of Anthropology at NYU, right through to the blogger of brilliance Will Owen, whose definitive blog, which is the best I've ever used, *Aboriginal Art & Culture: an American Eye*, I learned last night, is going to be archived for posterity even though it's ongoing. And of course he and his partner's collection is being gifted, has been gifted, to the Hood Art Museum at Dartmouth College.

RB: Our task today is to, not really to discuss the exhibition upstairs as such in a direct way, but rather to address the burning issues of value and interpretation. There's a fair bit of focusing on these issues in what's coming forward. When I say value, I don't just mean commercial or market value, though we'll be talking about that. But cultural value more generally, political value, ethical weight, aesthetic value. It's not the first time by any means that these issues have been discussed, so in 1990, for example, there was a big conference on the economics of the art market for Aboriginal art. But since those times a lot has changed, and if I could just make a few points about the scene since 2000.

We've seen of course the advent of the Internet which has led to a globalizing of sales so that art can now be purchased, you know, in Germany or Japan, wherever it is direct online from remote community cooperatives in some cases. The art auction phenomenon has redoubled since it was initiated, really, in a specific focus on Aboriginal art in 1996. There's been a burst of new communities coming on stream usually with senior law, law men and law women beginning a painting movement but a number of these movements are represented upstairs. The Spinifex people, the people from the APY and MPY lands, Amatar, Pepperminarty, Bidgeodenga, Jampy, Desert Weavers who you can see here at the top, Lockhart River, Torres Strait Islanders, redoubling their productivity.

RB: And today we're in a situation where well over half of all art sales in Australia are of Aboriginal art and it seems to me maybe half or more than half of all publication on contemporary art in our country is on indigenous art. That said, there's been a significant downturn since 2008, the Great Crash severely affected the market and that's had implications for communities which are reliant on their art sales. Investor confidence was driven down and there are problems of oversupply now in the market in the communities. But the activity of serious and imaginative exhibitions continues and if I can just give you a sense of some of the great shows that have been on the last twelve months in Australia. The National Gallery of Victoria's *Tjukurrjtjanu*, a huge show of early Papunya boards which will be at the Musée du quai Branly in the Fall. The National Museum of Australia in Canberra put on this fascinating exhibition, *Yiwarra Kuju: Art of the Canning Stock Route*, which was about representations of places on a 1,000 kilo, 1,000 mile long, stock route that was introduced by a white stockman in the early 20th century. The museum and art gallery in Darwin Yungbarra, *Art of the Junkuwa Sisters*, and so on. So this exhibition upstairs, I think, takes its place in this flourishing of an environment of productivity of thinking, interpretation and publication.

RB: Now our panel today will be introduced to you just briefly by each of the speakers but there are, from a convener's point of view, I just want to point out that we have tried, in a way, to represent differing stakeholders and commentators. So we have people from the Pacific Northwest, we have Charlotte Townsend-Gault coming to speak about the art of the Pacific Northwest. We have Preston Singletary, the artist addressing us momentarily. We have Gerald McMaster, the wonderful curator from Canada who has a Plains Indian background. We have a group of indigenous Australian speakers, artist curators, Brenda L. Croft, and I've actually brought some of the work along to show you some, oops, it's not her but she'd do it, she didn't do it. These are some of her works from the early '90s. She is an artist of very significant reputation in Australia although she's speaking to us primarily today as a curator and academic. Stephen Gilchrist, the curator from the Hood. Now as a Yamachee man we have Djambawa Marrawilli, who will be speaking momentarily, and Liyawaday Wirrpanda. And then we have people from, well the production end, really, the artists, the art advisor Will Stubbs, the gallerist Chris Hodges, the market expert and academic Wally Caruana. And then if you look at the reception side of things, we have museum people, Michael Brand, who'll be arriving at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Chris McAuliffe from

the University of Melbourne's art museum. Lisa Corrin, from Seattle. Glenn, and we have people in the audience, Glenn Barkley, Margo Smith, distinguished curators, Will Owen at the reception end is a collector and a blogger. Academics, like Howard Morphy, who's a very distinguished figure, and we're very lucky that Howard, who's the sort of *doyenne* of the anthropology of Aboriginal art -- is *doyen*, not *doyenne*, is here today [Laugh]. Susan Vogel, and so on. So, you know, I think we've got a great lineup this morning.

RB: I'll just ever so briefly mention the thematics. The first panel that Howard will be chairing after the artists have spoken addresses issues of cross-cultural aesthetics. This is for just now. Cross-cultural aesthetics we have, you'll see the dot point forms, I think, on your handout. Then we have a series of presentations on value, market, and the canon, after lunch. And where we'll be addressing issues like the role and function of, I suppose, the art auction, the museum as a place for the display and interpretation of indigenous art. There's a coffee break and the last session of the day is devoted to the idea of global art: Has the concept of world art helped or hindered the cause of indigenous Australian work? What are the impediments to indigenous art being collected at elite institutions? And the question of the acceptance of indigenous art as contemporary art and how that figures in the debate today. So these are just some of the issues that we'll be looking at and I think that's, that's it for me. I'd now like to invite the panel of artists to come and sit at the front. Thank you.

PANEL 1: ARTISTS' VOICE

- How does the artists' work relate to the 'ancestral' as well as the 'modern'?
- What are the artists' aspirations for their art?

DISCUSSANTS:

DJAMBAWA MARRAWILLI, Artist

LIAWADAY IRRPANDA, Artist

PRESTON SINGLETARY, Artist

PS: You know, we're really pressed for time and I pulled up a few images and it's, they're not in any particular order. But so it'd be, you have to bear with me. These, this, you know, I grew up in the Seattle area. I grew up in the, of course, in the glass tribe. But I'm also, I'm Tlingit, my great grandmother moved down from Alaska in the '20s, so from that point forward my family grew up in the Seattle area. This is a piece that I put together as a collaboration with a friend of mine, David Swenson, who was one of my first mentors and I met him at the Pilchuck School. But he helped me put this sculpture together and it's been transformed into bronze as you see here, this is a bronze casting of a totem pole. But what it does is it represents my story of my great-grandmother, who had a pet grizzly bear as a child. And she, I, you know, in a nutshell the story was the family was out hunting and they came across a grizzly and they shot it and they realized it was the mother and they, so they brought this little cub back to the village and my great-grandmother raised it as a pet. And at the time, it was in Sitka, Alaska, and at the time there were a lot of Russians in there, that area at the time, so they, there was a woman who would sell taffy in the streets. And so my great-grandmother would go out, she would pick berries in the woods and bring them back and sell the berries so she could get Russian money so she could buy taffy to feed her little pet. And—what is that?

BLC: Her little pet!

PS. Her little pet. Well I mean it was, and the story goes that eventually the little cub got to be too big to keep around the house so I'm, and that's all I was told. I don't know what happened to the cub after that. So anyway this is, totem poles, they tell a story. They represent the families. This is my great-grandmother here shown holding a copper. It's a tinnage, it's actually a money piece that denotes high status within the tribe. It has the crest symbol, the killer whale on the blanket, and standing on this box, which we say is a metaphor for containing the treasures and the riches of culture. And, of course, there's the eagle because my family comes from the eagle side of the Tlingit tribe. The next slide, oh actually I wanted to point this out too, because I'm actually going to try to cast this in glass. It's 7-1/2 feet but we're going to, and I have to take it to the Czech Republic because they're very well versed in making large scale castings, but this one's kind of unprecedented too, in the way that they have to take the mold off the piece, but it'll be cast in three sections and it should weigh, it might weigh a couple thousand pounds, but it's going to be kind of a groundbreaking project, I think, for the glass process. Not a way that I'm normally known for as far as how I work with glass. This one, okay, there we go. I'm in control. [Laugh]

PS: So glassblowing has been the thing that has been the path that I started on in about 1982, European glassblowing techniques, working with Italian glassblowers, working in production factory. Locally here in Seattle we made Mt. St. Helens glass. And of course there's been this, this Northwest glass history is quite, it's quite broad, and of course we have Chihuly and all of that to thank for that. And so in 1988 I started to blend Tlingit style design work with my glassblowing process, and so once I followed that thread and I met various artists who helped me along the way, I learned. I already had sort of a basic training for about ten, eleven years, and before I embarked on that journey of bringing my culture into the glassmaking process. These are the kinds of things I'm doing today. This is actually a collaboration with my first high school friend that I worked with. We made a collaborative effort here and so glassblowing is a very dynamic process because it's team oriented and as opposed to other mediums or other materials you have to really interact with other people. You have to work on a team that, and, you know, you have to get along with other people, you have to. I think a lot of art sometimes you only have to be with yourself and a paintbrush. So you, or whatever, a sculptor, you know, that works individually, but glassblowing is a very team oriented process and all that collective energy, I feel, is reflected in the piece.

PS: And this is another collaboration. See I'm always advocating the material of glass to other indigenous people. I've worked with the Hawaiians, I've worked with the Maoris, and exposed them to the material of glass and have done collaborations. Well this is a collaboration that I did with my other mentor, Joe David, who has been one of my biggest advocates and had adopted me, shared his name with me and opened my eyes to not only the artistic style of the Northwest coast but also the spirituality of the things that he's involved with, the sweat lodge ceremonies and things like that, and he's been a huge impact on my life and my family. So today I'm kind of working in the more abstract form and in a lot of ways, but I am also getting more into the symbolism. I've been working with a Tlingit storyteller and learning from his insights about how he, I call him the Tlingit Joseph Campbell. His name is Walter Porter. He has a website that he explores lots of symbolism and the broad ways that you can interpret it. So if you think about the Joseph Campbell perspective, it's all of the mythologies speaking to the same thing. They're all a metaphor for teachings and so forth and so I'm trying to bring a little bit of that into the work, but also this is obviously a non-traditional form so it becomes more of a study of how can I represent aspects of the story. And so this is a little bit more of a pictorial, this is the raven who is carrying the moon under his wing. So he's, the glass represents the moon, and he's showing the fisherman of the night, he's going to show him the treasures that he has, and so there I'm trying to get more into the symbolism of the story, but then the more of the abstractions that I'm doing I feel are, I like to say they're inspired by the modernists, the whole movement of primitivism and these sort of spare organic forms that have this fluidity, and yet they're ornamented with Northwest Coast art, okay, so they're very traditional on their form but for me they're a different perspective, a different take.

PS: Of course some of the earlier pieces, this one was *Raven Steals the Moon*, *Raven Steals the Sun*. That's the famous creation story of the Tlingit and the Haida and there's a, in fact Walter really goes into that, and if you want to look them up it's

really, really fascinating because he talks about the raven brings light or enlightenment, the world is in darkness and then so raven goes and he tricks the old man out of the sun and the moon and the stars and he brings that to the world and gives it, presents it as a gift and brings light to the world. So we're, that's just one aspect and there are many, many more. Because glass is such a unique material and the shadow effect that I discovered purely by accident. My aunt came and wanted to see some of the work I was doing at this little open house that I, well the place where I work was usually, is a Benjamin Moore's glass studio, where I worked for many years. We'd have a holiday open house and we'd have a card table over in the corner and Benjamin had these little pedestals with lights and everything and so my aunt said, "Well can we look at the hat there with the, on the nice pedestal with the light?" And so I said, "Sure." So I took Benjamin's piece down and I put my hat up there. And about 10 people had gathered around and then all of a sudden the light came through and made this shadow and everybody was, "Oh, look at that!" It was like, "Yeah well, that's what I intended all along, you know." Of course that was, so that was kind of the eureka moment for me.

PS: And then, so, just exploring different ways of "How can I make it look like Northwest Coast art?" because coming from a glassblowing standpoint and never having been trained as a traditional designer, it was a real, I had a lot of ground to gain at that point. I had to, I had to catch up. And so working with people like Marvin Oliver and Joe David and people like that, it really informed, opened my eyes to what I was doing, and of course learning how to sculpt the glass and create other kinds of forms has evolved over the years as my skills have evolved. And too, I think the way that I'm navigating this process. And I think part of the discussion was about the place of modern art in modern indigenous art, I like to say that I'm, this is what I do, and so I'm hoping that if I can achieve anything with my work it would be to inspire another generation, the next generation to do something in their own way. You know, that's all I can say. It's, is it good, is it bad? I mean, does it fit into the culture? It just happens to be that I'm interpreting it in my own way today. And so that is the success that I've received through doing my work. Hopefully it will inspire another generation.

PS: This was one of the major collaborations I did for the Pilchuck Glass School. We had some Tlingit carvers come down and we carved a totem pole, we inlaid it with glass and so that was a great cross-fertilization and kind of a rite of passage for me. And that's all I have today. So, thank you.

BLC: I'm only here as a ring in. So I'm up here with my *Bapa*, who I call Father, which means that I call Wally Caruana grandfather, which I'm really going to enjoy later on [laugh]. I've known Djambawa for many years through our work together on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board and I have such admiration and respect for him as a human being as well as an amazing artist and cultural leader. So I've been told by Roger that my job was to make Djambawa feel calm. That's not usually what I'm known for. So we're going to have a kind of a bit of a conversation. And I might ask you just to tell us a little bit about what your country means to you.

DM: Hi everybody, hear me okay? From the country that where we're staying now, where we living, it's just a, it's just strongly empty, you know, there's no buildings. There is no, some, what shall I say, not, not interrupt by big machines like bulldozer, these sort of things. But it's similarly look like this, but in the rivers go right up to the creek and onto the sea. But I say it's been there for quite a long, I mean it's been there for quite a long time, more than a century. But there were, the patterns and the design and the story are still alive and, and for, for human beings like us we still use our names on those rivers and bays and sands and banks like this.

BLC: Go on.

DM: You could say they're, like that animal now it is really, I, my totem, *baru*, Djambawa is another name. Particular animals and some going on, you know, I have lot of back bones, deep sacred names we don't call ourselves Djambawa [laugh] but that is more better beyond. Beyond this animal was human being before in the country. You know like when,

BLC: An ancestor.

DM: Ancestral being. And then he, then the person I'll tell it in a little bit, I just wanted to explain my animals, I mean my totem are *baru*. *Baru* is crocodile. In my country there was ancestral being living in Yathikpa. The truth, a person was living there, one is *baru* and one is *dhamalingu*. *Dhamalingu* is blue tongue lizard. But I don't know why we call blue tongue lizard, anyway, they were living together. One day the wife, *dhamalingu*, went around and she was collecting some snails and just because she walked around and got all those snails and came back on site and saw the fire, the original fire it was belonging to a *baru*. *Baru* means crocodile. Yolngu. And when she was starting to cook all those snails and all the shell and what shall I call it throwing the same time and teasing while the great *baru* was resting.

BLC: She was throwing the snails and hitting him.

DM: Yeah and all of a sudden he felt, he was, the snail was throwing the shell on top of the *baru's* head—you can see the bubbles here— and then *baru* turned around and why are you teasing me? You're in my own country so he just got wild and threw it back on the fire. So if you go further there you will see the story here.

BLC: Do you want to go to the—oh no.

DM: Oh, we'll carry on. Anyway, we will tell you that story. When I was young, since I got into my own, what do I say, this is very special dillybag represent to the land. Woman, very special woman make these patterns, a dillybag, and it's, it's representing the patterns, designs, and animals on the land. And you can see that the young ones wearing arm bands. I guess maybe everybody told me that I was wearing, I was representing my patterns and back where I come from and just to I was wearing the hat yesterday. The same a pattern like this. Arm band. And that was yesterday.

BLC: With the parrot face.

DM: Yeah, yeah. Very special, you cannot see much more like this, it is only belong to very certain clan patterns or design or armband like this.

BLC: Are these *larrakitj* in your country? Do you call them *larrakitj*?

DM: *Larrakitj*, yeah. We call it *larrakitj*, sometime we call it *dhanparr*. *Dhanparr*, is completely little one, short one made from bark. Guess I was, I had learned about what the *larrakitj* means originally because I think when we came back to our tribal country, I heard my father said to me, "Your grandfather and he says ancestral beings were buried on this *larrakitj*." I couldn't, I didn't know what was *larrakitj* means. But one day I had started and now also at the same time one of my manager from the other clan and that was Mununggurr, Djutjadjutja Mununggurr, he was my —

BLC: Your cultural manager.

DM: My cultural manager, he started at his homeland too and I did the same. So on that time did the *larrakitj* return to come up. And also there was at Yirrkala, took, along the beach there because when I was going to Yirrkala in the '60s, *larrakitj* was at the beach.

BLC: Old ones.

DM: Very old ones. This is really burial poles you know when we, our people in those days, '60s, '70s, not '70s, '60s and beyond, the body goes to put it on a platform and then bring all the clans now to complete the funeral.

BLC: So you'd wait for that flesh to go.

DM: Flesh to go away and at a certain time, 1967, one year and come back and take all the bones. And he and put all those bones onto these poles.

BLC: Inside them.

DM: Inside them. Significant sum of people coming in and taking their part, their role. And now we do it with a coffin. And coffin comes and you can see a lot of people, clans, all come together. And they are just playing their roles. And before in '50s and they were doing it in different way just to go and collect all those bones.

BLC: So these *larrakitj*, these are made specially for museums and galleries now?

DM: No, yeah, it's going off. No, it's going off to the gallery. And when we told the gallery it's where the owner were taken away to a gallery but remember now when he's up there and after that he'll go again to another state, the spiritual and the vision is still in our life.

BLC: The vision and the spirit. Yeah. And how, how do you see, do you see these as messages, cultural messages for the people who take these, who buy these?

DM: Well, I tell you it is, it is. Because it's reaching our people. I couldn't come to America. But in this pole and all those patterns and paints and bark paintings it took me to see another world. And it does look like it unfamiliar for me. Anyway, I am here and talking. And I'm talking here just a little bit of English and I have three different languages in my back tongue [laugh].

BLC: But English is that fourth one behind all those others.

DM: Yeah. I have names, languages, and then dialects from roundabout in my home community. Yeah.

BLC: Can you tell me a little bit, or tell us a little bit about the significance of you singing, which I always love. I find that so profound and moving, for you to sing us into the space where the works are. What's the role of that?

DM: My role is, well in I think that is I'm really putting it out into a public too, to people to feel it. But originally it's really when we have man's ceremonies and then we wanted to put some young and get into, into involved all those. Significance of those into Ngara.

BLC: So bringing those young ones—

DM: Young ones into a man, a man's sites or woman's sites, you know. It's about the rolling sea current, the stick that I was beating it was going towards, going full, towards the people that I wanted to bring them back and then I dragged you along.

BLC: So like rolling waves.

DM: Yeah, rolling and bringing you mob with me and then I took you around, you know, all those patterns. Because every patterns and designs have significant same sound of using those song. And it's really brings our souls, our blood, our spiritual, to meet, to meet together and can be really formally, formed like unity.

BLC: Yes. Which is why we had to come up and follow you dancing.

DM: Yes.

BLC: Shall we look at some of yours? Can you tell us a little bit about the importance of that sand sculpture?

DM: Sand sculpture?

BLC: Can you see that one? You know the sand sculpture that's upstairs?

DM: Oh, yeah. The sand sculpture means here is the land. The land that is the shape of the sand sculpture, it is the land. And the name of that land is called Yingapungapu. Yingapungapu means it's our bloods, our skins, our bones have to go back to this particular country. So like that's sand sculpture. There is three different culture, three different countries, one is Madarrpa, one is Manggalili,

- one is Dhalwangu. And those have a similar shape of the sand sculpture like this. And it's called Yingapungapu.
- BLC: And you are responsible for those three countries?
- DM: Well you know there's three different language, people - Manggalili, Madarrpa, which is me, Dhalwangu not the clan but we are all on the same level on the same country where, along the coast. And the songs and the dance and the patterns and the design are always share it, it's totally connected—
- BLC: And that's when you come together for ceremony.
- DM: Come together, yeah.
- BLC: Can you tell us a little bit about the *larrakitj* being put out in country and shown in country up in your land?
- DM: Well there was three different form, four different *larrakitj*. It's really representing all different [unintelligible] anyway. [unintelligible] which is [unintelligible].
- BLC: [Unintelligible] no. Where is this, Will, do you know?
- DM: Well it was, we displayed it because we like everybody to come and see it. And we were really putting this one is people, the other people can come and see it for themselves and learn what those poles mean. And also those patterns and design, we usually put it on, on the image of a person. It's all going back, right back to the land. Maybe as I said, we saw that the river was empty but this rule of spirit and the stories and the songs are there in the empty river. I don't know when we saw the first one.
- BLC: That first one, yeah.
- DM: Yeah. Is sacred for us. No matter when early on in '70s or '60s or the '50s where the missionary took us away, I grew up in Numbulwar. Maybe you know that place Numbulwar, Rose River.
- BLC: And you were taken there by missionaries for school.
- DM: Yeah by missionaries, they didn't want us to stay in Blue Mud Bay. But they dragged us away to Numbulwar, Groote Island, and Yirrkala. And so I stay in one community. And when the time came my father said we shouldn't be all live here, we need to go back and live in our own country.
- BLC: Homeland movement.
- DM: Yeah. And that was really my mind was reflecting, I shouldn't be living that no more. I should go back to Banlyala. The first message that I got it from my father was in '60s, but I went to, gonna make it a little bit short. I went to university, college, high school, and I was learning there for myself maybe for one year. And my father bought a cassette tape, and he was singing and talking,

- told me you there to learn English but remember I have here another message here, too.
- BLC: He sent those tapes to you at school so you—
- DM: To college, yeah, and I got that tape and I was listening to him and he was singing, talking to me, you should go, we should go back to our own tribal land. And I said which tribal land? I have already lived in Numbulwar. And I, when I went back to, from school I went to, to go be with my father and mother and they said, “Hey, how come you gave me the different message that we have already house here and that we have already country here now? Now we were dragged away by missionaries and this is not our real country. We should go back to our tribal own country where belong, where your grandfather and the ancestors are buried.” So I believed someday, okay. I want to go to see my country and I thought, to me, I wanted to go and see the community [laugh]. No. I was really visiting the country [laugh]. Okay, he, my father took me by boat, not boat but by canoe, a canoe that we make us—
- BLC: A dugout one.
- DM: A dugout one, yeah. My father was a good sailor, he bought it from Groote Island shops and the Numbulwar shop, that’s how he lived. Anyways we traveled to Blue Mud Bay. And when we landed at Banlyala, that is my homeland, really tribal homeland. And I said to my father, I didn’t really talk to him, I didn’t want to interrupt him but he jumped out from the canoe, he tied the boat, my mother went in and at the country, at my first [unintelligible] dance, she was crying. I don’t know why. But there is a story because there was a tree called Marawili, the name of the place. And then my mother began to cry and my father was really strong and told her, “Ok, Djambawa, I’m going to go and take you to my father’s burial ground.” Ah this is just a burial ground [laugh]. So when we were walking about to the billabong, he mentioned to me these different name of this country, different name of this country, and we went across the sand dune that’s Marawili, your grandfather, your ancestors’ true skeletons are all buried here. Where? Here. There’s a big hill that we walked around. And the bones were all buried here, I mean in the pole, *larrakitj*, was cracked away and all the bones. And that was my message from my father. From then on, anyway, I had, I have to see two worlds on that space. This is European way of looking at it, this is Yolgnu way of looking at it. And of course, yeah [laugh].
- BLC: Do you need me to finish, or keep going? Can we keep going or? I could listen to Djambawa all day.
- DM: Oh one of my, I’ll go back to my grandfather. That is my *mari*. I don’t know what you call *mari*. Grandfather. I mean this is on mother’s side.
- ZZ: [Unintelligible]
- BLC: But he wants to talk about this one, yeah.

DM: My mother's side. Mother's mother, yeah. Manggalili that one because I think it really connected with the family. As we were talking about, we were talking about Yingapungapu, you can see that Yingapungapu

BLC: That, that sculpture in the middle.

DM: The sculpture in the middle, yeah. As you see on the middle there, there is bones. Bones of the fish but originally it's representing the human being bones [laugh]. But in, now in describing to the western world, we do paint like this, like you know like the bones of the crab and bones of fish. But as you see there *didjiridu*, can see the canoe—

BLC: Yep the canoe, dugout—

DM: The paddles and you can see a person singing there. I can see birds there, I can see a tree, I can see—

BLC: A crab.

DM: Crab [unintelligible] shape there—

BLC: This one, yep.

DM: Yeah. And you can see there is on the top parts, yeah, that's the clouds arising from the sea and even this side too, it's arising from the sea. They all clambered onto the land. One day I couldn't believe it that I, people would say, ah, the culture must be different. And the song, and the song and the land must be different. And I, I was involved with Northern Land Council for quite a while now. And that's where I learn politics of the Northern Land Council looking out for their land. And Buku-Larrnggayare looking after the patterns and design and me, there I'm the chairman on ANKAAA for 25 years now, 25.

BLC: I'll tell people what ANKAAA is. It's Association of Northern, Kimberley, and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists. And Djambawa was chair there for many years. And the Northern Land Council is part of the Aboriginal Land council network in different parts of the country. Northern Land Council represents communities right across that top end of Northern Territory.

DM: And Art Center.

BLC: And Art Center.

DM: [Laugh] And that's why I learn politics. Now I knew where I was studying. I prefer in studying with Northern Land Council I was involved I was Council, I'm still with Northern Land Council. My voice there, sometimes I give my voice to the Northern Land Council and they cannot help me what to do. Buku-Larrnggay Arts Center where I can always be standing strong. —

BLC: You can go and bother Will.

DM: And they told the world like when I come I can be a good name but [unintelligible] by other people here [unintelligible], but one of the things that my really personal thing that I should state it is the patterns and the design. Because this pattern and design took me into the High Court because I had to be, I was involved.

BLC: In the High Court.

DM: The High Court to bring the land and the sea back into my, into our, into our hands. And that was not politics that I didn't really want to move back.

BLC: And you used your art—

DM: Yes.

BLC: As your legal, this is your lawful—

DM: Legal. Legal. And they would say, "Look, where is your document?" They was asking me where's the document now. My document is already patterns and design. I can tell you a story about this, about this country. The empty country that we've been first seen it.

BLC: You mean empty because there's no buildings there but it's full. It's full of culture and law.

DM: Full of culture and full of stories.

BLC: Can we look at one of your works?

DM: Yeah.

BLC: And you can tell us a bit about it.

DM: I love the story that I was really describing early about *baru* just to show—

BLC: It's *baru* at the end. And the blue, and the blue tongue lizard woman. And he's throwing her in that fire. And how did he get his designs on his back?

DM: Well the design was the-

BLC: He got burnt, did he get burned on his-

DM: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you could say it that all those-

BLC: Snails.

DM: Snails dot all around.

BLC: That stuck to him when she threw them at him.

DM: Yeah and that's why *baru* got very cross and threw the wife onto a fire. And they both turn around, the *baru* turned into a crocodile, like there now. And the blue tongue turned into a blue tongue lizard. And that was the message that I wanted, I was really describing. I think people can die for a minute. Is that you're all tired now? Yeah, thank you.

BLC: Do you want to sit down? Okay.

RB: I think we have five minutes for questions.

Margaret Levi: Djambawa, one of the things that I'm very interested in is the development of the *Buwayak* movement. Is that the right way to say it? Which I know you were involved with.

DM: We should ask Kathy because she's the one [laugh]. Anyway, let me explain to you mob (you want to talk?) One day while in, Kathy, my wife, we were both together and artists and we were working together and, and she had skill too, she just wanted to make the *Buwayak*. *Buwayak* means no one will shave it up, no one will see it. As you see, she started from here. And we were both working together. Our work is similar, same, Kathy and I we both work together. And it's really pretty hard when you work bark like this. Because you know you have to follow what she wanted and I wanted to follow, she wanted to follow me, exactly what I wanted. And this is, was really, first *Buwayak* that we would, we were working together. Shaving it up and a person wanted to sleep here, open his mouth. Because today he's still here, Djambawa talking goodness [laugh]. That's why you could say it's a particular, a little bit of *Buwayak* and we were starting out from here. And, and just to—

Margaret Levi: What's the translation?

DM: Collaboration, yeah. Invisibility, yeah.

WS: In the original, the patterns and designs Djambawa was talking about their language so anyone who can read them properly can read thousands of different identities of different estates which connect back to people's own personal identity and make a matrix that makes the world and you can read those patterns. When Yolngu first met non-indigenous people they said that freely because this creates proper deep relationships that can't be broken. The non-indigenous people, took them away, and put them on their wall and treated them as trade items and had no idea what they were being given. The Yolngu withdrew and for a period after that first shock they would put heavy images. So that crocodile is already in those paintings, in all those patterns, it's already in there. But to bring it out and to show you who can't read the crocodile comes out as a big fat black crocodile on top of it and for 50 years until I only just found out Kathy invented [laugh] *Buwayak* [laugh] that's a revision of art history that we've had this, this morning which I have no problem accepting but we just didn't hear it before now. Djambawa and Kathy revolutionized Yolngu art of Northeast Arnhem Land through the Saltwater Project which led to the Blue Mud Bay case. And they, I don't see any point in quoting Djambawa when he's here to say it himself, but he said, "Hey, this is our law, you know we can

use it. We can bend it, we can shape it. It's there for us. It's not there to put in a glass case in a museum. You know, we earned this and it's going to protect us, this is going to save us. So we can be brave with it. We don't have to be scared about making it fit, that's what it's for." And so these shapes, this fire that you can now see in the design, this bend in the corner of this thing is actually the crocodiles in here so he's bent that design and created the crocodile's nest. The crocodile now is falling back into the water. This is [unintelligible] not just fire, this is water, but now since Kathy invented *Buwayak* that is no longer a big black fat crocodile sitting and blocking you from the power, the Yolngu rhetoric was not to hide but to protect noninitiated people from the power of these radioactive designs that are so inherently powerful that it might harm someone if they were exposed to it without the protection of this heavy figurative imagery and Djambawa said, "Hey, we've been painting for the outside world for 50 years. We don't have to, you know, that's not the law, that's a convention. So we're going to, we're not going to break that convention, we're going to, we're not going to rip the clothes off this one and make it nude, we're just going to sink this crocodile back into the water. Now the new generation, they're all strutting around naked as the day they were born but that's something that came from Kathy, [unintelligible] the inventor of *Buwayak*."

RB: Thank you. Can we, can we [end of DVD]—

PANEL 2: CROSS-CULTURAL AESTHETICS

- How important is knowledge of the originating cultural context, including narratives and ritual performance, to appreciating indigenous Australian art?
- When the work resonates based solely on its aesthetic qualities, what is lost and what is gained?
- Can the art of other cultures (e.g. Pacific Northwest, West Africa) provide models for the recognition and interpretation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands art?
- Museums as cross-cultural spaces: what emphasis should be given to narrative, oral history, speaking presence, and performance?

MODERATOR:

HOWARD MORPHY, Director of Research School of Humanities and the Arts, Australian National University.

DISCUSSANTS:

SUSAN VOGEL, Independent Scholar and Director, Prince Street Pictures

CHARLOTTE TOWNSEND-GAULT, Professor of Art History and Research Associate, University of British Columbia

BRENDA L. CROFT, Senior Research Fellow, National Institute for Experimental Arts, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales

WALLY CARUANA, Independent Curator

RB: Can we begin again, please? Everybody. We have quite a number of speakers, as you know, and from now on we're supposed to be, each speaker is speaking for eight minutes max and I'm going to be sitting down in the front assisting everybody knowing when the eight minutes are up. The other thing we're going to do to save time during the rest of the day, the moderators weren't introduced as speakers at any length at all because you all have in your packages a list with the biographies of the speakers. Okay. So that was done to save time and you can, at your leisure, have a look. So the next session now on Cross-Cultural Aesthetics is being chaired by Howard Morphy and I'll turn over to him. Thank you.

HM: Okay. Well what I'm going to do is do a very, very quick presentation that will enable us to look at a few Yolgnu paintings in the context of what I would understand as a value of looking at a perspective of aesthetics in a cross-cultural framework. And as far as aesthetics is concerned, I think it's got something to do with the impact of form on the senses. And the way that human cultures incorporate that potential to produce expressive forms that create sensations in the viewers. And you can see this operating almost independently of any cultural background in terms of the sensation of life, the sensation of movement. You can feel power as Djambawa was implying. These things operate cross-culturally and enable works to be appreciated without really knowing anything about their background. However, this in a way is the first step towards appreciating the significance of aesthetics in context. And the way in which those, aesthetic potentials are used to convey a sense of being in

the world that relates to the particular culture and individuals who are using art as a way of acting. And in this brief series of images I hope to show a few of the ways in which [unintelligible] aesthetics are both aspects of the environment, nature and the underlying spiritual power of the [unintelligible], the ancestral beings. And I'm beginning with a picture of a sunrise in Northeast Arnhem Land close to a place called Yellinbra [unintelligible] country and the paintings that I'm going to show or the works that I'm going to show begin immediately before dawn and will end at sunset.

HM: So here is a photograph actually taken of the Northeast Arnhem Land at dawn or just after dawn, just before dawn. Here's a painting by [unintelligible] Marika and it's a painting of ancestral women, the [unintelligible], who paddled their way towards Yellinbra from a land called Burako. And here you can see, this isn't actually working, in the middle is the impact of the paddle on this relatively calm water that is sung through a word of *moomatom*, *moomatom*, *moomatom*, and they were following the light of the morning star so what we here is looking is a relatively calm sea with these ancestral women paddling towards, the homeland where they were going to involved in a whole series of creative acts including giving birth to the clans who live there. And when they got to the land they were following really from sunrise to sunset. And they reflected on the aesthetics of the land as they saw it on the birds, the parakeets that were in the trees. And on the way, the light of the sun changed during the day, and in particular the intensity of the rays of the sun at sunset as they struck the sand dunes. So here we actually have this moment of their arrival before dawn. We had a little bit of a discussion about the word boyac, translated as invisibility visibility. In fact I mean it's a technique that's been in Yolgnu art probably for thousands of years but it's certainly present in the notes of Donald Thompson who is the first anthropologist working in that area at first contact. And it's very much something that as Will was saying, and Djambawa, shows the imminence of ancestral beings in those powerful clan designs that appear to be abstract forms but in fact contain all of the ancestral events that happened in that particular place. So they're enormously dense with meaning and indeed the process of elaborating figures actually makes present to outsiders' eyes what is actually there within the designs. There you can see a paddle now in the water and the rippling effects.

HM: And then as we move towards sunset another way of representing that ancestral powers in the sacred dillybags and in this particular case the sacred dillybag refers to the rainbow *larrakitj* as well as the dillybags that the ancestral women had in the trees that sprung up from the waterholes, around the waterholes that they had created. And they looked at the dunes and the songs that you hear, and this is why the songs as Djambawa is emphasizing as so important actually bring out features that are encoded in both the paintings but also are represented in the ways in which those feathers are actually bundled up and structured. So you can actually read the dillybags as if they are also iconographic reference or have iconographic reference to these transforming ancestral acts. And on the dunes, the Jankow song about the water [unintelligible] and [unintelligible] moving up and down the dunes, the shifting of the sand, the impact of the sunset on the sand, and this is how when crayons were given by the anthropologist Ronald Burn to [unintelligible] Marika in the

1940s he represented the goannas playing in the dunes at sunset. So the aesthetics of Yolgnu artistic forms are ones that Yolgnu are able to apply to a whole series of different media. So they are therefore a productive system of knowledge, technical form that can be applied to all sorts of different images and then utilized in different contexts.

HM: Two minutes to go, so we'll quickly switch to another location, another place to Baraltja which is a river mouth where the saltwater and freshwater come together. That place and because at this point it doesn't work I'm going to have to briefly leap across here and [audience laugh] point to here—careful—here. There we have Baraltja and Baraltja will be seen in a different form if this moves on, which it doesn't. Oh dear we've got something up. Ah here we are, no. Baraltja was the place where at the coming of the wet season the great ancestral snake, Mundikal, stood up tall on its tail to the sky. It's tongue flickered lightning struck but the snake was communicating to other snakes and heralding in the coming of the wet season which appears in the distance in the form of these magnificent cumulus clouds that we can see and that we refer to as being anvil shaped. Then here is a painting by Djambawa. At the very top of that painting you can see an iconic representation, an icon of those clouds on the wet season. You can see the anvil shape which in Yolgnu terms are actually the breaths of the ancestral women billowing out across in the distance. And you can see the flickering tongues of the ancestral snakes. You can see the way that they're intersecting. Images that in the context of Yolgnu ritual performances are evoked by boomerangs traded in that are used to make a rippling sound that evokes that. And at the very bottom there you can see that slight oval shape that's the waterhole at Baraltja where the saltwater and freshwater come together, where they meet and that of course can be represented separately in a painting. We have images by [unintelligible] that represent that place in the exhibition above and there we can see the top, the analog between the clouds and the painting.

HM: And here we see [unintelligible] work of art. Do I call it a painting? No, it's a piece of insulation material from one of the houses that was being built at Yacalla. [unintelligible] is someone who sees the potential of aesthetics in the form of almost any kind of material and in this particular context he created a work that combines Yolgnu techniques of cross-hatching, Yolgnu techniques of carving into wood to create form by carving the design into this piece of insulation material, bringing out the potential of that form and then painting across it. But what it is representing is that place where the saltwater and freshwater meet that generates that ancestral power that is both in the forces of nature in that landscape but lies really deeply in the footprints of the ancestral beings who are in that particular place. And this is the kind of image that I think can be appreciated very easily in an American context where people are part of a history of modernism and the utilization of different materials in different forms for aesthetic effect, but it provides a way as soon as we in a sense are connected to the interpretation of bringing us into Yolgnu aesthetics of form and how they feel themselves as being in the landscape. So I'll finish at that point. And then minimally I will introduce Susan Vogel who is our next speaker.

RB: Susan do you have slides? You don't have slides?

SV: So we actually can have lights on. I'm not showing any slides. And I've got a timer. I think I'm here because I don't know very much about Aboriginal art. I'm an Africanist and I'm an art historian. And that may place me somehow outside of many of the other speakers. I have been for many years interested as Howard has been with the transit and the definitions between artifact and art, the way African art has moved from being ethnography to being art, and the way different objects were classified and moved across that line. But I think today what's interesting to me is a different transit. And that is the transit from a certain kind of contemporary art into the art world of contemporary art. Because that is really where these paintings sit.

SV: And I, for a moment of background, I just came two weeks ago from a conference called *Mapping Modernities* in Ottawa that regarded art from all different parts of the world, mostly the Pacific, Africa and Native America, contemporary artists who have been excluded from the world of contemporary art by and large. These are pioneer modernists, many of them from the mid-20th century and later 20th century who have not been recognized. And the question of, "Why haven't they been recognized and what is it about the work?" I also was involved with a course at Columbia we taught for three years called "Multiple Modernities" which looked at some of the same questions. And it's very interesting—there we dealt with China, we dealt with the Middle East, we dealt with Latin America and so forth, parts of the world where modernity has been created of a different sort that hasn't always been accepted in the mainstream Western art institutions. So my question today is "What is it that makes art contemporary in the sense that will get it into the Museum of Modern Art, the Venice Biennale, the Pompidou and so forth?" Contemporary art venues. That Aboriginal art gets into the Pompidou as part of [unintelligible] which is a primitivizing temporary admission and they're escorted right out the door immediately after. Or into the Metropolitan Museum when the curator in the formerly Primitive art department does an exhibition and they stay there is the question.

SV: I was a curator at the Museum, at the Metropolitan, for 10 years when the department was called Department of Primitive Art. It's now African, Oceanic, and that's a fig leaf. So it seems to me for Aboriginal art to be, to enter into these contemporary art museums, it has to be classified as contemporary art. The question is no longer whether it is art or not. The question is whether it is contemporary art or not. And visiting this exhibition is especially interesting and confusing on that topic because the work is so good, the work is so visually compelling and so interesting that it begs the question, "Why isn't it in these other places?"

SV: I want to digress for a moment to an example of the other thing that I've worked on. I'm working on a book, I've just finished a book on El Anatsui, the Ghanaian artist who works in Nigeria who makes big tapestries out of bottle tops. He was first exhibited, his first big presentation in the West was a presentation at the Studio Museum in Harlem where he was part of a group. It was 1990 and there was a review of the exhibition in Time Magazine. Very

interesting. Here's what Peter Plageon said in 1990. He said the ambience of this exhibition, nine artists from six countries, is that of a cautiously contemporary New York gallery, circa 1953. School of Paris palette, my things polished, hidden in the woods carvings, overworked exotic woods, skills largely banished as corny from recent Western painting and sculpture. Now of course the main interest of the work was that it had nothing to do with New York galleries of the '50s or of any other time. That the artists in it were engaged in their own art worlds, were engaged in a dialogue and a series of issues compelling to them in their own art world context which were largely unknown and ignored by the rest. And there was a sense at the time that there was kind of a World Olympics of art and whoever did something first made it and that these were the African team and that they were just coming in second because they were imitating work that had already been done. So the question at the time seems to me was "Can it be modern and authentic?" And that was the question because modernity was Western. And if you were modern, you were Western. And if you were really African you couldn't be both Western and African. So if you were modern, you were not authentic. Or you were creating something imitative.

SV: But I think that question is now past and we have a different question. That contemporaneity today is heterogeneous by its very definition. So to be contemporary is to be somebody born here working there, making art reflect, influenced by this and this. In other words it is this kind of mixture and it is very much an open question, not an open question, it's an open definition that is receptive of many things from many places, including work that is highly idiosyncratic and personal, that has to do with personal identity and personal histories. And it can also be inscrutable and autobiographical, so why is Aboriginal art not? And I think the Studio Museum brings me back to the example that will be useful. Oh, 6 minutes and 25 seconds! The art in that exhibition in 1990 had very few references to contemporary life. It, the artists in that, African artists in that exhibition were in some ways prisoners of the idea of tradition and their messages were about Africa's heritage. They are not portraying their contemporary lives or their world. They're not connected with, they were not addressing the international art world. And the international art world was not listening. And I think that that is maybe where we are here. That contemporary life and contemporary reality is kind of missing and I think that the international art world would take, would react completely differently if the discourse about the paintings was not an ethnographic discourse. We concluded, those of us who followed [unintelligible] work for many years, did we slow down his acceptance in the international art world by talking about him in terms of Africa? And Africa's history and Africa's heritage. And he had moved on actually. He was talking about big subjects. Subjects of interest to the whole world. And at that point he made his way into the Venice Biennale and has become a sort of rock star of the art world.

SV: But I think that the discourse about the work, almost as much as the work itself, has a huge amount to do with how it's seen and an acceptance and the circles that will accept it. And eight minutes, one second. Okay.

SV: I can leave this for the next person if you want.

HM: The next person is Charlotte Townsend-Gault, so Charlotte if you, and Charlotte will have to click onto her PowerPoint. Let's see, this thing here. This, how does that work? Alright. Where'd it go? Ah. Where's yours Charlotte? Is that it? Yeah. Oh.

RB: And forward like that. Roll it. Are you familiar with that?

CTG: No, but I can learn it. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, it's a privilege to be here from Vancouver. I'm calling this "Double Cross-Cultural Aesthetics." I'm using double cross to put any kind of singular approach in question perhaps in the contemporary way that Susan Vogel has just invoked. I hope I am. And also forgive me, I'm rushing through a number of images by artists to whom I obviously can't do any kind of justice, this is just to make a point. Excuse me. And I would also like to acknowledge the Native people on whose land we are here today as we would say if we were in British Columbia.

CTG: There is a sense in which Northwest Coast Native art as an *idea* becomes a kind of generalizable phenomenon, out of time, collective, enduring. It is a cross-cultural idea in as much as it can be held by Native and non-Native alike. And it can seem to have become detached from any historical and cultural specifics of its region. Evidently, something like the formline, which I'm going to be talking about there, has a long history. This is a little duck toggle that was collected or given by Haida people in the late 18th century to a Spanish explorer, is now in Madrid. It would not be very controversial to argue that the defining characteristic of the phenomenon of Northwest Coast art is the ubiquitous graphic line. It was termed *formline* arguably through the lens of modernist formalism. Note, I am not even pausing on how, why, or whether this should be except to say that the term originated with Bill Holm, who looked so closely at historical examples, and worked so influentially out of the Burke Museum here in Seattle, where he is followed by Robin Wright, Katie Bunn-Marcuse, and others.

CTG: Always active, even when creating symmetry, the line is punctuated by the eye forms of a dense conglomeration of beings, holds in looping tension the relationships between creatures, beings, both human and non-human -- the whole cosmological pantheon -- as well as outlining or connecting or isolating their bodily components.

CTG: This is a northern wood box front. As line it contains, separates and conjoins. I'm taking it as given that, with other formal elements -- the *ovoid*, the *u-form*, the *trigon* -- the formline has for decades been definitional of Northwest Coast Native art. The formline may be a clue to the significant paradox embedded in this idea of Northwest Coast art, its strength or its weakness depending on where you stand, hence the term 'double-cross-cultural aesthetics'. All I can do here is point to an admittedly complicated thing that seems to be going on today, how this formline phenomenon is complicit in politics and ethics: window dressing for some critical political issues; promoting art that conforms to a certain look at the expense of other art that does not; a kind of trap in as much as it designates a cultural ghetto doing a brisk business in commodities as the neo-liberal solution to problems -- social, economic, political -- that are not of its own making. While equally, and at the same time, the formline is proving

- essential to the springing of that trap by artists using its very devices to establish their own aesthetic. This is Kwakwaka'wakw artist Marianne Nicolson using the formline, large scale, on a cliff face near her Dzawada'enuxw village, up the coast, to tell the history of the two wolves which is its founding charter.
- CTG: In eight minutes it's a bit ridiculous to bring in Jacques Rancière. I have been inclined to think about these formal components as wallpaper for the habitus, but this invitation is explicitly about the aesthetic. As part of his inquiry into how aesthetics is complicit with social inequality, Rancière argues that aesthetics should be understood in an expanded sense to include space and time which so structure the way things appear. The aesthetic when understood as defined through the partitioning of space and time is political because it constitutes and stretches the boundaries of what is sensible, available to the senses, intelligible and possible. So following Rancière, at least for one step, while looking at these pieces you can see that the impact of the formline is primarily spatial, even topographical. It is on the surface, and stays there. It avoids interpretations premised on meanings thought to reside below the surface of artistic forms or political arrangements. The formline is its own thing, it offers a way of looking, a visual excursion across space. It deflects depth probes. In lieu of disclosing cultural references, it could be termed protectionist.
- CTG: Since the 1970s, Robert Davidson has been taking the lines to what he punningly calls an 'abstract edge,' giving them a workout in terms that owe something to Abstract Expressionism's concerns with figure and ground and framing edge and something to the push and pull of Haida formline on low relief carving, say the taut and disciplined painting on woven spruce root seen in this example by Davidson's great-great grandparents.
- CTG: Sonny Assu uses the proven elasticity of the line to tie up, and silence, a pile of drums, activating the painted line in this and other drum works in order to deactivate something else. Assu's formline ties the drums together and kills the life in them. In a related maneuver, Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas has twisted the formlines and ovoids off the old Haida poles, and other places where they are used to organize space, and runs them across the printed page. These are some pages from *A Lousy Tale*, using old Haida mythological narrative lines. This is him, Yahgulanaas, using the formlines on old car hoods, painted copper using the copper reference. Again Preston reminded us about the copper but you can see he's doing, hope you can see he's doing something very surface with these formlines.
- CTG: My final image by Raymond Boigilley, here he's using the form line across enormous projections of images of deep space taken by the Hubbell telescope. But think back to the, you know, these are, the frontal visual assaults of the northern box front. The symmetrical compressed into meshed flattened eyes, ears, paws and claws, not quite flattened, not quite locked in, and how they jump together. The line's own value deriving from its surface work. This is a collection of the Boigilley works we just looked at there, those above. But if you look at this thinking of Rancière and the spatial aesthetic, the line here is used to block spatial exploration. In other words the recognizable signs of a culture

do not or should not lead anyone to think that the culture is open to exploration. Thank you.

HM: Fantastic timing in this relay race. Brenda Croft.

[Discussing how to use power point display]

BLC: I'd like to pay my respects to the traditional owners of this region. The Suquamish, Tulalip, Muckleshoot, Squaxin, Snoqualmie, and Duwamish peoples. I'm very honored and humbled to be a visitor here in your country and I also pay my respects to all other indigenous people here today. I'm here as a Gurindji/Malngin/Mudpurra woman and Howard, where's Howard? Sorry. Howard didn't believe me when I told him the other day that I hadn't received his email asking me, telling me what I was going to be talking about. But it was true. So, I was looking at the idea of cross-cultural and I love the terminology of double cross-cultural. Cross-cultural aesthetics. And I thought I would talk about a particular exhibition that I curated with some colleagues last year for the Adelaide International Film Festival. I was asked, I was invited to curate the regional art component of that. For many years I've wanted to, well, for many years I've been really interested in working with other indigenous artists and curators around the globe and that's been my real interest in seeing, in considering what other people are doing in their respective countries. And so the title of this exhibition was called *Stop the Gap, International Indigenous Art in Motion*. I worked with three curatorial colleagues. David Garneau, a Métis curator artist from Canada, from Regina, SK, who's based in, at the University of Regina. Megan Tamati Quenell, a Māori curator who works with [unintelligible] in Wellington, or New Zealand or [unintelligible]. And Kathleen Ash-Milby, who's an associate curator, Navajo woman, and she works at the National Museum of the American Indian in New York. And our paths have been crossing at various conferences over a number of years and obviously with the Internet we keep in touch all the time and I've been fortunate enough to travel to North America on numerous occasions.

BLC: I approached Kathleen and David and Megan because in my role as a curator I wanted to really look at the idea of a curatorial collaboration. I didn't want to see myself as another colonizing curator traveling to other people's country and making selections. I found myself getting really frustrated when people would come to Australia and they would be pulling together work for major exhibitions overseas and, you know, I'd be, I and a number of my colleagues would be wheeled out to the various arts organizations such as the Australia Council to give a brief rundown of who's who in the arts industry at the time and people hadn't done their research when they came out to Australia. And so also when I was working with Kathleen and Megan and David I felt that they had such a wealth of knowledge about the artists from their communities that they recommended that it would be arrogant of me not to work with them. So we spent a lot of time talking about the artists for this project. It was specifically shown in a wonderful contemporary art space in Adelaide, the University of South Australia, called the Samstag Museum. And I worked with a great team there. The artists who are in this actual exhibit were Rebecca Belmore, from Canada; Dana Claxton from Canada; Lisa Reihana from Aotearoa, New Zealand,

Nova Paul from Aotearoa, New Zealand, Alan Michelson from the US, and two at an installation out, oh Warwick Thornton, sorry, from Australia, and two [someone from audience speaking]. No, I'm just getting to that [laugh]. And there was an outside satellite part of the exhibition which included two Aboriginal women artists r e a and Genevieve Grieves. And actually Warwick Thornton who's renowned as a wonderful filmmaker, he's a Kadeytj man from central Australia. His work is going to be in the Documenta13 so I was reading on Facebook that he and his wife, Beck, were just on their way over for the installation there this year, which is fantastic. And I'll show you some of his work in a minute. How am I going for time? I'm out. Yes, okay. [someone from audience speaking] Okay. [Laugh]

BLC: So I wanted to give you a sense of the space. I'm very, I play a lot with terminology and titles. I'm a bit naughty in that there's a number of words, maybe I'm just dumb, but there's a number of words I won't use in titles for exhibitions that I do and these are "crossing," "country," "borders," "culture," except for "culture warriors" of course, "spirit," "land," "color," "power" and "Dreaming." But it's not to be insulting. It's just that I really want just to get outside of that paradigm of thinking this is the only way to describe what's happening. What I'm doing, I was saying to people with this exhibition, it might sound like there was only, there's four countries, but there was actually 10 different nationalities, indigenous nationalities, nations, amongst the curators and the artists. So it was about thinking outside of those ideas of borders, states, and and countries in terms of that. And utilizing a space to kind of show this work in a very different context. There was a catalog with great accessibility through the website for this exhibition with curators talks, artists talks, etc., which I'm happy to show people later on. What I loved was one of my colleagues from the university, the art school, in art theory, came along and said what she loved most about the exhibition was the fact that it kind of traced the history of moving image rather than looking at this idea of I have to see this work as being totally, I mean for me it's absolutely framed by its indigenaity but it's also it's contemporaneity. And there was sound with these works as well. It was highly visited. The art space said that it was the largest number of visitors they've ever had for an exhibition. During that time it got a trashing review from a very conservative, which I was very proud of, a very conservative commentator, who didn't like my, what he called my polemical ranting in the catalog essay. And that was fine by me. As long as I upset people that's good.

BLC: And I'll just, we had Nova Paul. Nova Paul's work was wonderful. We had three color separation films with beautiful audio that went with that as well. Alan Michelson's work was, looked stunning, absolutely stunning upstairs and he, a lot of the artists came for the opening - funding to bring quite a lot of the artists. Thank you US Studies Center, Margaret, for giving us funding to bring Alan out. The University was incredibly supportive. We, who was there? There was Alan, there was Lisa, r e a, Genevieve, I think that was it. And we were able to make sure that, I did a huge package up for the artists that couldn't come out such as Dana and Rebecca. And Alan said he was just, you know, so overwhelmed by the professionalism of the staff there and the way his work looked. Now Warwick's, he did this amazing 3D film called *Stranded*. And you had to see it to believe it. And it was himself on the cross. He's dressed up in his

usual paraphernalia which kind of looks like a cross between an Aboriginal 'Man With No Name'. I kept thinking of Clint Eastwood (in his spaghetti western character) with this film. It was setup with popcorn, there was a popcorn machine, this amazing kind of vantage point of this revolving fluorescent cross with this very bored Aboriginal Everyman on the cross. And I'd love to see what he's doing at Documenta13. I understand he's working a caravan that is three dimensional and the caravan will drive throughout the exhibition space throughout the documentary and you can only see the work by looking through the windows. So you'll be looking at this weird landscape. And there's obvious references to the country of Namatjira, the colors that were shown in that film. I'm finishing. This, we used this amazing old building in Port Adelaide, which was an area that I lived in outside of the city. And we projected, we had these giant projections, silent films, on the front of that building that you just saw.

BLC: And I, I'll just go back to that and I'll finish with this. It was shown for three nights. Anyone could come along. We had people, you know it was like a drive-in. You brought your fish and chips and you came and watched these looping images that ran for three hours. And my favorite point of time was, I looked around and there were, it was a very hot night and very humid and it was like, there was a storm that wanted to happen. And I looked around and there were three young teenage boys, Anglo-Australian boys, and they had their long board, skate boards with them. And they were sort of standing off to the edge. And I said, "Oh come over. Come over and watch." And so they sat there, and they sat there for about an hour just watching these looping images. And I said to them, "How did you know this was on?" And they said, "Oh, we didn't, we were just skateboarding across the other side of the river and we saw these images and *they called us over.*" And for me that was one of the most successful experiences of the project. And they came and sat there for an hour and I loved the fact that they were shooting it on their little mobile phones and sending these images off to their friends. So for me that was the idea of a transition, I'm sorry, the transmission of the imagery in the show. And I'll finish there.

[DVD cuts out]

WC: ...to curate the indigenous collection there. In fact to put together a collection of indigenous art that represented the many nations across the continent. But it was a very, I suppose, an [unintelligible] time in the sense that Aboriginal art was just still breaking through into the public consciousness. And there was therefore also a time when putting together a collection which we were learning about as we went along too, and there are a number of people in this room who contributed to that development. We're facing a public that knew nothing about Aboriginal art, or very little, and wanted to find handles by which they could use to actually get a grip on this, on the subject. So I'm going to show you in a sense this couple of public controversial comparative works from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures. But I'm just showing you now what the very first gallery, the entrance gallery to the National Gallery, looked like at the time that I went. And you can see in the bottom right hand corner there are in fact purposely placed two bark paintings to indicate that you're actually coming, the first thing that you see that, when you came into the institution, was work by

Aboriginal artists. Now this place has been called, or that installation, had been called many things. One was perhaps the most kind, was one of the great post modernist places in the world. It was also called the most eclectic collection in the world. But it actually made one particular point. And I'm sure that from where you are, you can recognize many of the types of objects that are in that room. I don't have to go through them. From the [unintelligible] to the Mayan vase, the Fred Williams in the background and the [unintelligible] in the back wall. It actually reflected a vision that the [unintelligible] director, James Mollison, had, and that was that -- remember, this is 1982 -- and that was to bring the art of the world to Australia so that we weren't the cultural backwater that we had been before the acquisition of *Blue Poles* in 1974, and that people started not only to take us very seriously in terms of art but that Australians themselves could partake, look at art seriously and be exposed to what was happening beyond their closed doors.

WC: But in a sense there was also a language and a model that had to be developed to make people understand what it was that we were looking at. Now let me see if I get this right. [Discussion regarding images.] So one of the first major acquisitions that was made at the National Gallery was in fact, and it represented quite a commitment to 139 bark paintings by a painter called Yiriwalla. It's a magnificent collection. That collection's actually been built on since those days but in a sense the Gallery had the policy of representing major Australian artists in depth. And as early as the late 1970s, Yiriwalla was regarded and recognized as such. However, he was promoted, not necessarily by the Gallery, in fact quite the opposite, as the Picasso of Arnhem Land. So here we have a model of understanding. There is actually an apocryphal story which I'd like to follow up a little bit. That Picasso, when he first saw Yiriwalla's work, and he, Picasso, you know, did collect some bark paintings. But when he saw Yiriwalla's work for the first time he said, "I wish I could draw like this man." We'll see if it's true.

WC: One of the major acquisitions from the '80s that the Gallery made was this wonderful [unintelligible] painting by Jack Wonwon from Central Arnhem land and it actually shows the phases of the wet season coming towards the end, which really is a metaphor for a transition between life and death. And James Mollison in a sense likened some of the imagery here, especially in the right, left-hand panel as you're looking at it, of the fish going into that three-dimensional fish trap as a container of souls. And he likened it to part of the panel of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, *The Last Judgment*. So Jack Wonwon became the Michelangelo of Arnhem Land.

WC: So this model of, or this idea of trying to model Aboriginal artists on the Western sense goes back to the late 19th century. So photographs of artists posed as they are like William Burrock there on the right, is it really William Burrock at the Aboriginal [unintelligible] or is it Claude Monet in this sort of denuded Giverney? The image on the left is in fact the image that is actually pretending to draw the photograph on the right. Sorry. But occasionally, because the National Gallery had a policy, Monet's not in that, in the collection, but had a policy of actually showing Aboriginal art not just in the galleries [unintelligible] for indigenous art, but within the broader Australian galleries

and the international galleries as well. So it was working, if you like, and still does in three contexts. And sometimes when you're trying to get across ideas to a public that's learning about the subject, making comparisons like this could be useful but I always insist to people that once you've made the comparison get rid of the other object. You can actually appreciate the Aboriginal work for itself. And there are obviously formal similarities between these two pictures that you're looking at. But there's only one that is actually about a spiritual subject.

WC: Going the wrong way. These two paintings actually did hang together for quite a while in the National Gallery. And as it turned out, and unknownst to me, Ansel Keiffer was actually going to be visiting and saw these two pictures together on the wall. I wasn't there at the time. I was told about it later. But I think that a lot of you would be familiar with the subject with the painting on the right, especially given away by the title. And again this is the comparison of two works which have very similar formal qualities, starting with the manhole cover and the concentric circles [unintelligible] Tim Leura picture. But when you do delve down beneath the surface of these works, especially the Leura, you suddenly realize that in fact they actually are about the same subject in the sense that the Keiffer's about the end of civilization as we know it in one sense. And the Tim Leura picture's about his country, a part of his country, which belongs to a great ancestral hunter. And before, Tim Leura was born as you see there in 1929. He was born at a time when there was a great drought and the cattle industry was coming into his country. The cattle polluting the waterholes, freshwater holes and the rivers, and the great game, like kangaroo and emu, were disappearing from the land. So this is an image which shows in symbolic form the ancestral hunter performing a ceremony but all he can catch these days are little lizards and measly little snakes where once upon a time he could catch emu and kangaroo, and feral cats, yes. So this is again a picture about the end of civilization as we know it.

WC: I keep doing it the wrong way. I'm going to finish it on this comparison because this notion of cross-cultural aesthetics and how it works, of course, goes both ways. The painting, I'm not sure, it's very pixilated, but anyway this is a [unintelligible] on the right, actually is in this collection. I put these two together because they illustrate part of a story which I think is quite telling. In 1990 Rothko, in 1990 Rover Thomas was representing Australia at the Venice Biennale. And his friend and agent and mentor Barry Maha rang me up some time before he was due to go and she said, "Rover hasn't hardly been to a big city, let alone to a big museum." She said, "Can he come to Canberra for a couple of weeks? Can you look after him and show him through the National Gallery?" Which of course we are more than pleased to do. And Rover was very interested while he was in those two weeks at looking at a lot of art, not Aboriginal art, not necessarily indigenous art, but also [unintelligible] things. And of course while he was there everyone was telling him you must see *Blue Poles* because that is the iconic image in the Gallery's collection. So one afternoon I was taking him down into the galleries to look at *Blue Poles* and walking down the corridor towards it, and we could see it in the distance, and as we got into the gallery he grabbed me by the shoulder and spun me around and there was the National Gallery's Rothko, and to paraphrase he said to me,

“Who’s this son of a bitch who paints like me?” And I’ll leave it at that. Thank you.

HM: [Unintelligible] We’ve got really a reasonable time for some discussion.
[Unintelligible]

From UW Simpson Center: My question is actually in response to Susan Vogel’s presentation but I suppose the other panelists might be able to comment on it as well. And I was struck by what you said about the ethnographic, art critical or historical discourse on Alan [Unintelligible] work ultimately doing a kind of disservice to the art. And then you continued to say that we, and I, I suppose you were speaking of an art critical or art historical community, had spoken of his work in terms of African culture and heritage but he had long before that or, you know, quickly moved on to other subjects, bigger, bigger things. And I was kind of wondering about whether the opposition here between an ethnographic discourse and an art, art critical or formalist discourse, and between his African culture and heritage in place and bigger other subjects is sort of, I don’t know, creating or re-[unintelligible] an opposition between the local and the global or between the particular and the universal in which of course the African culture and heritage becomes the sign for the ethnographic, the local, the particular, and then there’s a set of other international art world categories that occupy the universal, the global, the formal.

SV: If I suggest, if I seem to suggest that I’m in opposition, I didn’t mean to. I actually think his success has rested largely on his ability to do both. And to comment, he’s been doing a lot of work that has to do with the environment and the earth and the titles of his more recent work often uses, for instance, he’s done one called *Ozone Hole* and another called *Ozone Layer*. He’s done many that, with earth and humanity as part of the title. But he’s making work I think that deals with these very large issues from a very African perspective so he really does both and he manages to be both local, completely grounded in a place he’s lived for 30 years and won’t leave. And really very broadly human. I think that’s the, I think that many of the people, the scholars who discussed his work, relied on, on comments he had made long before. And there was a kind of time lag there.

HM: I mean I obviously think very strongly that the opposition between ethnographic and art historical is a very much a false opposition and often actually has a stereotypical idea of what ethnographic is that doesn’t relate to the reality of that. And I do think, I know Susan wasn’t implying this, but in a way I mean Djambawa Marrawilli, and you can see this in the catalog, said, “I want people to know these are not just pretty things.” And uses in a sense a global audience who he hopes will be delighted in his art and will feel its beauty but at the same time will then ask questions that actually shows what it means and what its significance is. So I don’t think we’re dealing with kind of opposition. And I also think one of the interesting things coming up all the time is that when we talk about global issues, we’re often talking about things to do with globalization, with industrialization, with colonization, with life, death and the whole damn thing. And that tends to be something that remarkably most

people who are artists in the world are communicating about in both their local and other contexts, but-

Kathleen Woodward, Director, UW Simpson Center: Hi. I very much appreciated the panel, just excellent presentations, so thank you so much. I have a question for Charlotte Townsend-Gault. I appreciated your referring to Jacques Rancière so thank you for that. I'm glad you didn't leave that out. And the distribution of the sensible. And I see that you've written on affect, which I very much look forward to reading about. So this is an invitation if you would like to address the question of the formline and the deployment of affect, or the distribution of affect. I think it could be very interesting.

CTG: Thank you for the question. It's a little broad but I suppose all I could say is that since you are asking me about where I am going with this myself, it arises, or thinking about affect pursuing, I can't say a line of thought because it isn't a line of thought. That's exactly what it isn't. It's a way to find a way of dealing with what the intersection of various cultures is presenting us all with. So I mean in British Columbia, Native/non-Native relations are extremely fraught. I mean you know, I'm sure, that we have a treaty process going on which is designed to settle lands and other kinds of rights issues that have never been contended with in that part of Canada, unlike the rest of Canada which for better or worse has treaties. It means that everything is or should be up for discussion but of course human affairs are not done like that, you know, so some people get to discuss and other people don't. And if you want me to mention another theory, what about Agamben and his states of exception? And it seems to me that Native people are cast into a state of conception in much the way he describes and no amount of beauty and intrigue and works of art can actually get around this huge political and ethical situation that we are all embroiled in. I'm not sorry that I have to say this, I think it absolutely has to be said, if we're talking about western Canada, what is one to do, right? And this is where I turn to affect [unintelligible] apportionment of the sensible as a way of feeling one's way through it, to cut around the discussion of histories which people are speaking about so interestingly here, and of course in which we are all caught up too. But I mean not everybody has a written, the North, the history of Northwest Coast Native art is largely a written one, you know, and it's, that's why it started with the idea, it's an idea that has been perfected through writing and it's totally interesting and there's no undoing of that. Okay. You can't undo that by turning to affect but you can try something else. And I would say actually in defense of anthropology, "Who said this? We're all anthropologists now." Or maybe they said, "We're all sociologists now." I mean, I think that's by and large true so you know, let's not trash anthropology. That's a side point. I'm sorry I don't know if that gets to your question.

RB: Yes I have a, a question for Brenda. [Someone in audience speaks] I know you will. It's not so much about the *Stop the Gap* exhibition that you presented to us today, but I'd just like to hear some reflections from you on bringing *Cultural Warriors* from Australia to the U.S. exhibiting in Washington, D.C., I believe under the auspices of the Australian Embassy. How did you find, you know, what issues arose with regard to contemporaneity, the showing of remote art as opposed to cutting edge urban art using new media and so forth? Just some

thoughts, really, about the context of coming from Australia to the USA and the different [unintelligible] of reading and reception, please.

BLC: Well, I had great fun with picking that title because *Culture Warriors* here in the States has a totally different connotation for how I wanted to frame it. And in fact when I googled the term 'culture warrior' because I was wanting to look at the idea of the History Wars in Australia, and I'm not sure if people here are familiar with them, the idea of revisionist history or challenging Aboriginal standpoints or indigenous viewpoints that has been going on for the past decade or so, and the idea of, well, we had a federal government that wasn't going to support a 'Black armband' view of history, etc., etc., and we wouldn't acknowledge the Stolen Generations and we wouldn't do this and we wouldn't do that because "I didn't cause it, so therefore I'm not going to be responsible for the situation." So when I googled 'culture warrior' and Bill O'Reilly came up on the response, I was like, "Yes!" because anyone can be. I mean that's the whole ambiguity of it, anyone can be a culture warrior. You can be on the right or you can be on the left. And it depends on how, where you frame yourself. And that exhibition was obviously very political. I, it was in 2007 and it coincided with the 40th anniversary of the '67 referendum, when Aboriginal people were finally counted on the national census along with the rest of Australian citizens. And there were discriminatory laws that were overturned. It doesn't seem like much has actually happened since that period but it was also looking at the contemporary situation in Australia in 2007. And we had just had a terrible case of a Black Death in Custody up in Queensland, so being a young Aboriginal man could still be a death sentence in Australia and a number of the artists had connections with the place where this artist, sorry, that young man, died, Palm Island, so I specifically asked them to create work in response to that. And that was Richard Bell, Gordon Hockey, Vernon Ah Kee, and Judy Watson. And you just, somebody reminded me before, Judy Watson I love, she calls herself, she said, "I'm country *and* western." So she absolutely locates herself in, across those places. [Someone from audience speaks.] When the show got here? I'm getting to that! [Laugh] And what was wonderful was the ambassador at the time, Dennis Richardson, he absolutely, because you know there was concern I could see from the National Gallery that, how the political work would be taken. How that would be expected, I'm sorry, accepted, or not. Again we very deliberately chose to show it at the Katzen Art Center, which was a contemporary gallery, as opposed to somewhere like Asia Societies or what have you, so it's not framed within that kind of reference. And what was great about Dennis was he read the catalog from front to back and I met with him and he wanted to talk about those issues. He wanted to talk about the issue of Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the incarceration numbers, the ridiculously high numbers of Aboriginal people in jails, and he did, he spoke out very openly about that at the opening. And he also, I was very, very happy that he did this. He also stated that people in the States often see a comparison with African American communities and Aboriginal communities, and he stated very strongly there's much more connection with Native communities here. And the press also totally got it. You know we didn't try, sort of shy away from that. We had a lot of didactic ticks that dealt with those issues and the show didn't split things into regions. We had work from Old Lady (D R Nakamarra), who passed away recently. And mixed in with the Daniel Boyd's and the Christopher Pease's and

the Vernon Ah Kee's, so it was deliberately there to kind of, I wanted people not to just come in and have this idea of "I've seen this before. I want to be challenged by this." I'm sorry, that's a long winded version. Is that what you were asking me?

HM: One last question.

Pablo Schugurensky: Great. I have a question actually for Susan Vogel. I was interested in a comment that you were somewhat confounded in seeing this exhibition by finding it so visually compelling, and at the same time dealing with the perception of within an ethnographic context. I was thinking about also [unintelligible] if the perception of being part of an ethnographic movement or presentation was because it was a group show also at the time rather than making a case for he is now identified as an individual artist and if part of the presentation of what leads us to think in ethnographic terms is to have a collection or a larger show.

SV: You mean a group show with many artists?

PS: Yes.

SV: That certainly is part of it. But what, to be clear about what I meant to say about the exhibition upstairs, if you walk into the galleries, many of the galleries, not all, but if you walk into the galleries you could be at the Museum of Modern Art. No, there is absolutely nothing, if I took a picture of those galleries, there is nothing about them that would tell you you weren't. But the framing, the discourse, about the exhibition in all regards is completely other. That was what struck me. And [unintelligible] long after that group show continued to be presented as an artist concerned with African history, with the history of slavery, with the colonial history, with even the present history of Africa and the sorry state of things in Africa. So, in other words, he was continually framed as having a very narrow framework of interest [unintelligible] and that is really the significant thing, I think.

HM: Okay, do we have time for more questions or? [Unintelligible] Right. I'd actually like to ask Susan how was it framed as other and whether the curator thinks that it was framed as other?

SV: Other than what?

HM: Exactly, that's my question.

SV: I'm saying, other than purely contemporary art, that's the other that I would say.

WC: And that's particularly relevant here. I mean there are a number of issues that come into play. I'm thinking that one is that, yes, we want to put together an exhibition that reflects the contemporary nature of what's in the work itself. But the other thing that's equally important is the fact that we're approaching an audience that knows nothing about Aboriginal Australia, very little about Australia itself. Nothing about Aboriginal Australia and probably even less about Aboriginal art. So how do you marry those three things into something

that actually will satisfy each criteria? And you, I think, have to err on the side of practicality. I think what we've tried to do here is in fact take away a lot of the mystery behind looking at works and trying to work out if you had no hooks to do it with, what the thing is about, to understand what you're looking at. And that actually by doing that, by giving those insights into what a work is about, you then, as I said before with my comparisons, and once you've done that, you throw it away and then you appreciate the work for its aesthetics, and whatever else that you bring out of it. It's getting people to be engaged with the work. So in a sense what we've been trying to do here is actually allow people to feel much more at ease in the presence of the work, and therefore letting them engage on their own terms with it.

HM: No we really must adjourn for lunch cause I think we're, oh [speaking from audience] and Margaret wants to say something as well. Okay. Can we extend the lunch break or something? Where's [speaking from audience]?

BLC: [Laugh] I just wanted to pick up on that. I think it's tricky. You know you have to also pick your audience and I was part of a curatorial team for the Australian Pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 1997 and Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Judy Watson, Yvonne Koolmatrie, and two of the artists who are in the show upstairs were in that, and we chose to deliberately, I mean, obviously you've got connections with country and the relationship within the catalog, but we wanted it to be placed in an international contemporary art context and for people to respond to it in that way, and you know, I don't know how successful that ended up being; it's hard sometimes to address that. But you do, you have to kind of give your audiences, I think we sometimes think they, it's not that we dumb it down, I'm not saying that at all, I love the exhibition upstairs. I think it's amazing. It looks absolutely stunning. But it is that, how much information do you have to provide with it? And you know, it's a constant thing, I think, if you're a curator working out what kind of information do you put out there, and what do you think your audience is capable of as well.

SV: One of the things about contemporary art museums, of course, is that they sort of think you can figure it out on your own. They don't give you much information. It's as if the meaning of the work or the appearance of the work, whether that's accurate or not, just two comments about [unintelligible]. Many of the subjects were similarly to the work here, the subjects refer to the past. The work is about the past. And the work was about an inherited situation, that was one thing that I think was very, it's what we refer to as ethnographic, but it really is historical as opposed to contemporary. And the other thing is, many people hated it when there was a suggestion that this topic was not that because it sells. It's very much, that's what people want an African artist to do. They want him to do something African!

BLC: I just quickly want, can I just say, it reminds me of, there was one weekend, when I was in New York in '97 one weekend, at Soho - there was the Outsider Art Fair, and I went along to that which was absolutely amazing. But the majority of people in there for the Outsider Art Fair were white people. And then I went along the following weekend which was the Black Art Fair and a number of the same artists were on there but the majority of the audience were

African American, and I just, it was really interesting wandering around and just seeing, listening in on the different conversations and seeing how people, those different audiences, responded to, you know, the framing of those things.

Margaret Levi: So you know in art collecting, this is an issue we've been struggling with because we're attracted, sorry [laugh], because we've been attracted to the work because of what it looks like, but it's been deepened by understanding it. And you know you're talking about it in the contemporary art form, and I have to say that I somewhat, I like the term renaissance, because I often think of it in comparison to the Italian Renaissance work, where you can't look at a Roger Van Der Weyden and not know that those, I mean, you can love the work. But you also are enriched with the work when you understand that it comes, we know the history of that, you know of the Christian iconography. People don't know the history and the iconography of the Yolgnu and of the people of the desert. So I think it's a really hard, I want the work to be appreciated as contemporary. I hear what you're saying, Susan. But there also is this other need and demand really that the work makes that you really have to give it its context just as we've given other work its context.

SV: Framing the issue.

HM: Yeah, no, absolutely. What an unruly panel, [laugh] but wonderful because they were unruly because the discussion was so interesting. And we really must adjourn the discussion now.

PANEL 3: VALUE/MARKET/CANON

- What local roles do artists and community art advisors play in establishing the criteria of value for the work?
- The process of individuating artists and the elevation of some as eminent is pervasive today. What are the implications of this?
- What are the varied considerations by which museum curators, dealers, auction specialists and collectors select work?
- Are critical procedures applied differently to Aboriginal artists? If yes, how and why? If not, when and why did things change?

MODERATOR:

ROGER BENJAMIN, Professor of Art History, University of Sydney

DISCUSSANTS:

CHRISTOPHER HODGES,
Artist and Gallery Director, Utopia Art Sydney

WILL STUBBS,
Coordinator, Buku-Larrnggay Mulke Centre, Yirrkala

MICHAEL BRAND,
Director (Designate), Art Gallery of New South Wales

ROBERT KAPLAN,
Collector

RB: Thank you. Alright, now we're going to start the afternoon session, panel number three on your guide. It's entitled "Value Market and Canon". And there are five speakers. I'm not going to go first, I'm just going to say a couple of words now and then I will bob up as number three. So, first of all we'll hear from Will Stubbs. Then from Chris Hodges. Then from Roger Benjamin. Then from Bob Kaplan. And then from Michael Brand. And I wanted to, just one important note, and that is that for Michael we've, I have formulated a special question which is not printed in your guide. And the question of Michael we'll somehow address is, it's a bit cheeky, "If the museum system is the Federal Reserve underwriting the art market, have the right policy settings for indigenous art been achieved?" How abstruse is that? Anyway. Okay, so we're going to start with Will Stubbs, who's the manager of Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre in Yirrkala.

WSS: Yes, please. So I'm either the manager, I'm not the manager or the director, sometimes the director, sometimes mistakenly called the boss. But I'm actually, believe it or not, the coordinator. My formal title is Art Coordinator, and I forget what was, Arts Advisor, that was current in the '70s and '80s. And it's a mysterious role and one that I've been doing for 17 years. I think that makes me certainly the longest current serving person of that nature, whatever title you want to give it in Australia at the minute. I'm part of what the difficulty of "what do you actually do?" You know, answering that question, and I usually start with, "I clean the toilets," but lately I have a new breed, a new generation, Generation X, who've come to work with me, and they don't clean toilets. And

they've actually persuaded me that I don't need to either. We can actually hire someone to do that and that's been liberating. So I don't clean the toilets, well I do, I mean sometimes. When they get really stuck we have a long aluminum pole which seems to be my job. And we leave it up in the gutter and you have to be careful to make sure you always return it in the same format that you retrieve it. So that's my role. And the aluminum comes from the materials some of our 24 staff use to provide strapping on the backs of barks. This a bark after it's gone. So it's an absence of bark. And this is, the argument about ethno [unintelligible] or contemporary is very rejectable where we live because we live in a contemporaneous time that is the past, the present, the future, it's a tense that doesn't exist in English, and it's impossible to explain and [unintelligible] when it's called Dreaming, which is why I profit that as one exhibition title that should never be used because everyone thinks it's some sort of hallucinatory LSD trip or a narcolepsy. It's actually a temporal grammatical state that isn't in your heads because you don't have the language in your heads or our heads to understand. The only people who do understand that tense is quantum physicists.

WSS: And the thing that gets stuck on the bark once it's cut are these kind of patterns and these are in that tense. So that shock was, is, will be confronting that fish trap at [unintelligible] set by those men. And it did, is, will smash through it, breaking the bonds of mortality in the same way that currently in ceremony [unintelligible] people are breaking out of the shelter that holds the body at the moment that they're taking it to their mortuary ceremony. So this is as contemporary as you can get. This photo was taken last April. This little boy is about to have his foreskin removed. You know, many of the [unintelligible] that you see today that are explained as contemporary art are older, works of art that are older than this. And this art work is now gone. That wasn't washed off but it was allowed to wear off at the conclusion of the ceremony so it's ephemeral. How much more cutting edge can you get than that?

WSS: And this is where we work. This is our boss, one of our, this is Djambawa, who is boss in every way but in this case he's in his role as Chairperson of ANKAAA. And this was a regional meeting of the Arnhem group of art centers and our art center book [unintelligible]. And that's me. I look a lot younger then. That was about nine months ago. This is the kind of landscape we live in. And when you talk about boyac you'll see bark paintings with stingrays in them. And that are also embedded in [unintelligible] clan design that reflects water. And I don't think the resolution's good enough here but embedded in this photo, well how good is it? [Speaking without microphone.] That's a real stingray. And [unintelligible] you can tell the tide's going east cause the stream of mud's going away, I just noticed that the other day. So embedded things within embedded things and nice place and empty and full in the way Djambawa described. And Djambawa, this is not the biggest gig Djambawa's ever had [laugh]. There's a couple of ladies here I need to [unintelligible] here. That's [unintelligible] depending on your perspective of colonialism, the Queen of Australia. And our Prime Minister, the Honorable Ms. Julia Gillard. And that was one of the most hilarious occasions, what does an art coordinator do? An art coordinator conspires with the Special Minister for State to [unintelligible] 500 extremely overweening, preening, colonial subhuman aristocrats who are

desperate to get close to this lady and forms a blocking wall so that the Special Minister of State can shove Djambawa towards the Queen and the Queen understands, you know he's making signals to the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister's steering the Queen towards Djambawa. And the Queen's finally arrived at Djambawa and she goes, "Hello." And the Prime Minister goes, "This is a gentleman from the Northern Territory. He's very important." And Djambawa goes, "Hello." And then turns away. Because the objective's been achieved, the Queen's left hanging, going, "I had a really good line of small talk." And Djambawa and Kathy were looking at him and say, "What is wrong with you people?" Because it was the most unholy crush of ambition, vanity and egotism that you could ever imagine. That's the only time I've ever felt culturally inferior as an Australian, is when I saw that these are our alleged leaders who couldn't control themselves into any sense of ceremony, like the ceremony we had last night.

WSS: And in there's a [unintelligible] in the fire in the water of Yettik that's by Djambawa, that's what he does. And what I do is I do what Djambawa tells me to do. And around about 2004 he said, you know he was in the Sydney Biennale, he had a major show in an Annandale that was totally sold out, you know he was doing alright. He said, "What are you doing about the young people you know?" I mean really. I was feeling pretty happy, we're doing okay. He said, "What's your plan?" you know, "Have you got some concept of what's going to happen? I mean, this is not enough. This is just a really underperforming art center because you haven't looked forward to the future, you know. I'm working on them ceremonial, I'm giving them the knowledge, I'm giving them the power. But what's your strategy art-wise? I mean, how are they going to get out there, make a living and support themselves in ceremony?" So because I'm such a rambler and [unintelligible] I mean it's not going to contain anything, I've decided to just quickly flip through my answer to Djambawa hopefully or my responses. This guy on the right winning the richest indigenous art prize called [unintelligible]. And he stands on the shoulders of giants and that giant is Djambawa amongst others. And he knows no limitation and so for him we have, I showed you the bark we cut. You know, the law says if you're gonna paint the land, the identity of the land, you use the land, that's how we do it, and we've always done it since the artist committee decreed that way back. Gunybi stretched that to whatever you find on the land is part of the land. So this is the water tank from Gangan, after he taught himself to weld. This is a much more interesting painting when you look at the back of it. I actually prefer looking at the back of it which is that beautiful timber veneer, plastic timber veneer pine that those of us who remember the '70s it seemed like the entire decade was walled with that particular substance. Imagine turning that over and finding that on the back, it's like the most, it's like biting into a rotten apple or something.

WSS: This was at one point a component of what was at one point the longest conveyor belt in the southern hemisphere, which was used to ship the mineral bauxite to a wharf to be sent to Japan, because Australians aren't smart enough to turn that into aluminum, whereupon it would be sent back to Australia and turned into beer cans, and then thrown back onto the bauxite. And this was laying outside the front of Walken Wannabe's house when [unintelligible] was

officiating over the death of an important person for us, and he just grabbed it and cut it up into pieces, and turned it into minimal design of the minimal, the sacred waterhole of his spiritual origin. Howard stole my thunder and he used exactly the same image that I did but I think we all agree that mine's a much better photograph of it.

WSS: [Responds to audience comment] [Laugh] I think we're even on that. And this is the installation that won him the award a curator, by a marvelous indigenous curator Glenn Isika Pilkington at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, who is a rising star amongst indigenous curators, and really deserves the credit because probably without his talent we might not have been able to call [unintelligible] Mr. 50 GG as we do. And I tried really hard to to get a workup to show during my presentation where you wouldn't have heard a word I said because you would have been watching the progression of Never Never's light painting but luckily we weren't able to get the technology together so you just have to wait until Gerald's Sydney Biennale presentation of it in in a couple of weeks time in Sydney if you're there. These are frames from it. I don't know how, has anyone waived any scientific [person speaking from audience]? Okay, and so, what do art coordinators do? They sell art. And if you'd care to join us on Bainbridge Island on Saturday at 4:00 we'll be showing you movies, a [unintelligible] film exhibition from the Mulka project which is our media studio with some of the young directors there, with a young director there from that, from showing those films and then moving on to the gallery to show you a commercial exhibition of bark paintings from northeast Arnhem Land in America. Thank you.

RB: Terrific. Now we'll hear from Christopher Hodges.

CH: I'm here to talk about art. I'm here to represent artists. I say this with the greatest respect to Will and his kind, the art coordinators who represent the communities which I think are some of the most important facets of contemporary indigenous art coming from the center of Australia and the margins to the north. Without people like Will the art wouldn't get out and in this picture taken in 1988 is a guy on the right, Rodney Gooch, who was the coordinator for the Utopia community at the time. I acknowledge him. And on the left is Clifford Possom Jappaljarri, probably one of the first individuals who really made a presence known in the in the contemporary Aboriginal art world. We're traveling, we're in Chicago O'Hare Airport in the tunnel there if you know. We're traveling to New York to see the *Dreaming* show. Clifford's work was in the *Dreaming* show. He wasn't part of the tour, he'd just done an exhibition in St. Louis of his work, a solo show which is something I think is vital for the presentation of artists in the contemporary context. And as you see he's a modern man living a modern life.

CH: This was the portrayal in 1988 that most people had of what indigenous art was like. They tried to present the indigenous artists as from the land, a part of the land. And this face will make some sense later on in the day. Brilliant photograph, brilliant artist, brilliant setting, but people at this time were separating indigenous from art and this was something that when we began representing indigenous artists from Utopia and Papunya Tula, in the early days,

this was something that I was keen to unite. And art was the important driving force and indigenous artists need to be shown as great artists, number one. The greatest individual artist that I've chosen to nominate today is Emily Kame Kngwarreye because her career shows what an individual, an individuating artist can really do. The spelling at the top here is important because that's the spelling not used in your catalog here, that's the modern linguist's spelling. This is the spelling which was her career name. So as a professional artist we don't want to mess up the professional career of somebody because of a change of spelling and linguists, you know, dictionaries. That's her career name. Her name was spelled several different ways in several different times but if you are looking through the Internet or textbooks, that's the name that most often will find your source to this wonderful woman. Of course her art career by 1988, Emily had 10 years of work before that and this was the first work that she made which was tie dyed work. It wasn't a work of art of her making. This was production technique. An opportunity arose in that community to make something that could provide some income and give a chance for self-expression as it went. And at the forefront was always Emily Kngwarreye and I acknowledge Lilly Kngwarreye next to her, a lifetime friend, companion and country woman.

CH: But the place that Emily Kngwarreye came from was a place called Utopia and this is my first meeting with the people of Utopia. Actually Wally Caruana showed a landmark slide earlier of the National Gallery of Australia. 1980, early 1980s, the National Gallery of Australia had Aboriginal art at the front of the museum. It had other indigenous art forms throughout the main gallery. It had art from Southeast Asia in that picture. It had art from Europe. It had art from America. All within the front door. This was a modern art museum, there was no differentiation between cultures. This was art. This was what we were here for. The first time I saw the art of the Utopia women was in the National Gallery. Not hanging in an indigenous gallery, hanging amongst the Australian art collection. These flowing pieces of silk were marvelous, wonderful, I had never seen them in my life before I walked in the door of the National Gallery. Certainly the next time I was to see them was in a little bag after a failed exhibition attempt in Canberra. And these were the first things of indigenous work that I ever saw. I didn't sell it as a dealer. I sold it because it was this poor lady had all this stuff that she failed to sell in an exhibition and my friends had never seen it nor had the opportunity to see it so I was an instant success. I had a phone call from the art coordinator the next day. Where's the money? Where's the money? I sent him the check. It was alright.

CH: But this piece of batik fabric was Emily Kngwarreye's earliest work in the National Gallery purchased in 1982 before the doors had actually opened by a curator that knew nothing of the name Emily Kngwarreye, was in a foyer of a hotel, poured out on the floor, and somebody sifted through this bag and found this piece. Was it Wally? John McPhee was the curator, another curator at the National Gallery of Australia. This work was picked purely on its merits. The visual power of this object was what got it selected for the National Gallery. But in it you can see so many things that I could relate to you about Emily Kngwarreye's life, her history, her struggles. In fact, everything about Emily Kngwarreye's *oeuvre*, you can find in this piece with due diligence. Use your

eyes, not your ears, make your decisions. This is the first piece of Emily Kngwarreye's work I ever saw. When Helen and I went to Alice Springs in 1988 the first morning we woke up in Alice Springs after a big night, because the plane didn't get in until about 2:00 in the morning, this is what we woke up and saw hanging on the wall. It hung on a piece of wood, found wood, and this was all draped off the wall and I've got to say it was a marvelous sight to wake up to. I was told this was by a really interesting old lady. And I thought, "Wow." This is now in the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

CH: But you've got to remember in those days that indigenous art in the minds of the the museums and institutions was not really in the picture. Though this is the Art Gallery of New South Wales (that you are about to become the director of [aside to Michael Brand]) this is the breakthrough picture. In 1991, three years after I started working with the Utopia community after being told that about 10 or 12 works would cover the essence of Aboriginal art in the museum's collection, we managed to get this work placed on the wall of the Art Gallery of New South Wales for the trustees to look at. This is just inside the front door. Emily Kngwarreye had taken the opportunity to paint a big picture for her solo exhibition which had just been on. We managed to get this curator on the left, Debra Edwards, still a major curator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales who had seen the work, championed it. We've got the curator of Australian art now to come out and he thought this could be one of the 12 pictures. We got, eventually, we had a temporary curator of indigenous art who came in, walked in the door said, "Is that the picture?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay," and walked out. And we had to race it in the gallery, get it hung on the wall in the morning, so the trustees meeting could see it before they met. That's what it was like in those days. That was the foot in the door for indigenous contemporary art.

CH: The next exhibition was an invitation to be in a prize and Emily Kngwarreye was told what the stature of this prize was, the Clemenger art prize. And Emily Kngwarreye took the chance to make the big painting for the show. This was it. This is it, when it got to the National Gallery some year and a half later, thanks to Wally and a few other people. But [unintelligible] by this Emily Kngwarreye changes direction. She's ill. She's got some time on her hands. She's thinking about things and she starts painting these pictures. Remember that batik? Remember those lines? See how it all starts to come through. These are pictures of, you could relate to body paint. They're pictures that could relate to women's ceremony. But they're incredibly subtle, sublime, powerful, simple works. These represented Emily Kngwarreye at the Venice Biennale. People said, "Hey she's copying Sol LeWitt." Sol LeWitt, said, "I want to buy one." And he did, you know. Because of this individual's work and the chance that she took every opportunity to do her work, the Queensland Art Gallery, another link to Michael Brand, who was the deputy director there at the time, took on the brave step of staging a solo retrospective of an artist's work. Emily Kngwarreye once again rose to the challenge; Queensland Art Gallery got a big puddle of water, needs a big picture to go to the back of it, asked would she take it on, paints this major work just to fill that space. This is an artist on an individual level that took every opportunity thrown at her to make her case.

CH: So we are asked the question, and then as a result of that, this is an exhibition at the Osaka National Art Gallery, and Professor Tadahara, who had seen Kngwarreye's work at the Queensland Gallery's exhibition, loved international art, saw this work, didn't have an idea that Kngwarreye was Aboriginal, thought the modernism of the piece was amazing, and the show went on from there up to the National Museum of Tokyo. And at this museum Tadahara announced that Kngwarreye is a genius, because he's figured out that she's Aboriginal, and he said like Pollock invented Abstract Expressionism, but behind it was the whole history of European Western art, but Kngwarreye invented her form of abstraction, which was not the same as the material that had been coming before in her culture, but she invented it out of nowhere. And so for Tadahara this breakthrough moment of genius set her aside. And in the world of art it's the breakthrough moment of genius, it's the ability to take opportunity, it's the ability to make great art that sets artists on their own.

[DVD cuts out]

RB: My issue, and I'm just going to actually quote it a little more literally, I actually think that many of the decisions about quality and value and the significance of art are made by the kinds of people we've just heard speaking. On the ground the art advisors, the gallerists, like Christopher Hodges, although he's an unusual case because he is a very fine practicing artist. He's not the gallerist in the narrow sense of the word. But these people I think really come closer to being the tastemakers than do the art critics and my brief was just to discuss briefly art critical procedures applied differently to Aboriginal artists. Let me set my beeper. Okay. Yes I think broadly speaking critical procedures are applied differently. Except in one area of art I think that urban Aboriginal artists, especially those who've been trained in the art school system, their work is much more susceptible to conventional art critical writings or newspaper reviewing being written up in art journals and so on. These are artists who live to a large extent in the contemporary art world that the professional critics also occupy. They don't live in another world. We've been talking this morning about other worlds. I think the challenge, there's a huge question mark over this challenge, is the criticism for remote indigenous artists.

RB: Just to give you some sense of things, critics in Australia, I think, often shy away from doing newspaper reviews. It's a sort of a setting problem, there isn't nearly enough critical response in the daily papers to exhibitions of Aboriginal art. Slowly the condition is improving, but it's a problem and artists themselves have often complained, "Why don't you white fellas write about our stuff? You chicken or something?" That is part of the problem. I think there's been for a long time a fear of, if you like, being, not being, politically correct in criticizing works by Aboriginal painters. Well this problem I think masks a bigger one, which is the lack of cultural expertise. And some of our commentators this morning addressed this. I mean, what tools do most working critics in the English language have other than primarily formalist ones? And there are some commentators, one well known to those of you from Down Under, John McDonald, who writes for the Sydney Morning Herald. He's a critic who does engage with Aboriginal art, remote Aboriginal art. He's the sort of person, though, who loves taking opportunities to slam post-modern conceptual

- political art by contemporary white artists but I don't think feels that he can be nearly as tough on political indigenous art. I might be wrong. Brenda can fill me in on that.
- RB: So there's one person though that I think applies his standard sort of vocabulary of enthusiasm and a formal language in order to articulate a response to the pictures. An interesting writer who's come forward in recent years is a chap called Nicholas Rothwell who was a political writer originally, is a, most people agree, a superb writer in the literary sense. And because he's been based in Darwin for years writes a lot of stuff these days about the newly emergent movements in central Australia. His discourse is the discourse of praise. He writes in Comia speeches of praise and to a lesser extent exegesis of the art that he is, in quite a political sense, putting forward and trying to publish in the Australian color photographs, put it on the map. But just consider the problem that faces the art critic dealing with a work like [unintelligible]. By what authority would you as a white person criticize the handling, for example, of this work? How could you in a sense criticize, if the work is, the [unintelligible] in this work, the Dreaming, by what right can you impugn the Dreaming? If you see what I mean. So there are kind of ethical, moral problems around criticism of remote indigenous art. You don't have the language, you don't have the theological background, everyone calls for more criticism, more attuned to Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal values. But in a certain sense it's impossible. Anthropologists perhaps have the information but they're not in the business of evaluation. Could there be, for example, a [unintelligible] art critic who writes about the work from his or her community. And it seems a very strange idea because I don't think the social role of art critic as we understand it exists or perhaps is relevant in that community. So all I've done is raise a number of thorny issues that I can't easily see being resolved and I'm actually well under time. Thank you.
- RB: Who's next? It's Bob. Bob, the last two speakers have no slides.
- RK: First I'd like to thank Roger for ceding his time to me. I'm here as a collector. And I'm going to talk about my determination of what I buy, what I collect. So my venture in sharing Aboriginal art is post-1990, when I married Margaret. My parents collected art, they didn't collect, no, my parents bought art, and our house always had art on the walls and works on the windowsills and things like that. But they weren't collectors. They were decorating with art. And I mean, it was not bad art, it was what I grew up with. It shaped my taste. When I left their home I continued buying art. And it was a good adventure for me because I, as a lawyer, represented a number of artists and I could get art by trade or by going out and buying it at a gallery or going to studios and buying it. And I enjoyed that. That was part of my business social life. And I also had a house full of what I thought was very nice art. I wasn't a collector at that point. I was a buyer of art and a consumer of my friends' goods.
- RK: When Margaret and I got married, well actually I'll start six or eight weeks earlier. When Margaret and I were engaged, we were in Vancouver and we were in the Gastown area of Vancouver and we went into a gallery called the Inuit Gallery. We were out shopping. We were just looking for something to do. And

we went into the Inuit Gallery and were looking at these stone carvings and thought, "Oh, that is nice," and Nigel came up to us, I can't remember his last name. We still do business with him. Nigel came up to us and introduced us to the work. He talked about each piece and he contextualized the pieces, and all of a sudden this area of art we had not been interested in became interesting in because we'd been educated about it. We continued up the street and down the street, looking around, and we just kept coming back to the Inuit Gallery because we had been educated there. And we said, "Gosh, that's a really great piece." Well it turned out that was the piece we bought ourselves as a wedding present. But we wouldn't have if we hadn't been led through the process of thinking about that piece. I am thinking about how I -- how we -- collect.

RK: We got married and went to the Queen Charlotte Islands for our honeymoon. It was there that we purchased the first piece of art we bought together, Margaret's bracelet. The bracelet is on her right wrist right now. The piece was interesting, it was novel, it was new, a little bit was explained to us, but it was just interesting art. It was different than what we had been buying up until that time. Margaret did have a mask, a coastal mask, but we purchased because we really liked it. But we weren't collectors. We weren't collectors even after we bought the piece of Inuit art. And we've bought more pieces of Inuit art. But we're not collectors of Inuit art. Anyway, that's my thinking. Then we, Margaret had been going to Australia as you've all heard, and we went to Australia and we started going around. Margaret was very interested in Aboriginal art and she took me around and I found it fascinating. And we went to the galleries, we went to both public and commercial. We started looking through things and it was something, again, different. It was interesting to us. It was also something that we could afford to buy—not a lot, but we could afford to buy it. And aesthetically we enjoyed it. The first piece we bought, I went through a tremendous education period just in language. What is law? I mean, I know what law is, I'm a lawyer. But Aboriginal law is so different. It's a concept that's taking me a long time to understand. But it gave me the context and I think we really bought that piece, which is upstairs, because we just liked it aesthetically. And I know the next piece we bought we liked aesthetically because the gallery was closed, we could get no information about it, but we knew we had to have it. And so those two first pieces of art that Margaret and I collected. We didn't know we were collectors at that time. We were evolving into the thought we were collectors. The first two pieces we bought based on aesthetics and subsequently learned more about the background.

RK: The next big event in our journey to collecting occurred in Australia when Margaret had a meeting in Sydney. I went to Melbourne. I went to the National Gallery of Victoria and I went up to the desk and I said I'd like to talk to the curator of Aboriginal art. This was because there wasn't much Aboriginal art up in the gallery. And so I ended up going down to Judith Ryan's office and Judith Ryan said, "Well, what do you want to see?" And I said, "I don't know what I want to see." And so she gave me the books of all the works of Aboriginal art she had in the collection and I was allowed to spend two hours just going through educating myself about the art. That was kind of the real beginning for us as collectors because I became as invested in the art form now as Margaret was and we started buying. And the reason we chose Aboriginal art is because,

one, it was affordable, if we were collecting it as opposed to buying pieces; and it was something that aesthetically pleased us. And finding out more about the works was also a bonus because there were stories we could tell our friends about the work. But the real driver has always been the aesthetics of the work. I think the most important thing as a collector is that we spent a lot of time thinking about and learning, visually learning about what we wanted to get. And then we had the support of art centers, dealers, etc., etc., who helped us along in understanding what we were seeing. When Howard showed the piece of insulation, I had seen that picture of the work before but I got a different appreciation of it, I'd only seen images of it, but when I saw the image and Howard said, "Oh, that's insulation," it changed in my mind— I visualized it differently. Education is really the key. If you want to bring collectors along you have to teach them both visually and culturally, I think's important too. But the vital part is bringing collectors along, and that's why Margaret and I have had a great journey collecting because we've spent so much time with people who have helped us. Anyway, I hope that gives you a context for how we have thought about collecting and how we have gotten, well we didn't get anything about how we got in upstairs. But anyway, thank you very much.

RB: Our last speaker is Michael Brand.

MB: Thanks Roger. Just getting my watch set up here. One second. Oh don't worry, I'll be quick. I'm particularly happy to be about to become the director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales because, as I said to the staff when I was introduced to them in March, the Gallery has a spectacular location overlooking Sydney Harbor that is also historically significant. If you look in the other direction, our Gallery is only about 10 kilometers from the actual point of first contact between the English and Aboriginal Australians at Botany Bay. So I think as the state art gallery in Australia's first city, that gives us a particular challenge to do it right in terms of Aboriginal art, to get it right. As Roger said, the prompt I was given for this presentation was that "If the museum system is the Federal Reserve underwriting the art market, have the right policy settings for indigenous art been achieved?" Actually it was a bit literal, but I did look up the Federal Reserve and they've got a dual mandate to achieve: full employment and stable prices. That should be our mandate for the art world also! So I'm just going to try to dissect those three points as quickly as I can. There's way too much to cover in a few minutes.

MB: It is important to note that it is now art museums in Australia who are at the forefront of collecting, studying and displaying Australian Aboriginal art, at least those works that are emerging from the current art market. I'm proud to note the role of the Art Gallery of New South Wales in this development, and especially Tony Tuckson. While serving as our deputy director from 1950 to 1973, this erstwhile Abstract Expressionist painter made a crucial acquisition of a group of Pukemani funerary poles from the Tiwi Islands up north in 1959 and then, even more radically, put them on display *as art*. Nevertheless, some of the truly pioneering work took place in our natural history or ethnographic museums such as the South Australian Museum in Adelaide. And it was this museum that was chosen by the Asia Society in New York to be their partner on the groundbreaking exhibition *Dreamings, The Art of Aboriginal Australia* in

1988-1990. The distinction between the goals of art museums and more general historical museums does raise the potential difference between the work of art historians in the former and anthropologists in the latter. And if you accept that cultural context is relevant to the encounter with Aboriginal works in an art museum setting, then this does become an important distinction. At the same time, it needs to be stated early and often that the realm of cultural context is not solely that of anthropologists: you only have to think of urban Aboriginal art in Australia to figure that one out. And something that we haven't been talking that much about today is the urban context.

MB: Now let's turn briefly to the art market. I'm not sure it can really be said that Australian art museums underwrite the market for Australian Aboriginal art, something you big private collectors know well. But we certainly do play a major role in determining various types of value. And perhaps, in fact, the question shouldn't be about underwriting but sanctioning, sanctioning certain sorts of practices. In terms of values, it is good to be able to say that from at least the early 1980s, Australian art museums have not shied away from assigning a high monetary value along with increasingly high cultural and aesthetic values. There are certainly some idiosyncrasies in this art market that public museums need to be wary of, some occurring at the very point of production, the starting point of the art market. I'm thinking here of, I think there are certain art centers in Aboriginal communities where I believe virtually every work brought in by an artist, each work is purchased so that's an issue perhaps of oversupply. Then there are the so-called "carpetbaggers" who subvert the painstaking work of the community art advisors at these centers by forging separate relationships with the artists, sometimes inviting them to so-called "painting camps" from which their work is often purchased at bargain basement prices. Not surprisingly, the aspirations of Aboriginal artists range from those who are keen to share their cultural images with the widest possible audience, both in Australia and elsewhere, to those who are totally candid about their desire to make money. Nothing unusual about that in the art market, in the art world either. Apart from outright exploitation of artists, I don't think any of this should unduly worry collecting institutions. We deal with such issues all the time in the contemporary art world, as long as they know exactly why they are acquiring certain works for public collections and, by extension, for public scholarship and contemplation. And this, of course, is where the issue of quality comes in and I'm sure there'll be many questions about that, so I won't attempt to deal with that right now.

MB: Finally, in terms of other policy settings within public museums, one of the most basic is, where and how should we display Australian Aboriginal art? Should it be in a separate area or an integral part of a broader Australian display? Should the displays be thematic or chronological? And should the individual works of art be allowed to speak for themselves or be bolstered by a battery of didactic materials? Although I have to admit I have not yet actually seen it in the flesh, I would like to think that the totally new integrated rehang of the 20th century Australian galleries at the Art Gallery of New South Wales that opened earlier this month, I'd like to think that that is heading in the correct direction. In one gallery, for example, the Tiwi Pukemani poles acquired by Tony Tuckson in 1959 have been juxtaposed with contemporary bark paintings along with paintings

by Tuckson himself. Elsewhere, there'll be spaces for a survey of the development of Australian Aboriginal art over the last half century and also a space for small "dossier" type exhibitions. I shall also say that I love the way that the Gallery displays Australian contemporary art with international contemporary art. We do not separate it out. So I think it's also part of that process. But one thing that does always make me feel a bit dissatisfied is the way we talk about the great Aboriginal oral tradition but I don't think that often comes across very clearly in the actual galleries. But, again, for art museums to play their Fed-like role, they'll need to find and nurture a continuing supply of smart curators. But many of the key positions are currently vacant, including the senior curator position at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Who will these new curatorial leaders be? Will they be both indigenous and non-indigenous? Will they be both art historians and anthropologists? And will they be scholars and practicing artists? Whatever their backgrounds, they will need to be able to conceptualize their work in a manner that ensures that Australian Aboriginal art doesn't just have currency in Australia. We must be able to create much broader forms of exchange with sister institutions on other continents. To achieve this we will need to nurture a very strong critical framework of scholarship within both art museums and academia because I don't believe any art movement can survive, let alone flourish, without a link to some of the universal ideas and concerns of our times, whether they be artistic, cultural or political.

MB: And since I seem to have a few seconds left, and hopefully without embarrassing Roger too much, we should think about the end point of what we're all trying to do. And I think the best example is perhaps a review of Roger's exhibition *Icons of the Desert* that was shown in Los Angeles in 2009. The critic Doug Harvey who used to write for the *LA Weekly*, one of those free cultural newspapers about art in Los Angeles, and not just contemporary art. And he reviewed Roger's show and described it as, "An unparalleled object lesson in a particular moment of art history, a breathtaking display of human visual invention, and one of the most moving and aesthetically revolutionary painting shows, Western, non-Western, whatever I've ever seen." [LA Weekly, June 26, 2009] It seems to me that's exactly the response we're trying to create. So, congratulations, Roger. And I do love the idea that we're seen to be recognizing basic human visual invention and, of course, our Australian Aboriginal community have been doing just that for 40,000 years. Thank you very much.

RB: We now have [unintelligible—not talking into microphone].

BLC: Without wanting to be a defector panel member, just a couple of observations. Firstly, Roger, looking at a lot of the writings of Nicholas Rothwell problematic for me is that he often frames things in a very kind of romanticized, looking back at the past with fondness, sorry, at the passing of the great masters, and that places a huge amount of pressure on contemporary and younger artists coming through, this idea that it's a vanishing—and we've been living with this as Aboriginal people for the entire time of colonization in Australia that we're passing, we're losing all the great masters and the kind of context that places on you. The pressure that places on you, and just an observation for Michael, I

would just state that I think there really needs to be some serious questions asked about why some of these curatorial positions are vacant, why people are leaving those positions in those institutions, and it would be an extremely backward stick to have a non-indigenous person coming and take that role. There's been a huge movement in the last decade or so for us to be presenting our work and culture on our terms.

MB: I agree with what you said there, Brenda. I wasn't suggesting it would be an "either/or" situation, and I wasn't speaking about any particular positions. It is the breadth of the discussion that I was talking about. I take your point.

CH: One of the things though that I'd like to provide a thought about in that context is that there's been very positive discrimination towards indigenous work being collected heavily by institutions. And there's been a very positive discrimination in that institutions have developed their own holdings in their own special galleries for the presentation of indigenous art. And there is something that worries me is that within the art framework of Australia indigenous curators are never given a job anywhere else but the indigenous section. And for example, Hetti Perkins, who's just left the job at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, would be a wonderful curator in another department. And I think indigenous curators and indigenous artists, the creation of a specific indigenous gallery has been helpful, but in some cases it's allowed an audience of Australians who are not indigenous to say indigenous Australians are over there. And indigenous art is over there, and it shouldn't be coming over here. So I think we've got to be aware that we've got to be positive to get Australian art looked at as Australian art and indigenous art should have their rightful place front and center in that game.

[Unintelligible—not talking into microphone]

WSS: It's a curatorial decision. So I live surrounded by thousands and thousands and thousands of works on natural media and I appreciate it and love them. But when I get to go to someone's house who has a broad range of collection and I see our work next to the best of whatever anyone else in the world can produce, that's when I really feel that our work shines, and it's just a curatorial decision—our work looks better against everyone else.

Jane Raffan: I have a, Jane Raffan, I have a question for the coordinators and your comment, Michael, about art center or community art centers buying everything and where do you discriminate. And I thought Will could enlighten us perhaps about how that works in his center and elsewhere.

WSS: Yeah that was disturbing. I never actually heard it phrased that way. I mean, there's my boss, you ask him. We buy everything, cash up front. And people who visit our place will see the most bounteous collection of art that you could ever possibly imagine. Because we have way more than we need and none of it's indifferent and none of it's done in a cynical way because that's not the nature of the way Yumal art is made. In actual fact what it is, is that an artist contemplating making something has got a range of [unintelligible], has got a range of things in their mind—Djambawa is thinking, "Oh I need to initiate those

five guys , that'll be in the dry season. Then I'll need to bring these people from here, these people from here, to run that ceremony. I need some money. I'm going to go and chop some bark. It's going to be a month to wait for that to dry. It's going to take me a month to paint each painting, so I should start now." And the thing that is vital to the economy of all this is knowing that when he gets there after this six-month process, I'm not going to say, "Oh, Michael said we should just not buy everything, you know, we don't have the money, go away." So once you break that circle of reliance or faith that there's going to be someone at the other end receiving it with respect. You know, we try to pay cash up front knowing that there's going to be, hoping and knowing, with faith in the relationship, that there's going to be another level of people to receive it with respect and resources so that they can then flow back down. So in the end those boys are getting initiated. Culture's not being compromised. You know we're spending a lot of time talking about how should we frame this or how should we describe it as if writing about it changes what it is. It is, you know, and the principle is honesty. Because this is, we are the ambassadors, I am an ambassador for indigenous people. And if you're an ambassador you represent the people that you know that you're paid to represent. And there they don't have a cynicism or a manipulative thought about their art. And for us to then, I mean, I'm not saying that we shouldn't be having a discussion, I'm just saying a principle of honesty, saying what it is you know as best you can is about all you need to do. And everyone's going to have different opinions. But I don't think we need to. Hello, Margaret.

RB: First Margaret, then Roger. Because I, can I just come in immediately on this? Will, sorry, it would be great if you could tell us by what process you work out which are the best pictures, that, hang on. Yeah. I mean how do you decide when Annandale Galleries puts on an exhibition of some of the, Endow Gallery for example down in Sydney, does the gallerist come up and select work from what you have in stock or do you recommend things, do you put stuff aside? I mean I think it's especially interesting regarding the top end work.

WSS: I'll just answer the direct question because it was a direct question. It looked like I'm dodging it. The last show we did with Bill, I told him, "Bill, this is an uncurated show." So he couldn't be here. He had a select show in 2009. He was inspired by going down there. That's when he picked up all this material and started working on them. From the moment I saw it I went, "Holy hell, that's pretty weird!" And tried to talk him out of it, and he ignored me and carried on, and I just determined, "Okay, I don't know what this is. I don't know if this is good or bad. And so I'm just going to collect everything." So that process of me buying everything allowed for 70 works to accumulate. And Bill came up and, you know Bill's an expert, and he was saying, "Well, I like this," and I said, "No, there's nothing to do with us, could be he's starting something totally new and it was not up to us to determine, yes, that is a piece to be [unintelligible]. Quite possibly it is, but we don't know because this is something new so we're going to hang it all there and we're not even going to decide where it goes really. We're just going to put it on the wall and let Gunybi communicate directly with his public," and they did communicate in that all 70 pieces were sold out before we got to open the show. So that was great [unintelligible] curate American.

MB: What I was saying wasn't implied as any sort of a value judgment, but just pointing out some of the issues that people know and write about. And what I said was that I don't think that should actually be a concern of a state art gallery because, by this stage of the process, we can make our own decisions. And you might also add that by the time the art gets to us it's more expensive so we can't buy everything we want to buy anyway. So we have to make decisions. But you could look at almost every example of the way Aboriginal Australian artists produce and then market their work, and you could find a parallel somewhere in the New York art world. But the thing is state art galleries have our acquisition policies and we have our art acquisition budgets. And curators have a particular role according to those policies to try to get either a survey of works or depth in certain areas. And so I think a lot of what gets discussed about this issue really shouldn't worry us because we have a well-prescribed role to play and we try to do that in the most ethical and creative way we can.

RK: Just a quick, the artist walks into the gallery and if the gallery takes everything, they take it on consignment. They're not buying. So that's a world of difference between —

CH: Well actually it's not true at all. The Jeff Koons show that was staged at Sonnabend Gallery in 1988, Sonnabend Gallery put in two and a half million dollars for the production of the work and underwrote the whole process of doing it. Gagosian Gallery underwrites the process of manufacture of many of the major works that they show. And the, what I was going to do was defend the position of the art advisor and because Aboriginal art is the most overstudied economic environment ever. Everybody in Australia could write headlines, "Aboriginal Art Market Hits Record Highs." "Aboriginal Art Market Falls." Find out about the price of Australian art, the contemporary abstract painting 1970 to 1983, no one knows, no one cares, no one tells you. Everyone says that art advisors in communities they buy everything so all the rubbish gets out there in the marketplace to community organizations, the general art market. A community organization has to look after its community, listen to its bosses, listen to the people there. And if you'd look, Emily Kngwarreye, who I talked about later, distributed her resources to her community willingly, happily and hopefully. And upstairs, Gloria Petyarre, Kathleen Petyarre, Aida Bird Petyarre, and a whole slew of people whose names you have never heard of, and you never will hear of them, all benefited, all made art, all had their presence in the world. And this is a genuine community value that needs to be respected. But we don't need to, I mean, you know, Jeff Koons, ask Jeff Koons how he does most of his budgeting. He won't tell you because that's a private thing and that should be private too.

ML: So this question is I think a follow-up on what's being said. And Will, what you just said about Gunybi. Gunybi helps a lot, and I'm thinking, and Christopher follows upon the issue of how Emily developed her work. So some of these artists are changing their styles, individuating, responding to a variety of stimuli that are out there. And I'm thinking, I'm just going to tell a very brief story about Dorothy Napangardi, who totally transformed her style as a result of actually seeing Emily Kngwarreye's work and being in a group exhibition with Emily Kngwarreye and realizing everybody was gravitating to Emily and realized she

had a voice, it was different than Emily's, and that she had a right to express it. That's really a question about how are these, the urban artists, I understand how they learn and develop and transform their art form because they have joined a larger conversation and a larger community, but a lot of the artists in the remote communities, what's happening there? How does that happen? Is there a common story or a lot of different stories? I mean, what's going on?

WSS: It's exciting because the title of Gunybi's exhibition was [unintelligible], but in his own from my mind, and he's making the point, "This is my idea." But what he's doing is either his own clan identity or his mother's clan identity, and in his own statement he acknowledged this man here. And the strong influence that this man here had on the whole region and now Gunybi's having a similar influence on all these people, so everything I'm getting now is on bits of plastic, bits of fucking plastic, bits of fucking anything you can grab is being cut and [unintelligible], and the artists, they're human, they're obviously influenced by each other and that is a normal process and Brenda wants to have another go.

HM: Lowaday's mother once provided a definition of an anthropologist who was someone who was good at watching other people at work. Now I as an anthropologist, I've also watched a lot of people at work with [unintelligible] artists at work for a long period of time. And I also like to complexify things. And there is absolutely no question in the fact that whatever good Will is working in a community for a long period of time establishing relationships with artists working with the community, working with the art galleries, working with the outstanding art dealers who are around in Sydney and Melbourne, is the center of really a network of expertise and authority that is actually a very vital but complex component of the way in which Aboriginal art ends up on the walls of art galleries and the selection process involved in Annandale. And there are many occasions when works will not appear on the walls of [unintelligible] partly because in some cases, because artists themselves will say, "No, probably shouldn't have that." There are areas in which in terms of pricing control in response to the market, clearly the art centers have to play a particular kind of role. The art centers also, though, have to see themselves as a part of [unintelligible] way of maintaining their culture into the future, the training of young artists as Will was being instructed to do in the context of the real world, that artists' part of the economy, as well as part of the religious life of the community. And so that whole system in fact does end up with innumerable discriminations being made in the context of the Ocala, in the context of the Annandale Gallery, in the context of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and that process in the case of somewhere like [unintelligible] has that long [unintelligible] works very well but it's not a controlling thing. It allows the flexibility and freedom and the possibility of growth.

WSS: Two metaphors. One ocean liner, so no brake, okay. So there's a big rock up ahead, the GFC or really, really unsellable bad art, which happens because in [unintelligible] life as in real life everyone is an artist, it's just industrialized people that say, "Ah, that's a genius and he must specialize." And everyone else, "You're not an artist, you have no talent, you can never be one." And this is what all collection and all marketing of art is predicated on, and I and the [unintelligible] don't accept that for starters. Everyone has an identity and they

have a power to paint it. So I've been dealing in that context. I can't put the brakes on, but hey, look, looks like clear water over there. Foot on the accelerator, hard yank on the wheel towards something good. That's how you control that. And the other one is gardening. And so things sprout up, oh my god, you know, you put a little fence around that, and we're going to put a bit of extra fertilizer on that, and we're going to put some water on that, and, oh, that again. I might forget to water that for a couple of days and see if it's still there when I turn around again. And it's not invasive and it is, if it was just totally through my eye we wouldn't have the results that we do get. It's a big wide world, there's a piece of art, there's someone for every piece of art, for instance. A last anecdote, the uncurated show, Gunybi show, and I said I consciously let work go through that I didn't really like. But it was only one piece that I really hated. And that sold early on and I was at the exhibition and we were all being petted [someone from audience speaking]. No, that's the second anecdote which I might have time to tell it, I don't know. But I'm sitting around glad-handing and hobnobbing at the end of it and blah, blah, blah, and I'm telling exactly the same story as I am now about the uncurated show and I was talking to this circle, and I said, "There's only one piece in here that I hate," and as I said that I looked at the guy and I could see, I don't know, just some intuition told me, and he said, "Which piece is that?" And I said, "Look, I'm here now, you know, if I'm going to prove that this is the uncurated show and it's much better for that I'm going to have to say it [unintelligible]. And it's the one where he's used crayon to represent a naturalistic view of the flood plain and then used oakers on the bottom to show the sacred thing. I really can't stand it." He said, "That's my painting." And it still paid the money and everyone was happy I think, I don't know [laugh].

WSS: And the second one is, I walked into the shop here and I saw the painting I fell in love with but only had for two weeks [unintelligible] which is one of the top paintings that I've ever handled in 17 years and here it is in Seattle. And that's what collecting can be and what relationships can be, is something like they said. I've handled tens and hundreds of thousands of paintings that are all bought but I've missed this one for so long, and I walked in here and there it was, you know, the love of my life.

RK: We'd have given it back to you except that we've already promised it.

WSS: Well I'm just happy to see it again.

RB: [Unintelligible—not talking into microphone]

PS: Talking about collecting, I wanted to ask Bob if he could talk a little bit more about the transition from art buyer to art collector in terms of depth, learning about the works and in the relationship with the galleries and communities. In bringing the work to the States and to Seattle.

RK: It's almost impossible to be a collector of Australian Aboriginal art in the United States without going to Australia to buy. You can't train your eye because there's not enough. You can't read about it because you have to see it. You can look at it on the Internet but you don't know what you're looking at; I mean

- even if you're an expert you don't know what you're looking at when you see it on the Internet. So that's only a part of the question. The rest of the questions I've forgotten except I've been thinking there's three "can't" to being a collector. That you can't stop, you can't put it up, and you can't afford it.
- LC: [Audience laughs] That's so good, that's so good.
- CH: I can speak for a couple of situations and I'll speak about Papunya Tula artists I've worked with for 25 years. And the Papunya Tula artists, since the earliest days, had documentation delivered by the artists at the point that the painting was deemed complete. And in the earliest days Jeff Bardon used to sit down and write notes on a piece of paper they got, then it got to be index cards and then they, I can't tell you the year, but in the early '80s there are certificates printed like a certificate of authenticity, if you like. And each artist, there are field notes which are taken down at the time the artist presents the work with the details of the site, place and interesting things that the artist might, may or may not want to mention. Do the artists read them? The fact that most of those artists are illiterate in the English language but can speak four or five other languages means most of them aren't read by the artists after that point. But the artists all agree to what is written down on that piece of paper when it's first done.
- RB: Can I just add that I mean you have to think through the problems with that process. And you know, Jeffrey Barden didn't have any indigenous languages. In fact, none of the people who were working I believe initially at [unintelligible] did.
- CH: [Unintelligible—not talking into microphone] was dealing with in those early days all spoke English.
- WSS: It's not an excuse. It's not an excuse.
- CH: No.
- RB: How much English? Plenty of no but this was the historical situation. So the, you know, during the early [unintelligible] show that we did a couple of years ago where we actually attempted to assemble every piece of documentation and to represent it in the catalog, you'd find the situation where such and such a series of objects or places were described in a painting in 1972 according to the little sketch, and Fred Myers or one of the the leading men who came to Cornell would say, "No, I think it's actually [unintelligible] completely different." And so this sort of level of indeterminacy is very high.
- WSS: It's not about what's written down by white people about anything. The story's in the painting and what Djambawa said today, and the reason that documentation's good, because since '97 it's on our computer and every time you learn more about something, which is endless, and Djambawa said something today which I heard for the first time. He said, "And this pattern and design has a sound, and really the documentation of the painting, it can't be argued about. There is a right and a wrong to every documentation. What you ferret about on bits of paper in faraway continents and fiddle fiddle around

with and including our documentation to whatever standard it comes, is really an irrelevance. These are epic song cycles and if you can't hear it, you'll never know." But the little brochures that we put are to give an idea sometimes hopefully to approach the depth of poetry that goes on metaphorically level after level and it's an entire separate area of knowledge. We could be having a conference with no images at all talking about the same topic, subject matter. It's just another [unintelligible] on this other thing that's in the head of people who have the knowledge. We're not talking about the writing, you don't want to—

WSS: At some point, you know, you're not going to know, so that's it. It's the same with contemporary art, and I love exhibiting art with no signage whatsoever. My particular fascination with Yumal culture makes me want to know more and share what's allowed to share and every time that I meet an artist I learn more. And that's a sort of, and I, as Margaret said, it enhances, and Bob said, it enhances. You never get, if you have a curiosity—

RK: I'm not going to pay for everything. I don't, I'm not going to pay for that recording. That's the issue, how much does it cost?

WSS: We're going to do it anyway. We're going to do it anyway.

RK: If you do it for free.

WSS: Yeah, that's what we do. The other thing is—

RK: Then I'm paying for it without knowing it.

WSS: It's a recording. It's a song. You heard it last night, Djambawa sang it for you. Did that help you? Well it did. You felt it and when you look at that painting you can feel it. You don't actually need to read it, but you can, cause that's a little thing that we like to do. And I'm not, it's not against it, it's reaching out for knowledge but it, you can't hold that knowledge from those bits of paper. They're not gonna get you to the final result and you have to let that go and that doesn't mean we don't have high standards of documentation, which I embrace. It's hilarious. Because I look at paintings I've never seen before and I read the documentation and I go, "I know how that was made." It was made by some idiot who wasn't paying attention, who just wrote it down without any knowledge whatsoever. And it stands out like dogs balls because you can see, look at the painting. Can't he read? There's a painting, it's written in front of you. And why would you write that bit of English text next to that bit of writing that's in the painting, cause they're clearly not the same thing. So you need that level of knowledge to look at the painting, oh, okay.

RB: Will Owen.

Will Owen: I didn't want to make a question, I just, this whole concept of documentation and ethnography really bothers me. I'd like to go back to what Margaret said this morning: all art carries ethnographic information. We just never talk about it when it's Ellsworth Kelly. And let's hold ourselves to the

standards that we're trying to hold Australian Aboriginal art to and see how it looks.

WSS: The Yumal way, that design has a power. That's why it's here. It's why it's up there and that's why they are prepared to share it. Within it is a knowledge that I will never have. The bits I'm writing on the paper, that's a public bit. I'm not doing a great job, you could do better. But within, beyond that is things I'll never know that are the real guts of it and they're not for sale. And that's the way it should be. But the Yumal believe in their own rhetorical knowledge systems that by being exposed to those designs you're being altered on a cellular level. Is that right Howard, they're powerful, those designs, inherently powerful?

RK: An art director from one community once told me that if I come across documentation that says this is Martini Dreaming then I should beware because that's what she heard when she first got to the community. She was being told about Mount Doreen Dreaming. The name doesn't make the painting any different. I still appreciate the painting even though it's not a Martini Dreaming painting.

RB: That's it, thank you.

PANEL 4: GLOBAL ART

- Has the idea of “world art” helped or hindered the cause of indigenous Australian art?
- What are the impediments to indigenous Australian art being collected in elite institutions of modern art (e.g. the Met, MOMA, and the Tate)?
- The acceptance of indigenous Australian art as “contemporary” is not complete in all quarters. Do recent academic definitions of the contemporary provide new tools to that end?

MODERATOR:

GERALD MCMASTER,
Frederick S. Eaton Curator of Canadian Art, Art Gallery of Toronto/Artistic
Director, Biennale of Sydney

DISCUSSANTS:

STEPHEN GILCHRIST,
Curator of Indigenous Australian Art, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College

CHRIS MCAULIFFE,
Gough Whitlam & Malcolm Fraser Visiting Professor of Australian Studies,
Harvard University

LISA GRAZIOSE CORRIN,
Director, Block Art Museum, Northwestern University

RB: Okay, let's hope we can maintain the heat. The final session, the fourth session, is on global art. And I just want to welcome Gerald McMaster, who's come all the way from Sydney where he is currently the co-curator of the 18th Sydney Biennale. So he's been extremely busy and it's kind of amazing that he's here but welcome, Gerald. Thank you.

GM: Yeah it's a little bit confusing to say you're a prairie boy from Saskatchewan who works in contemporary art, talking about Aboriginal Australian art from Sydney, and here I am in Seattle, Washington, presenting this important opportunity to talk about all sorts of things. So first of all, I'd like to thank the Organizing Committee for the invitation and the travel, the Duwamish and the Suquamish peoples, for being on their land and I'd just really like to acknowledge that, first of all. So I'd also like to thank Bob and Margaret of course, and their collection, without whom I think we wouldn't be talking about this. I was just reminded as Bob was talking about who's the boss in the house, I think there's a line in a Woody Allen movie in which a young kid has come up to him and they're chatting about it, and he says listen, "I'm the boss of the house. But your mother makes all the decisions." [Laugh]. So you can use that one. [Laugh]

GM: So I'm Gerald McMaster, the Frederick S. Eaton Curator of Canadian Art, the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. And, as I was introduced, the 18th Biennale of Sydney co-Artistic Director along with Katherine Disager. And this panel this afternoon, the third or fourth and final one on global art brings together Stephen Gilchrist, Lisa Corrin, and Christopher McAuliffe. Of course you have

brief biographies in the booklets, you can look at them at your leisure and get more information on these folks but just let me restate them. Stephen is an indigenous Australian curator currently working at the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth, where he's working on an Australian Aboriginal exhibition, I think coming up in a year or so. Lisa Corrin, of course, is a well-known curator who once worked at the Serpentine, the Seattle Art Museum here, and is now in Chicago, art museum director at Northwestern University. And Christopher is the director of the Ian Potter Museum in Melbourne, Australia, and is currently the visiting professor of art history at Harvard University. So this panel will be discussing a number of questions stemming from the exhibition, in particular indigenous art in relation to global or world art; the collecting of contemporary indigenous art; and the questions of "contemporary" in quotation marks in indigenous or Aboriginal art.

GM: By way of introduction Roger has asked me if I would use the Sydney Biennale as a kind of jumping off point, so what I'm going to do then is just talk briefly about that, and because I think there's some representations, there's some artists who could really say that they are Aboriginal to some extent that are in this year's biennale. But let me just go back to at least what I saw two years ago at the 17th Biennale that was directed by David Elliott. And David Elliott's exhibition was called the *Beauty of Distance: Songs in a Precious World* or something to that, right. And in the biennale that David, oh yeah, you've got it there. There's a T-shirt that is being worn back there. Unfortunately, Will, we don't have any T-shirts for our biennale so I'll have to draw something or sign something or, okay [laugh]. But as I said that the the last biennale that was directed by David, there was a profound emphasis on issues coming out of the world of indigenous art, global art, Aboriginal art, etc. But this year we decided not to because that's not how I was selected as a director, because I do, in fact, I do respond quite readily and a lot of my work is on Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal art. But that's not the reason that I was selected as the artistic director this year.

GM: Let me just say a few more introductory words. The title of this year's biennale is *All Our Relations*. Some of you may recognize that term, "all our relations," as it's often the invocation address, of course, by many Aboriginal peoples for ceremony in which the spirits are invoked, but in fact all the world is called together to think about thoughts beyond our daily lives. And in some ways we wanted to talk about all our relations as a notion of collaboration with artists and thinkers from around the world who have come to understand that modernity, the idea of modernity, has caused considerable separation and alienation and left the world in need of a renewed attention to how things connect, or how they relate to one another. So rather than offering further critique on the state of the world, the kind of works that we have selected have brought, been brought together, to engage in new modes of reciprocity, of working together within a changing reality. This year I'm curating it with Katherine Disager, a Belgian curator. But the previous biennale by David Elliott brought together works such as this. This is a, was spoken of earlier, this is a number of *larrakitj* poles from the community that Will currently is from and I think our two people from the community here, from the northeast Arnhem Land community of Yirrkala. And these are much newer poles from the Kerry

Stokes Foundation; this was in the major wing of the Museum of Contemporary Art. There were approximately, I think it says here an installation of 141 *Iarrakitj* from 41 artists that were there at the time and I'm going to handle. This is a piece by Hiroki Sigomoto. And the reason that I put this here is that Sigomoto had this piece as it's referred to the deferred a cage, but it talks about, he photographs lightening or electricity. And when the exhibition was on, David had asked a number of the artists from the community of Yirrkala if they would engage in doing an intervention into this piece during the opening ceremonies. And about a handful of the guys came and did a dance and they got dressed up, and you could only crowd in about 50 people at the bottom part of this installation here. And the guys came in, was very similar to how it was done last night with the singing and the sticks and that.

GM: And there was one guy carrying a large implement which I was told was like a bag, what was it again was in the bag? [Someone from audience speaking] Paper bag of something of inside and he kept banging it on the floor, I think to replicate the sound of lightening. But they went up and down the stairs and got to the top and were singing a song at the top. At the top of the stairs Sigomoto kept referring to a thunder god that was right at the top. See, along the way you see the photographs as you go up. These are the photographs of lightning and at the top of the stairs was the thunder god. And he kept referring to the thunder god as a 16th century artifact or an object. But what was surprising to me as the men, the gentlemen, were singing and dancing going up and then coming down, was the fact that and Sigomoto was off to, I was just down at the bottom right there and Sigomoto was off to the, to his, my right as well. And he was really enjoying it at the time. And then later I was told he actually didn't really enjoy it that much, particularly because it was an intervention into his work. But what was interesting about the piece and what was, two minutes, okay. So what's interesting about this was that the artists doing this dance were bringing , it's like the thunder gods and that we're putting them into some kind of context and some kind of a living, breathing moment at that point, and quite in contradistinction to what Sigomoto, who was thinking more in terms of the past, of the 16th century, but to the people that the thunder gods were very much alive and there. And so it really, to me, brought this work tremendously to life.

GM: Just a few other artists that were there at the same time. This was shown earlier, a Marianne Nicholson piece, Beau Dick piece. You can see the very strongly traditional looking objects in a very, very contemporary art context. But this is what David Elliott saw as quite interesting to juxtapose against other world artists around the world. As I said this year this is the kind of works that we're going to be presenting. I'm just going to be showing a couple slides here of work by the artists from Australia that we would refer to, of course, as Aboriginal Australia.

Will showed this piece earlier, a work by Nyapanyapa (Yunupingu), which is a series of 100 or so acetate sheets in which Will and others managed to put together and dissolve one another. The other night we were watching this particular piece at Margaret and Bob's house. And it's the kind of piece that you're going to spend days and days looking at because you'll never see the

same number of images together, so it's a, these imperceptible changes in how you see each one of these works. So we just put these up to show you just the kind of quality of the kind of objects that Nyapanyapa had created here. I'll talk more about these in a second. This is Jonathan Jones, Sydney-based artist. This is called *Oysters and Peacocks*. It's really based on the idea of the midden. And of course middens are really an important part of establishing kind of the presence of Aboriginal peoples in the world but at the same time it's really a history of Australia, of bringing the British and the Aboriginal peoples together in this particular piece. So it's quite an interesting work here. This is a work by Judy Watson, an installation of burnt pieces that was found at the Heron Island in which there was a research center there. And she was doing some work but the research center had burnt to the ground. But in a sense what I think she was looking at is this kind of recovery of ancient cultures and cultures that are, can be, artifactual, but somehow you can actually live and look at the artifacts and see that there is in fact life here.

GM: So we do have a number of Aboriginal artists in the exhibition not only from Australia and from around the world, but we have basically said it, it's, well obviously, we haven't identified them as such as Aboriginal artists. We also have artists who are collaborating with Aboriginal artists. In this case here is Monica Grismala, who is a Berlin-based artist, she'll be working with a number of ladies from Ernabella who are called the Euraba papermakers. And I'm not sure how many in the group, there's about a dozen or so, and which she's actually working with. And there are other artists such as Tim Johnson, who in the 1980s was working with Michael Nelson Jakamarra in terms of a collaborative effort. So the idea and notions of collaboration, of empathy and those kind of ideas that we're talking about here are coming through in these particular kind of works here. So I just wanted to sort of introduce that because a number of the ideas that we're talking about this afternoon, as I said, the ideas of world or global art, I mean as the discussions of globalization, how do Aboriginal artists participate on a global level and on a local level at the same time? I know there was a lot of discussions earlier about the location of artists in communities. Of course now many Aboriginal artists are in urban areas and are doing absolutely amazing works. Artists who are obviously crossing the boundaries and borders of media. There's also artists who are looking back, artists who are going back to traditional- based ideas, ideas that are based on skill and craft. There's ideas, artists who are looking at notions of working with others, with collaborating with others, whether it's other artists from your community or artists from across the world. And so there, the idea of the exhibition was to look at many of these ideas.

GM: So this afternoon I wanted to call up a number of our folks to come and talk about some of these ideas. As I said, we had posed a number of questions about global art, about collecting art, how do major institutions collect art, for example. And I think we have to get over the questions of narratives, about nationalist narratives, to reconsider how Aboriginal indigenous art fits within, whether it's in Australia, whether it's in Canada or the United States. I think we have to look at those notions of the narrative and how do Aboriginal artists fit within the narrative. How do collecting policies try to, do we understand art within the context of those narratives? And finally, how do we position the art

that we're looking at today, some of the art within the notions of the contemporary? Realizing that a lot of Aboriginal art often is not looked at as contemporary. Contemporary, as we know, is about temporality; indigenous, Aboriginal art is often looked at as atemporal, or sometimes extra-temporal or extemporal. So it's these kind of ideas I think we want to talk about. We want to position so each one of them, you guys will come up and address some aspect of it or a number of these questions if you will, and then we'll certainly engage the audience. And just before I step off here and introduce, I just wanted to say that we have, already, the book is out. And if you want to come and look at it it's quite an unusual book because down the middle we've split the pages so that you can look at the art. Again it's based on the notions of relations and relationships, and we figured out the, we also put some ribbons on the bottom so that you can put the ribbons in, and to each page or relate artists to one another and to juxtapose [someone from audience speaking] What's that? [someone from audience speaking]. They're no, they're, I think, I don't know, they're kind of a red, yellow and a kind of a mauve or blue. What we tried to do was to give a color to each of the spaces in Sydney for the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and Cockatoo Island, so that people who are coming to the biennale can sort of color code the areas like that, and so in the book we decided that that's the kind, that's the way we wanted to do it. So I'll show it to you later. So anyway first up is Stephen. So Stephen would you come on up and make your presentation. Thank you.

SG: Thank you. I'd also like to acknowledge the customary owners of the land that we're now standing on and pay my respects to their ancestors. We've touched on some of the issues that are in my short little paper, which is actually more like a series of tweets. So global warming might literally raise both tides and boats, but symbolically globalization doesn't. Writing about the increasing biennialization of the art world, Rex Butler says, "It cannot be decided whether they represent a critique of Eurocentrism or a renewal of it." What I and other curators, artists and activists seem to be interested in are the conditions of possibility within this intensely biased paradigm that pretends it's not to sustain and mobilize difference, and cultural coexistence because the alternative looks a lot like assimilation. The historical separation of art and ethnography and anthropology justified a disciplinary monopolization of knowledge that stood apart from the integrated systems of indigenous knowing that it purported to represent. But for indigenous people, art and culture is both hardware and software and cannot function in isolation. Theoretically globalization offers the potential for making the world anew in the absence of these and many other artificial and wholly western designations.

SG: Success in the contemporary art world is so narrowly and conventionally defined. And when I think of the indigenous artists who have made it, which suggests a kind of rescue narrative and naturalizes the "less than" and subcategory of indigenous art production, it has often been at the cost of renouncing some or all of their indigeneity. This globalized model is not at all an endorsement of the irrelevancy of difference but acknowledgement of the system's depressing cultural asymmetry. The Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg is an interesting model in making legible the mechanics of apartheid. With your admission ticket you are arbitrarily given a pass that says

either white or nonwhite. And the visitor is told to use the corresponding entrance. And I've always thought of this as a crude metaphor for the sorting machinery of the Australian and international art worlds. This is obviously something that I myself am complicit in. In Australia there has been, as Brenda L. Croft mentioned, decade-long struggles of employing indigenous curators through affirmative action programs which it must be said endorses Spivak's strategic essentialism. Ella Shoat and Robert Stam describe this post-colonial paradox of theory and practice as a situation where theory deconstructs totalizing myths while activism nourishes them. In my own curatorial practice I try hard not to be a casualty of the art world nor oblivious to its hierarchical tensions. I grew up with the subject positions and identify politics of the 1980s and 1990s and you can all kind of groan because it's very unfashionable now. But it really helped complicate the realities of race and gender and nation and taught me that specificity, intersectionality and multiplicity is vitally important.

SG: We've been talking a little bit about how things are curatorially and institutionally framed. And I think the art world needs to be reminded that universality is written in English. I don't derive any satisfaction in getting Aboriginal art into spaces that have historically ignored it. I thought globalization was supposed to democratize spaces, not endorse the fraudulent model of meritocracy. For me, every place that has Aboriginal art is an elite place. This is my own highly biased value system. And I don't want to pat museums on the back for being so avant-garde that they decide to show indigenous art and be grateful for the crumbs of their affection.

SG: I think we need to stop looking at the globe and start looking at the earth. Earth-centered knowledge, earth-centered economies, earth-centered communities. indigenous knowledge and indigenous ecology has so many important lessons to teach us about the globalized world. And spending any time with the works upstairs demonstrates that beautifully. The 2011 decision by the Bolivian government, led by the democratically elected indigenous Socialist president, Juan Evo Morales Ayma, to enshrine rights to Mother Nature that are equivalent to human beings, demonstrates this new indigenous framework that responds to the global issues of climate change. If people can rationalize and defend the idea of granting a corporation rights and entitlements that are distinct from its members, then surely we can imagine a world where the environment can be afforded rights that are equal to our own. Many of the works in this exhibition demonstrate that we are part of the natural world, not distinct from it. Many of the works in this exhibition talk about the necessity of caring for country, and this theme has almost been emptied out of its cultural meaning, but it's so important. And although this Bolivian decision is indexed heavily to a specific cultural philosophy, it illustrates the global need for visionary leadership that recalibrates our relationship to the environment and articulates a radical commitment to safeguarding that which sustains us culturally and spiritually.

SG: We were originally asked to consider why the acceptance of indigenous Australian art as contemporary is not complete in all quarters, and do recent definitions of "contemporary" provide new tools to that end? For me, the acceptance of indigenous Australian art in the contemporary category is not

- something that is incomplete, but incompletable. It can't be fixed. It can't be in the contemporary art world at the cost of culturally resonant installations where meaning and context is everything. It has to be both. Global, local, ancestral, modern, Ancient knowledge matters even more in the increasingly globalized world. Thank you.
- GM: That's wonderful Stephen. So I'd like to call up Lisa now, and Lisa does not have slides as well, but she's promised us she's going to be fiery and impassioned and articulate. So there you are.
- LC: I'm very, very moved by Stephen's words, I'll just say, I feel like I need to take a moment just to internalize them, because they are so apt and thoughtful and it's not unfashionable, well, or I should say I'm very out of fashion, because I was so much a part of that moment in the '80s and '90s. So. First of all, I want to thank you for inviting me back to Seattle. It's a privilege to celebrate the generosity of two dear friends and be part of a transformative moment in this museum. And I'm using that word very intentionally and not just to be polite. Because I really think for me writing for this catalog was a personally transforming experience, and I actually threw away the text I had planned to read and took notes in the dark, and I hope that I will be able to make sense of my scrawl. But as I have reflected today on what I've heard, it kind of tied back to the essay that I've contributed, and so I'm going to share from that perspective. And when I say it's personally transformative, it's because I am one, I am the clear outsider in this group. I have no background on Australian Aboriginal art whatsoever. I am very much a product of the floating cocktail party which is the contemporary art world internationally. And why I am used to looking at work that is not only self-reflexive but has a high dose of at least irony to generate questions about the nature of what art is. What was really complex for me in dealing with this work is the absence of irony about art making. As a result it pushed me to ask some questions I probably as a contemporary curator never wanted to ask, which is not just the definition of art, which so much art asks, but also what is the definition of the contemporary? What do I mean when I talk about myself as a contemporary art curator? What is in that category?
- LC: And I wanted to share two anecdotes with you because I think they're very telling. One is I had drinks two weeks ago with the new director of the Art Institute of Chicago, Douglas Druick. I didn't know quite what to expect because it's an august institution and I was expecting a colleague who would be stuffy and guarded at the very best. But actually it turned into a rather remarkable conversation because Douglas shared with me his own challenge at the Art Institute of grappling with global contemporary art and what it means. For example, in the acquisition of works of art that are like the works in the exhibition upstairs, where do they really belong inside the museum, and if the Art Institute is going to have to sort of carry forward its work in the contemporary, he understood instinctively that boundaries were going to have to be blurred and categories within the museum were going to have to collapse. And I shared with him my experience working with Pam McClusky because very soon after I arrived here at the Seattle Art Museum we acquired a work by William Kentridge. And where in some museums there might have been a lot of debate under whose aegis that acquisition should come, Pam and I actually

never even bothered to have that conversation. We never asked the question, "Should it be in the department of African art, shouldn't it be in something called modern and contemporary?" It was just a work of art we felt compelled to have that could cross a lot of boundaries and so we bought it and we advocated for it together. Now why it should be possible here in Seattle over 10 years ago to do that and not so easy to do at the Art Institute is in part, part of the remarks I want to make.

LC: First of all, the problem in dealing with the art that we've been discussing today is that the problem is really embedded in the museum itself. First of all, it's structures, and second of all, it's nomenclatures. Its structures, of course, are taxonomy, the taxonomic systems that it sets up to tidy up history and divide things up into very neat categories. And the second is nomenclature, the words it used to talk about these works of art. Words like "indigenous" are already a problem. They're deeply challenging and messy, and words like "contemporary" are as well. These taxonomies and the nomenclatures are of course deeply eurocentric and what museums find it so difficult to do is question the very languages they used and the basis from which they've arisen. I would also say as part of today's conversation is something that has concerned me is the rhetoric of nationalism which keeps arising, perhaps unwittingly on the part of my Australian colleagues, and when I think about some of the things that might be so-called back the incorporation of this work from the rest of the contemporary art world, I would encourage you to really question the nature of the discourse and how, while it may be very important within Australia, it may be creating a sort of imprisonment for the works of art that keeps them from having a productive dialogue with other contemporaneous works.

LC: Now in the essay that I wrote I wanted to really deal with the whole fallacy of the *lingua franca* of contemporary art, this idea that art all over the world right now actually speaks a common language, and in doing so I really question the very notion of universality. I actually believe that contemporary art doesn't speak a *lingua franca*. It's something that the art world has conveniently constructed in order for us to kind of float seamlessly from one cultural context to the other, and also to avoid discussion about how increasingly professionalized contemporary art production has become, with all the machinery and apparatus that is around that. As a consequence, talking about a *lingua franca* makes it easy to not have to speak other languages. I mean that both literally and metaphorically. So the word that I think is the most useful today, or the language, or the person, who's been most influential in my thinking is actually Kobena Mercer. And I don't know how many of you are aware of an important essay that he wrote on cosmopolitan modernisms. But one of the things that he argues for, and indeed so does James Elkins on a similar kind of essay on Aboriginal art, is that it's important for curators to be not only self-aware of their own cultural subjectivity, but to be aware of the way the structures of eurocentric modernism has shaped the way that they look and the way they see. And what Kobena Mercer argues is for a kind of way of thinking about contemporary art that not only allies categories of indigenous art and everything else, but also requires a curator to struggle with having to look at work both within its own historical context and how it relates to everything else in its time. By making sort of productive juxtapositions that find common

ground that is not just sort of superficially aesthetic, but really looks at issues that are important to artists around the world at a particular moment. And that's one of the things I think that we've tried to do, that SAM has tried to do upstairs by juxtaposing Aboriginal work with, for example, the light piece by Claude Zervis.

LC: So I wondered how to advance this discussion in some way. And I wanted to take the last minute and a half that I have to throw down the gauntlet both for my Australian colleagues and for the Seattle Art Museum. First of all, for my Australian colleagues, I don't know what your systems of support and advocacy are for this art, but it seems to me that the previous systems may no longer be relevant, and I wonder whether they need to be critiqued and rethought in order to more easily facilitate the kinds of construction and abiding collaborations that would move, remove the art from this rhetoric of nationalism and into a bigger discussion around contemporary art that is happening around the world. I'm no fan of biennials but if they, actually, the Sydney Biennial seems to me a very, very good model for this, particularly the way it's been organized the last few years. Also, I think you need to speak to Qantas Airlines because the cost of flying to Australia is so expensive [laugh]. I actually think getting more of us there and a dialogue that is both with our Australian colleagues and those of us outside is actually quite critical. I also think that it's time to eschew the kind of European machinery and create one of your own, not just one that's located in the various parts of the country where Aboriginal peoples live, but also to create, perhaps, a structure that is in opposition to the current art world machinery. So one that may work in a wholly different way that is, as Stephen was suggesting, local and very particularized.

LC: For SAM I would say this has been a really closed conversation. I've been kind of amazed that it's been mostly our Australian colleagues that are here and also that there aren't that many artists in the audience, including artists from the community. And I think that the dialogue around what is contemporary and this particular collection needs to move beyond this circle. Otherwise it's going to continue to feel like it's a cat chasing its own tail. The dialogue, I think, really needs to be much bigger. SAM has a real challenge in the future. There are many collections of so-called modern and contemporary art that are going to be offered to the museum. Many of them are cookie-cutter collections, it's basically the same artists in greater or lesser quality because of the generation of collectors who've actually put them together. And I think that the use of acquisition funds and the kind of talking inside the museum about how to ensure that the closed definition of modernism doesn't become the one that continues to prevail at the museum is really critical. One of the ways in which I think SAM has been somewhat ahead of the curve is that when I arrived at the museum the organization was really literally "the West and the rest," to quote Stuart Hall. On certain floors you had European art and American art but then on other floors you had African and Native American art. And this kind of separation of the ethnographic from the art created all kind of problems in which it became very, very difficult to reconcile this practice and make them one. But in the new reinstallation of the museum they've actually come together in some pretty magical ways. And I really hope that as the museum continues to acquire collections like the Kaplan Levi collection and do acquisitions that it will

keep in mind that it's really played a leadership position and can continue to actually be an important model both locally and nationally and internationally for thinking in this area. Those are my sort of random thoughts. I'm really glad to be back and I'm very, very proud of what this museum has done and I want to thank Bob and Margaret again for having me back.

GM: Thanks Lisa for priming the pump. You've given us lots to think about and to provide a lot of questions. So I'd like to call upon Christopher and I think there's quite a bit of a segue because I think he has to do a wrap-up at the end, so maybe between the two, I think, we'll have an opportunity for him to say something now and later. Thank you.

CM: Thanks very much. Just saying I'm an analog kind of a guy, so I'll just use a watch. Thanks for that kind introduction. I'll just say, Gerald and, and [unintelligible] I'm called Christopher by my mother when I'm in deep trouble but for everyone else it's Chris. Thank you. I'll just speak very quickly because some of the ideas have already been covered. But before I speak about the idea of global art, I just want to speak about a particularly Australian preoccupation, this perhaps goes to your comments, Lisa, around a certain national ethos. Australians are very preoccupied with the idea of going global, rather than globalism as such. Ian Burn referred to this very positively in the early '80s as "taking our place in the international scene." And that notion is actually wide on Australian culture of all kinds, I think, for a long time. It's rooting in that notion of colonial and geographical isolation and it brings with it the baggage of our ongoing concern about our peripheral status, both literal and, if you like, in terms of values, of the value accorded to our culture. It also is manifested in the ideas of the need for cultural exile and expatriotism to make it in the world, and it also sustains a lot of government support for the profiling of Australian art. Now that may not seem, that may seem a colonial settler preoccupation, but I want to suggest that it does have an impact on the way that indigenous art has been presented or promoted in recent years.

CM: Ian Burn's comment that I quoted recently, just now, the notion that we could take our place in the international scene was made in the early '80s. And if we turn the clock back a little there was an interesting moment in Australia in the late '70s or mid-'70s, early '80s, where it was felt that there was finally and at last a solution to this peripheral cultural position of Australia. A solution to our isolation. It was political. The kind of aggressive internationalism of the Whitlam regime, it was a policy position that drove many of the early initiatives of the Australia Council for the Arts, which was initiated in the early '70s, and it also had a an element of opportunism to it, with the impact of pluralism and the emergence of post modernism, there was a sense that those metropolitan centers were weakening and that there might be a chance for a peripheral nation like Australia to step into the breach. Now as I say, that may not seem to have a lot of direct relationship to indigenous art, but it strikes me as interesting that all of that rhetoric about potentially resolving Australia's cultural isolation was emerging at exactly the same time that the major new contemporary indigenous art movements were also emerging, and I think directly or indirectly, and perhaps even directly, the idea of a global appearance of indigenous

Australian art is shaped by that sense of recovery and recuperation in the early 1980s.

CM: One of the problems, and Lisa's hinted at some of them, but one of the problems is that this all happens under the rubric, a policy rubric, of a distinctively Australian culture, and that quote unquote "distinctively Australian culture" then and now reminds one of the primary measures of the federal cultural agencies in Australia. I mean there's just been a major inquiry into the structures and funding activities of the Australia Council and a key recommendation of that is that the goal of the Australia Council be to foster a quote unquote "distinctively Australian culture." Now, I mean, you can see the problematic we have here. On the one side a distinctively Australian culture is seen as an affirmative gesture, overcoming that isolation, taking our place in the international scene. Within the year of globalism, of course, the problem is, well, what is distinctive about Australia? What is distinctive about any nation? If we say taking our place in the international scene, what is our place? What is the international scene? Aren't those things evaporating under the pressures of globalization?

CM: So, the implications of that kind of thinking, I think, is starting to emerge in our conversation today. First, we approach the idea of a participation in a global art world, begging the immediate question of what is place, what is nation, what is identity, what is this world in which we're participating? Second, we tend to assume that any artist who goes international is a national representative, is playing for the international team. Of course, as many people have suggested today, artists aren't teamplayers. That's what makes them so good! , And in fact, more to the point, in a global culture, the character of the artist is seen to be one of a strategizer— not self-interested, but someone looking for, to use Christopher Hodges' words, looking for those opportunities. I think that third issue, which is very important for this discussion today, is that the mentality sustaining the idea of Australian art going global is one way. It's about getting from down there to up here, or getting out there. I mean it is remarkable given the conversation that we've had today how little indigenous art from beyond Australian shores is brought to Australia. I don't think, I can't recall a major exhibition of Maori art in Australia. I think there's been very, they must, maybe somewhere, but Brenda, the example you gave of your exhibition, seems to me one of the rare occasions where a self-conscious dialogue amongst contemporary indigenous curators in arts around the world was presented as a formal package, if you will, as part of a cultural festival. So that one-way element of the dialogue seems to me a remarkable weakness. It also tends to assume that the artist, or curator, is a kind of export agent, and I think we've touched upon some of those concerns there.

CM: So let me return though again to that moment in the early '80s when it was felt that Australia could take its place in the international scene. There were voices from artists questioning that notion, and I'll quote you one from Juan Davila, an artist of Chilean birth now living in Australia. And in a catalogue of an exhibition of contemporary Australian art staged in Paris in 1983, which included indigenous art, Davila's artist statement included this comment. He said, and I quote, "We should find a dialogue constituting ourselves as a difference, not as

a peripheral another but as a sustained contradiction.” Unquote. And it seems to me that many of the comments today have been around, have been searching around that formulation that Davila as an artist posed. Let me do the humanities math: Nearly 30 years ago. That is to say, it has to be about a dialogue, it can't be about just getting us out there and hoping we get our moment in the spotlight. It's about constituting our souls as a difference. And when, I keep using the word ourselves, I mean nation, because I think we need to pick that one apart, as Lisa suggested, “nation” still, constituting ourselves as a difference, that is not one more voice in the corporate lounge of the international airports of the cultural scene. And but as a, not as a peripheral annova, not as just this nagging voice from the periphery that says, “Correct those postcolonial wrongs, give me center stage,” but as a sustained contradiction. Which brings me to this finally to end on this notion of the contemporary. It's not good, I suppose, to be impolite to your hosts, but the major work in the lobby of this building, the Cai Guo-Qiang installation, for me actually stands for everything I don't like about contemporary art right now. It's about a spectacle, it's about scale, it's about mass, it's about delegation and technology, it's about a kind of, frankly, easy gesture towards a universal issue. Now I'm sure I'll get beaten up afterwards on that, especially since you spent [someone from audience speaking] [audience laugh] so I was going to say, since you [someone from audience speaking] can I just say, I just have to pause here and say I'll see you outside, is such an Australian comment you know, [audience laugh] if I can just lift your vocabulary a little, it's you and me in the car park, okay. Okay. [someone from audience speaking] [audience laugh]. But seriously, I mean I would not like, and I think, I haven't heard anyone here either from the podium or in casual conversation, define that as the kind of contemporary art they mean when we're having this conversation. Nor do I think it, I've heard anyone say, “I want contemporary art to be forgotten treasures from an exotic location, somewhere else that we've read about in *National Geographic*. And that's what brings me back to the Juan Davila comment. There is, I think, a strength in the indigenous art we've heard spoken of today and heard of today which is about that sustained contradiction. And I think that's where the conversation started getting unruly, when we started saying, “No, that's not what I mean,” or, “No, you haven't heard what I was saying,” or, “There's another way of saying it.” That's the sustained contradiction, I think, is very productive in the art, that it steps us outside the template contemporary art and says, “Look, it's just another way of being contemporary,” and it may be both of this time and of very distant time and [unintelligible] and of the future all at once. That's very contradictory for a lot of us but that's a very productive form of contemporaneity. I'll leave it at that and I think it's time we face the music.

GM: My apologies Chris. Your passport must say Christopher, yes? Okay. So, come on up panel. I just wanted to maybe restate my thoughts of what I heard. On one hand, Stephen talked about maybe perhaps not taking the discourse to the idea of the global but rather looking at the earth as a form of looking at how artists being produced to the other end of the rainbow, I thought maybe Chris, who was talking about the global in the sense that for Australians, perhaps, it's a question of distance, and perhaps it's only a question of the white Australians as opposed to, say, the indigenous Australians, who distance isn't an issue but rather they're related to the people in the community, and that's New Zealand

or in the Torres Strait Islands or there. And so distance to them isn't the issue the same as a new Australian. So I think that's the other end of kind of the global idea that Christopher's talking about earth and then down the center, perhaps, I think Lisa was referring to kind of how the art worlds are meeting in many ways, in many instances. But the other thing I was thinking of is the notions of these worlds, the global, and even the contemporary. And I think we have to think that there are many worlds going on, there's not just one world right and I think that that's the major thing would be each one of us actually was talking about their own particular kind of world, and I think it's not a clash of the world but rather the discourses that take place in those particular worlds and how do they come in contact, you know? And I think that's the interesting things. And in museums there are actually particular institutional places where these worlds can actually come together, or in an instance where, in a project that I'm working, for example, the biennale, in which in fact there are many, many worlds that are coming together there. But as Lisa said, there's a question about the biennales, and I agree, happen to agree about the notions of, we're talking about differences in many ways, about Aboriginal art versus everything else. And in biennales it seems like everybody's different but then at the same time it's all looking the same, you see. So I think there's some interesting thoughts there. So I just wanted to open up the questions to the audience. How much time do we have? Ten minutes okay. So we should be able to get 20 questions in [laugh]. Okay.

ZZ: No answers! [Laugh]

[Unintelligible—not talking into microphone]

HM: Can I throw a question in just about sponsorship? A very quick question cause I mean the point that you are making in relation to the absence of a Maori exhibition in Australia, and absence of major Aboriginal Australian exhibitions in New Zealand, sponsorship is a really major issue in terms of these kinds of exhibitions, and it seems to me that it's actually very difficult, and it seems a slight contradiction also between the Australian government's emphasis on national art identity and contribution and their inability to organize sponsorship for indigenous Australian exhibitions.

CM: That was a very good statement, I think, rather than [someone from audience speaking] you have, yeah.

ZZ: [Unintelligible]

CM: Yeah. That's, well, I'd be happy to pass to the floor. I would just say very quickly, to recap, I think one of the questions for us is the extent to which the potential or actual circulation of indigenous art globally has been shaped, limited, stymied, steered the wrong way by a set of obsessions about Anglo-Australian cultural isolation. I mean, I think your second thing is the extent to which our encounter with global culture is so packaged. I mean in, we, none of us have mentioned the age of the blockbuster, but that is a crucial factor in everyone's experience of other cultures outside their own shores. And yes, it's about a package that is sexy. I mean, I'll just, Australia, Australia's never had, I mean

[unintelligible] a major exhibition on post-war Japanese art. Or Mexican art, just stick your finger on a map. We're just not seeing, we're not encountering culture the way you'd think we would be in a global context. And you're right, it's about what sells.

Henry Skerritt: After a long day the thing that, one of the things that struck me all day is that we've really got a lack of definition or clarity with some of the terms that we're using. Particularly for a show called *Ancestral Modern* no one has yet explained why we would use that term "modern." And I think quite often we've been confusing contemporary with modern, modern with modernism and modernity. For me, the Ford Taurus in the lobby is a classic example of [unintelligible] sensationalist modernism. Aboriginal art is essentially contemporary. And to return to Stephen's point, which I think is brilliantly made, is the distinction between globalism and planetarity, where planetarity isn't about universalism, it's about multiplicity. And rather than the whole discussion that we've been having about where Aboriginal art sits in a universal discourse, it's really how it sits in a discourse of multiplicity in which essentially different voices don't show us, different voices show us the necessity of multiplicity, that is in fact a way of seeing the world that to me makes a lot more sense. It's a planetary way of looking at the world rather than a global way of looking at the world. It's that, I think probably, Stephen, that's something you should expand on because I think it was, six minutes was not enough to fully get that. I think the world of ideas and what you were saying.

SG: Well, what I've been thinking of recently is how do we valorize indigenous ways of knowing. I'm working on an exhibition at the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, which is an Ivy League institution, whatever that means. It has a history or a stereotype of being the acme of Western knowledge. And for the exhibition I've tried to say that indigenous systems of knowledge are equal to those systems of knowledge, and that they have to engage with one another. We are deeply enmeshed in each other's lives and we can't undo that. [someone from audience speaking] Exactly. Everything is using the language of the oppressor and there are some institutions, well some places, like in Yirrkala, where we're taught Yolngu words to talk about Aboriginal art, and I think that's really key because we've inherited the critical vocabulary of modernism and abstraction and minimalism and all these movements and historical moments, and they don't quite work cross-culturally.

ZZ: In terms of this exhibition, I'd be really curious to why you chose the term "modern." [someone from audience speaking] Because, I mean, do you feel with, but with what you just said though, like to me the issue with modernity is if we phrase Aboriginal art in terms of modernity, we're always going to be talking about it in terms of resistance of submission to a dominant paradigm. Whereas if we can start talking about multiplicity, then immediately it's not just a good part of that, it's an integral part of that. So rather than reframing how we're thinking about Aboriginal art, like maybe the whole point of this symposium is to change how we think about contemporary art.

LC: I'm really, I'm so excited by what you're saying, I can't tell you, because as like the good feminist I am, I'm always looking for the sharpest surgical instrument

for cutting away at the body of the patriarchy and the structures that it has put in place that has created a narrative that is so internalized that it feels not that we can't get beyond it, but it makes it impossible for us to not even reconcile, because I don't think it's about reconciliation, but to allow a kind of agitated and productive coexistence of difference. And so this word multiplicity, I think, is a very, very useful one. Anyway, I think that's, you've really, and I do think it is a question of language. I don't think that we can have this conversation, and I think that's one of the exciting things about the moment that we're in, and I think that an exhibition like this presents us, is an opportunity, and that's what, I was, actually, this was one of the hardest things I ever had to write. It took me a very painfully long time because I was so aware of the problems of language, of how embedded I was even in the same language I had critiqued. But what makes it exciting, I think, for us in art that is contemporaneous is this opportunity to kind of rethink that vocabulary and what has informed it, the political implications of what has informed it.

GM: There was a, I want, I'll answer that in a way that I did an exhibition ironically called *Inuit Modern*. This one's *Ancestral Modern*. And I think you and I discussed this earlier about the question of teasing out the whole notion of the modern. And what was interesting, I think, for us because we dealt with the whole issue of the modern in Inuit culture and Inuit art. And one of the things that we looked at was that the whole structure of Inuit or even Aboriginal Australian art is based on and constructed around the modern, the conditions of modernity. And one of the thoughts that we had was of course the whole notion of the modern, was a kind of a choice to remove yourself from the tradition, right, to look in a different way, to sort of look away from tradition. And one of the things we said was that Aboriginal peoples never had a choice of choosing modernity. They were extricated, they were taken away from the continuity of life, a continuity of culture, and forced into a very, very highly structured modern society. And so we thought about that for a long time. And we said here's, it is very much along the lines that of Australian Aboriginal art is today structured along the same conditions of modernity. I think that the community art system is structured along that way. But one of the things that we looked at those kinds of conditions of how modernity affected and influenced indigenous cultures was to say, "Okay, so they've moved off the land and into little houses and into communities and have infrastructures very much based upon urban areas. And how do they live within that?" So it's not that they just kind of withered up and died. And we felt that for the Inuit in the far north what happened was that they embraced in many ways modernity and said, "We're going to take it beyond this." So in the last number of decades they worked tremendously—not only did they change their names from Eskimo to Inuit, right, in the US they're still called Eskimo. But they changed their name first of all. And I think that was an empowerment, when we talked about multivocality, I think they were fighting for voice.

GM: The other thing that they did in the late '90s was establish an entire territory in the far north called Nunavut, which now that they almost 90% completely run themselves. So there's a question of going with the flow, going with the ideas of modernity to suggest, "Well, we are modern too, why can't we be modern," right? "Everyone else has an opportunity to be modern, why can't we be

modern?" I think so those are the kind of discussions that we had around that exhibition to try and tackle the term, even though a lot of curators say, "Well, you're not modern." How can indigenous peoples be modern? It's not even [DVD cuts out] over your way of life. And I think for so long indigenous peoples had been controlled and they're saying, "No, we're going to control our own destiny." So that was the example that I think that we wanted to look at the whole notion of the modern and modernity even though it's an entirely western construction, but how is it applied in other areas of the world? So that's how the term *Ancestral Modern* is used here, could be along the same lines, or it could be applied, I think, similar questions, similar ideas. So I really like your question because it's allowed another opportunity to talk in a different way about this exhibition.

SD: I'll bring the mic back there but as I'm on my way I'm going to take the opportunity to ask a question. And that is that I think it's, I'm interested in hearing more about the issue of race, class and social justice, and how that plays an active role in this discussion, and how it's not necessarily been brought to the surface, but it sounds like it's been a shadow kind of in the room in some ways. And I'd love to hear you all [unintelligible] in some ways I think Stephen, you started talking about it, Lisa and all of you started to talk about it a little bit, but I'd love to hear just a little bit of attention given to that in this discussion because it seems to be actually a really important issue. So.

SG: Well it's National Reconciliation Week in Australia and reconciliation is a national aspiration. Well, we're told it is a national aspiration. And to borrow from the Guerrilla Girls, "What happens in the rest of the year, when it's not Reconciliation Week?" And I think Aboriginal art in Australia has been deeply politicized, and it is attached to an agenda of anti-racism and lots of social justice issues. So I think we need to, [sigh] it's tricky, because we hear about all the social indicators of Aboriginal people and how there is 17 years difference in terms of life expectancy. And those things are really important for people to know about Australia. How deeply the gap is between indigenous people and Australians. And I think the essays and the exhibition makes those points.

SD: [Unintelligible—not talking into microphone] I'm talking about the contemporary art world. Now historically that's [unintelligible] and oftentimes we've [unintelligible] in protest and major exhibitions [unintelligible] and how artists have actually carved out places for themselves in the world and impacted the contemporary art scene in the confines of this discussion and in the contemporary art context.

SG: Well I think it's okay to be Aboriginal, it's just not okay to be a politicized Aboriginal in the contemporary art world. These are highly contested spaces, and these places become spaces of indigeneity, not *for* indigeneity. And that's kind of where the problem lies.

[Unintelligible—not talking into microphone, talking at same time]

GM: There's a question back there.

RB: Where is it? Oh, it's from Brenda.

[Unintelligible—not talking into microphone]

BLC: No, no, I wasn't yelling at anyone. I guess it's also the point of even though it's National Reconciliation Week in Australia, for a lot of Aboriginal people, reconciliation's just become another brand. You know it's, what is it actually? It doesn't mean a lot, it's a bit like the national apology, it's symbolic without any real follow through. And what I'm thinking about when I'm hearing the speakers, and I've really enjoyed this session, is the idea we feel like we have to constantly remind people that Aboriginal land in Australia is everywhere. It's not, we don't just live in certain areas, we live everywhere. And we live off our traditional homelands and we're constantly aware of that. I would love to say that we had some influence over Qantas but just because a couple of their airplanes are painted with Aboriginal designs certainly doesn't mean that we have any say. And vice versa. It's expensive for us to travel but we engage in those kinds of discussions because we want to. And there's lots of discussion that goes on through cyberspace about where are the centers? And I was just thinking, Chris, Wally, what was that big show that was at the Museum of Contemporary Art, was it called *Head On? Head Lands?* [someone from audience speaking] It was New Zealand but there was a very large Maori contingent with it. But I mean it was so long ago, you have to think back. [someone from audience speaking] There's this idea we've done that, we've ticked that box so we don't need to do it again. But you're absolutely right.

Jane Raffan: I don't want to misquote you about what you said, Stephen, that it's okay to be a contemporary artist but not a political contemporary artist?

SG: [Unintelligible—not talking into microphone] I said it's okay to be Aboriginal in Australia, it's just not okay to be a politicized Aboriginal in the contemporary art world.

Jane Raffan: I think that's, oh Aboriginal, I was going to say contemporary politicized Aboriginal art is completely okay. And I think it's problematic for the art we're seeing upstairs to be considered contemporary. I think that's much more problematic to people and I think they much more readily accept a politicized Aboriginal artwork or agenda. Even [someone from audience speaking]. You mean the authenticity?

BLC: No, the politicized work will often be dismissed as having less authority. Having less authority as Aboriginal art.

Jane Raffan: Right, authenticity as original art in the, how people—

BLC: Yes, authority.

JF: Yeah, how people see it.

CM: So [unintelligible] if we can lapse into the vernacular—

ZZ: I agree with [unintelligible]

CM: There's a distinction between a classical and a rat bag. I'm thinking of Richard Bell, you know. And he, if I can just chip in, I mean in a funny way, that's where, I thought, this notion of a sustained contradiction. I mean Richard Bell is angry, confronting, but he talks down art making constantly. And I think that's the kind of contradiction that interests me is to participate globally, and he's building a career, he's had his shows, his touring show—

JR: Yeah, he's in New York.

CM: He's in New York but he's still talking down the art world even as he's building a position in it and it seems to me that's, I mean, you might say it's a good rat bag gesture. No?

ZZ: [Unintelligible—not talking into microphone]

CM: Well, that's what I mean, by talking, by not, he kind of [someone from audience speaking] No, no, no, but when, say, in the catalogue for his recent retrospective, when asked about his background, he talks about cake decorating. And that's what I mean. He's the very antithesis of the beaten orator. But, and yet, as you say, he's taking everything he does very seriously. And it seems to me for an artist to take the game very seriously but not play it by the typical rules, I mean, that's a great gesture. And that's a contemporary gesture because it's kind of experimental, it's contradictory, yeah. Anyway, that's enough of my talking.

GM: So is there anybody out there who has not asked a question today? A few people.

RB: And then we should we should finish up.

CH: If Qantas gave discount tickets to every major curator in every major institution in America do you think any of them would be interested enough to come?

ZZ: No.

LC: I was being very facetious.

CH: No, no. I'm not being facetious. This is a serious question.

LC: Actually, what's kept me from, I've worked internationally, but what's kept me from coming to Australia is resources and time. I actually feel that it isn't just about the flight over, it's about an iterative process of when it, in such a complex place one doesn't make one trip, one makes many trips and has to have time in between to absorb and consider and question. And I think I, someone mentioned before, people coming over and not doing their homework, I think it was, was it you, Chris, or someone? Yeah. Oh, sorry, Brenda, sorry. But that's fairly typical. But I think if there was the opportunity to make multiple trips. I also, quite frankly, when I was asked to write the essay I, one of the many things that gave me pause, one was that I had never been to Australia and I felt very uncomfortable writing about the work. Not only, I had seen it, of course, at Margaret and Bob's, but I curate through the soles of my feet and not through

my head. When I was working on the Olympic Sculpture Park I couldn't even begin to think about what the artistic program was going to be without walking for several years on that site, and watching the changing light and watching how people behaved. And I think it's similarly when one is going to write about work, I mean this physically as much as I mean it metaphorically, you have to absorb everything about the context. And I even felt that addressing terms as generic or concepts as broad as the contemporary required a kind of cultural displacement on my part, which I didn't have the opportunity to do. So I'm one of those people who would like to make a deeper commitment to that endeavor but it's actually very hard to find the resources to do it. And I've worked at some pretty well-off organizations, it's a lot to keep—and also it's considered the purview of the curator of African and Oceanic art. And that's another problem, I think. That was my point really before about who's in the audience from our local community? It's that this winds up being in Pam's department and not in what used to be the department that I was in. And I want to just say this, and I don't work here anymore, so I can. I am dismayed that the two curators of contemporary art are at Documenta and are not here. Because I feel as though they could have gone to Documenta any time over the summer. It shouldn't be about the party. And we needed them and the museum needed them to be here to be part of this discussion.

CH: [Unintelligible—not talking into microphone]

[Unintelligible—not talking into microphone]

GM: [Unintelligible—not talking into microphone] I said to Lisa, "Are you coming to Sydney?" She said, "No, I don't think I'm going to be going for some reason," I can't remember what you said.

LC: I'm moving.

GM: But then, you're moving, but then you said. "I think I'll be going to Documenta, however." [All laugh]

CM: I just want to revert, I've just got to—

LC: I should say, I'm not a curator anymore. I'm not a curator anymore, I'm a museum director, and we have an artist who teaches in our department in Documenta who I have to [unintelligible]. So [laugh] it's more complicated than that.

CM: I'm just going to revert to type here and it's actually a parallel conversation to the one that's just had. I mean I love coming to Seattle because it is the sister city of Melbourne, the rock 'n roll capital of the world. And what is interesting is if you, no, but seriously like the music scene in Seattle, of which Seattle is justifiably proud, has no problems declaring its deep affiliation with the music scene in Melbourne, and your bands like Mudhoney proudly support, were support acts for Cosmic Psychos and—

BLC: [Unintelligible—not talking into microphone]

CM: No, no, but here is, hey, I was talking about the '70s before. But seriously, here is another parallel issue, there is one cultural form, say recent rock 'n roll, of which it could be said that distance was overcome, the dialogue was there, the interweaving of their aesthetics, the sense of a union of purpose across the Pacific was all sorted out. Now, okay, that might be to do with technology and markets and so on, but it was solved in that cultural form, but now it's too far and it costs too much.

RB: [Unintelligible—not talking into microphone]

CM: Well can I just say since this is, Roger's the scheduler, if you give me one moment, the schedule asks that I make some concluding remarks and then orchestrate final discussion, I would simply say, I think we're in the throes of that now, so let's keep going. I would simply, just before you dive in, I would simply say for the next, how long have we got, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, for the next 15 minutes, let's all of us look back into our minds and say, "Is there something that didn't get answered, something that didn't get asked?" What's our takeaway after eight hours at work here, are there some, some, we're not going to solve the world's problems, but are there questions that still need to be asked? Are there, is there something someone said earlier in the morning, especially who sat on our first panel, we've had too much coffee and sugar since then. We may have forgotten those important points. So let's carry on the conversation but let's ask, what have we yet to attack?

PS: I just wanted to make a comment about the nature of power and representation. In the early '90s, I participated in a study which was organized by the CIUN, Center of Information for the United Nations, in Paris. And the study was about the representation of Third World artists in First World museums. So this has been looked at from an institutional basis to take a look at how it's really done. My part was doing the research in New York City where I was living at the time. But what was interesting was I interviewed five museum directors and curators and most of them would represent artists from the Third World without going to the countries, they couldn't afford to do it. They relied on the consulates and it was heavily edited, the information. There was only one museum, and that was the Guggenheim, that could afford to send the curators four, five, six times, until they decided to curate an exhibition. So I think when we look at the issues of class representation, understanding a community, is who can afford to do it and how it gets done? And we're very fortunate here that we have a couple of collectors that were able to amass a collection that can be seen this way. But it's very important to think about how institutions approach this.

SD: I'd be interested in when you asked the question of why, you asked the question of, if people could afford to go, would they? And the loud response was no. Why? I mean particularly you, Chris. I could hear your voice over everyone's.

CM: Well I mean I'll stick my neck out again and, I mean, if we're getting down into the, I mean, I'm surprised as I travel around this great nation, I'm surprised at the rapidity with which consensus forms amongst museum exhibitions. I mean, you mentioned cookie cutter. I'm surprised at the number of times I have seen the

same Columbian artist in museums. That's one. I think there's consensus formation. I think a second issue is that does seem to be a curatorial preference for a kind of current affairs agenda setting. And I don't mean to sound snarky about that because I've done it myself, but there's an issues-oriented emphasis that may mean if it's not in the headlines now, it's not there. And I think this also, what people have mentioned, is there's just, that people just aren't looking. And I'd say that not just for now, I mean I've been living and visiting Australia, from the United States for more than 25 years, and that's been my consistent experience. Though I am [unintelligible] an art historian, I'm not sleeves up and in the art world. So I just think there is some real structural blind spots.

LC: I also think that we, I hate to make generalizations about this country, but we're not a very curious country when it comes to everybody else. We're pretty glib about our preeminence or self-presumed preeminence. Which is why some of us chose at different points in our careers to work outside of the United States in order to have our assumptions tested. That's, I think, very, I know I'm in a university where I'm spending a lot of time raising money in order for my students to get out of the United States, to actually go and experience curating and art history and thinking in other places and not Europe. That's one of the things I say to them, not necessarily Europe, but please not Europe. But also not following the, what happens in the contemporary art world is that the next hot thing, so right, it's now, I guess, the Gulf States. I missed Russia completely because I was here and working on the Sculpture Park, by the time I got around to it Russia and China had been and gone. And now it's Art Dubai. And then I remember when I got to the Serpentine it was the Nuit Blanche show at the Musee [unintelligible] Paris and all the Scandinavian artists. So a lot of young curators, they kind of follow that. And that's where the curiosity comes from. Let's go see the thing that everyone's talking about instead of a genuine curiosity about something that not, as I said before, it's not the art that raises the questions within the subject matter of what's being done by the artist, but the engagement of it raises, puts everything that you presumed at stake and in question, which I think is what this exhibition does. And that's a pretty vulnerable position to be in when you're supposed to be a curator, leading trustees and acquisitions and so on. And so I think it's also important that young curators be trained to think about themselves as public intellectuals, not high paid valets to major donors. Or there to kind of just be predictors of what is going to be the next phenom.

ML: One of the things that I'm struck by, as I'm listening to all this and you, you've spoken to some of it just now, Lisa, is I actually think there's a lot of curiosity out there. Some of the shows that have been most successful at the Seattle Art Museum as I've observed it have been shows like *Garden and Cosmos*, the Indian exhibition that actually traveled to your institution, to the Art Gallery of New South Wales. And drew people who were interested in the art, people who were interested in the history of yoga because that was embodied in the art. The Indian, East Indian community, or the South Asian community of the area, because that was their history, but it was the curators and the structure of curating which you've just spoken to—it reminds me of the university. For 40 years I have been struggling, sometimes successfully, sometimes failing, to break down certain barriers to create conversations across some disciplines

within my own department, let alone across disciplines. There are boxes in which people are making their careers and that limits their curiosity because they've built on a certain kind of capacity. Sometimes it works and it leads to scholars like Howard, who does think outside the box, but more often than not it kind of limits the way in which people are looking at things. And that's what I feel we've been fighting. We sent out invitations, Sandra can attest to this, we sent out invitations to lots of Americans to come and participate, curators, artists, others. The Australians responded, and you and Susan Vogel and a few other people responded. From the American, north, the US community. Much better responsiveness from Canada. Much more open.

GM: I was interested in the notions of power and representations, perhaps not necessarily those two, but I think [someone from audience speaking] yeah, but I think what you were, it was sort of a question was asked of us as well in terms of collecting Aboriginal art, primarily Australian Aboriginal art, and one of the questions that was asked of us, you know what, can we get, can we ask the question to the Tate, the Metropolitan Museum, Museum of Modern Art, those places? And I think that's the kind of questions that you were trying to establish or was being established. And when we think of the questions like that, we often think in terms of these large institutions that are never ever going to look at Aboriginal art at all.. It may be the smaller institutions like the Seattle Art Museum, but those large institutions which I think, you know, when you see the exhibitions that they've produced are really much about national narratives and we go back to the national narrative kind of situation. And you think of these kinds of narratives like Australian Aboriginal art or indigenous, where do they fit into that narrative? Where do they fit into the kind of school of thought along that narrative? So the question would be for me, where is it? And I think it was asked of us, and I think it goes back to your, "do have the money to travel?" These big institutions, but they're not traveling to, as Christopher said, they're not coming out to Australia. They're not going out to certain parts of the world. But they're going to already established, the well-worn paths of the world, to continue just to. So I'm wondering where the large institutions, will they ever be collecting those kinds of arts, or is it always the secondary institutions?

BLC: Margaret was making me think with what she was just saying in terms of the invitations that went out to people, people I think should be here, the young indigenous curators from institutions in Australia, they should be here and part of hearing this conversation if not partaking in it. I know it's difficult to bring many artists from remote communities because of what that requires, but I'm thinking of the program that you were on, Stephen, where we had five young indigenous curators who went to the Venice Biennale for two years in a row, and went as a group and had the opportunity to see work in that kind of context over there that had nothing to do with whether it was indigenous, Aboriginal, whatever, it was to see that kind of—because it is about that global learning without whatever the term—a chance to see and look and hear and talk amongst yourselves. And we don't do that enough. We do get stuck into those little boxes about what we are supposed to be, what we're allowed to do, how we are meant to fit into the world. And Will prompted me to make sure that I say a huge thank you to Margaret and Bob for helping bring this about. And a massive thank you to Pam and the people who worked to bring this symposium

about and enable us to all get here together to speak. So I hadn't said that earlier and I really want to convey my heartfelt thanks.

Glenn Barkley (GB): Can I just sort of butt in there, sorry, just to further for Brenda.

ZZ: As a species we've lost control!

GB: Just to say that I think one of the issues, too, is Brenda's point's a really good one, but I would also say there's a problem with Australian institutions that if I would say, "I want to go to Seattle or to [unintelligible]," they'd say, "Well you can't go there." But if I said, "I want to go to Venice," they'd say, "Oh yeah, here's some money." So that's actually one of the other issues. [someone from audience speaking] Yeah exactly.

MB: That was actually pretty much what I was going to say, is that for art museums, unfortunately, you're talking about the structure of the way people work. It's much easier to get approval to travel to a known event than if you say, "Look, I'm just curious about what's happening in Brazil and can I get two weeks off?" I can't imagine any art museum approving that, unfortunately. But that's sort of a minor point in some ways, a structural point. But it does actually open the bigger question, what about research in art museums? Because that's what we're really talking about, not so where you get to go for two weeks, Brazil or Venice? And I'm an ashamed idealist but surely, we talk about research and scholarship in museums. You know, how does a curator get to know the new field? They come in as a specialist in something. What if they decided China's heyday is gone, now is the time to go to Brazil? Do they ever get a chance to retool? And that is what I think sabbatical used to be about, in universities, was the chance to after a while to say, "I really think this is the question, this is the place where things are happening. I want to go and find out." And I would think after anyone who's been here today would think that Australia, and this is not a nationalistic line, but Australia is a place where very interesting stuff is happening with art, and if you are a curator of contemporary art or whatever, that is a place you probably should go and spend some time. Not necessarily, I mean I'm, I'm sure the Biennale will be fantastic but to be a part of the art gallery. But you don't have to go there for the Biennale, just come sometime, twist someone's arm and just spend a little bit of time. That's how, I mean, museum directors suffer from that also, it's very hard to get a chance to find out something new so you don't keep on talking about the same things.

CM: I'm just going to congratulate Michael for two great moves there, one seeking sympathy from museum directors, and two, claiming credit for an exhibition that was not on your watch [laugh]. Look, I mean, oh, you've got the mic.

Katie Russell, National Gallery of Australia: Can I just raise a point before we go close up? I'd just like to maybe continue talking about this across the next day or so but we haven't had a discussion about reception and about audiences. And Chris, I was really interested in what you said about how Australia talks to itself about culture. And that idea of the blockbuster. And what we're perpetuating by bringing European blockbusters to Australia in the peak season every year

and when we put a price on the ticket for an Aboriginal art exhibition it fails. That's a serious conversation that needs to be heard.

CM: Well can I just, I'm just trying to get the things back in order for five minutes so we can feel that we've wrapped up the day neatly. And I would say, I've just been jotting notes all day and I think that some of the questions we've chased around the room and started to name more emphatically in the past 45 minutes as you'd expect since we've been at it all day. We talked a lot about which contemporary art world we were meaning when we referred to contemporary indigenous art. I think the comments, strong comments about it being a community driven art world. There were discussions about it being a market driven art world with the attendant risks. Institutions, as you're suggesting just now with your comment, are regarded as central and yet risky in their own ways. I didn't really hear anyone advocating a participation in the global spectacle of contemporary art but certainly a strong sense that there were important things to be said from within contemporary indigenous art about fragmenting that global spectacle down to the realities and the very multi-layered systems of time and belief that happen at a community level. We talked a lot about agency, who's making the decisions, who's driving this, the artists, the curators, critical discourse, markets. It seems to me that some of the answers that were starting to come through, if I can be very pragmatic, is it's a hell of a lot easier to move people than paintings, that for one blockbuster you could send a whole slew of curators around the world. I think your point, we've got to be talking about audience as well. I'll just say from my own experience, I found American audiences had no trouble at all engaging with, say, Richard Bell's exhibition. So I don't think there's any in-built resistance in audiences, it's just that they're only consuming what they're being given. [someone from audience speaking] Yeah. Our biggest risk is perhaps we're building generations of art viewers who expect to encounter art in certain ways, and I think that's been a lot of the discussion, is how are we building that moment of encounter? All our quibbling about should there be a photo, should there be a label, should there be a map, we're really asking the question, can we make the meeting of the visitor in the art productive? And I think, I probably also end with a comment that, Will, you mentioned, and it's the driving philosophy, the prod made to you, what are we doing about the next generation? What's the forward plan? What's the next, what's a 10-year-old going to know about indigenous art? What's a young curator going to be? What's a museum director going to be like 10 years from now? What are sponsors going to be like from now? I mean, those are all big questions we deal with everyday. [Laugh] Oh god, I've opened, I meant to be wrapping up the conversation.

[Unintelligible—not talking into microphone—all talking at once.]

—END OF SYMPOSIUM—