Becoming art: some relationships between Pacific art and Western culture

Susan Cochrane

University of Wollongong

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BECOMING ART:
SOME RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PACIFIC ART
AND WESTERN CULTURE

by

Susan Cochrane, B.A. [Macquarie], M.A.(Hons.) [Wollongong]
This thesis is concerned with the art forms of the indigenous people of the South Pacific region and their reception in the Western art-culture system. Its particular concentration is on visual art forms produced by Papua New Guinea and Australian Aboriginal artists from the 1960s to the 1990s.

It emerges that the arts of indigenous peoples of the South Pacific region have accrued a history and place in the Western art-culture system in addition to the role they continue to play within their own societies. As well, while some art forms have maintained indigenous traditions, in many instances artists have changed their methods of production and introduced new types of art into their repertoire.

During the second half of the twentieth century there has been a profound change in Western attitudes towards the visual arts created by indigenous people of the South Pacific region. Significant shifts have occurred in the Western conceptualisation and categorisation of indigenous art. The thesis aims to explain, as far as possible, why changes have occurred in the indigenous arts of the South Pacific region and to make a contribution to the improved conceptualisation of this art.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks are due to Professor Edward Cowie for accepting the proposal of this thesis in the School of Creative Arts at Wollongong University. A particular debt of gratitude is owed to Dr Harry Beran of the Department of Philosophy, Wollongong University, for his careful guidance and constructive criticism as my Supervisor.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Supervisor, Harry Beran,

for his constant support throughout its long development.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*Our contemporary artists will pass into history as our artists, our visionaries, our prophets in our times. Our art should be seen and enjoyed and our artists appreciated for what they are and not for whom or what they resemble.*

Bernard Narokobi (1990:21)

INTRODUCTION

Most contemporary art being produced by Pacific Islanders and Australian Aboriginal artists is expressive of their desire to maintain the practice and development of their indigenous forms of creative expression and to explore new possibilities incorporating Western media and concepts of art. On the individual, group and national levels, art is considered an important and intrinsic part of the artists' personal and cultural identity. The Papua New Guinean writer and philosopher, Bernard Narokobi, notes the importance of art as a reflection of national character in the quotation cited above. In Australia, the Executive Officer of the Sydney-based Boomalli Aboriginal Artist Co-operative, Brenda Croft, wrote

    Boomalli Aboriginal Artist Co-operative was born not only from frustration but also from the desire to create our own space in the art world and general community. Not wanting to compete
with non-Aboriginal artists and the mainstream art-world’s definition of us as Koori artists. We are not part of traditional Aboriginal art but complementary to it just as many urban Kooris are not living what is defined as a “traditional lifestyle”, but are nonetheless part of the here and now and expressing ourselves as such . . . As urban Koori artists we could/can best determine how, where and why we want our work and culture to be marketed, promoted and ultimately controlled (Croft 1990:108).

Individual Pacific Islander and Aboriginal artists are speaking and writing with increasing frequency about their art as their engagement with Western art institutions, marketing organisations, art critics and theoreticians expands. The following statement by Aboriginal artist, Robert Campbell Jnr., is representative of many individual artist’s reflections on the nature of their work:

> My images are created from my environment, both past and present, and my own relationship with both. My art is a personal response to these stimuli, wherever I may be. Aboriginal culture naturally becomes a part of my work as a reflection of my heritage and ancestry, but my message is to all people, [it is] my response and interpretation of my world (Campbell 1990:83).¹

The art forms being made at present reflect the contemporary nature of indigenous societies, their beliefs and their aspirations. Because of the ethnic diversity of the South Pacific region, as well as the differing environments and social circumstances of the people, their forms of creative expression encompass an enormous range of styles and traditions. Today, indigenous art includes objects made in accordance with tribal traditions, innovative forms in a variety of media, and contemporary art in introduced Western media. The diversity of art objects being produced is indicative of artists' responses to the different audiences for, and consumers of, their art. In the past, especially in Australia and New Zealand, indigenous art has been largely peripheral to the lifestyles and mainstream popular culture of the majority non-indigenous population. But as Western art audiences increasingly recognise the compelling scope and originality of the traditional and contemporary art of indigenous people, they are also becoming more aware of the circumstances of its makers and the integrity of their forms of expression.

In Australia, since the late 1970s, a promising development has been the increasing interaction between practising artists from South Pacific Islands and Aboriginal communities and curators and scholars from metropolitan art galleries and universities. The staff of these institutions are increasingly undertaking fieldwork, inviting Aboriginals
and Pacific Islanders to actively participate in formulating exhibitions.

Major international exhibitions, such as *Te Maori* (1984), *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia* (1988), *Headlands: Thinking about New Zealand Art* (1991) and *Aratjara: Art of the First Australians* (1993) have been formulated with the assistance and active participation of indigenous artists and their communities.

The new awareness of the diversity of South Pacific art forms and their acceptance into the Western art/culture system is quantifiable by examining the acquisition and exhibition policies of such major cultural institutions as Australian national and state art museums over the last decade. In Australia, which has a highly institutionalised arts establishment relatively well supported by government funding and private benefactors (in contrast to other South Pacific nations such as Papua New Guinea), the talents of individual Aboriginal artists have been recognised and rewarded by important art awards.

---

1 The National Gallery of Australia’s collection of Aboriginal art, commenced in 1973, contains objects generally recognised as traditional Aboriginal art such as bark paintings and burial poles, and also works of contemporary art such as acrylic paintings, drawings, prints, textiles and fibreglass sculptures. In 1991 both the Curator of Aboriginal art and the Curator of Prints purchased a number of items by contemporary Papua New Guinean and Vanuatuan artists including oil paintings, prints, textiles and metal sculptures.

2 Gordon Bennett won the prestigious Moet et Chandon art prize (an invitation award valued at $A50,000 plus one year’s residency in France) in 1991. Raymond Meeks and Robert Campbell Jnr. have been awarded residencies at the Australia Council’s Paris studio; Campbell Jnr. was also represented in the 1990 Archibald Prize. For the first time two Aboriginal artists, Trevor Nickolls and Rover Thomas, represented Australia at the 1990 Venice Biennale. The National Aboriginal Art Award sponsored by the
These recent developments are a radical departure from past attitudes and institutional practices. Throughout this thesis, as the nature of the changing relationships between South Pacific art and Western culture is examined, the words of another leading Papua New Guinean writer (Eri 1990:1) should be borne in mind that 'culture and art-forms are living things and therefore undergo changes and adaptations'.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS

During the second half of the twentieth century there has been a profound change in Western attitudes towards the art forms created by indigenous people of the South Pacific region. While some of the art produced in the South Pacific region in the twentieth century has maintained indigenous traditions, in many instances artists have changed their methods of production and introduced new types of art into their repertoire. At the same time, significant shifts have occurred in the Western appreciation, conceptualisation and categorisation of indigenous art and in Western museum practices. And, during the same period museums for indigenous art have also been created or upgraded in the South Pacific region itself and South Pacific peoples have started holding national and international arts festivals.

The main aims of this thesis are:

Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory has brought many Aboriginal artists to prominence since its inception in 1983.
To describe these changes in broad outline.
To offer some possible explanations of why they have occurred.
To make a contribution to the improved conceptualisation and categorisation of indigenous art.
To assess the effectiveness of changed museum practices and new museums.

The main focus of the thesis is on the period of greatest change, from around the 1960s to 1990s, and on Australian Aboriginal and Papua New Guinean visual art which is now circulating in Western cultural institutions and art markets.

Within the broad aims of the thesis the following particular objectives will be pursued most extensively:

(1) In the period approximately 1900 to 1960, students and collectors of the indigenous art of Africa, the Americas and the South Pacific developed a conception of this art which may be called the paradigm of primitive art. They also developed a categorisation of this art. The paradigm of primitive art is now largely rejected and the thesis shows why. Partly by drawing on the recent literature on South Pacific indigenous art, the thesis offers a sounder conception of indigenous art more relevant to the 1990s. The thesis also includes reasons for the rejection of some of the categories devised by Western scholars to describe indigenous art since the 1970s and the tentative acceptance of others. The findings are particularly relevant to Australian circumstances. This will occupy Chapters 2 and 3.
(2) Western interest in South Pacific indigenous art forms, and the values attached to them in Western culture, may differ from the ways art objects and practices are valued by the indigenous communities which create them. The thesis describes both phenomena and tries to explain what has led to them. This will occupy Chapter 4.

(3) During the past decades contemporary indigenous art has emerged among Aboriginal Australians, in Papua New Guinea and other South Pacific nations. However, some art practices have continued in their traditional forms despite the impact of Western culture. Both phenomena will be described and an attempt made to explain them. This will occupy Chapters 5 to 8.

(4) The emergence of national and regional arts festivals is another recent development in the indigenous arts of the South Pacific region. An attempt will be made to explain the function of arts festivals, in particular their role in the formation of cultural identity. This is the subject of Chapter 9.

(5) From around 1960 to 1990 contacts between indigenous artists and the Western art/culture system have greatly increased, although the spread and intensity of this development is not even. This is demonstrated by
an investigation of some of the activities and perceived roles of several Australian and South Pacific Islands museums. Previously, research and writing on South Pacific indigenous art, its exhibition and preservation in museums, and marketing and promotion activities were carried out almost entirely by non-indigenous people. The thesis tries to establish whether indigenous artists, scholars and entrepreneurs have succeeded in gaining influence and control over these activities. This is the subject of Chapters 10 and 11.

The literature relevant to the objectives of the thesis will be reviewed.

The pursuit of objectives 1 and 2 requires a predominantly art theoretical approach, the remainder a predominantly art historical one.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis studies the history of recent changes relating to indigenous art because the changes have been extensive and profound. In summary these are: (i) changes in Western attitudes towards indigenous art; (ii) changes in what is being produced by indigenous artists; (iii) changes in the roles of indigenous artists, both within and for their own communities and in what they wish to express through their art to the outside world and, (iv) changes in the methods of exhibiting, promoting and studying what was produced in the past and is
produced now. The following is an outline of the structure and content of the chapters of the thesis.

A. Introduction. Chapter 1.

B. Changes in Western attitudes towards indigenous art.

The first four chapters describe the changes which have taken place since the turn of the century in Western theorising about indigenous art from the South Pacific region.

Chapter 2 provides an exposition of the paradigm of primitive art, that is the most common conception of indigenous art between the 1900s to the 1960s, and gives reasons why it has been rejected in recent years.

Chapter 3 evaluates the terms and categories most frequently used in the period 1970s to 1990s to describe indigenous art from the South Pacific region. It is granted, in principle, that categories may be useful for some worthwhile purposes; some categories are accepted and others rejected. Bark paintings are used to test the appropriateness of Western categories for indigenous art.

Chapter 4 concentrates on estimations of value, firstly considering the great increase in commercial value of certain types of indigenous art in the Western art market. It also explores the movement of objects between 'regimes of value' in both indigenous and Western cultures, because of the great moves indigenous art has made in value and description within the past few decades.
C. Nature of art now being produced

Chapter 5 assesses why some traditional indigenous art forms remain important for the maintenance of cultural values and social cohesion within the originating society and are still produced to a significant extent, while others have ceased production. It gives some examples of strongly maintained traditional art forms.

Chapter 6 provides evidence of innovation in Aboriginal art as far back as evidence is available (beyond European contact). It demonstrates that innovation occurs because of factors internal to Aboriginal culture, not just from external causes, and describes some recent types of innovative art and the circumstances stimulating its emergence. This chapter also provides a partial account of some kinds of innovative contemporary art produced by Aborigines over the past few decades.

Chapter 7 explores the causes of the emergence of contemporary art in Papua New Guinea and gives an account of the nature of contemporary art produced there. It identifies indigenous as well as Western interests in the development of new art forms. Some brief comparative remarks are made about innovation in Aboriginal and Papua New Guinean art. Some attempts to sub-categorise contemporary Papua New Guinean art are discussed.

Chapter 8 provides a partial account of developments in urban Aboriginal art. It identifies abrogation, a special
feature in some urban Aboriginal art. Abrogation is explained and examples of it given.

D. Communicating culture and identity
Chapter 9 investigates arts festivals as a new form of communicating cultural forms and values among indigenous peoples of the South Pacific region. The Pacific Festival of Arts is also a significant forum for promoting individual, national and regional cultural identity. Arts festivals are a large-scale innovation in the presentation of indigenous art, primarily designed to meet indigenous, rather than Western, interests.

E. Researching, collecting and exhibiting indigenous art
Chapter 10 contrasts the roles of ethnographic\(^1\) and art museums in Australia and gives examples of the changing emphases in their collections and relationships with indigenous people in the last few decades. The degree of influence and control indigenous people have gained in Australian institutions is assessed.
Chapter 11 focuses on museums in the South Pacific Islands. The discussion is centered on whether indigenous curators, artists and scholars have succeeded in gaining control and influence over the operation of museums in their countries, and evaluates the usefulness of several museums and cultural centres to different groups of the

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\(^1\) In most instances in Australia the anthropology divisions of natural history museums.
local population whom they are intended to serve. Although some established institutions have declined rather than developed in the post-colonial era, changes in the role and function of museums and cultural centres in the South Pacific nations are considered to be another large-scale innovation.

F. Conclusions, Chapter 12

TERMINOLOGY

There are a number of terms which occur throughout the thesis. There may be many interpretations of each of these words, but the definitions given below show the meaning and/or emphasis given to them in this thesis.

Art

Within Western society a system of concepts exists which enables us to relate the word 'art' to singular products of creative activity. The problematic question of whether there exist certain properties which can universally characterise art has been debated from many perspectives by Western authors. In his assessment of this perennial question, Richard Anderson found that

(probably the best we can hope for is a tentative list of traits, each of which is usually present in "art" as we currently use the term. I suggest the following features as members of such a list: the things
we generally consider to be art, both from our own society and from others, typically convey culturally significant meaning, are produced in a style that is characteristic of their time and place of origin, and are made in a sensuous, affecting medium by individuals whose skills markedly exceed those of others in the society (Anderson 1989:26).

Throughout the thesis various objects are referred to as 'art' although there may not be an equivalent word in the language of the originating society (Kaeppler 1979, Feest 1992). This is because such objects have been drawn into the Western art-culture system (however else they may circulate) and it is the relationships of indigenous art with Western culture that this thesis is attempting to explain.

In essays which discuss the meaning of art, both Bernard Smith (1988:7) and Arthur Danto (1988:27) comment that the ancient Greeks did not differentiate between art and artifact, or fine art and craft, designating both tekne, objects made with skill. Poesis, the inspiration or intuition that gave the artist a profound insight which was reflected in his art-making, touched the object but was not bound by it.

There is no equivalent for the word 'art' in many South Pacific languages, except where it has been recently introduced from a European language. This lack is not peculiar to South Pacific languages. The idea of art as an overall word for many forms of creative expression is foreign to the ways in which artistic expression is conceptualised in South Pacific cultures. But the existence
of aesthetic quality, and degrees of aesthetic quality, in objects and behaviours, is recognised by members of South Pacific societies despite not having a single word translatable as 'art'. It is not that indigenous people cannot conceptualise 'art', but that many are unfamiliar with the term in its institutionalised Western framework.

This thesis will demonstrate how certain classes of objects from South Pacific societies have been valued and circulate within the Western art market and cultural institutions as 'art'. It will also attempt to identify what is involved in the processes of a class of objects becoming accepted as art in Western culture, and show that other classes of objects, which may have equal merit and cultural legitimacy in their originating culture, have so far remained outside the realm of art in Western culture.

**Art forms**

In studies of art the term 'form' is generally understood to refer to the arrangement of parts. Form components can be arranged in two or three dimensions in space (paintings, sculpture), in time (music) or in space and time (dance). A composition can consist of elements of colour, sounds, words and movements - art is, therefore, manifested in activities as well as in objects. The term 'art form(s)' will be used throughout this thesis to refer to the aesthetic arrangement of form components in a specific manner, as defined by time, space, material, technique or by the cultural
criteria significant to its users and creators. A ‘work of art’ or ‘art object’ is a specific entity that conforms to the rules of an ‘art form’.

**Primitive art**

It is impossible to ignore the term ‘primitive’ art because of its historical position and its complexity of associations. As will be fully discussed in Chapter 2, the concept of primitive art served as a basis for the definition and classification of objects from African, Oceanic and native American societies in Western culture until the 1970s. The influential Dutch anthropologist, Adrian Gerbrands was perhaps the first to strenuously criticise the term ‘primitive’ art (Gerbrands1957:9-23), but others supported its continued use, including Lewis (1961), Newton (1978a) and Richard Anderson (1979). But by 1989 Anderson admitted that

(a)pparently no amount of argument can rid “primitive” of its perjorative associations, so although the word was sometimes used in the past to refer explicitly to small-scale societies and not to imply negative qualities, it now seems best to avoid the term altogether (Anderson 1989:8).

An explanation of the several uses of the term ‘primitive’ art in Western art history is given by John Berger. Of interest to this thesis are the second use Berger identifies and his distinction between non-professional and professional artists:
Art-historically the word *primitive* has been used in three different ways: to designate art (before Raphael) on the borderline between medieval and modern Renaissance traditions; to label the trophies and "curiosities" taken from the colonies (Africa, Carribean, South Pacific) when brought back to the imperial metropolis; and lastly to put in its place the art of men and women from the working classes - proletarian, peasant, petit-bourgeois - who did not leave their class by becoming *professional* artists. According to all three usages of the word, originating in the last century when the confidence of the European ruling class was at its height, the superiority of the main European tradition of secular art, serving that same "civilised" ruling class, was assured (Berger 1980:64, his emphasis).

*Indigenous art/indigenous people*

‘Indigenous’ is now the accepted term used to describe the original inhabitants of a country. Its appropriateness was confirmed by the United Nations nominating 1993 the International Year of the World’s Indigenous People. Other terms currently in use in North America to describe indigenous people, in particular ‘First Nations’ and ‘Native Americans’, do not extend to the South Pacific region. Although it respected that indigenous Americans have adopted the self-description ‘Native Americans’, ‘native’ is considered a perjorative term in the South Pacific region. ‘Indigenous’ has also replaced ‘tribal’, because the latter
term suggested that indigenous people remained in small-scale, tradition-oriented societies. It is now recognised that indigenous people may also chose to live in urban centres and participate in national and global concerns, or move between both situations.

The Pacific region

I prefer to use the term ‘the Pacific region’ rather than ‘Oceania’ which was the more commonly used term in the literature until the 1970s. Since then, a number of Pacific Islands states have achieved independence and are generally referred to as Pacific Islands nations. As well, a new geopolitical region, known as the Asia Pacific region, has emerged and in the 1990s this is redefining, to a significant degree, political, economic and cultural links within the region (Dobbs-Higginson 1993).

Nevertheless, as Oceania and the culture areas which it encompasses, are important to the art history of the Pacific region it is important to clarify what is referred to as Oceania and its culture areas. Ron Crocombe (1992:154-153) defines the region of Oceania:

The region embraces the twenty-four nations and territories of the culture areas commonly known as Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia

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1 As this article (Crocombe 1992) appears in a Japanese journal, first in Japanese, then in English, page numbering follows the Japanese system.
Melanesia includes Irian Jaya, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and to some degree Fiji.

Micronesia includes the Northern Marianas, Guam, Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, and Kiribati.

Polynesia includes New Zealand, Tonga, Wallis and Futuna, Tuvalu, Western Samoa, American Samoa, Tokelau, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Hawai’i Pitcairn, and Easter Island. Fijian culture shows some Polynesian characteristics and there are some small Polynesian outliers in Melanesia and Micronesia. . . .

Oceania includes all of the above plus Australia which, in terms of location and trade and otherwise has much in common with the islands.

The culture areas Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia are well known in the literature on Oceanic art and are occasionally referred to in this thesis. It has already been stated that the thesis has a particular concentration on contemporary Australian Aboriginal and Papua New Guinea visual arts; both Australia and Papua New Guinea are geographically located countries in the South Pacific, as are most of the other Pacific Islands countries referred to in this thesis. For my purposes the term South Pacific region is more accurate than Oceania and its three culture regions.

Western

In the text of this thesis, the use of the term ‘Western’ assumes a society with ideas, concepts and behaviour patterns based on the ideologies and cultural heritage of European societies. As Sally Price (1989:3) astutely notes,
'Within this convention, "Western" signals an association with European-derived cultural assumptions, whether in the thinking of some-one from New York, Tokyo or Lagos'

Culture

Raymond Williams contends that 'culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language'. He recognises three broad active categories of usage:

(i) the independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development . . .
(ii) the independent noun . . . which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group . . . (iii) the independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity (Williams 1980:77-81).

These categories of use are adopted for the purposes of this thesis.

The art-culture system

The conceptual framework of this thesis assumes that each culture develops a distinctive and interactive art system. To encapsulate this idea, I use the term 'art-culture system'. Although the term originates in James Clifford's 1988 work The Predicament of Culture, my interpretation and application of it is wider than Clifford's, as it also incorporates Bernard Smith's definition of an 'art system'
(B. Smith 1988:33-50). Clifford relates the term 'art-culture system' to a model of how objects move into, around and out of the Western art world. Because it is a useful theoretical model for South Pacific cultural objects circulating in the West, his diagram and description of it are reproduced below.

For the purposes of this work the term 'art-culture system' also carries the sense of 'art system' as described by Bernard Smith. Smith's definition of an art system is, for his purposes, related to European art. But it can be applied more widely, if read with a wide interpretation of 'professional' and 'institutionalised'. Smith's definition reads in part

by art system I am here referring to associated groups of professional people who are concerned with the production, interpretation and distribution of works of art. An art system . . . develops from and maintains its historical continuity by means of the participation in and contribution of its members to a more or less coherent set of beliefs, values, dispositions and expectations. Consistent with these beliefs the system evolves specialised components which often develop institutionalised forms (Smith 1988:36).

The term art-culture system not only maps the ways in which art objects circulate within a culture, but also takes into consideration what makes any particular art-culture system distinguishable. Clifford's model will be referred to again where the circulation of South Pacific art objects in Western culture is discussed.
Four zones are generated. This establishes horizontal and vertical axes and between them four semantic zones: (1) the zone of authentic masterpieces, (2) the zone of authentic artifacts, (3) the zone of inauthentic masterpieces, (4) the zone of inauthentic artifacts. Most objects, old and new, rare and common, familiar and exotic - can be located in one of these zones or ambiguously, in traffic, between zones.

The system classifies objects and assigns them relative value. It establishes the 'contexts' in which they properly belong and between which they circulate. Regular movements towards positive value proceed from bottom to top and from right to left. These movements select artifacts of enduring worth or rarity, their value normally guaranteed by a 'vanishing' cultural status or by the selection and pricing mechanisms of the art market.

An i.a of frequent traffic in the system is that linking zones 1 and 2. Objects move in two directions along this path. Things of cultural or historical value may be promoted to the status of fine art. Examples of movement in this direction, from ethnographic 'culture' to fine 'art' are plentiful . . . Movement also occurs between the lower and upper levels of the system, usually in an upward direction. Commodities in zone 4 regularly enter zone 2, becoming rare period pieces and thus collectibles. Much current non-Western work migrates between the status of 'tourist art' and creative cultural-artistic strategy (Clifford 1988:228-230).

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6 I do not propose to follow Clifford's (1988) terminology, viz. 'authentic masterpiece', 'inauthentic masterpiece'; etc. although in his model these do help the reader conceptualise what types of objects have been legitimised as art in the Western art world and what may become so in the future.
METHODOLOGY

An art historical analysis of the subject of this thesis requires a number of approaches: an historical perspective; analysis of characteristic styles; commentary on individual artists and the cultural and social circumstances influencing their work. The further development of the methodologies of art history and theory better related to the contemporary visual arts of indigenous peoples of the South Pacific is a concern of this thesis. To gain a perspective on the present situation it is necessary to investigate the points of contact between visual art forms from the South Pacific region and their Western audience in both the past and the present. Since the beginning of the twentieth century the responses by a number of European artists, collectors and scholars to art from the South Pacific region have affected the premises on which objects were, and are, selected and evaluated as art within the Western art-culture system. The work of such artists, collectors and scholars needs to be evaluated in terms of their effect on the appreciation and commodification of indigenous art in Western society.

It is evident that new art forms, often blending Western influences and indigenous cultural heritage, are emerging throughout the South Pacific. It needs to be asked whether there are any common elements in the types of activities developing in the visual arts of South Pacific societies and whether there are particular social and cultural motivations which provide the stimuli for innovative
art, or whether artists are simply responding to expanding commercial opportunities.

The examples given throughout the thesis demonstrate an upsurge of creative activity and show that recent developments in the arts across the South Pacific are worthy of closer attention and analysis than they have received from art historians to date. The artists' community background, as well as their present social, political and economic circumstances are inextricably part of the history of such movements and help explain their development.

Because art history is part of the Western intellectual tradition its primary purpose is to serve the requirements of the Western art-culture system. Applying Western principles of art history/theory to creative forms which do not arise from Western artistic traditions requires a number of qualifications and/or extensions to its principles and definitions. This should not be problematic because the considerable developments in European modern art this century, as well as the acceptance of new critical and theoretical approaches, have already caused the discipline of art history to expand - as with any tradition, change and incorporation are constant factors.
Studies of the changing emphases of art history in the Western art-culture system reveal that whereas, 'Art history was previously concerned with style, attribution . . . authenticity, rarity . . . reconstruction and the meaning of pictures' (Rees and Borzello 1986:6), like other disciplines it has now been exposed to the intellectual turbulence of the twentieth century to which it has responded. As M. Tucker wrote of the challenges facing the discipline in the climate of the 1980s

it is considerably more diversified . . . There is an increasing implementation of interdisciplinary thought and study; work in other fields - philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, to name just a few - serves as a point of reference, a model, or becomes incorporated into the fabric . . . . It is thus linked to a larger world of intellectual endeavour and today is likely to include political, cultural, and sociological, as well as purely formal analysis (Tucker 1984:2).

This model of art history, with its expanded scope and interdisciplinary links, provides the basis for this enquiry.

Research methods: (i) field trips

For the purposes of this thesis several field trips of fairly short duration (three to four weeks) were made to research specific situations, or interview the artists, curators and administrators concerned with a particular venture. Fieldwork was undertaken in Fiji in March to April 1987; the Cook Islands, May 1987; Townsville, Australia, for the Pacific Festival of
Arts in August 1988; Papua New Guinea, September 1988, to attend the 18th Waigani Seminar, The State of the Arts in the Pacific, at the University of Papua New Guinea; Papua New Guinea again in 1989 to co-curate the exhibition Luk Luk Gen! (Look Again!) Contemporary Art from Papua New Guinea, and again in 1990 to further investigate contemporary Papua New Guinean art and interview artists.

The final draft of this thesis was written while working as Arts Adviser to the Aboriginal community at Ramingining, Central Arnhem Land, in 1993 to 1994. This employment provided opportunities to observe artists at work, the nature of the art they produced for sale or commission, and the circumstances in which it was promoted, exhibited and sold. Personal communication and information gathered from artists, curators, representatives of commercial galleries and arts bureaucrats provides the most original material in the thesis.

(ii) Exhibitions and projects

In order to discover the problems faced by South Pacific artists in gaining recognition in the Western art world, and to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of white Australians towards South Pacific art, it was considered necessary to have personal experience of the operations of cultural institutions and marketing organisations and their dealings with art and artists. I initially worked with the curators of several exhibitions of Aboriginal and South Pacific art, learning the procedures of negotiating and preparing
exhibitions. These experiences were valuable to the thesis as they provided opportunities to learn about the operations of major cultural institutions from the inside and to gain a better understanding of museum and art gallery policies and procedures. In 1987 I assisted with the organisation and curating two exhibitions of Aboriginal art and design through Aboriginal Arts Australia.\(^1\) These exhibitions were *Aboriginal Art 1987*, held in the Long Gallery at the School of Creative Arts, Wollongong University, in September 1987, and *Aboriginal Design* held at the Craft Council Gallery, Sydney in February 1988. In 1987 I assisted with preparations for the Australian Museum's major exhibition *Pieces of Paradise*, curated by Dr. Jim Specht. Apart from an appreciation of the extent of the Museum's holdings of ethnographic material, some insight into the policies with regard to exhibitions, conservation, custodianship and the dialogue between the Australian Museum and Aboriginal and South Pacific Island societies was gained by discussions with senior members of the Anthropology Department's staff. These earlier projects enabled me to undertake the management of subsequent major projects.

Following the Waigani Seminar at the University of Papua New Guinea in September 1988, I co-ordinated a project team and applied for an Exhibition Development grant from the Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australia Council for funds to enable an exhibition of contemporary Papua New Guinea art to

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\(^1\) The national, federally funded organisation which was formed to market Aboriginal art.
tour metropolitan and regional galleries in Australia in 1990-91. It was then invited to New Zealand and New Caledonia, returning to Papua New Guinea in 1994. Details of the organisation and curating of this exhibition, *Luk Luk Gen! (Look Again!) Contemporary Art from Papua New Guinea*, provided a valuable research opportunity for the material now contained in Chapter 7.

In November 1989 a proposal was put to the Power Institution of Fine Arts at Sydney University by Aboriginal artist/designer Bronwyn Bancroft and myself for an extended series of forums on contemporary Aboriginal Art. The proposal was accepted and we worked as joint co-ordinators for the series, *Aboriginal Art in Australian Society*, July-October, 1990. The series was devised to provide an opportunity for a significant number of Aboriginal artists, curators and arts administrators to present their work and/or discuss contentious issues affecting Aboriginal artists and their art. This was followed in 1991 with two other series of seminars, *Aboriginal Art in New South Wales* and *Aboriginal Artists Speak*. Some of the outcomes of these series will be discussed in later chapters.

From February 1992 to April 1993 I coordinated the Pacific Arts Association's 5th International Symposium, *Art, Performance and Society*, hosted by the South Australian Museum. This Symposium incorporated four days of conference sessions on many aspects of indigenous art, a Visual Artist's Week with presentations by Aboriginal, Torres Strait and Pacific Islander artists and twelve related exhibitions and
performances. Both the Sydney University and S.A. Museum projects provided numerous opportunities for meetings and discussions with indigenous artists. Interviews were recorded with individual artists as well as curators, academics, arts administrators and others, such as elders and community leaders, concerned with the artistic heritage of indigenous peoples.

(iii) Source material

Much of the background knowledge and material for illustrations was obtained from anthropological texts, art books and other publications concerned with many aspects of indigenous South Pacific art and cultures. Because little has been published on contemporary South Pacific art, particularly of an academic nature, other sources had to be located. The most useful published sources have been special issues of journals devoted to Aboriginal or South Pacific art, occasional articles and reviews in art magazines and exhibition catalogues. The popular press, especially reviews and articles in newspapers and magazines, as well as film documentaries, have provided an extra insight into local attitudes. All sources are acknowledged in the bibliography.

Contemplating art, and the context in which it is presented, has also been an essential research method in the preparation of this thesis. This encompasses the ways in which South Pacific peoples present their art to an audience and includes attending two Pacific Festivals of Arts, as well as
attending exhibitions. Visiting artists in their workplaces, discussing their work and photographing it has provided valuable source material.

CONTRIBUTION TO UNDERSTANDING

The thesis offers an account and partial explanation of the changing relationships between South Pacific indigenous art and the Western art-culture system in the period 1960 to 1990. While an occasional mention is made of other South Pacific cultures and their art, the concentration on two very active art producing cultures allows stronger contrasts and comparisons to be made between the circumstances faced by Australian Aboriginal and Papua New Guinean artists and their art.

Following a review of the relevant literature on the categorisation of indigenous art, it was perceived that a paradigm could be developed to describe the predominant Western attitudes towards it in the period 1900s to 1960s. Many scholars have previously conceptualised ‘primitive’ art, distinguishing a number of features and applying them to various small-scale societies in Africa, the Americas and Oceania (including Boas 1927; Linton and Wingert 1941; Lewis 1961; Fraser 1962; Anderson 1979; Price 1989). The paradigm of primitive art presented here has been drawn up with the advantage of hindsight. Some features which now appear as
distinctive reflect the fundamental changes in Western attitudes towards indigenous people which have taken place since the 1960s, which make this new version of a paradigm of primitive art possible.

The paradigm forms the starting point for the investigations which follow. Several inter-related changes in Western attitudes to, and concepts of, South Pacific indigenous art which have occurred between the 1960s to 1990s, are identified. Again, various aspects of these changes have been published by other authors but the thesis describes the changes more comprehensively. It also identifies reasons for some of the innovations in recent Aboriginal and Papua New Guinean art. In some instances developments in art skills and processes, exhibitions and marketing may be viewed metaphorically as representing profound changes in the social and cultural relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous people. The main contribution of the thesis to our understanding of the indigenous art of the South Pacific region is that it offers a comprehensive review and interpretation of the development of contemporary Aboriginal and Papua New Guinean art during the last three decades and of the nature of that art.
OBJECTIONS TO PROJECTS OF THIS NATURE

How do Western art historians come to grips with the creative productions of peoples whose arts practice is not devolved from Renaissance traditions and perspectives, has no preoccupation with Modernism or other contemporary Western theories of the image, and whose archives largely rest in the originating community's memory and oral traditions?

The first step is at least to identify and acknowledge the existence of such difficulties and to attempt to find ways by which they may begin to be resolved. Critics of attempts by Western art historians to study indigenous art may suggest they are only producing meanings about non-Western art forms and practices to suit the requirements of Western scholarship and connoisseurship. Some critics have been outspoken in their criticism of studies such as this thesis. They perceive such studies as Eurocentric and the academics or curators who produce them as mainly interested in furthering their careers and maintaining an era of 'cultural colonialism' (Fry and Willis 1988, 1988/89, 1989a, 1989b).

This over-simplifies the whole debate. It is certainly necessary and desirable for indigenous people to enter into the discussion of every facet of their art, and there are increasing opportunities for them to do so. But there are many
circumstances where providing access to and sharing knowledge and exchanging ideas are also valid and valuable. This is especially so if one considers it the moral imperative of a researcher, in any field, to work with and for the people he or she lives among, or any section of the people who are discriminated against within the society in which they live. Whether or not he or she is of the same ethnic origin is immaterial to the overall responsibility of a researcher.

Western scholars attempting to study indigenous art may also be criticised for aiding the appropriation of indigenous art into the commodity marketplace and for facilitating the institutional validating mechanisms to incorporate it within their established systems. For example, in his critique of the exhibition 'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinities of the Tribal and the Modern, Clifford (1988:312) argued against the ethnocentric practice of projecting diverse cultures into a global narrative of art. He claimed that 'the relations of power whereby one portion of humanity can select, value and collect the pure products of others needs to be criticised and transformed'.

Donald Preziosi (1990:xiii) comments that, over the last century, art history has developed strategies which 'have served to strengthen, legitimise, and render natural or obvious several specific perspectives on the roles and functions of artistic production and construal'. Within the system of analysis he advocates there are a number of possible ways to
investigate the discipline of art history and locate problematic areas. One of these is to examine the discipline itself or any of its components, that is, the objects which it studies and analyses, the disciplinary technologies and practices, its theories of meaning and signification (Preziosi 1990:xv). Throughout, this thesis investigates the problematic relationship of the Western discipline of art history to indigenous art. It attempts to discover how indigenous interests can be best served, both within the existing Western art-culture system and by increasing awareness of how indigenous interests may be better served in the future.

There are, of course, limitations on the points of view which any writer can express. Any individual’s assumptions, opinions and findings are conditioned by their cultural background and experiences. No vantage point is neutral and every observation reflects as much on the observer as the observed. The South African essayist, Nadine Gordimer (1988:286), reflects on the tension facing writers between ‘standing apart and being fully involved’. She finds a resolution to this tension in the words of Roland Barthes (Gordimer 1988, citing Barthes 1983:31) who wrote that ‘“a writer’s enterprise” - their work - is their “essential gesture as a social being”’. Gordimer takes the position which I follow in this thesis, that is that

when I have spoken of white attitudes and opinions I have not taken it upon myself to speak for whites, but have quoted attitudes and opinions expressed by whites themselves, or manifest (in my opinion) in their work. When I have spoken of black attitudes and opinions, I have not taken
it upon myself to speak for blacks, but have quoted attitudes and opinions expressed by blacks themselves or (in my opinion) manifest in their work (Gordimer 1988:143).

Preziosi (1990:10) claims that 'as a humanistic discipline, art history produces, sustains and perpetuates humanistic values', and it is this goal towards which the thesis is aimed.
Due to an ineradicable problem with the computer software, p. 36 does not exist.
CHAPTER 2: THE PARADIGM OF PRIMITIVE ART

Primitive art may be defined most succinctly as the high art of low cultures.

Douglas Fraser (1962)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter proposes that 'primitive' art, a concept long considered useful by Western scholars to refer to the art of the indigenous peoples of Africa, the Americas and Oceania, represents a broad paradigm within which a number of identifiable and recurring features exist.

The features of the paradigm are related to Western perceptions of so-called 'primitive' societies during the latter part of the nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century. For example, Leonhard Adam (1940:25) describes 'primitive man' as 'a general term for all the native races of Africa, the South Seas, America and certain parts of Asia'. As part of his definition of primitive art, Phillip Lewis (1961:223) proposes that 'Primitive art is art which is produced and used by members of primitive society'. It will be shown that definitions such as those of Adam and Lewis were conceived by Western scholars, and did not arise from any of the indigenous cultures they purportedly represented.
The 'primitive' art circulating in Western cultures is a category of objects acquired by Europeans from those societies designated and described as 'primitive' by European scholars. As Howard Morphy explains

(‘primitive art . . . is first created as part of an indigenous culture, to be used and valued in a traditional way. Then it has to be created a second time, as a work of art in European terms, with a place in the European scheme of art history, a value in the art market, and a space reserved for it on the walls of art galleries (Morphy 1989b:162).

The objectives of this chapter are to establish a paradigm of primitive art and identify its main features. Evidence from the writings of art historians and anthropologists substantiate the analysis of the features of the paradigm. The chapter aims to demonstrate that:

(i) 'Primitive' art was a category of material culture objects from indigenous societies described as 'primitive' by Western scholars. The features of the paradigm of primitive art reveal as much about predominant Western beliefs and attitudes held at the time as they do truths about the art of so-called 'primitive' societies.

(ii) The romance of the primitive, which flourished in early modernist movements in European art, reflected elaborate constructs about the physical and spiritual life of tribal peoples and their material objects. These ideas of 'primitivism' were absorbed and interpreted in Western art. The dual effect of the romance of the primitive was to raise esteem in the West for 'primitive' art and, paradoxically, to heighten the perceived antithesis between the 'primitive' and the 'modern'.
A move away from the perception of the art of indigenous peoples as 'primitive' has been underway for the last thirty years or so, with suggestions for reform coming from people of both Western and indigenous cultures. Later chapters investigate and analyse changes in Western attitudes to, and acceptance of, indigenous art from the South Pacific region from around 1960 to 1990. The paradigm of primitive art which is described and substantiated in this chapter provides a base from which the patterns of change can be more readily identified.

THE USE OF PARADIGMS IN ART HISTORY

This section makes some initial comments about the use of paradigms in art history. I then discusses the conception of 'primitive' art, using the exposition of it by Lewis (1961). Although this was written by Lewis in the 1960s, when it was too late for him to make a new contribution to the established conception of 'primitive' art, his description of it was selected because he articulates it well. It establishes that there were valid grounds for discerning a paradigm 'primitive' art, as there were for the establishment of the paradigm of feminist art history and that of Orientalism.

Feminist art historians, including Griselda Pollock, and the Orientalist scholar Edward Said, have shown how it is possible to discern paradigms which reveal how Western minds create and legitimate an authoritative set of beliefs about their own, or other, cultures.
Since the 1970s feminist theoreticians sought to challenge the male-dominated, patriarchal attitudes which were historically entrenched in the discipline of art history.\textsuperscript{1} Griselda Pollock discusses the use of a paradigm as a structural tool and uses it in her analysis of the lack of recognition given to women artists within the discipline of art history until the 1970s. Pollock explains that

a paradigm defines the objectives shared within a scientific community, what it aims to search and explain, its procedures and its boundaries. It is the disciplinary matrix. A paradigm shift occurs when the dominant mode of investigation is found to be unable satisfactorily to explain the phenomenon which it is that science's or discipline's job to analyse (Pollock 1987:3).

Pollock's concept of a paradigm is a structure which describes the matrix of ideas about a subject (in her case, the place of women artists in the discipline of art history). It can then be tested and shifts identified. In this chapter this concept of a paradigm is used to establish a paradigm of primitive art and identify it as the dominant paradigm in the Western view of the art of indigenous societies from around the 1900s to 1970s. Following chapters analyse the changes in perception, or 'shifts', in Western views on indigenous art, which have since occurred.

\textsuperscript{1} The first publications on feminist art history were directed towards reestablishing the histories of long neglected or forgotten women artists and exploring the circumstances in which women worked as artists. Later investigations provided a feminist critique of art history and developed theories about the cultural construction of gender.
Edward Said has researched and identified the 'enormously systematic discipline' by which Western scholars interpreted the Orient in the interests of Western culture. Said (1987:3) writes that, 'even if it does not survive as it once did . . . (this interpretation) lives on academically through its doctrines and theses about the Orient and the Oriental'. In Said's view, 'Orientalism', structured by Western scholars from a presumed position of authority, served Western interests in the Middle East for several centuries:

What German Orientalism had in common with Anglo-French and later American Orientalism was a kind of intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture . . . . (Authority) is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it established canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it distinguishes as true, and from traditions, perceptions and judgements it forms, transmits, reproduces (Said 1987: 19-20).

Likewise the construct of 'primitive' art can be perceived as a paradigm within Western culture. Western scholars assumed the authority to incorporate and interpret the art of tribal societies for the purposes of Western scholars and aesthetes.¹ From around the 1900s until the 1970s 'primitive'

¹ In her study Sally Price identifies what she calls the 'universality principle', i.e. that under the mantle of superiority provided by this principle, Western culture was deemed to be 'enlightened' and 'responsible' and to have rights of access to every other culture (Price1990:23-26). This included the right to collect evidence and to interpret and circulate, within its own art/culture system, the cultural property of 'primitive' societies. The 'universality principle' is one of the features identified by Price in her study (1990). In this study she discerns some features similar to those which are discussed as features of the paradigm of primitive art below. See especially her chapters 'Anonymity and Timelessness', 'Objects d'Art and Ethnographic Artifacts'.
art was the only really substantial and consistent model within which the artistic products of tribal cultures were systematically collected, described, evaluated and intellectualised to serve the interests of Western culture.¹ In the preceeding three centuries, during the era of European exploration and conquest of the ‘New World’, Asia and the Pacific, European navigators, traders and adventurers acquired thousands of trophies and curiosities, some of which accumulated in collections such as that of Sir Ashton Lever (see Chapter 10). However, the diversity of objects in the European aristocracy’s ‘cabinets of curiosity’ were not the subject of rigorous scholarship and scientific enquiry. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss European concepts about indigenous art prior to the twentieth century, but they should be acknowledged, however briefly. Ethnography, which emerged as a specialised study of human society in the late nineteenth century and later evolved into anthropology, was the first attempt to systematically describe indigenous societies and recognise art forms as part of a particular group’s cultural system.

The idea of ‘primitive’ societies emerged from the evolutionary framework of social Darwinism in the late nineteenth century. As Maurice Freedman (1979:9) notes, there appeared to be an unwarranted evolutionary assumption behind

¹ Phillip Lewis (1961) and Richard Anderson (1979), give reasons for its continuing use as a category of art objects. David Attenborough (1976), argues for the term ‘tribal art’ which was also adopted by auction houses such as Sothebys and used by them from the late 1960s.
this separation out of a special class of society: primitive societies are lowest on the scale of progression towards large scale, literate and technically developed societies.

Dictionary definitions of the term 'primitive' give its meaning as 'early', 'original' or in the 'first stage of development'. Anthropological definitions of 'primitive' societies concur that such societies are small-scale, non-literate and based upon a simple technology.

Lewis’s 1961 essay was written with the aim ‘to define primitive art in ways meaningful and operational for both anthropology and art history’. As it assesses the opinions of his contemporaries on the definition of primitive art it has been selected as a useful discussion which sets out the ideas prevalent at the time. Lewis (1961:221) points out that there are two essential elements which can be considered separately as well as together, 'primitive' and 'art'. He refers to Robert Redfield’s (1953) characterisation of primitive society as a base from which civilization may develop. This, he says (1961:230), ‘presents a social typology - an ideal primitive society and an ideal civilization’. Lewis supports Redfield’s model by reference to Melanesian societies, of which he says

1 Lewis precis Redfield’s (1953) model thus, ‘Redfield considered as primitive those societies whose communities were small, isolated, homogeneous and intimate, where literacy was absent, where full-time specialists lacking, where there was informal social control, and where there was strong group solidarity based upon common understandings as to the purpose of life. On the other hand, Redfield held that civilization may be said to exist to the extent and degree to which, and in the respects in which, a society has developed away from these characteristics of primitive society’ (Lewis 1961:233).
on the basis of present knowledge, it is not unrealistic or impractical to view Melanesian societies as primitive, in the sense that they have not been and still are not civilized, and also in the sense that as far as anyone knows they have not changed much from the actual primitive beginning (Lewis 1961:231).

Lewis finds that there are sufficient differences in the form and content of primitive art, stemming from the social and cultural context in which art is produced in primitive as compared to civilized societies, to support the continued use of the term. Lewis takes a culturally relativist view:

Primitive art is defined as the art of societies that can be regarded as primitive by virtue of type of social organisation. The term ‘primitive’, although it carries certain invidious connotations and has some confusing aspects, is appropriate, if used to refer to an ideal type of early society and then extend to later societies of that type . . . . (T)he definition of societies as primitive and civilized are a prerequisite ordering of social contexts of art so that future comparative analysis of art form can proceed (Lewis 1961:240).

Redfield and Lewis set up an oppositional framework between primitive and civilized for a paradigm in which small-scale, non-European societies are contextualised as primitive. Further evidence that this was the basic framework on which Western ideas of primitive art was structured appears below.

Although he acknowledges the symbolic and iconic values of art objects, in his discussion of whether particular primitive artifacts are art or non-art, Lewis concentrates his analysis on evidence of design, composition and visual appeal. In his summary, Lewis suggests that
art can be differentiated from non-art by the presence of elements of form whose total design emphasises visual appeal, and by reference to the use to which the maker intended the object to be put. Art objects can be defined as artifacts that function primarily by means of appeal to the visual sense (Lewis 1961:223).

In his view both durable art (objects) and transient art (performance): (i) make important symbols visible; (ii) show evidence of design and composition for visual appeal and, (iii) reveal the artist's intention, both in establishing function and meaning, using their knowledge of the culture to achieve this. However, Lewis makes only the briefest mention of what he calls 'transient' art and concentrates his distinction between art and non-art on sculptural forms. It becomes apparent that the selection of objects elevated to the category of 'primitive' art accorded with Western aesthetics, or in Lewis's phrase 'visual sense': sculpture, masks and paintings were established as categories in which artists from 'primitive' societies must work for their creative productions to be accorded the status of 'primitive' art.

FEATURES OF THE PARADIGM OF PRIMITIVE ART

The features of the paradigm of primitive art distinguished below are my conceptualisation of it. The claims made in the initial summary section on the features of the paradigm are broad. They are meant to be true of most, but not necessarily every, writer or theorist on primitive art. Following this
summary, evidence is presented for the features claimed to be part of the paradigm.

- **The assumption of Western cultural superiority**
  - This feature authorised collection formation and rights to display, own and/or retain custodianship over the cultural property of others.
  - Western scholars were considered to be the experts in the field and make the distinction between what is/is not art.
  - Western concepts of 'high' and 'low' cultures and 'high' and 'low' art were related to class, race and gender hierarchies established in Western culture.
  - The involvement of indigenous people in formation/documentation/publication of collections of their material culture for Western institutions was not required beyond the point of collection.

- **Gender bias**
  - The bias in Western collections of tribal art towards objects made or used by males reveal the gender hierarchy in Western culture as it existed in the period reviewed.
  - Also in the period 1900s to 1960s, European males dominated the disciplines of art history and anthropology. Despite the gender divisions in many of the societies studied, and likely restrictions on men attending womens' ceremonies, there is an observable bias by European male scholars, in their studies of indigenous art and society,
towards the roles of males in producing art and the use of males as informants.

- Women were considered to make only 'lesser arts' and women's roles in cultural activities were undervalued.

- **Art/artifact**
  - Significant paintings, sculpture and architecture were more readily accepted as 'art' in the West, because these types of objects were established as fine art in Western culture.
  - Culturally significant aesthetic objects dissimilar to Western art traditions were often neglected and/or classed as artifacts or crafts.

- **Object-centred nature of the paradigm**
  - Many Western studies were museum-based and detached from the originating society, rather than based on fieldwork informed by indigenous participants.
  - Art forms which did not involve objects (or involved ephemeral objects) were neglected; this often led to insufficient or distorted data on the nature of the art produced by a particular society and bias in the recording of what art was and who were regarded as artists.
  - Many objects were collected and analysed without full details of provenance.
  - Material culture specialists conducted much of their research from collections, establishing typologies of objects and regional styles. This impacted on what was
accepted as authentic - the correct form must resemble what had already been recorded by Europeans and recognised and accepted as the characteristic style of the culture area.

- **Anonymity of tribal artists**
  - Artforms of primitive societies were conceptualised as unchanging and highly conventionalised.
  - Art objects were considered to be the product of a culture, not an individual: in most instances, even when the provenance of an object was described in detail, the artists name was not recorded and no attempts were made to differentiate individual artist's work.
  - Primitive artists were not regarded as trained professionals, even when it was evident that art making was a highly specialised role.

- **The 'ethnographic present'**
  - Indigenous cultures were considered to be in a static or arrested stage of development: they existed in a timeless void, history-less and immobile.
  - Written records of indigenous societies were undertaken by Western scholars (for many indigenous societies only one written account exists): this tended to freeze Western perceptions of that society at the time of recording, perpetuating the myth of timelessness and unchangeability.
  - The definition of culture areas/regional styles by Western scholars also tended to freeze art forms in the frame of the 'ethnographic present'.
• **Commodification**
  - The value of objects became assessed in Western monetary terms on leaving the originating culture.
  - The demand in the Western art market for certain types of objects impacted on art production.

• **The romance of the primitive**
  - The fascination of some European artists with 'primitive' art led to the absorption of styles, techniques and motifs from indigenous art into avant-garde Western art.
  - 'Primitive' art stimulated the creativity of some avant-garde European artists, led to speculations about the 'primal self' and generated an emotive response to an idealised vision of tribal art and society.
  - Ideas of 'the primitive' were used to 'define by antithesis Western notions of civilization and modernity' (Lloyd 1985:130).

**DISCUSSION OF FEATURES OF THE PARADIGM**

In this section the features of the paradigm of 'primitive' art are discussed. Evidence from the Western literature is presented to substantiate that each of the features existed for some time in Western interpretations of 'primitive' art. The main objection to each of the features is raised and, if there has been a discernable shift in Western attitudes since the 1970s, the shift is noted. Further investigation and analysis of
changes in the relationships between South Pacific art and Western culture are the subject of later chapters.

Assumption of Western cultural superiority

The most serious objection is to the paradigm's claims that primitive societies and their art were culturally inferior to modern Western civilization. The pervasiveness and persistence of this claim affected all the other features noted in this paradigm. Definitions of primitive societies and their art which positioned them as inferior to Western civilization and its art abound in the literature on 'primitive' art. When scholars, commencing with Adrian Gerbrands in 1957, cautioned against the assumption of Western cultural superiority, it signalled the eventual abandonment of the paradigm of 'primitive' art. The low development/inferior culture definition of 'primitive' societies and their art was only one meaning of the term 'primitive' art. As Gerbrands (1957) and Berger (1980) pointed out, this led to some problems with its definition.

In his definition, Leonard Adam states that

(a society's) classification as 'primitive' . . . is based on the stage of their cultural development . . . . The best way, then, to define 'primitive' peoples would be to say that they comprise all those tribes who are outside the spheres of (a) modern European civilization, and (b) the great Oriental civilizations - in other words, peoples representing comparatively low cultural stages. The
theory is that these cultural stages are 'earlier' in the development of ideas (Adam 1940:25).

The fundamental reason for a society being deemed 'primitive' was considered to be its level of cultural development as measured against modern Western civilization (Redfield 1953). This did not prevent Western experts collecting 'primitive' art widely, and selecting 'masterpieces of primitive art' for exhibition in prestigious institutions (Rockefeller 1978). Erwin Christensen (1955) is one of a number of Western scholars who acknowledges the excellence of the artistry and craftsmanship in objects within the classification of 'primitive' art, asserting that, technically, the best examples of 'primitive' art equal the best European art, but that the artists are intellectually inferior:

Primitive craftsmanship at its best is superior . . . the carving is often excellent and the surface carefully finished. Even in difficult processes such as the casting of bronzes, as in Benin, the work is as well executed as in the best European practice (Christensen 1955:7-8).

But, as Christensen continues what may appear to us as the limitations of primitive art are not necessarily due to any lack of skill or industry, nor are they due to a lack of devotion or of a sense of beauty. They can be considered the by-products of man's slowly evolving intellectual powers.

John Berger's distinction between three uses of the term 'primitive' (quoted in Chapter 1) emphasises the historical and class distinctions of the term 'primitive' when applied to European art. Berger observes that the use of the term
'primitive art' was roughly commensurate with the era of European colonial dominion (Berger 1980:64-65). He stresses the distinction between professional (i.e. trained in European academic traditions) artists and European artists from different class backgrounds whose work would have been regarded as naive, folk or amateur. The distinction between professional and non-professional artists, based on training and expertise in European high art traditions and techniques, was a central reason for 'primitive' artists from tribal societies not gaining recognition as individual artists - they were not considered to be 'professional artists' in the European sense, as their art did not serve the 'European traditions of secular art'.

Said (1987:19) envisaged that one of the ways Western culture established 'intellectual authority' over the Orient was that it 'established canons of taste and value'. Similarly, the large-scale collection and subsequent interpretation of the material culture of so-called 'primitive' societies helped to establish Western culture's intellectual authority over them. Clifford considers collecting a 'crucial process of Western identity formation'. In his view (1988:225), Western society's preoccupation with collecting, 'led to an appropriation of the past and present cultures of the world to serve the West's own past and present identity'. As Clifford states

(a) history of anthropology and modern art needs to see in collecting both a form of Western subjectivity and a changing set of powerful institutional practices. The history of collections (not limited to museums) is central to an understanding of how those social groups that invented anthropology and modern art have appropriated exotic things, facts and meanings.
facts and meanings. (Appropriate "to make one's own", from the Latin proprius, "proper", "property") (Clifford 1988:226).

Once collected in the field, sometimes with excellent documentation but usually not, tribal producers lost control of their objects which were subsequently interpreted, displayed or sold according to the conventions of Western culture. From the nineteenth century a great number of the tribal objects which flooded into Western countries were acquired by people who had little interest in art or anthropology - initially seamen, then government officials, traders and missionaries. Collecting was often unsystematic and the frequent lack of documentation is often traceable to this.¹ In the nineteenth century, as European influence expanded, the objects collected reflected the primary concerns of those who acquired them.

The frequency of particular classes of items in Australian museums does not reflect the frequency with which they would occur in the originating culture. Instead, collections represent the preoccupations of the collector. For example, the subjection of indigenous peoples was a basic preoccupation of military and government officials in the South Pacific region during the

¹ The verb 'to collect' has a depersonalised connotation, as zoological, botanical and archaeological specimens can also be collected without necessarily requiring any inter-personal relationship to be undertaken in order to collect them (Beran, pers. comm. 1992). Works of art may otherwise be purchased, acquired, or commissioned, all activities which require the transaction to be detailed. In the European tradition the identity of the artist is of paramount importance. When applied to non-Western art, collecting suggests that the paramount interest was the formation of the collection itself, with the fame for collecting something rare attributable to the Western collector. It is interesting that a collector could give his name to a new discovery in the zoological or botanical domain; in the human domain a collected object may gain fame by association with a discerning collector. For example, in auction catalogues the sequence of ownership by collectors is an important detail of a tribal art object's provenance.
early period of colonisation. The collection made by Sir Hubert Murray when he was Lieutenant Governor of Papua (1904-39) included 1,333 weapons in a total of 2,252 objects reflecting his preoccupation with pacification and maintaining law and order (Bolton & Specht 1979).

Throughout the colonial era, tribal elders or artmakers did not participate in the documentation of material once it left their communities. In 1956 a Nigerian sculptor, Ben Enwonwu, summed up the situation then existing for African artists:

The science of anthropology has been used to create an intellectual barrier which makes it most difficult for most Africans to be considered qualified to play an important part in the development and preservation of their native art... he faces the humiliation of having to listen to lectures on African art in foreign art galleries and museums. He visits foreign museums in order to see a collection of the art of his country... This aspect of the problem is cultural, emotional and political (Enwonwu 1956:9-10).

The Maori scholar, Hirini (Sidney) Moko Mead noted that Western interest in primitive art did not necessitate a face to face contact between the art-maker and the eventual audience or consumer of the object in the West. The vast number of collections of indigenous art assembled and researched in Western institutions had given rise to thousands of professional opportunities for Western ‘experts’ in this area. Mead points out that

the association (with tribal art objects) can be by vocation, which accounts for nearly all of the art gallery, museum and university personnel; or commercial, which includes all of the collectors and
some of the curators . . . . The persons associated in this way may not, in fact, want to become involved with the people of Oceania. Their interest is job related (Mead 1990:270).

In this section the claim of the superiority of Western civilization has been identified in various authors' definitions of 'primitive' societies and their art. Intellectual superiority was assumed in the collection and interpretation of 'primitive' art by Western scholars and by the fact that the indigenous creator had no control over the objects or the interpretations offered about them once they were in Western hands.

The first shift away from 'primitive' art being the most appropriate conceptualisation of indigenous art in Western culture was undertaken by some authors in the 1950s who cautioned against making generalisations validating Western civilization superior in every respect of social organisation, economic development, technical achievement and religious belief (Firth 1951, Gerbrands 1957). In 1957 Gerbrands raised several objections to the use of the term 'primitive' in relation to what he called 'the art of the autochthonous population of Negro-Africa, Australia, the Pacific area and certain forms of art in America, Asia and Indonesia'. He disagreed that small-scale societies were culturally inferior to any other form of social organisation. So far as the use of the term 'primitive' was concerned, he dismissed the claim that it represented a low development stage of societies and their art. Gerbrands also found that the term 'primitive' confusing in the history of art, noting that certain pre-Renaissance art styles are called 'primitive'; as well, the work of folk artists and modern naive
painters such as Henri (le Douanier) Rousseau were also described as 'primitive' (Gerbrands 1957:11-12).

In the period of decolonisation, shifts in Western attitudes towards indigenous people, in particular the development of policies of access and equity in Western cultural institutions, began to take place.¹ For African studies, this turnaround had its beginnings in the early 1960s; as Vigini Grotanelli noted, the best studies being undertaken then were those where the African or Western scholar was the interpreter or mouthpiece of the African informant or artist, because

African sculpture belongs to a living humanity that has not yet delivered it up to the archives of a dead past. There are two of us looking at it - white man and black - and what matters, as Roland Colin has put it, is not so much “to see separately, even if we see well. What counts, above all, is to see together” (Grotanelli 1961:16).

In the 1980s, the Museum fur Voelkerkunde, Basel, Switzerland, together with some German ethnographic museums, undertook an extensive review of the Sepik material held in their collections. ‘Salvage’ anthropology and art history, which recognise that greater benefits can accrue to both Western and indigenous cultures if information about indigenous objects in Western collections is shared, is attracting more attention since some pioneering attempts in the late 1970s-1980s at this kind of work (Crawford 1981, Corbin 1988). In undertaking ‘salvage’ anthropology, field parties return records of collected material to the originating

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¹ In the South Pacific region this process began in 1962 when Western Samoa achieved its independence.
communities to obtain further source data and oral histories for it and, to some degree, to return information that had been gathered in the past (Kaufmann 1984).

Following a seminal UNESCO-sponsored conference, 'Museums and Indigenous People', held in Adelaide in 1978, Australian museums began to liaise more closely with indigenous communities and employ Aboriginal staff (see Chapter 10).1 It has increasingly become museum policy to encourage the participation of indigenous people with collections and exhibitions. For example Christopher Anderson (1990a:31-42) describes how negotiations between Aboriginal elders and South Australian Museum staff have taken place since the mid-1980s regarding the repatriation and/or safe-keeping of sacred objects in the museum collection according to Aboriginal requirements.

Gender bias

The paradigm of primitive art provides further evidence of the dominance of Western male scholars and their interests in art history. Since the 1970s feminist art historians, including Griselda Pollock, Germaine Greer and Roszika Parker, have exposed the almost total exclusion of female artists, the types of artworks they created and the role of women in art from the

1 In Australia the beginning of the shift is discernable in the outcome of the 1978 UNESCO sponsored conference, Museums and Indigenous Peoples. By 1993, the Year of the Worlds Indigenous Peoples, the Council of Museums Associations of Australia issued a policy document and directives for all Australian museums covering the employment, access and participation of indigenous people in museum activities.
histories and other literature on Western art since the Renaissance (Greer 1979; Parker and Pollock 1981, 1987; Broud and Garrard 1982). It is not the intention of this thesis to review the gender bias in Western art history, but to point out that a related phenomenon occurred in Western interpretations of ‘primitive’ art.

So far as ‘primitive’ art is concerned, the gender bias may be located in statements about the (even lower) cultural status of women and their art in so-called ‘primitive’ societies, in the concentration on men’s objects in Western collections of indigenous art and the neglect of fine objects made by women, and in the fact that the majority of Europeans involved in the collection and interpretation of ‘primitive’ are were men. As Maureen MacKenzie notes in her study of string bags and gender in central New Guinea

Weiner (1982), and subsequently Strathern (1988), have both pointed out the western assumptions which have led generations of anthropologists to concentrate on male activity, and to consider the study of women peripheral to studies of society. The imposition of such eurocentric values within the discipline of anthropology inevitably led to the presumption by Melanesianists that the ubiquitous bilum, so generally produced by women, was but a woman’s thing . . . wrongly presumed to represent only the feminine in a male dominated world it was not considered worthy of sustained anthropological research (MacKenzie 1991:21).¹

¹ MacKenzie (1991:21-22) discussed Weiner’s (1977, 1980, 1982) case for correcting male bias in ethnographic enquiry by questioning the male-centred assumption which restricts the notion of power to the political realm. Weiner’s analysis of Trobriand Islands women’s ‘seemingly insignificant banana leaf bundles’ demonstrates that male observers failed to see women’s centrality in Trobriand exchange. Mackenzie says that ‘in her reassessment of the relations between the sexes Weiner highlights the
It is admitted that indigenous societies in the South Pacific region are often patriarchal and there is a gender division in the kinds of objects men and women make, with the objects made by men frequently being the most visually spectacular. However, the concentration on men’s objects in Western collections of indigenous art is an important feature of the paradigm and is a consequence of male domination of the field of art in Western society until the 1970s.¹

Elaborating on the scope of objects which can be described as ‘primitive’ art, Douglas Fraser (1962) suggested that ‘primitive man’ himself discriminated between those objects which are ‘practical and secular’ and those which are of ‘high spiritual value’. He attempts to justify the selection of what types of objects may be classified (in European terms) as art and those classes of objects which would not be considered as art by generalising on the gender basis of production:

It is true, of course, that primitive man, not having a word for art as such, would not trouble himself over what is and what is not ‘Art’. But in his daily life he almost always differentiates between objects produced by a slow, repetitive process, such as weaving or pottery (crafts), and other objects of paramount significance for his culture.

primacy of the female role in biological and cosmological reproduction in Trobriand matrilineal society'.

¹What has been exhibited and published as exemplary objects of ‘primitive’ art verifies the select range considered by Western experts to come within this category. For example, in Linton and Wingert’s Arts of the South Seas (1946), 222 objects are illustrated, 189 of which are sculpted objects made by men for ritual or ceremonial purposes. Of the other 33 objects only the 3 pieces of tapa cloth, two feather cloaks and one pot are traditionally the work of women. Many subsequent publications illustrate similar selections.
He relegated craft work to his inferiors (i.e., women); only men, as a rule, practiced carving and painting (Fraser 1962:13).

Fraser states that women made only ‘the lesser arts, usually called crafts’. Fraser does not support his generalisation about the gender division in art production in ‘primitive’ societies with evidence from one or more societies researched. The overall assumption in statements such as Fraser’s reveal the bias in European men’s attitudes towards what may be valued as ‘high art’. It also reveals ignorance of women’s creativity and the significant contribution of women’s art to the social and cultural well-being of indigenous cultures.

The majority of Europeans involved in the processes of collection and selection of primitive art were men, who generally chose as their informants the senior men of tribal societies. The fieldwork method of anthropology was really established by Bronislaw Malinowski in his study of Massim culture in the 1910s to 1920s. Margaret Mead, who went to Samoa in 1925, was one of three exceptional women trained by Boas in the 1920s, but only Mead worked in the Pacific. From the 1970s many of the exceptional studies in the fields of cultural anthropology and art history in the South Pacific region have been undertaken by women,¹ and now a significant proportion of the profession are women.

Prior to the 1920s ethnographers working in the South Pacific had virtually all been men, as were the considerable

¹ Among them Nancy Munn, Annette Weiner, Catherine Berndt, Shirley Campbell, Margaret Mackenzie, Patricia May, Margaret Tuckson, Georgina Beier, Pamela Rosi.
majority of those of other professions who worked in the field and collected artifacts either seriously or as a hobby, whether missionaries, government officials, sea captains, planters and traders. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was extremely rare for women to go on voyages of exploration. One exception was Rose de Freycinet who, in 1817, smuggled herself aboard the French vessel Uranie in men's clothing so she could accompany her husband, Captain Louis de Freycinet, on his 'voyage of curiosity' around the Pacific. Part of de Freycinet's mission was to observe 'the habits of strange people' and make collections for French scientists (Bassett 1962). Fifty years later an Englishwoman, Lady Brassey, made several voyages to the Pacific on the Sunbeam and acquired her own collection of Pacific artifacts. Queen Emma, who established a trading empire from a base at Mioko in the Duke of York Group (then part of German New Guinea) from 1878-1907, is another exception. Emma Forsayth, her de facto husband, Captain Thomas Farrell, and her sister's husband, Richard Parkinson, collected widely and many objects were acquired by them for the Australian Museum (Encyclopaedia of Papua New Guinea 1972, entry 'Queen Emma'). Elizabeth Kramer accompanied her ethnographer husband Augustus Kramer to Neu Mecklenberg (New Ireland) between 1901 and 1903 and wrote a book of her observations of women's affairs, with extensive footnotes by her husband on men's ceremonies (Kramer 1906).

Most women coming to the remote areas of the South Pacific in the late nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century were the wives of missionaries, government
officials and plantation owners or other settlers. Some European women operated independently and set up their own trading or plantation enterprise, usually following the death of their husband: for example, 'Ma' Lumley established a hostelry and trading venture (including purchasing and selling arts and crafts) in the Trobriand Islands which she ran from the early 1900s to the 1960s (Lumley pers. comm. to Renata Cochrane, 1962).

There are still many female aspects of art that are little understood. For example, James Ritchie perceives that closer studies of the use of tapa and fine mats in Polynesian cultures should reveal strong female symbolism in the wrapping and binding of persons and sacred objects to enclose and protect their mana (Ritchie pers. comm. 1988). In Tonga painted tapa (ngatu) and fine mats, both made by women, are the most esteemed objects and no ceremonial occasion would pass without their display and presentation (Cowling 1988; see Chapter 5).

The neglect of fine objects made by women denies their significant contribution to the social, economic and aesthetic values of their respective cultures. The commonality of weaving to all South Pacific cultures and the sheer number of objects woven in a variety of fibres, from the simplest functional container to the finest ceremonial basket, shows that the art form of weaving is deserving of better attention and more discerning comment than it has so far received in Western books and collections on the art forms of the South Pacific region. Some literature on gender roles and objects
made by women is now being published, such as Maureen MacKenzie's book on string bags and gender in central New Guinea (MacKenzie 1991).

Some new studies of traditional and innovative forms of weaving in Central Arnhem Land attest to the complexity of the imagery, forms and materials of mats and other woven objects, as well as acknowledging the technical virtuosity of the women weavers. The recounting of one of the major creation stories, that of the Djan'kawu Sisters, provides the ritual sequence for the conical mats made in Central Arnhem Land. On their travels the Djan'kawu Sisters took with them a variety of sacred objects which have secret symbolic associations and the conical mat was one of them. Some anthropologists, notably Donald Thompson and Catherine Berndt, and missionaries Harold and Ella Shepherdson, had recorded information about the functional uses of conical mats (carrying babies, protecting small children from sun and mosquitoes and being worn as a skirt, and noted their occasional use in ceremony, and these references to mats in ceremonies and rituals bear further investigation (Hamby 1993).

A shift in Western attitudes towards the recognition of the value and significance of women's art forms is now apparent. In recent years some curators have admitted that women's art forms and their role in South Pacific societies have been undervalued. Jim Specht wrote in the catalogue for Pieces of Paradise, a major exhibition of Melanesian art at the Australian Museum in 1988 that
(t)he Murik people are perhaps best known for the carvings made by men. As so often has happened in the Pacific, outsiders collecting artefacts have concentrated on the spectacular male artefacts, and the contribution of women to social well-being and survival has been largely ignored. This reflects in part the dominance of male collectors, both privately and in museums, as well as the dominantly male interests of anthropology until recent years (Specht 1988:42).

Specht included fine baskets and other objects by women from the Murik Lakes district in the exhibition, detailing how these items were integrated into the social life and economic well-being of the people.

In 1989 the Australian Museum featured an exhibition, The Woven Image, of women's weavings from the Aboriginal community of Maningrida in Central Arnhem Land, and in 1994 an expanded version of this exhibition was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney. Another indication that major Australian art galleries and other cultural institutions now regard Aboriginal women's weavings more seriously, and accord them the status of art objects, is demonstrated by the first acquisitions of fine examples of circular pandanus mats by the National Gallery of Australia and five State art galleries in Australia in 1993 to 1994, following a travelling exhibition Buyu: Weavings from Ramingining, which presented fine mats as evidence of women's virtuosity within this form.
This feature of the paradigm of primitive art further demonstrates that Western collectors and scholars of 'primitive' art tended to select 'masterpieces' from among certain categories of objects, in particular spectacular ritual and ceremonial objects, masks, figurative sculptures and other carved objects such as canoe prows, facades and carved posts forming part of the structures of ritual architecture, whether spirit houses, men's cult structures and the facade boards of chief's yam houses. Weaving or other fibrework, featherwork and pottery were generally designated as artifacts.

The South Pacific art forms which have been most readily assimilated into the Western art world are those which, from the Western connoisseur's point of view, are visually compelling, associated with power and prestige, and rare. This selection does not adequately represent the full artistic repertoire of South Pacific peoples, nor does it sufficiently recognise the aesthetic and cultural values that particular South Pacific cultures might attach to a class of objects or a creative practice which Western culture has not yet recognised as art.

The essence of the Western understanding of craft objects is that they are utilitarian and functional. The use value of craft is opposed to the greater cultural value ascribed to 'fine' art, which is considered to have greater aesthetic, intellectual and monetary value. In many South Pacific societies, shell valuables, fine mats and tapa cloth are items of high prestige and ceremonial use (see Chapter 5). In their determination of what constitutes 'primitive' art, Western connoisseurs and
curators concentrated on their own aesthetic values, often ignorant of, or overlooking, the aesthetic and cultural values of South Pacific societies.

There is a strong correlation between the objects made by women and the types of objects considered to be craft, rather than art. The Aboriginal curator, Hetti Perkins, commented on the misinterpretation of objects resulting from their inappropriate classification as craft objects. Perkins perceives that Aboriginal women have faced double barriers of gender and object classification to the acceptance of their artwork:

Women's art is often relegated to the anonymous sphere of "craft" and considered purely utilitarian or, if working in collaboration with a male artist, the contribution of women may be ignored. In the past, collectors who documented Aboriginal paintings rarely acknowledged other domains of art that are primarily the domain of women. This is problematic for weavers, for example, whose art, an essential part of Aboriginal society, requires considerable skill, patience and labour. In this context it is difficult to justify labelling a bark painting "art" and a dilly bag "craft". Both have aesthetic appeal, functional purpose and may be produced commercially. Significantly, both items may be used in a secret/sacred ceremonial context as can many items which would otherwise be considered craft and therefore alienated from their ceremonial capacity. It has been argued that the art/craft categorisation is a result of Euro/American art theory which misinterprets Aboriginal culture and imposes preconceived hierarchies and totally inappropriate associations on Aboriginal art (Perkins 1991:7).
Objects from tribal societies have travelled along a complex path to reach the status of art in the West; the re-directions which have occurred along the way reflect changes in Western ideology towards what constitutes art as well as changes in Western attitudes towards indigenous peoples. For example, Clifford (1988:224, see diagram Ch.1) comments that cultural objects from tribal societies have been regarded in the West as either scientific (cultural) artifacts or aesthetic objects, but that these imagined barriers break down as objects move from the domain of artifact into that of art.

Susan Vogel (1988:12) comments that, 'the category of African objects defined as art has been steadily expanding throughout the twentieth century. Virtually all the African art works we now know were once classed as artifacts. The problem of distinguishing between the two categories has proven resistant to clear-cut solutions'. She illustrates this through the selection of objects in the Art/Artifact exhibition (Centre for African Studies, 1988), each of which has been differently interpreted by Western scholars over time as artifacts or art objects, indicative of how Western perceptions and tastes have shifted over the past few decades.

The emergence of indigenous curators and critics, who are knowledgable about their own culture as well as being trained in Western art history and aesthetics, has challenged Western preconceptions about indigenous art (and craft). Art criticism by indigenous writers has introduced a new range of approaches and intellectual challenges to the appreciation and interpretation of indigenous art forms.
The object-centred nature of the paradigm

Several features of the object-centred nature of the paradigm are discernable. Firstly, Western collectors of 'primitive' art concentrated on acquiring objects. Their records generally included descriptions and photographs of ceremonies and other events where the objects they collected, or similar ones, were used. But when exhibitions were devised for Western museums, only objects were used to represent the indigenous society to the Western audience. This ignored the importance of ephemeral designs, such as body decoration and ground constructions. For example, an exhibition representing one of the Central Australian Aboriginal cultures which did not include these two ephemeral elements, would misconstrue the nature of their art.

The second feature is that objects were given more status than the artists who produced them. This feature has a strong correlation with the anonymity of artists (see next section). But here it will be demonstrated that objects and their typographies were the central focus of material culture studies and exhibitions.

Western culture developed its interest in primitive art from two distinct bases: ethnography,¹ and modernist, or avant-garde art movements which emerged in Paris and Dresden.² Both

¹ The scientific study of non-Western societies was generally called ethnography in the nineteenth century. The term ethnographic museum or collection is still used. Anthropology is now the preferred term for the study of humans as social beings.

² The interests of European avant-garde artists are discussed in the later section, 'The Romance of the Primitive'.
interests developed around the same time, essentially from the turn of the century. In both sets of interests, only a limited range of objects were recognised as 'primitive' art from the mass of objects from the material culture of tribal societies which were available for scrutiny by Western experts.

In the first years of this century, the 'father of American anthropology', Franz Boas, developed new theories and methods for the study of objects of material culture which acknowledged (anonymous) primitive artist's knowledge of materials, techniques and functions. Boas analysed the 'formal elements in art', commencing one of the major tasks of material culture studies. He deemed the selection of finely wrought objects he examined to be 'primitive' art, and possibly coined the term (Boas 1927). Following Boas' example, material culture studies flourished as a branch of anthropology, establishing typographies of objects, analysing motifs and styles. In contrast to the more emotive responses of European artists, the ethnographers' approach was detached and analytical. It was believed that the study of the material culture of a society (dwellings, means of transport, utensils, weapons, ornaments, instruments, ritual objects, etc.) would provide information about mankind's social, cultural and technical development. Analysing data compiled from a high number of specimens enabled qualitative and quantitative criteria to be developed around the geographical distribution of objects and distinctive ethnic characteristics.
In many instances anthropologists worked on material they had collected, and sought information about, in the field. But considerably more research was undertaken on collections in Western museums and universities, far removed from the country of origin of the objects, sometimes giving rise to speculative theories.¹ For example, evidence accumulated from the study of primitive art was used to establish diffusionist studies, such as that which sought to prove the widespread influence of motifs from the early Chinese ‘Dongson culture’ throughout the South-East Asia and Pacific region (Barnard 1970).

Material culture specialists who have described Oceanic art in terms of the characteristic art styles of particular culture groups have made a valuable contribution by establishing typographies of objects (Linton and Wingert 1946; Buhler, Barrow and Mountford 1962; Peter S. Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa) 1927, 1932; Kaeppler 1979 and others). The difficulty created by typographic analysis is that, once published, the pieces selected to represent a characteristic style come to represent it in perpetuity, adding to the feature of immobility and timelessness ascribed to primitive art (discussed in the section ‘The Anonymity of Artists and the Ethnographic Present’). As previously explained these two features, the object-centred nature of the paradigm and the anonymity of artists, are

¹ Allan and Louise Hanson demonstrate that, so far as the study of Maori art was concerned (especially on recurrent motifs in Maori art such as the manaia and the double spiral), while many scholars were meticulous others developed quite speculative theories about the origin and diffusion of the motifs (Hanson and Hanson 1988:185-90).
correlative and some aspects of one feature are also applicable to the other.

The experience of collecting and identifying material culture objects across the Pacific region revealed a distribution of cultures which produced sculpted objects and others which did not. There was a tendency to elevate, in Western consciousness, those indigenous cultures which produced quantities of sculpted objects such as the Sepik and Massim cultures in New Guinea. Cultures which did not produce spectacular aesthetic objects (in European terms), like Central Australian Aboriginal peoples whose ceremonial art entailed the construction of ephemeral forms accompanied by the performance of dance and song cycles, remained virtually unappreciated as 'art' in Western terms until the 1970s.¹

The object-centred nature of the paradigm is also revealed in the manner of selecting and presenting works for exhibition. Europeans, highly trained and eminent in their field, selected 'important' objects for exhibitions, but in the display and the accompanying scholarly catalogues did not make any reference to the individual artists who made the important objects (see further explanation of this feature of the paradigm in the later section 'The Anonymity of Artists and the Ethnographic Present'). This tendency can be traced from major exhibitions

¹Despite the ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in Central Australia from the 1890s by Baldwin Spencer, Spencer and Gillen, C. Strehlow, T.G.H. Strehlow, C.P. Mountford and others which revealed the complexity of their societies, Aboriginal people from this area were generally considered to be low-ranking in their level of cultural development. Only since the 1970s, with the efflorescence of their contemporary art movement, has the depth of Central Australian Aboriginal culture become widely appreciated in the West.
of tribal art dating back to 1946 with Ralph Linton and Paul Wingert's *Art of the South Seas*, to Douglas Newton, Peter Gathercole and Adrienne Kaeppler, *Art of the Pacific Islands* (1979), and William Rubin's *'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinities of the Tribal and the Modern* (1984). These exhibitions were all held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the first two assembled by anthropologists reflecting the perspectives of their discipline, the third concerned with the influence of indigenous objects on the development of modern Western art. Several features of the object-centred nature of the paradigm are discernable in these three exhibitions:\footnote{The three exhibitions described indicate general tendencies, as it is impossible in this space to go into further detail.} Firstly, the emphasis on presenting objects to represent a culture, no ephemeral art was exhibited; secondly, many of the objects exhibited lacked details of provenance but were selected on the basis of qualities deemed pertinent by the curators; thirdly, interpretations of them were made by Western scholars rather than indigenous informants.

Since the late 1970s a shift is discernable in the attitudes of Australian museums towards indigenous people and the collections of indigenous material they have acquired (see Chapter 10). In recent years Australian museums have encouraged the participation of Aborigines and South Pacific Islanders in the development and exhibition of artworks from their various cultures. There are several ways in which this has occurred.
(i) There has been intensive consultation with the communities and individuals whose artworks are to be displayed, such as with the international travelling exhibition *Dreamings: the Art of Aboriginal Australia* formulated by the South Australian Museum in 1988.

(ii) Aborigines have been employed as curators and education officers and Aboriginal Advisory Panels for museums have been formed.

(iii) Ephemeral art forms have been recognised. For example Warlpiri (Central Australian) ground constructions have been included in *Dreamings* (1988) in America and *Magiciens de la Terre* at the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris, 1989.

(iv) Indigenous artists have been invited to attend exhibition openings, to give workshops in conjunction with exhibitions, and to take positions as artists-in-residence for the duration of exhibitions. The policy of the Flinders University Art Museum is a good example of the participatory role of indigenous people in its exhibition program.

(v) Studies of stylistic variation, largely museum-based, eventually led to studies of the artist in his society.¹ This has awakened the interests of anthropologists and art historians in the individuality of the artist in indigenous societies, and the individual artist's relationship to collective styles.

¹ Studies of the role of indigenous artists within their own society have generally considered male artists (Gerbrands 1967, Dark 1984, Beran forthcoming). Often there are not enough provenanced objects in collections to undertake this endeavour retrospectively for women artists: one exception is R.F. Thompson (1961).
The anonymity of artists and the 'ethnographic present'

Two closely related features of the Western paradigm of primitive art were the concept of the ethnographic present and the presumed anonymity of tribal artists. The anonymity of artists implies that an individual's creativity was unimportant. Most scholars of 'primitive' art believed that conformity to art styles meant artists had no scope to create, therefore it was not important to record their names. The concept of the 'ethnographic present' implies that societies were static and unchanging, so was their art.

These views resulted from the physical distance and intellectual detachment of the majority of Western scholars, artists and connoisseurs from indigenous artists and their societies. As well, for at least the first half of this century, the records of Western scholars were considered to provide the most reliable information on other cultures and it was not considered necessary to gather further information from tribal informants once this task had been undertaken by a European. Delivering the Lugard Lecture at the African Centre, Boston University in 1961, Vigihi Grottanelli deplored this state of affairs in the following words

African art is being studied in handbooks, monographs, or museum glass cases, like that of extinct or buried civilizations; and, but for a few exceptions, this study has the anatomical character of an autopsy rather than that of a physiological analysis of a living organism . . . .

Almost all evaluations of these art forms have been made by Europeans or Americans without paying any attention to the criteria and
judgements of Africans themselves. Either the reactions of the African concerned were not, and could no longer be known - as in the case of objects of uncertain origin or collected at an earlier date: or it was thought that the Africans' opinions on the subject were irrelevant in principle, the refined subtleties of art criticism being the exclusive preserve and monopoly of sophisticated Western culture (Grotanelli 1961:5).

There are many South Pacific societies for which there is only one written record of the culture available in Western literature. Writing on a similar tendency in studies of American Indian societies, Ruth Phillips noted that:

nearly all were recorded by non-natives, then edited, censored and transmitted by the author's own form of discourse . . . . Most seriously . . . the majority of the canonical texts to which modern scholars continually return in order to perform their art historical labour of explication and exegesis . . . froze oral traditions at one moment in their long history of development and change (Phillips 1989:7).

The lack of source material available for interpretation and the reliance on what had been recorded by Europeans in the field, resulted in the perpetuation of the myth of the 'ethnographic present'. The 'ethnographic present', can be described as a static timeframe in which 'traditional societies' were immobilised. The highly conventionalised, traditional world of small-scale tribal societies was also understood to contrast with the dynamism and modernity of Western civilization.

The designation of culture areas and the concentration on defining characteristic regional art styles assisted in the
immobilisation of objects in the ethnographic present. As Linton and Wingert (1946:91) wrote, culture areas were considered ‘a convenient device to organise the exceedingly complex material into more or less homogenous units’ which was ‘based on the character of the objects themselves’.

When it is recognised that the aesthetic material of indigenous cultures had such a profound effect on European thought and vision, the concept of the anonymity of indigenous artists and the relative lack of engagement of European specialists with indigenous communities can be seen to reflect the eurocentric nature of the paradigm. Many European artists, scholars, collectors and the public have been largely unaware of the individuals who created the objects they admire. As Harry Beran writes

Western students of tribal art took very little interest in individual tribal artists until the 1950s (Fagg 1963:119-21, Gerbranda 1967a, Price 1989). Until then Westerners interested in traditional tribal art mistakenly assumed that the identity of tribal artists is not important, even in their own cultures, and made virtually no attempt to obtain the names, let alone study the identities, of the creators of objects they collected, housed in museums, exhibited and published. Individual artists were assumed not to matter since it was thought they produced the objects required by the traditions of their society without significant personal creativity (Beran, forthcoming:3).¹

¹ Beran cites the comprehensive and prestigious exhibition and catalogue Art of the South Pacific Islands (Gathercole 1979) as evidence of the neglect of individual artists. He notes that ‘not a single artist is noted in the catalogue, almost certainly because nothing about the creators of the objects has been recorded by their collectors’ (Beran forthcoming:3).
Reasons for the anonymity of the indigenous artist may be traced to three causes:

(i) Indigenous societies were regarded as communal, leading to the assumption that one could not differentiate artists or their works. This was compounded by the repetition of objects in conventional styles. As Fraser (1962) commented, 'to an untrained eye they appeared to be all the same'. Fraser reveals the attitude of Western scholars, to whom the identity of individual artists was not important, in his following remarks:

(b)ound to a long, strict tradition, the primitive artist repeats again and again only that version of reality accepted in his society. His symbols are perpetuated because they have the weight of the past behind them. Neither a spontaneous, emotional outpouring nor a mystical, intuitive creation, primitive art is an endless incantation of given visual form (Fraser 1962:7).

(ii) Indigenous artists were not regarded as professional artists in the same sense as European artists.

(iii) Western connoisseurs have consistently made their own judgements about discreet objects, trusting their own evaluative acumen rather than that of the objects' creators.

There is another significant consideration surrounding the anonymity of indigenous art objects. Western cultural practice insists that an artist's name and the date of creation appear on (Western) artist's works, around which a whole cluster of ideas is formed - individual creativity, authenticity, value, historical place and so on. Sally Price (1989:60) perceived that, 'a case can be made that the "anonymity" (and its corollary, the
"timelessness") of Primitive Art owes much to the needs of Western observers to feel that their society represents a uniquely superior achievement in the history of humanity'. As well as the Western cultural superiority feature of the paradigm of primitive art (see earlier section on this feature) I refer back to Berger's explanation that only professional artists, trained in the European tradition, were recognised in Western culture: 'primitive' artists, whether untrained European peasants producing naive art, or African sculptors, were not 'professionally trained' in the European sense, therefore they were not recognised as artists.

Many 'anonymous' works were, in fact, made by historically significant artists. Although studies of individual carvers are still very rare for Melanesian art, Gerbrands (1967) studied the individual style of eight Asmat woodcarvers and Beran (forthcoming) has traced over seventy items as the handwork of the nineteenth century carver Mutuaga from the Suau district in south-east Papua. In Australia, Ivan P. Haskovec and Hillary Sullivan (1989:57-74) established that the recently deceased Aboriginal painter Najomboli was responsible for a number of significant rock paintings in the Alligator River region. There are now quite a few studies of individual African, American Indian and Maori artists. Some of these studies also show that the identity of the creator of artworks was important to their indigenous users (Gerbrands 1967, Holm 1983).

One argument for the lack of artist's names being recorded at the time of collection is that it would have been difficult to obtain and assess the correct name of the maker. Where
different concepts of ownership and authorship exist, the patron, the individual or group who commissioned an object may be described as having claim to an object. In indigenous societies major cultural objects are often commissioned. Investigators who do not know this would not, in their inquiries, make the distinction between 'who made it?' and 'who had it made'? Therefore, if they had inquired as to who made it, they would sometimes have been given the name of the patron instead of the maker. But investigators were not, until recently, interested in the maker's identity. If they had tried to find out something about the maker, they would soon enough have discovered the patron/maker relationship, as investigators in the field have in the 1970s to 1980s.

The claim that early collectors of artworks could not have discovered the names of their creators, can be discounted given that other lengthy and quite specific details of provenance have been obtained directly from informants about a particular object. For example, the canoe prow illustrated in Seligman (1909:34) has information about precisely where it was collected, its function and even the names in the local language describing certain motifs or features of the particular prow. As the role of carvers was important in the culture of this area, in particular in the making of canoe prows, information about who made a particular canoe prow would have been available. On two occasions in the 1970s Chief Narabutal (also spelt Narabutau) of the Trobriand Islands identified the individual carvers of a significant number of canoe prows at the Papua New Guinea Museum (Narabutal 1975, Narabutau 1979).
A distinct shift is observable in Western scholarship to the recognition of indigenous artists as individual creators. There are an increasing number of studies of artists who lived in the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, revealing how their body of work represented both the characteristic style of their culture and times, and went beyond it (including Fagg 1963; Holm 1983; Gerbrands 1967; Beran forthcoming; Neich 1990a, 1990b; Haskovec and Sullivan 1989; Sayers 1994). This is an aspect of 'salvage' art history, meaning that scholars have to reinvestigate and reinterpret old records, collection data and objects using both Western sources and local knowledge in order to redress the misinterpretations of earlier Western scholarship.

In Australia the documentation of Aboriginal art and individual artists is now undertaken quite thoroughly. For example there are twenty-nine Aboriginal arts centres in remote areas of the Northern Territory, each having the responsibility to assist artists with the promotion of their art. Documentation of each painting, including registering, photographing and obtaining the artist's statement about the painting, as well as updating the artist's biography, are one of the essential functions of these arts centres.

**Commodification**

The commodification of objects of primitive art, especially those classified in the Western art-culture system as masterpieces, is another feature of the paradigm of primitive
art. The different values that can be attached to culturally significant objects are discussed in Chapter 4. But it is necessary here to introduce the fact that objects from indigenous societies became assessed in terms of their monetary worth at the point of their leaving the originating society to circulate in the West. As they continue to circulate in the art market, their monetary value is re-assessed periodically, for example, when an object comes up for auction.

Over the past 200 years or so, cultural objects from South Pacific societies have been acquired at their source by European voyagers, missionaries, traders, government officials, anthropologists, dealers and tourists. Their destinations have been public or private collections in a variety of situations. Many objects remain in the original collections while others have changed hands a number of times, often becoming well known examples of their type in the process.

The introduction of indigenous art into the world of desirable collectables, is exemplified by its inclusion in the categories of art auctioned by Sothebys and Christies since the 1960s (Faith 1985). Nicholas Faith comments that leading auction houses had had some specialised sales since the turn of the century, for example Japanese artifacts, fine lace and textiles, Oriental rugs, and so on. But it was Sotheby Parke-Bernet’s sale of Helena Rubenstein's African art collection which, as Faith (1985:150) says, 'heralded an increasing interest in the artefacts of supposedly 'primitive' societies, which was to bring Sotheby Parke-Bernet, like everyone else in
the trade, equal shares of criticism and profit in the following years'.

Once primitive art objects became important commodities in the art market and prestigious cultural objects in Western museums, collectors occasionally disregarded the objections of the indigenous community to parting with a significant object in their zeal to obtain important objects, or deliberately misrepresented what they were exporting to museums or customs authorities in the country of origin. Flagrant breaches of trust and outright theft were committed by European collectors, such as the instance quoted by Price from Michel Leiris' diary (Price 1989:69-73). Warren d'Azevedo (1989:81-82) admits to thefts being committed by himself, revealing the overwhelming desire to have treasured objects in one's possession. Both Leiris and d'Azevedo subsequently regretted such behaviour (d'Azevedo 1989:82). In Papua New Guinea in 1967, last-minute notification to the authorities that a collection of culturally significant and valuable objects was about to be illegally exported, resulted in what is now called the 'seized collection'. The 'seized collection' then had to be housed and resulted in the Papua New Guinea Museum getting new (temporary) premises at Paga Hill.

The Western art-culture system has commodified objects from indigenous societies by accepting them into its system of exchange based on monetary value. This has had a multiplicity of effects on art production, some beneficial, others not (see Ch. 3, especially the sections on the commercial/non-commercial distinction and 'tourist' art and Chapter 4).
One shift which has occurred since the 1970s is government intervention in the marketing of indigenous art and the implementation of export restrictions on certain categories of objects.\(^1\) In Australia government subsidised arts centres have been set up in remote Aboriginal communities to facilitate the production and promotion of art made for external markets and to protect the interests of artists. The arts centres are generally Aboriginal owned corporations increasingly staffed by professionally trained Aboriginal people. In the late 1970s to 1980s provincial cultural centres were set up in some of Papua New Guinea’s nineteen provinces - these centres assist local artists in the production and marketing of their art to varying degrees. The Fijian Government finances the Government Handicraft Centre in Suva and the Cook Islands Government the Women's Development Centre, which primarily markets women's arts, in Rarotonga. Although government sponsored arts centres cannot forestall the activities of private dealers, they can establish fair prices for art works, provide opportunities for skills development, purchase and market a fair portion of the communities' output and protect the artists' copyright.

\(^1\) Australia and most other countries in the South Pacific region are signatories to the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Movable Cultural Property.
The romance of 'the Primitive' in Western art

The romance of the primitive in Western culture is a significant feature of the paradigm of primitive art. However, this feature involves an arena different from the previous features, viz. how primitive art affected the development of radical new art movements in Western culture. All the previous features have been concerned with Western concepts of the role of primitive art in primitive society. In comparison, the fascination of European avant-garde artists with primitive art and society was based on a romantic idealisation of 'primordial man in harmony with nature'; 'primitivism' was used to contrast an arcadian vision of nature with the conditions of modernity in the contemporary European world.

First in this section is a brief summary of how the 'romance of the primitive' feature of the paradigm reflects the features discussed earlier. Two art historians' concepts are important to the investigation of 'primitivism' in the art of German Expressionists which follows: Jill Lloyd (1980:130) discerns that German Expressionists 'used 'the primitive' as an inverted image . . . to debate and define by antithesis Western notions of civilization and modernity', and Donald Gordon

1 In an exchange of articles with Franz Marc in 1912 Max Beckmann condemned "this dependence on ancient primitive styles which in their own time grew organically out of a common religion and mystic awareness . . . (I find it) weak because Gauguin and the like weren't able to create types out of their own confused and fragmented times which could serve us in the way that the gods and heroes served the people of old" (Beckmann quoted in Lloyd 1985:130).

2 Studies of primitivism in the German Expressionist movement have tended to concentrate on the detection of which particular tribal model influenced which individual artists, rather the artists' simultaneous search for primitivism and modernity. See Weltkulturen und Moderne Kunst, Haus der Kunst, Munich 1972; F.R. Brandt and E.M. Hight (1979); Donald Gordon (1984). See also Goldwater (1967) and Gordon (1970).
(1984:369) asserted that ‘Primitivism affected Expressionism in two ways: both as a life idea and as an art idea’.

German Expressionism has been selected as a representative art movement of the early modernist period in which the notions of ‘the primitive’ and ‘primitive’ art were thoroughly absorbed and translated into Western culture through the vision of European artists. Particular reference is made to the German Expressionist artists Emile Nolde and Max Pechstein. Throughout the section, certain of their artworks (and occasionally those of other German Expressionist artists) are mentioned which embody their visions and interpretations of ‘the primitive’.

It will become apparent that the ‘Romance of the Primitive’ feature of the paradigm of ‘primitive’ art reflects some of the other features of the paradigm that have been discussed above. German Expressionist artists appear to have been genuinely awed by the features and aesthetic impact of the ‘primitive’ art they discovered in ethnographic museums. Some of them experimented with living in a ‘primordial’ lifestyle, and Nolde and Pechstein travelled to the Pacific to personally investigate the societies of ‘primitive’ man and see their art in its own setting. While recognising that Nolde, Pechstein and other German Expressionists explored new intellectual and artistic territory in their fascination with ‘the primitive’, they were undoubtedly influenced by the prevalent ideas and political realities of their time. Evidence is presented in the following analysis of these artists images and ideas that they, consciously or unconsciously, reflected the assumption of
Western cultural superiority. The features of the anonymity of primitive artists and the 'ethnographic present' emerge quite clearly in Nolde's and Pechstein's approaches to, and comments about, primitive art\(^1\). None of the objects they depicted, or individual Pacific Islanders they portrayed, are referred to by name, but only as representative of a type, such as in Pechstein’s *Palau Carver with Idols* (1917) and Nolde’s *Papua Young People* (1914)\(^2\).

In his study of Orientalism Said discerns that a number of English authors, who wrote in popularist rather than academic genres, were effective in transmitting ideas about the Orient to a wide readership through their works. Similarly, the ideas and images promoted by avant-garde European artists about primitive art, the 'primal self' and man in harmony with the natural world, made a strong impression in the West\(^3\). Substitute 'primitive art and society' for 'the Orient', and French and German avant-garde artists for the British writers

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\(^1\) On Manus, Nolde experienced 'a strong, primeval way of life in its purest original form' and foresaw its destruction with sorrow. He wrote 'We live in the time when all original customs and people are perishing - all becoming Europeanised. In 20 years it will be gone'. Nolde's notes for the introduction of a book he planned but never finished, entitled 'Kunstausserungen der Naturvolker'. The notes were eventually published in Nolde, trans. Gordon (1980).

\(^2\) It is acknowledged that it is an accepted convention in European art to paint a subject as representative of a class, for example Joan Miro *Portrait of a Man in a Nineteenth Century Frame* (1950); an abstraction, as in Pablo Picasso *Seated Woman* (1927), or an idealised form as in Nusch Eluard *Nudes Dancing around a Golden Chalice* (c1936). On the other hand portraits of named individuals is a genre equally firmly entrenched in Western art. In Western artists images of indigenous people, the individuals portrayed are rarely named (Dutton 1974).

\(^3\) Said identified a "band" of British writers, including Gertrude Bell, T. E. Lawrence and St. John Philby who, in their creative works, were effective in creating a popular (Western) vision of the Orient (Said 1978:224).
of the same period, and Said's model holds true for the paradigm of primitive art. In particular it is important for the art/artifact' and 'commodification' features of the paradigm. A number of influential artists of modernist schools (Cubists, Fauves and Surrealists as well as Expressionists) and their patrons, who were attracted to primitive art, were effective in raising Europeans' awareness of the forms and qualities of art from Africa, the Americas and Oceania. This affected the place 'primitive' art attained in world art, and established that objects, especially 'masterpieces of primitive art', had commodity value in the art market.

Of the groups of Expressionists formed in German cities, the most important were Die Brücke (The Bridge) founded in 1905 in Dresden by Ernst Ludwig Kirschner, Erich Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Fritz Bleyl, and Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider), founded in 1911 in Munich by Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc.

Some of the central concerns of German Expressionists in the Die Brücke movement were to recapture a more authentic contact point with their innermost feelings and to celebrate nature in contrast to the alienating, conformist, technologically dominated urban world. In seeking to broaden their boundaries, Expressionists borrowed eclectically from 'any source which seemed to give primacy to the spirit over the intellect, the flesh over reason', including the earlier work of the Fauves, indigenous art and medieval German art (Macdonald

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1 Oceania was widely used in the Western literature on art to cover the region encompassed by the Pacific Ocean, including Australia.
In their earlier works, from around 1905 to 1911, a number of Die Brücke artists found their primitivist ideal in the form of a worship of nature and the body, exemplified by the series of bathing nudes of Ernst Kirchner (*Girl under Japanese Umbrella*, *Bathers in a Room*, both 1909). Gordon (1984:369) quotes Gustav Hautlaub's distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' primitives. 'Medieval mystics or indigenous sculptors were "primary primitives" in this sense, but German Expressionists were of the secondary type, that is, "consciously primitive" or primitivising "by choice"'.

The (imagined) differences between the primitive and the modern inspired avant-garde artists to produce a considerable body of art that was either influenced by primitive art, or interpreted concepts of the primitive. This body of art has become one of the most recognised features of modernism in Western visual culture of the 1900s to the 1940s (Rubin 1984). However, although Expressionists enthused over 'the life of pure nature' in their writings and in their art, and were impressed with the styles and forms of 'primitive' art, their art and writing reveals a sense of intellectual separation between their own 'primitivising' inclinations and the realities of indigenous societies. In effect, 'civilized' Europeans can revert to primitivism at their whim, but 'primitive' societies are doomed by civilization.\(^2\)

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1 See also Marit Werenskiold (1984:32-62).

2 Other analysts of early modernist art movements perceived that their philosophies of art and life reflected crucial issues of European modernism. A. Rossi wrote of the alleged 'primitiveness' of modern artists: The artist . . . is under the illusion that he is reproducing primitive attitudes in a primitive way, but this repetition is merely the cultural display of a
'Primitivism' was conceptualised as returning to primordial nature. It was also part of a search for a new, anti-traditional art including new directions in subject matter and technique. Against the dehumanisation of industrialisation, Expressionists wanted to infuse their art with a humanity and spirituality they felt had been lost. The Blaue Reiter's Almanac (1911) combined artists' writings with tribal and folk art, childrens' paintings and the work of non-European cultures, indicating that the artists of this group wished to emulate what they perceived as these spontaneous, natural, unaffected qualities.

In their early years in Dresden, members of Die Brücke absorbed and transformed the pastoral and exotic subjects of the Post-Impressionists and the Fauves in their quest to develop a new language for art. The depiction of man in harmony with nature became a central theme of Die Brücke artists around 1909 to 1910 (Brandt 1979), for example, Max Pechstein's watercolour *Standing Nude* (1909) and *Bathers* (1911). Members of Die Brücke desired to create not merely new kinds of painting, but an art that would suggest a whole lifestyle. One commentary describes the Expressionist's absorption with ideas of how this could be achieved:

They created environments decorated with exotic fabrics, African sculpture and their own hand-carved furniture . . . . Die Brücke artists sought idyllic retreats in the country or at the seaside that provided the opportunities and setting for them to work, often together, in the natural landscape. Fresh country air and nudism became a metaphor for decidedly modern taste, which in great artists does attain sincerity, but a sincerity which . . . solves strictly modern problems (Rossi 1959:17).
liberation from society. They counteracted tradition and academic art by using untrained, unposed models - friends, children and workers in natural settings, quickly sketching them instead of labouring over a perfect drawing - free brushwork, intense colour, rudimentary form. All the above denotes 'primitivism' - man in harmony with nature . . . .

The Die Brücke artists also shared a fascination with the ideals of Urmensch and Urnatur - primordial man and nature uncontaminated by civilization. As one of their members, Emil Nolde, said, "Primordial peoples live in their nature, are one with it and part of the entire universe" (Hight 1979:18-19).

In his exploration of how Expressionist artists translated 'primitivism' into an "art idea" as well as a "life idea" Donald Gordon comments that:

as with life style, so with art-style: German artists emulated primitive example. The prototypes ranged from the flat and silhouette like painted reliefs of Palau to the powerful, three-dimensional forms of Cameroon sculpture. There is a hardy "look" to much Expressionist art - angular in shape, geometric in detail, stubby in proportion - that is unthinkable without the Primitive precedent. Vitalism was also important: Eyes, mouth, breasts, genitalia were all given expressive prominence. Even in repose the Expressionist figure seems packed with energy. These are all German derivations from tribal art (Gordon 1984:370).

Die Brücke artists were attracted to the ethnology collections in the Dresden and Hamburg ethnographic museums. The first decade of the twentieth century was the heyday of German colonialism and the Dresden Museum housed extensive collections from the German Pacific domains of Micronesia and
German New Guinea. The Palau material in the Dresden collection interested Pechstein, one of the Die Brücke artists. He perceived the formal qualities, style and subject matter of Palau house boards to be 'untainted by civilization'. Pechstein and other Die Brücke artists considered European civilization had lost the mystic, spiritual qualities that indigenous groups still possessed. They were captivated by the ritual qualities of objects and viewed them as sources of energy and power. So the appeal of indigenous objects lay not only in the physical character of the making of the objects, but also in their perceived spiritual and emotional intensity (Hight 1979:39).

Emile Nolde syncretised his images and ideas of primitivism in a number of ways: firstly, from 1911, he experimented with the representation of masks in paintings, then later incorporated indigenous carvings into his paintings, contrasting the relationship of foreign still-life objects with more familiar things; secondly, Nolde romanticised man in his natural environment in paintings done on his voyage to the Pacific in 1914. His selection of media, range of techniques and development of style all purvey the sense of primitivism in his artworks.

Nolde's interest in primitive art emerged around 1911. His first paintings can be included in the genre 'ethnographic still life' (that is, a painting featuring African sculptures, masks or other indigenous art objects in still life compositions), as in Still Life of Masks 1 (1911).\(^1\) In this painting, as Gordon's

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\(^1\) Following a visit to the Belgian painter James Ensor, who had used carnival masks in his allegorical paintings of life and death, Nolde became interested in caricature and the use of masks (Hight 1979:22). In his
research indicates, each mask can be directly related to a real object - two are carnival masks, one is a nzunzunzunzu head (a stylised canoe prow ornament from the Solomon Islands, Gordon's spelling of the name of the object)\(^1\) and the other a shrunken head of a Yoruna Indian from Brazil. The fifth mask is uncertain, but Gordon attributes it to a type of Ijo (Nigerian) mask (Gordon 1984:380).

Eroticism and pagan subjects interested Nolde. His paintings **Candle Dancer** (1915) and **The Dance around the Calf** (1910) are imaginative, voluptuous scenes where the frenzy of the dancer is emphasised by the agitated, swirling brushstrokes and the glow of intense, unnatural colours. Unrestrained, frenzied dancing was considered one of the primeval urges of mankind (Hight 1979:23).

Nolde joined an ethnographic expedition organised by the Imperial Colonial Office in 1913-14. The purpose of this ethnographic and demographic expedition was to study the customs of Pacific Islands peoples under German dominion, including Palau in Micronesia and New Guinea. Travelling as the official artist with the expedition, Nolde visited several areas of German New Guinea: the Bismark Archipelago (including the area around Rabaul), the interior of the Gazelle Peninsular, Neu...

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1 Various names for this type of Solomon Islands carving are given in the literature, as well as several ways of spelling nguzunguzu. Deborah Waite says that the figureheads are variously termed musumusu, totishu and nguzunguzu (Waite 1983:116).
Mecklenburg, the island of Manus and parts of the northern coast of Kaiser Wilhelmsland on the main island of New Guinea.

In his vignettes of everyday life, Nolde depicted not only external appearances but, as Dissanyake (1989:20) notes, he 'expressed something of his generalised awareness that the simplicity, harmony and imposingness of the primeval people was about to disappear forever. This sadness and regret of Nolde's seems to infuse the faces and even the poses of many of the figures'. In his official capacity Nolde was to document the racial characteristics of Pacific Islanders. As well as his drawings and sketches, around twenty paintings resulted from Nolde's South Seas travels. *Papua Young People* (1914) and *Women in New Guinea* (c1914) are nostalgic images of the 'original beings' he encountered in their 'primeval' island settings. The pervasive European view that these tropical arcadias were about to disappear, and regret for the inevitable anihilation of the idyllic primeval lifestyle of Pacific Islanders by the encroachment of European civilization, are evident in his images and writings.¹

¹ In a letter to a former teacher and friend, Hans Fehr, Nolde wrote:

The natives are a splendid people as far as they have not been already spoiled by their contact with the white culture. A few times we had the opportunity to meet absolutely original beings in their villages. That was beautiful. Magnificent figures with enormous hair, and ears and neck full of beautiful ornaments. Their houses were built of bamboos covered with palm leaves and the surfaces were painted. Their canoes were full of carvings like their weapons and every household item was ornamented in the most beautiful way, painted and carved from heavy wood.

Everything is made so purposefully and with uncommon artistic sense and love. For their religious cults they carve figurines; their legends, their songs, their chants, their dances, everything is so beautiful and complete in its manner.

Reddish-brown people, almost without clothing, only with their ornaments, walk on white sand between fruiting palms or banana trees, or the yellow-red bushes around their dwellings, an unusual, strong harmony. Then I think of our German apartments full of the most banal conglomeration
A number of Expressionist painters, including Kirschner, Heckel and Pechstein, were attracted to the carved and painted reliefs on the Men’s Houses from Palau in the Dresden and Hamburg Ethnographic Museums. Palau, an island in Micronesia, was then part of the German Empire.

In 1914 Max Pechstein travelled to Micronesia, like Nolde taking his wife and ensuring he had the comforts of modern life on his voyage\(^1\). Not many drawings and paintings remain of his visit, but in his diary Pechstein noted:

I now saw in every day use, in the setting for which they were made, the carved and painted beams which once in Dresden had set my creativity flowing . . . . I saw the primitive ornamentation, the decoration of the huts which grew out of the simplest human need for beauty. I saw the artifice with which these primordial folk decorated their bodies in order to rejoice in nature’s sovereign changes on their bellies and to bear witness to the sense of beauty and the passion for structure. I saw the carved idols which had impressed upon them in trembling piety and awe before the incomprehensible powers of nature their hopes and their terrors, their fear and their submissiveness before unavoidable fate (Pechstein quoted in Gordon 1984:391).

After his return to Germany in 1915 Pechstein’s imagination continued to be fired by his Palau memories. A 1917 painting of *A Palau Carver with Idols* is a study of natives

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\(^1\) 40 cases of belongings for his two-month sojourn on Palau. Although they likened themselves to Gauguin in these undertakings, they were in reality far less adventurous.
in the act of carving. Other paintings are only known through photographs of them, Palau Tryptich, Head of a Palau Islander, Palau Dancers (referred to in Gordon 1984) as is a large freize which he used to decorate his Berlin studio. In paintings of 1917 and after, Pechstein introduces carvings from the Cameroons in Africa into his still life paintings, and mixes African and Oceanic sources from then on.

In summary, the 'art ideas' Nolde, Pechstein, and other German Expressionists, derived from their fascination with primitive art objects are observable in different art works. The so-called 'ethnographic still-life' paintings are works which feature renditions of actual indigenous objects, such as Nolde's Still Life of Masks 1 (1911) and Still Life with South Sea Sculpture (1915)1, and Pechstein's Still Life in Grey (1913) and African Wood Sculpture (1919). Franz Marc (1912 cited in Lloyd 1985:132) discerned that it was the ahistorical status of indigenous artefacts which made them relevant to a renewal of the present. He wrote: 'I find it natural that we should look for the rebirth of our own artistic consciousness in the dawn of artistic intelligence . . . if we are to escape the exhaustion of our European bad taste'.

Secondly, the urge to find the 'primal self' and return to 'pure nature' are exemplified in Nolde's Candle Dancer (1910) and Pechstein's Bathers (1911). These offered an idealised, alternative image to the contemporary industrialised world.

1 This work features an Uli figure from New Ireland and was painted after Nolde's voyage.
The artists were also seeking the regenerative qualities of nature by returning to a ‘natural’, uninhibited life.

Thirdly, their portraits of indigenous subjects, as in Nolde’s *Papua Young People* (1914) and Pechstein’s *Palau Carver with Idols* (1917), represent the idyllic ‘primeval’ lifestyle which they considered was doomed to extinction. Pechstein’s paintings of Palauans in their environment are highly romanticised, like his writings. Nolde’s response is more complex. The range of his portraits from life and images concerning the life of the people under colonialism, can be viewed as a response to German imperialism. Nolde’s painting, *The Missionary* (1912), is an effective characterisation and caricature of changes enforced into indigenous life. On the basis of what he saw and experienced on his tour with the expedition, Nolde criticised the unnecessary harshness of the colonial regime, and wrote stern letters to the Imperial Colonial Office. But many of his ‘official’ drawings and sketches of archetypal native people are in the conventions of ethnographic recording of that time, and elsewhere his writings reveal his German nationalism and, despite his sympathies for indigenous people, reflect the prevalent view of European cultural superiority.

**DISCUSSION**

This chapter has proposed a paradigm of primitive art and identified its main features. The principle framework of the paradigm was an antithesis between primitive societies and
modern European civilization, which many Western anthropologists, art historians and artists working in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, believed existed.

Fraser's definition of 'primitive' art as, 'the high art of low cultures', epitomised the view that Europeans could create and legitimise an authoritative set of beliefs about other cultures. As Grotanelli points out, the basic premise is flawed:

So-called primitive art . . . is in itself not primitive at all, just as the men who create it are not primitive. Contrary to what critics chose to believe and repeat, we are almost never confronted by improvised creations, with spontaneous expressions of a supposed and nonexistent Naturmensch, but with their exact opposite, the products of century-old, highly elaborate traditions. Not works of exuberant youth, much less of inexperienced childhood, but works of conscious and thoughtful maturity (Grotanelli 1961:9).

Gerbrands, the Dutch scholar whose studies of Asmat woodcarvers contributed to changing views about the anonymity of artists and the production of art in indigenous societies (Gerbrands 1967), wrote a definition of art in 1957 which formed the basis of his later studies. This definition of art is applicable to all societies. It exposes the flaws of the paradigm of primitive art, in particular the assumption of Western cultural superiority. Gerbrands asserts that

when a creative individual gives to cultural values a personal interpretation in matter, movement or sound of such a nature that the forms which result from this creative process comply with standard of
beauty valid in his society, then we call this creative process, and the forms resulting therefrom, art (Gerbrands 1957:57).

Over thirty years later, recognition that the primary knowledge and interpretation of artforms must come from the creators has penetrated Western consciousness. Policies of participation and access for indigenous people to Western cultural institutions, and respect for their ideas and interpretations of material which concerns them, are now becoming reality.

A new paradigm for an art history of past and present Pacific societies should be developed in order to redress the deficiencies of the previously dominant paradigm of primitive art - its social and ideological power bases, its class, race and gender positioning, the exclusivity of its institutions and practices and its eurocentricity. A new paradigm should enable the study of art as a social and cultural practice, accepting differences across cultures. It should suggest new concepts and new relationships, reconsider the conventions of present systems and institutions and welcome the intervention of indigenous people and their contribution to the discourse on art and the role of the artist. Mutual cultural understanding should now be the goal. The paradigm of primitive art has shown how it is impossible otherwise to achieve an unbiased, constructive set of relationships.

Although many objections to the paradigm can be discerned and have been discussed, there have been some benefits resulting from the acquisition of vast quantities of indigenous art by the West. Foremost among these is the fact that many
types of significant cultural objects which could have been lost in the process of rapid cultural change have been preserved in the collections of Western museums and are now available to indigenous people interested in undertaking specific cultural revival projects or reconstructing their past.

The paradigm shift which has occurred is discernable in the re-definition of what indigenous art is. Following chapters will reveal that a fundamental reshaping of attitudes towards indigenous people and their art has taken place over the last thirty years. As this chapter has endeavoured to establish, the term 'primitive' art is now best used in a retrospective sense, when users appreciate not only its perjorative connotations, but also the world view and set of relationships it once represented.
CHAPTER 3: THE CATEGORISATION OF INDIGENOUS ART IN THE PACIFIC REGION 1970s TO 1990s.

The study of the arts of the Fourth World is different from the study of ‘primitive’ art characteristic of most earlier anthropological writings, for it must take into account the existence of more than one symbolic and aesthetic system, and the fact that the arts may be produced by one group for consumption by another.

N.H.H. Graburn (1976:2)\(^1\)

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter substantially reassesses the general terms and categories used to describe indigenous art of the South Pacific region in the period 1970 to 1990. The discussion demonstrates that the meaning of terms sometimes changes over time, and that terms may have different meanings to different people. As well as being descriptive, categories or terms may carry evaluative assumptions about social, cultural and economic relationships.

\(^1\)Although this quotation may appear to be dated it is substantially still valid. Australian Aborigines, New Zealand Maoris and Native Hawai’ians are indigenous minorities in their countries, but many island states with indigenous majorities have achieved independence. For the purposes of this chapter, the emphasis is on Graburn’s comment that more than one (the Western) aesthetic system and paths of circulation and consumption of indigenous arts must now be considered.
The chapter evaluates the terms or categories most frequently used in the Western art-culture system to describe the indigenous art of the South Pacific region in the period 1970 to 1990. It also examines the premises on which various Western authors have structured categories in their attempts to describe the common features of indigenous art. Systems of classification do not exist only in Western culture. An example will be given of how Yolngu people classify bark paintings and other material culture objects in their Arnhem Land Aboriginal society.

The categorisation of indigenous art by Western theorists is an attempt to interpret the directions and processes of change in the known history of the art of indigenous cultures. One difficulty faced by Western observers and theorists in constructing such categories is that they are describing manifestations of complex cultures which are not their own. For example, is it better to classify objects according to their end consumer, with tourists and collectors representing the two extremes of the market, or should the circumstances of the objects' local manufacture and use be the determining principles for classification? Another issue faced by Western theorists is how to develop terms which adequately conceptualise and classify indigenous art: for example, whether such terms as ‘transitional’ art and ‘contemporary’ art should be time-relative, or timeless?

If categories were timeless it would mean that an object could not escape its original classification, for example an Albert Namatjira watercolour classed as ‘tourist’ art in the
1950s would not be able to move across to the category of 'fine' art later on. But I find James Clifford's model (see Chapter 1) more realistic, as it envisages that objects which have entered circulation in the West may move between categories from time to time. In Chapter 4, Arjun Appadurai's theory, of how objects may move into and out of the 'regimes of value' of different cultures, demonstrates that Western terms and categories may have limited application in the overall 'biography' of an object.

The reason for Western scholars' attempts to devise universal categories is that it is considered necessary for categories to encompass more than one culture (given that each culture's art production can be described in more locally specific terms). If similar traits are observable in indigenous art from various regions of the world, it is probably reasonable to devise classificatory concepts which refer to their similarities.

The present chapter begins with a discussion of Nelson H. Graburn's (1976) initiative to devise a new framework for the discussion of indigenous art, a framework which moved it out of the parameters of 'primitive' art. The categories devised by Graburn, and those of other scholars, including Adrienne Kaeppler (1979), Philip Dark (1979, 1990, 1993) and Jim Specht (1988), are conceptualised for use within the Western art-culture system. These scholars' contributions improved on the paradigm of primitive art in that they recognised, to some degree, indigenous values and opinions and the dynamics of contemporary South Pacific societies. A number of terms
devised by Graburn, Kaeppler and others, did not succeed, and reasons are given why they are thought inappropriate to adequately describe indigenous art of the South Pacific region.

Since the 1970s several terms have become consistently used to describe indigenous art in the region. The first group, 'traditional', 'transitional' and 'contemporary' art, have a set of criteria based on local use versus Western influence on the nature of the art produced and may take sociocultural factors affecting art production into account. The second set, 'fine' art and 'tourist' art, are based on market analysis. The end-user is most important in this scheme of categorisation: 'collectors' of original art works are envisaged at one end of the spectrum and casual buyers of memorabilia at the other end.

Because prolonged and general use of terms induces complacency and leads to stereotyping, the premises on which the terms/categories are based are questioned. Evidence is found that supports the continued use of some categories, but situations are also identified that indicate a need for the astute revision of existing terms (and concepts embedded within them), to make them more relevant to the present time. For example, Morphy (1980, 1983, 1987, 1991), Stanton (1986) and Mead (1984a, 1990) have objected to the widespread, uncritical application of universal terms such as 'traditional' and attempt to include indigenous perspectives in the characterisation and classification of the art of the South Pacific region.

The particular objectives of the chapter are as follows.
(i) To identify the term/categories which have been or are most widely used in the period 1970 to 1990 within the South Pacific region.

(ii) Following Graburn (1976), to evaluate whether a commercial/non-commercial distinction provides a useful framework for categorising art before any other form of categorisation occurs.

(iii) To analyse the main terms/categories in use in order to discover whether they are considered useful and appropriate for Western scholars and consumers, or not; also, to assess whether the terms are considered useful and appropriate by indigenous people.

(iv) To assess the adequacy of the terms discussed by applying them to a specific art form, in this instance, Aboriginal bark paintings from Arnhem Land, northern Australia. This may locate ambiguities and inconsistencies in the Western terms used to describe indigenous art forms; it may also find that categories are useful to some extent.

Examples of how the terms/categories have been used in the literature are drawn from both scholarly texts and publications directed to a general audience, in particular, exhibition catalogues. These reveal how concepts associated with terms have varied from time to time, and how widespread the use of these has become in both scholarly and popular literature on the indigenous art of the region.

The terms and categories discussed in this chapter are the most widely applied and generic terms in common use. It is
acknowledged that some writers, of both indigenous and Western backgrounds, have often categorised various artforms and practices more accurately and subtly than some other writers, particularly when focusing on art from a specific locality.¹

It is demonstrated that generic terms encompass the diversity of artforms existing in contemporary South Pacific cultures only in the most universal and undiscriminating ways. Within the past two decades, as innovations have occurred and new art forms have arisen, general terms such as 'traditional' and 'tourist' art have been accorded a wider application. The development of a discriminating outside audience for indigenous art will only occur if people are better educated through future writing and exhibition practices which use more specifically localised and accurate terms to counter the continuation of 'the amorphous and generic promotion of Aboriginal art of in the 1950s and 1960s' (V. Anderson 1990:43).

Many of the areas of investigation in this chapter are worthy of consideration in more depth, but this cannot be encompassed in the overview this chapter presents.

¹ For example, the distinguishing characteristics of bark paintings from various regions of Arnhem Land have been described by Baldwin Spencer, C.P. Mountford, Ronald and Catherine Berndt, Peter Sutton and others since Spencer 1912.
Because of the length of this chapter a brief outline of its structure is presented first. The chapter is divided into seven sections. The first two sections are introductory. The third, ‘commercial/non-commercial’ section, considers Graburn's (1976) view that this distinction is necessary before all others. The fourth section acknowledges some terms or categories devised by Western scholars which deserve consideration, but which, for various reasons, are not discussed at length below. The fifth, and longest section, evaluates two sets of categories which have been widely used to describe the indigenous art of the South Pacific region in the period 1970 to 1990 viz. (i) ‘traditional’, ‘transitional’ and ‘contemporary’ art; (ii) ‘tourist’ and ‘fine’ art. The evaluation of each of these terms contains some discussion of the main meanings of the term; its use by various authors; some objections to the term, and whether or not it is used by indigenous people to describe their art. The sixth section applies the terms, ‘traditional’, ‘transitional’, ‘contemporary’, ‘fine’ art and ‘tourist’ art, to a single art form, Aboriginal bark paintings from Arnhem Land, northern Australia, to assess whether or not these terms are appropriate to bark paintings. The seventh section discusses the findings of the previous sections.
THE COMMERCIAL/NON-COMMERCIAL DISTINCTION

In his seminal work on the categorisation of indigenous art, Graburn (1976) found that a 'commercial/non-commercial' distinction was an essential base from which to assess the circulation of indigenous art in the West. He distinguishes some circumstances where art objects are 'non-commercial' and distinguishes several sub-categories of 'commercial' art. In his schema all subsequent distinctions are sub-categories of the primary 'commercial/non-commercial' one (Graburn 1976:10-21, see also Graburn 1979:354-362). This section investigates whether the 'commercial/non-commercial' distinction is an important one for the description of indigenous art of the South Pacific region in the period 1970 to 1990 and, if so, whether it is also an important distinction for indigenous people as well as Western consumers.

Graburn's 'commercial/non-commercial' distinction reflected the high degree of commodification that had developed in what he called 'the arts of the Third and Fourth Worlds' (Graburn 1976:11). Although neighbouring indigenous peoples had long-established economic relationships for trade, barter and gift exchange between themselves, new Western markets for indigenous art expanded rapidly after World War II and the increase in the circulation of art objects as commodities escalated.¹ For the middle classes of European,

¹In his investigation of the use of the term ‘commodity’ by anthropologists, Arjun Appadurai acknowledges that in economic analyses (outside anthropology) “commodities are special kinds of manufactured goods (or services) which are associated only with capitalist modes of production” (1986:7). Later in that investigation, in order to include all products of all
American and Asian nations, the attraction of visiting remote destinations became widespread in an era of affordable travel. This stimulated the production of an increasing range of objects made for sale to Western consumers.

In *Ethnic and Tourist Arts*, edited by Graburn (1976), he drew together a number of authors' observations about how acculturation to Western economic imperatives, ideas, tastes and values has provided an impetus for the development of art and craft industries in Third and Fourth World societies. Another factor in the evolution of 'ethnic and tourist arts' was the response to increasing demand from the tourist (and other outside) markets for the 'arts and crafts' of indigenous peoples. As well as being related to social and economic changes occurring in these societies, changes in art production reflected, to some extent, new tastes and preferences of indigenous peoples in their rapidly transforming world.

Graburn defines ‘ethnic and tourist arts’ as those arts made for an external, dominant world; these have often been despised by connoisseurs as unimportant, and are sometimes called 'tourist' or 'airport' arts. They are, however, important in presenting to the outside world an ethnic image that must be maintained and projected as part of the all-important boundary-defining system (Graburn 1976:5).

The intention of Graburn (and the other authors in the 1976 volume) was to recontextualise the study of, 'what used to be called 'primitive' art', taking into account, 'the changing
sociocultural context of the modern world'. As well, they were attempting to displace the claim that artistic change, including the modification of art forms for external markets, resulted in derivative objects and cultural loss.

Graburn and the other authors in the 1976 volume he edited, succeeded in directing Western interest towards new kinds of artistic activity, encompassing 'ethnic and tourist' arts into the corpus of indigenous art recognised in the West. Objects produced for sale, whether in traditional media like bark paintings (Williams 1976), or Mexican ponchos embroidered with indigenous designs, had not been admitted into the category of 'primitive' art. Connoisseurs of 'primitive' art considered objects made for and used in the originating society to be of most value. For example, Bühler, Barrow and Mountford considered that commercialisation was detrimental to indigenous art:

Wherever carvings and paintings are produced nowadays for the commercial market, detached from their traditional function, we find that the ancient motifs and styles are almost invariably presented in a degenerate form; we only have empty shells devoid of content (Bühler, Barrow and Mountford 1962:47).

Graburn's strategy succeeded, insofar as it started to draw attention to new types of objects, and caused a number of scholars and collectors to question whether indigenous art produced for sale was invariably degenerate and inferior.

However, many terms in Graburn's complex schema of categorisation (1976:10-21), that were intended to assist the re-definition of indigenous art, did not enter general use. At
least within the South Pacific region, his term 'ethnic' art was never really used in relation to indigenous art. This is because, particularly in Australia's and New Zealand's multi-cultural societies, the term 'ethnic' is popularly used to refer to immigrant cultures and their art. Instead the term 'tourist' art became widely applied, without Graburn's layering of distinctions which at least attempted to differentiate between the types of commercial art produced for external consumption.

There are a number of types of art which fall outside the market range and may be described as essentially 'non-commercial' (in Graburn's schema, 1976:10-14, these are called 'functional non-commercial arts'). In Western economic terms, most types of objects are commodities, that is, they have an exchange value which can be calculated in monetary terms and they circulate openly in a market system. However, some types of valued objects are never commodities, and others may pass into or out of commodity status (see case studies in Chapter 4). The distinction of whether or not an art object or practice is 'commercial' or 'non-commercial' should take a number of factors into account. One important factor is the intent of the maker and/or commissioner of the art work at the time of production and the intended destination for the finished item: for example, some Aboriginal communities make secret/sacred objects for restricted use in ceremonies. The commercial/non-commercial distinction acknowledges that certain classes of objects are beyond commoditisation. Graburn was drawing distinctions for a primarily Western audience, to assist with their appreciation of indigenous art. Other types of
distinctions, and other assessments of value, may be more appropriate to indigenous people.¹

‘Non-commercial’ art in the South Pacific region

Indigenous peoples of the South Pacific region produce various types of art which may be described as ‘non-commercial’ (a few examples are given below; more detailed case studies, where the prestige and heritage value of objects prevent their becoming commoditised, are given in Chapter 4). A number of cultures have certain objects which are invested with secret/sacred properties and only used for ceremonial and ritual purposes. Non-commercial art also includes some forms of ephemeral art, such as body decoration and elaborate constructions that are destroyed after use.² Some major art forms, such as rock art galleries, are site-specific and protected from commodification by their immovable nature.

There are many types of ‘traditional’ objects which continue to be made primarily to serve the purposes of indigenous communities such as Maori wharenui (meeting

¹ The difficulty of assigning all objects to commercial or non-commercial category is shown in the case of the Art Gallery of New South Wales’ set of pukamani poles from Bathurst Island, northern Australia. These were specifically commissioned for AGNSW and paid for in cash but were never in circulation in the art market. AGNSW, as with some public art and ethnographic museums, collect such items for their aesthetic, symbolic and heritage value.

² Warlpiri people (Central Australia) have constructed their large ceremonial ‘sand paintings’ for major exhibitions in USA, France and Australia. These are installed for the time of the exhibition after which they are destroyed. Schmitz (1962) describes large fragile constructions used in dances and public performances in Northeast New Guinea.
houses), Trobriand Islands *kula* canoes, Tiwi *pukamani* (burial poles). But even large items, with many internal components, such as the three just mentioned, have been collected and placed in museums. The museum context is entirely different from the original context of such objects, however within the museum they are also 'non-commercial'. Here, they have entered a different 'regime of value', and become part of the national heritage (Appadurai 1986:5; see 'Regimes of Value' section in Chapter 4).

Emerging nations seek symbols to characterise their identity, and these images become emblems of the country and its culture. Images used to signify national identity are not commercial. As the Papua New Guinean writer, Bernard Narokobi (1990:17) expresses it, 'a search for self-hood, nationalism and identity has found itself in the expressive arts'. A prime example, from Papua New Guinea, is the National Parliament House which, according to Pamela Rosi

> has been designed as a monumental manifestation of national identity to display national pride and progress to Papua New Guinea citizens and the international community (Rosi 1991:290).

In 1990 an exhibition of Christian Melanesian art was held at the Papua New Guinea National Museum. Items in the exhibition included Christian icons, crucifixes, Christ and Madonna figures, and religious images by Papua New Guinean artists (not all of them Christians) which had been created for, or commissioned by, churches of several denominations. In the

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1 *Wharenui*, Auckland Museum, Field Museum; *kula* canoe, PNG Museum and South Australian Museum; *pukamani* poles, Art Gallery of NSW and Australian Museum.
South Pacific region, some Christian churches have followed a policy of 'indigenisation', in order to relate Christian beliefs more readily to their converts. As a result religious services have been translated into vernacular languages and local artists encouraged to create religious symbols and imagery using their own forms of expression. Because such objects serve a religious purpose they are deemed 'non-commercial'.

As I have written elsewhere (1990a), public art is becoming an increasingly important feature of urban spaces in Papua New Guinea:

Public art (including) . . . large commissioned works such as the decorated facades of buildings, sculptures for urban spaces and murals, reflects the cultural and socio-economic change taking place in Papua New Guinea's urban societies (Cochrane Simons 1990a:33).

But not all non-commercial art in urban settings serves such grand aspirations as those embodied in the National Parliament House, nor promotes the indigenisation of urban spaces, nor assists religious worship. Ulli Beier (1978:1-13) recorded how Goilala people, who had migrated to Port Moresby and were living as fringe-dwellers in bleak poverty, used discarded paint and other cast-out material collected from the town's rubbish dump, to transform their settlement for community ceremonies. The transformed 'found objects' are

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1 The chapel of the Martin Luther Seminary in Lae features the work of David Anam in its facade and interior fittings (Anam 1986).

2 Although artists receive payment for commissioned works they can be differentiated from commercial art: commissioned works do not enter the market.
used to decorate the dance ground and surrounds for a week of celebrations, the decorations are then demolished, reverting to rubbish.

Graburn (1976:10) describes 'functional non-commercial arts' as 'those most meaningful to the creator peoples'. He includes in this category traditional arts that are not intended for external display or trade and also gives examples of modified or entirely new forms which are also intended for personal use or internal use within a group. As the above examples from Papua New Guinea demonstrate, the term 'non-commercial' art may be used to describe artforms which serve on a personal, group or national level, as an expression of identity and heritage values. It may also be used to describe artforms which support the cultural, political or religious ideology of a society.

The characterisation of 'non-commercial' may be useful from a Western point of view, where outsiders are trying to come to terms with the rapid cultural change occuring in indigenous societies. It relates the manifestations of change to a familiar system of values and assists Western understanding and appreciation of indigenous art by distinguishing between marketable and non-marketable works of art. A number of types of non-commercial art have been briefly described above, viz: secret/sacred objects and other traditional arts not intended for external display or trade, ephemeral art, immovable objects, items of cultural heritage, national monuments, religious art and public art.
Is 'commercial' art a valid term in the South Pacific region?

The distinction between 'non-commercial' art and art made for sale is made primarily in terms of whether works are made for use within the culture or for sale to outsiders.

Before undertaking a review of what Graburn included in his category of 'commercial' art, it is necessary to point out that within the South Pacific region, commercial art has another meaning. In the Western culture of Australia, New Zealand and Hawai'i the term 'commercial' art most commonly describes the type of art used in advertising. A commercial artist is a specially trained professional working in media graphics.

I realise that this use of the term was not a consideration for Graburn when he was making his distinction between non-commercial and commercial art. However, I prefer to use Howard Morphy's term, 'art for sale' (1991:10-38). Morphy uses the term 'art for sale' to refer to art objects made with the intention of being sold, not objects made for some other purpose which may eventually end up in the art market. In order to make the 'art for sale' category perfectly clear, I only include in it objects intentionally made for sale and have modified Morphy's term 'art for sale' to 'art made for sale'.\(^1\)

As Graburn (1979:356) noted:

\(^1\) Not all collected objects come into the category of 'art made for sale'. Objects which have been made by indigenous artists for ritual or ceremonial use, or for internal trade or gifting, may eventually have served their purpose and become offered for sale, traded or given to outsiders Lewis (1969:67-68) obtained permission to collect four out of five malanggan
Not all collected arts are made for commercialization, however; in cases where the traditional art was always discarded after use or allowed to decay, under modern circumstances such items may be handed to a collector or anthropologist instead, without disturbing their primary function.

I have adapted the term 'commercial' art as a sub-category within the category 'art made for sale'. This sub-category includes (i) items, incorporating motifs from the art style of an indigenous culture, designed for mass-production in print media or apparel and, (ii) newly designed, well made objects in the style of a particular culture, using motifs of the culture, typically using mostly the materials of the culture, made for display and sale. This sub-category is further described below.

Graburn (1979:354) indicates two effects of the commercialisation of indigenous arts and crafts. He writes that

(t)his process may be broken down into two components. One is the transfer of the items to outsiders (other than traditional trade partners) - that is, the alienation of the creator from the user. The other is the monetization of the exchange process. Both are equally important in modifying the old and creating new genres of art.

From the 1950s art made for sale to non-indigenous consumers and external markets has proliferated throughout the South Pacific region. This is evident across the spectrum of art production. Graburn et al (1976), in their investigations of objects in New Ireland, one remained on its rack to perform its traditional function of reminding everyone of recent ceremonials. Asmat bis poles were often removed to museum collections; otherwise they would have been left in the jungles outside the villages to rot (Gerbrands 1967:38).
'ethnic and tourist arts', began to redress a negative attitude which had emerged among scholars and collectors of indigenous art in the 1950s to the 1960s. This attitude assumed that increased market demand for indigenous art resulted in 'the development of an impoverished souvenir art tradition characterised by uniform and culturally neutral works which finally have the effect of devaluing the art as a whole' (Morphy 1980:91). But Grabrun et al, using the umbrella term 'commercial' art, demonstrated that there needed to be greater recognition of the diversity of products designed and made by indigenous people in response to different levels of demand and different external markets.

In the South Pacific region in the 1990s, several sub-categories of art made for sale can be distinguished. The sub-categories described below are very general because it is recognised that there are always exceptions and some objects or types of objects may be difficult to categorise. The sub-categories within the 'art made for sale' category are; original culturally significant artworks, replicas, souvenirs and commercial art. Although the sub-categories I tentatively offer include the same range of objects as Graburn describes, they are named differently from Graburn's sub-categories of commercial art, viz. 'commercial fine arts', 'assimilated fine arts' and 'tourist arts'. This is because, since Graburn devised his scheme of categories in the mid-1970s, scholars have become more sensitive to the possibility of eurocentric bias in terminology, and more indigenous people have asserted the strength of their particular cultural identity.
In 1979 Graburn (1979:355) reflected the view prevalent among art historians and anthropologists at the time when he wrote:

Various replicas of the culturally accepted traditional arts are being made in most parts of Oceania for both tourists and serious collectors. At the most positive end of the range, there are what I have called "commercial fine arts" or, in May's terms (1975:125), "pseudo-traditional arts": "carefully made reproductions of traditional items by artists who have been brought up within the traditional culture". Such items might be specially commissioned for museum collections or at least intended for the discriminating dealers whose public is aware of correctness of form and fineness of material (Graburn 1979:355).

In the same essay he discusses 'such forms as I have called "assimilated (fine) arts"', among which he places the water-colour paintings of Albert Namatjira and 'the productions coming from the Creative Arts Centre of Port Moresby' and suggests it is no longer possible to ignore 'these increasingly common forms of acculturation and assimilation' (1979:355).

In the 1970s there was a tendency among theorists to consider the 'traditional' arts of indigenous societies as those being made at the time of their discovery or first description by Europeans (Graburn 1979:354, see also Kaeppler 1979). 'Pure' traditional art was differentiated from 'contact-influenced' traditional art and Graburn noted that most scholars1 worked almost exclusively with contact-influenced art.

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1 As an example Graburn cites several authors whose essays appear in the same volume as his own (1979), viz. Kooijman (1979), Kaufmann (1979), Lewis (1979) and Kaeppler (1979) in Mead (ed) (1979).
traditional arts; comparatively few paid attention to new kinds
of art made for sale to Europeans, exceptions being May and
Mead. It was generally accepted that, in many societies,
traditional art was still made for community use; but art
producers also made 'evolved traditional' (Kaeppler 1979) or
'pseudo traditional' (May 1975) art objects for sale to
outsiders. Reflecting the predominant view of that time,
Graburn commented that

(e)ven the best pseudo-traditional commercial arts have, of course,
changed in function, since they are made primarily to sell and to display or
even to replicate traditional pieces, rather than for their former unique
function. (Graburn 1979:356).

As far as indigenous artists using Western genres,
techniques and materials was concerned, these were often
considered to be art forms of 'acculturation and assimilation',
or forms of experimentation which some might like to forget
(Graburn 1979:355). Making art for cash was considered to be
the primary motivation for much indigenous art production and
market demand to be the cause of most modifications to the
types of objects indigenous artists produced. Reasons will be
given below why terms such as Graburn's 'assimilated fine art'
are not acceptable to indigenous people in the South Pacific
region in the 1990s. In brief, such terms contain a eurocentric
bias, assuming that the absorption of Western culture
overpowers other cultures. As well, the strength and diversity
of contemporary art movements which have emerged in the
South Pacific region from the 1970s to 1990s demonstrate the
differences of modern indigenous cultures from the Western model rather than their assimilation with it (see Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9).

Since the late 1970s scholars, including Morphy, Stanton, Mead and Specht, have reappraised what is meant by 'tradition' and 'traditional' art (see below). By the 1990s it has become accepted that traditions of indigenous people are a dynamic force which continue to inform their cultural life and to inspire creativity. The impact of Western culture on indigenous societies and, in particular, the commoditisation of indigenous art, is acknowledged. But it is now also recognised that great art continues to arise from cultures other than Western culture. For example, in the 1990s it would not be possible to describe significant bark paintings by senior Arnhem Land artists as 'replicas of the culturally accepted traditions' or 'pseudo-traditional' art. While there are certainly many inferior paintings and replicas made in the genre of bark paintings, original, culturally significant works are also created.

It will be demonstrated later in this chapter (and in Chapter 6) that there are a multiplicity of factors motivating innovations and developments in indigenous art. Innovations may result from both internal and external influences. The desire for cash and success in the outside art market is now recognised as being only one of several motivations for producing art for sale. Original artworks may be stimulated by the artists' own cultural traditions with the desire to represent, or affirm, important aspects of their culture to
outsiders. Original artworks may also be created by indigenous artists in Western media, sometimes presenting traditional subjects in a new way, sometimes exploring the pace of cultural change and its effects on their particular group (see Chapters 7 and 8).

Therefore, within the category of ‘art made for sale’, I discern a sub-category of original, culturally significant, art which is made for display and sale to predominantly outside audiences. Original, culturally significant art works may be made by indigenous artists adhering to the forms, materials, techniques, training and aesthetic principles of their own cultural tradition. They may also be important works which are innovations from traditional forms (see Chapter 6), or contemporary works that abrogate Western art (see Chapter 8). An original, culturally significant artwork may be in any media but will attest its maker’s creativity and skill in the genre they are using. This sub-category of original, culturally significant art is proposed instead of Graburn’s ‘commercial fine arts’ and ‘assimilated fine arts’.

Objects designed for external markets of non-indigenous consumers are often simplified and modified (Dawson,

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1 An increasing number of indigenous people collect major original artworks; for example, Sir Serei Eri assembled a collection of works by Papua New Guinean contemporary artists from the late 1980s to early 1990s and in 1994 Pias Wingti (once Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea) purchased a major painting by Kauage and two by Taba Silau for his personal collection. Charles Perkins, an influential Aboriginal activist and bureaucrat, has a substantial collection of Aboriginal art (pers. comm. Hetti Perkins 1991) and Koori artist Fiona Foley in 1994 purchased several paintings by women artists from Ramingining to add to her collection.
Fredrickson and Graburn 1974). Many such objects may be loosely grouped into a sub-category of 'replicas'. 'Replicas' are here defined as images or objects made in a recognisable art style but which are copies or stylised derivations of traditional objects. The artist or craftsperson may make fine quality replicas or mundane copies.

Souvenirs are produced in villages and production workshops in towns. Whereas replicas adhere to a conventional art style and are generally made by artists or craftspersons who participate in the originating culture, souvenirs are often highly modified or adapted from traditional models and may even be made by people from another culture. The sub-category of souvenirs includes novel creations, such as handbags made of tapa cloth, 'in which some near-traditional item of material

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1 Dawson, Fredrickson and Graburn (1974:23-42) give examples of modifications in size, materials, form and function which have resulted when 'material objects are made to sell to consumers who are not part of the maker's culture'.

2 In this context 'art style' refers to the stylistic features of artworks used in the Western literature on the indigenous art of the Pacific region to define 'culture area', for example as in Linton and Wingert (1946).

3 In Fiji carvers supply the Fiji Government Handicraft Centre with reproductions of kava bowls and weapons, ranging in quality from mediocre to high standard. The better ones are usually made by a small number of master-carvers. An association between the Fiji Museum, Government Handicraft Centre and master-carver Jonati, encouraged him to attempt a hinged turtle-shaped feast bowl. This type of bowl was illustrated in nineteenth-century records, but the Museum had no example of it. Once he mastered the making of this type of bowl, Jonati passed the skill on to his apprentices. Replicas of it are now sold at the Government Handicraft Centre, but Jonati's original is on display in the Fiji Museum, along with other objects representing the skills of present-day carvers (pers. comm. Emily Vulaca, co-ordinator Fiji Government Handicraft Centre, and Jonati, on a visit to Jonati's workshop, March, 1987).

4 Philip Dark gives a description of reproductions of the god Tangaroa and other Polynesian gods being made in the workshops of Island Crafts Ltd., Rarotonga, Cook Islands (Dark 1993:17).
is incorporated into something with an entirely different utility in another culture' (Graburn 1979:355). 'Souvenirs' are at the lowest end of the scale in price, quality and design. Mass production, uniformity and response to what the market likes, rather than what is culturally significant, characterise many souvenir items.

The sub-category of 'commercial' art encompasses objects in introduced media that are primarily designed for Western consumption, including posters and screenprints, pottery, clothing and textiles. It also includes objects such as carvings and items of personal adornment, well designed and well made in a recognisable indigenous style, but which are new designs rather than replicas. Commercial art works range from highly original to mass-produced works of lesser quality. Now that collectors have recognised that indigenous artists exhibit virtuosity and inventiveness in a multiplicity of media, the most original textiles, prints and ceramics are desirable collectables, but the majority of objects are mass produced and are accurately classified as 'commercial' art. Throughout the South Pacific many types of commercial art production have developed as local people have become interested in mastering the skills and technologies required for screen-printing or hand-painting textiles, print-making, wood-turning, throwing pots, etc. These arts-based industries are centred on commercially oriented, decorative and functional objects which can provide a regular income for their makers. Marketability is the primary criterion of these types of
objects, and 'commercial' art is the accepted description for
them.

Graburn (1976, 1979) wrote that 'tourist' or 'airport' arts
were the most insignificant and derivative forms of indigenous
art. But, from the mid-1970s the term 'tourist' art became
very popular, until it encompassed replicas, souvenirs and much
of the production of less important paintings, as well as
prints, textiles and other commercial art production - anything
that Western tourists were likely to buy on their holiday
travels to Third World countries. Within the same period
'tourist' art was used to denigrate new art forms, particularly
where indigenous artists adopted Western media.1 It will
become apparent from this chapter, and the chapters on
Aboriginal and Papua New Guinean art, that the art market is
highly segmented and that the increased demand for indigenous
art at all levels has introduced new roles for artists, such as
printmaker, potter, or contemporary artist, into indigenous
communities.2 Objections to the category 'tourist' art are
raised in a later section of this chapter. Briefly these are that

1 While working as an anthropologist in Papua New Guinea in the 1970s to
the 1980s, Barry Craig collected some early prints by Akis and Kauage. He
admitted he never took these works seriously, 'they were just tourist art' and
gave them to colleagues and family as gifts. Craig admits that this attitude
towards new art forms in introduced media was common among
anthropologists at that time (pers. comm. 1992).

2 Screen printing and pottery were introduced to the Tiwi people of
Bathurst and Melville Islands (Northern Territory) in the 1970s. There are
now four community arts centres producing high quality commercial art:
viz, Tiwi Designs screen printed textiles, generally by male artists; Bima
Wear, screen printed textiles and clothing, by female artists; Jilamarra,
screen printed textiles and clothing; Tiwi pottery. Tiwi artists continue to
produce their traditional art forms, such as pukamani poles, for internal use
and the external art market.
the term 'tourist' has become far too broad and unspecific, that it (largely inaccurately) defines objects by the end consumer, and that it implies attenuation of skill and originality on the part of the producer and lack of knowledge of art on the part of the consumer. In the latest market research survey of the Aboriginal arts and crafts industry, Mike Parsons (1994) found that tourists in Australia buy across the range of art produced, although, overall, their purchases of original artworks represent a small percentage of what they buy; the majority of their purchases are made up of souvenirs, replicas and commercial art (see section on 'fine' art below).

To summarise, the sub-categories of 'art made for sale' appropriate to the South Pacific region at present include: original art works in traditional or introduced media made for sale; the broad spectrum of 'commercial' art; 'replicas' and 'souvenirs'. Again these are only very broad categories and further descriptors should be added to adequately identify and characterise individual art works.

Graburn's 'non-commercial/commercial' distinction, despite its orientation to Western consumers, is useful and has been adopted by later authors in their studies of changing patterns of art production (although the term 'art made for sale' has been preferred here to Garburn's term 'commercial' art). Graburn's distinction is most useful as a preliminary indicator to Western consumers that, even now, not all indigenous art is made for sale. It leads to a consideration of other values that indigenous societies attach to some of their art forms. Graburn et al (1976) pointed out that social and
cultural factors may influence art processes and production in indigenous societies. Later authors, like Morphy (1980, 1983, 1991) and John Stanton (1988, 1991), recognised this and emphasised that culturally significant artworks (and also utilitarian forms) cannot be evaluated on their commodity nature and commercial success alone.

CATEGORIES DEVISED BY GRABURN AND KAEPPLER WHICH ARE NOT WIDELY USED IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC REGION

Some of the categories authors have included in their schema of categorisation do not always succeed in South Pacific circumstances. For example some terms in Graburn's (1976 and 1979) schema, and that of Kaeppler (1979), contain socio-cultural references which are in some ways inappropriate. The reason for Graburn's term 'ethnic' art not being used in the South Pacific region to refer to indigenous art has already been given.

As it is impossible to investigate every category devised, some selectivity is necessary. Therefore, I will briefly discuss only two terms, Graburn's 'assimilated fine art' and Kaeppler's 'folk art' and give reasons why they are not useful in categorising the art of the South Pacific region. Terms or categories that are based on Western values and aesthetics, and which suggest a eurocentric bias, including 'assimilated fine' art, 'fine' art, 'folk' art and 'transitional' art¹, are no longer considered useful or appropriate.

¹ 'Fine' art and 'transitional' art are discussed in separate sections below.
In both his 1976 and 1979 essays, Graburn proposes a category of 'assimilated fine' art, which he finds exemplified by the work of Albert Namatjira and the Hermannsburg School of water-colour landscape painters. He characterised 'assimilated fine' arts thus:

There are an increasing number of instances where the conquered minority artists have taken up the established art forms of the conquerors, following and competing with the artists of the dominant society. These are characteristic of extreme cultural domination and hence a desire to assimilate. Excellent examples are most of the Plains and Southwest Indian paintings . . . and the water colour productions of Australian Aborigine painter, Albert Namatjira, and the Hermannsburg school (Graburn 1976:7).

As an American scholar Graburn may not have been aware that any reference to assimilation, or the use of a term which may seem to condone any aspect of assimilation, would be found unacceptable by Aboriginal people and writers on Aboriginal art and culture, because of the social and cultural damage done to Aboriginal communities by Australian government policies of assimilation between the decades 1930s to 1960s. For Namatjira and other artists of the Hermannsburg School, water-colour painting was an inventive response which challenged existing Western concepts of Aboriginal art and established a new role for Aboriginal artists, that of representing their own culture to outsiders (Burn and Stephen 1986; Hardy, Megaw and Megaw 1992). A number of examples of this are given in Chapter 8, 'Innovation
In Aboriginal Art'. In my tentative set of categories Albert Namatjira's paintings may be included in the sub-category of original, culturally significant art works.

In Kaeppler's scheme, devised in the interests of better describing Polynesian art, she includes a category of 'folk' art:

'Folk art' in this scheme refers to the living art of the community. Folk art may incorporate profound structural changes, objects may be made of dissimilar materials, the object may incorporate new concepts and methods which were not part of the traditional culture. Folk art does not imply denigration of the product; it signifies a creative combination of traditional and nontraditional values (Kaeppler 1979:185).

Although it is clearly Kaeppler's intention, in introducing the term 'folk' art, to separate innovative art forms from those which were part of traditional culture (for which she employs the terms 'traditional' and 'evolved traditional' art), the term did not become widely used. This is probably because folk art, in European societies, refers to popular domestic and religious objects from peasant traditions. But village societies in the Pacific have different cultural traditions to village societies in Europe with which the term 'folk' art is closely associated. For the same reason the term 'ethnic' art has not become widely used in the South Pacific region.

In multicultural societies, as in Australian and New Zealand, 'folk' art is generally used to describe art objects and practices derived from the ethnic traditions of European migrants. Even if Aboriginal or Maori people form part of these countries' multicultural societies, recognition of them as the original inhabitants, and their cultures as those indigenous to
the land, is acknowledged. To avoid misunderstandings the term 'folk' art is not often used in Australia or New Zealand to describe indigenous art. The items Kaeppler describes as 'folk' art would come into the 'commercial' art sub-category of 'art made for sale' in my tentative set of categories.

Other terms that have attempted to grasp the inventive fusions occurring between indigenous and Western art forms, have had little success (see examples from Graburn and Kaeppler above, see also Dark 1990, 1993). The term 'transitional' art, favoured by some in the mid-1970s to mid-1980s is discussed below. Some other terms suggested for art which draws on and reinterprets traditional forms in new media, such as, 'syncretic' art or 'hybrid'1 art, never gained much currency. This is perhaps because they over-emphasise the influence of Western culture at a time when indigenous people in the South Pacific region are pursuing goals of autonomy and renewal of cultural identity. 'Contemporary' art is presently (early 1990s) the favoured term for new art (see below).

1 In botanical terms a hybrid is cross-pollinated from different parent species, resulting in a new form. But even if the idea of re-combination and unexpected results is attractive, the use of botanical terms is possibly too close to be acceptable to the taxonomic methods used in the past of displaying 'specimens' of flora, fauna and human cultures together in natural history museums.
CATEGORIES WIDELY USED TO DESCRIBE INDIGENOUS ART IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC REGION

The main reasons for accepting some categories and rejecting others (in the above two sections of this chapter and below) are their general usefulness for and accuracy in categorising art in the circumstances prevailing in the South Pacific region. In the section below, which considers widely used categories, the same criteria apply. Reasons are given for rejecting the terms 'transitional' art and 'tourist' art as inappropriate in the 1990s. While these terms, which came into widespread use in the 1970s, may have been useful for a time in assisting a newer conceptualisation of indigenous art than that envisaged by 'primitive' art, it is demonstrated that they have outlived their usefulness and contain a number of inaccuracies.

Two sets of terms will be discussed below. The two sets are (i) 'traditional' art, (ii) 'transitional' art and (iii) 'contemporary' art: these describe Western perceptions of change in indigenous art as well as the adoption of new media and techniques by indigenous artists. The second set is (i) 'fine' art and (ii) 'tourist' art: this market-oriented set is devised in terms of the end consumer of art, viz. Western collectors of original works of art and casual holiday buyers.

These terms have been accepted and widely used in the literature since the 1970s as being most useful in the West for the categorisation of indigenous art from the South Pacific region. However, as the terms are discussed in the section below, it will be demonstrated how short-lived they can be.
One of terms, 'transitional', has already fallen from favour. The discussion of the term 'traditional' will show that it has survived because the meaning of traditional has shifted from something static and inert to something vital and dynamic. The term 'tourist' art has been applied too indiscriminately and the effects of this will be analysed.

'Traditional' art

'Traditional' is a term widely used in the Western literature on the indigenous art of Africa, the Americas and the Pacific region. In its narrowest sense, 'traditional' has been used to describe small-scale, indigenous cultures in an (often idealised) state prior to contact with Europeans, or appraises them as continuing a way of life which has resisted corruption from European influences. Some contemporary writers have objected to the paradigm of 'primitive' art stereotype which envisaged 'traditional' cultures and their arts being static and unchanging (Kaeppler 1979, Morphy 1980, Specht 1988). Their objections have led to a re-evaluation of the term which supports the view that traditions can, and do, change. The view of tradition being a dynamic and positive force is supported here.

Several meanings of the term have emerged.¹ 'Traditional' art has been described as that which:

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¹ These meanings have been arrived at from extensive reading and seem consistent with the way 'traditional' art has been interpreted by Franz Boas, Alfred Buhler, Terrence Barrow and C.P. Mountford, Anthony Forge, Raymond Firth, Ronald and Catherine Berndt, Nelson Graburn, Adrienne Kaeppler, Howard Morphy, Sidney Mead and other significant writers.
was in existence at the time of European contact;
• identifies the characteristic forms continuously used by a particular indigenous society;
• is made in accordance with cultural conventions for the creator group's own purposes.

Often more than one of these meanings may be used in descriptions of so-called 'traditional' art. This indicates that the term 'traditional' has been found useful to describe certain types or features of indigenous art from the South Pacific region since Europeans began to comment on it. But, as it has become so extensively used, the term may have lost some of its nuances. These need to be recognised for the term to be really useful.

Until the 1960s most Western scholars tended to emphasise the unchanging nature of tradition in 'primitive' societies (see previous Chapter), and considered that artists were restricted by the need to constantly reproduce conventional forms. This view is represented by Bühler, Barrow and Mountford, who wrote in their volume on the arts of Oceania, that the cultural bonds on artists in indigenous societies were more restrictive than those on Western artists.¹ They claimed that

as a result of rigid demands imposed on their art, the primitive peoples find it very difficult to make revolutionary innovations in their art, or . . . to adopt unfamiliar styles which fulfil some new function. For this reason

¹ Relative to modernist movements in Western art, well established by the 1950s, in which the artist was free to express him/herself as an individual unconstrained by social conventions and mores.
sudden and radical changes in motifs and styles are extremely rare ....

Even in very recent times, under the influence of modern civilization, the fetters of tradition have only in very rare cases been shaken off (Buhler, Barrow and Mountford 1962:47).

Until the 1970s, the tendency to emphasise the unchanging nature of indigenous art often had the consequence of demeaning innovations as 'untraditional', without serious consideration of the underlying reasons for innovations to occur. In criticising the negative stereotype of 'traditional', Morphy (1980:81) contended that 'traditional' practices imply the existence of 'untraditional' counterparts, which are usually negatively evaluated and thought of as being impoverished and even products of cultural loss. He also objected to the 'ethnographic present' stereotype that had accumulated around the term 'traditional', finding that

'traditional' is by definition a backward looking term .... It belongs to the school of thought which sees cultures as discrete integrated wholes, unchanging and little affected by history .... Yet cultures are always changing and what is 'untraditional' in one generation may be 'traditional' in the next, in the sense of becoming accepted cultural practice (Morphy 1980:81).

In Kaeppler's (1979:185) system of categorisation, 'traditional' art is (ideally) that which precedes the European contact period and 'evolved traditional' art is a continuation of traditional art with essentially the same structure and expressing the same sentiment, although techniques of
production may have changed.¹ Kaeppler’s term ‘evolved traditional’ confirms that past events and values kept their relevance and place in the traditions of oral history and mythology, and that ceremonies and rituals, designs and emblems continued to be produced in similar ways because of the importance of the forms to be socially acceptable and validated by the community. Kaeppler acknowledges that ‘traditional’ art, i.e. that made without European influences on technique and, according to conventions which were not European-influenced, sometimes continued into the post-contact period. Kaeppler’s (1979:186) category of ‘evolved traditional’ provided a solution to the problem of making a categorical ‘traditional’/‘untraditional’ distinction between objects.

Art forms which are restricted by local cultural conventions are most often categorised as the ‘traditional’ forms of a society. In this interpretation, the most ‘traditional’ arts of indigenous societies are those which are governed by formal rules, have religious significance and encode ritual knowledge. Objects made for ritual contexts have to be recognised as correct to be effective in rituals. Traditional forms of artistic expression in indigenous societies were (and still are) generally constrained within what is considered a permissible range, and may have a restricted audience (Stanton 1986:21).

¹ Geoffrey Mosuwodoga, when Director of the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery, found Kaeppler’s classification plausible for the art of his own Trobriand Islands culture (Mosuwodoga:1979).
But changes do occur, if more gradually, even where traditional forms are constrained by ritual or indigenous law. Roger Neich (1990a:169) explains this in his investigation of Maori artforms current in the period 1865 to 1900, by writing that 'tattoo and woodcarving were the two Maori arts most bound by the laws of *tapu*, which tended to lock those arts into conventionalised forms, suppressing any bold innovation or at least slowing acceptance of new ideas'. He compares these with figurative painting which underwent more rapid stylistic development as it was not so constrained by convention.

The adoption of new technologies did not make all indigenous art produced thereafter 'untraditional'. In 1951 Raymond Firth discussed the contentious issue of what distinguished 'traditional' from 'untraditional' objects in a essay on Maori woodcarving:

The distinction . . . cannot be made simply in terms of a radical difference in the tools employed. The Maori wood-carver of pre-European days . . . appears to have used spade chisels and skew chisels of the same generic type as those used by a modern European craftsman, although they were in stone and not in steel (Firth 1951:161).

His main point was that in making a distinction of whether an object can be classed as 'traditional' on the grounds of whether non-traditional tools were used or not is too simplistic; the totality of a tradition and its importance to a society is more important than the processes employed in the making of objects. Firth's (1951:159) view is that the most important aspect of traditions are their continuity and adaptability; these factors ensure their viability. Metal tools
or other new technology and access to new materials such as paint may have enlarged the artist's scope and allowed greater diversifity in the art forms being created, but that did not change their essential purpose or function and the way they were used in the continuance of Maori traditions. In Kaeppler's view such developments would be encompassed in her term 'evolved traditional' art.

For many indigenous societies the rapidity and far-reaching effects of change were probably greater in the period following European contact than in earlier periods. Keeping with the Maori example, David Simmon explains the phenomena of the extinction and adaptation of art forms in response to changing conditions. For the Maoris, as Simmons writes,

intertribal musket wars, the arrival of missionaries, the treaty ceding sovereignty, the arrival of European settlers, war against the settlers, withdrawal and a rapidly declining population were some of the changes affecting Maori life in the nineteenth century (Simmons 1984:107).

One result of the rapid changes following European contact was that many art styles became extinct. Simmons (1984:107) accounts for thirteen identifiable eighteenth century styles of Maori stone carving which died out between 1820 and 1863. But some art styles continued to flourish with the introduction of new steel-tool technology. As Simmons says in his account, 'in the mid-nineteenth century there were three great schools of carvers (using steel tools), Rongowhakaatua of Gisbourne, Ngati Porou of the East Coast and Arawa of Rotarua'. Social and technological change had stimulated the tradition of Maori wood-carving in new directions.
Contemporary writers do not deny the significance, benefits and contexts of tradition in the present (and past) art making practices of indigenous people. But they are critical of the stereotyped concepts which have developed around the term 'traditional'. Among contemporary writers on the topic, Jim Specht supports the view that traditions can, and do, change. In an exhibition catalogue written in 1988 Specht wrote that

'traditional' means that some aspect of an artefact, custom or ceremony derives from the past . . . . Traditions are continually changing, even though the change may be slow and not immediately recognised.

The idea of kastom, fa'a Samoa and fasin bilong tumbuna mean roughly the same thing to a Ni-Vanuatu, a Samoan and a Papua New Guinean: "the ways of our ancestors" or "the way we traditionally do something" (Specht 1988:19).

Recent interpretations of the nature of tradition, including those by Specht, Morphy and Stanton, accept that new ways of doing things and new interpretations of events may be incorporated into a particular group's traditions. This makes it difficult for a clear traditional/untraditional distinction to be determined. As well, the balance of who decides what is 'traditional' is altered when members of the producing community identify the elements of an artform or practice

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1 As elaborated by writers such as F.D. McCarthy, who wrote about the 'traditional' lifestyle of Aborigines in a number of exhibition catalogues including that for the travelling exhibition Australian Aboriginal Art, 1960 to 1961, arranged by the State Art Galleries of Australia. The documentation explaining the exhibits would have a lasting impression on the viewing public, in this instance re-inforcing the ethnographic present stereotype of Aboriginal 'traditions'.
which are significant and meaningful within their culture and re-affirm their traditions.

Another significant issue that Specht raises is that indigenous people should affirm what they consider to be traditional and give their own definitions of it. It is important to investigate whether 'traditional' is a term understood and used by indigenous people to describe their culture and its physical expression in art. In the context of addressing Western audiences indigenous writers and speakers use terms such as 'traditional', which are readily understood.

The late Wandjuk Marika, a respected Aboriginal elder from Yirrkala, emphasised the importance of painting (on bodies and objects for ceremonies, as well as learning important clan stories by painting on bark) to reaffirm beliefs and traditions. As Marika and other Arnhem Land Aboriginal artists (Marika 1986:7-11; Milpurruru 1989:18-21; Bulun Bulun cited in Golvan 1991) have substantiated, it is the designs which are important, not the surface they are reproduced upon.

In transcripts made at the Macleay Museum, Sydney University, (while he was re-interpreting a number of paintings collected by Ronald and Catherine Berndt), Marika told the stories depicted on the barks, describing the main motifs and

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1 Increasing participation by Aboriginal people in Australian museums' projects, as well as the growing number of Aboriginal people employed by such institutions is allowing their viewpoints to be more consistently adopted.

2 The paintings in the Macleay Museum collection had been documented to some degree at the time of their collection by the Berndts.
compositional elements of each painting. As well he made statements on their significance. For example, about a 'fish-trap' painting by Mawu, he said 'this is the Dhuwa story for Djapu tribe . . . this the believing and foundation for all the Djapu tribe'.\(^1\) In the description of a bark painting by Birrkitji or Bulambi of the Yirritja moiety, Dahlwangu people, he said

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\text{this is . . . their symbol, their foundation and their story, permanent story, permanently story, from old time until today. They do the same painting, on and on, ever. They tell the story about the creation, story, the ancestor story . . . their stories, so they can teach their children.}^2
\]

Marika emphasised that Yolngu clan's traditional designs represent a foundation story of a particular clan which is retold and re-interpreted by artists of successive generations.

While I was working at Ramingining (Central Arnhem Land) in 1993-94, several artists were invited to make sand sculptures for major exhibitions. Jimmy Wululu and Philip Gudthaykudthay were invited to install ground sculptures at the Fremantle Arts Centre in November 1993, and David Malangi installed one at Tandanya for the 1994 Adelaide Festival. Explaining what was wanted was made much easier when Wululu grasped that what was wanted was a 'culture sand'. Wululu also refers to his, and other senior artists' important paintings, as 'culture paintings'. As a female balanda (outsider) I was only permitted to know the 'outside' story of 'culture

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2 Documentation on bark painting P2088 in the Macleay Museum collection recorded 13 April 1976.
sands' and 'culture paintings' which, in my capacity as Arts Adviser, I could pass on to a balanda audience. Wululu, Gudthaykudthay and Malangi are aware that they are maintaining Yolngu traditions both by continuing to depict the foundation stories of their respective clans and by restricting knowledge of the 'inside' stories to outsiders. These artists understand the concept of 'traditional' art, but prefer to call it 'culture'.

In summary then, it can be seen that the term or category 'traditional' art, has assisted Western scholars in their characterisation of indigenous art and is understood and used by some indigenous people. Narrow interpretations of 'traditional' art, such as that of Buhler, Barrow and Mountford (1962), viewed tradition as an inhibiting factor, restricting artists to endless repetition of the same styles, and did not admit that changing artistic practices can lead in positive new directions and continue to affirm cultural values. As Firth, Neich, Specht and others cited in this section have affirmed, if an object represents a community's cultural identity and carries forward their traditional values and beliefs, changes of form are relatively inconsequential.

The concept of 'traditional' art is deeply entrenched in Western audiences' perception of indigenous art of the South Pacific region. 'Traditional' is not a useful concept when it is perceived in a passive or negative light, inhibiting development. If tradition is perceived to be the sound and positive basis on which the original identity and continuing development of the culture and art of a particular society are
formed, then it is a useful term. Indigenous peoples' viewpoint of what is regarded as 'traditional' for their own societies should be taken into account for the term to continue to be viable.

'Transitional' art

In several essays, Graburn describes the 'arts of acculturation' or 'transitional arts' of Third and Fourth World societies. To precis his findings (Graburn 1969, 1976, 1982; Dawson and Fredrickson and Graburn 1974), these are art forms which experiment with materials from non-traditional sources; they find new ways of representing traditional subjects, and are oriented to an outside audience.

Their classification of objects as 'transitional' sought to identify emergent forms related to traditional styles. It was intended to cover an intermediary area between 'traditional' and 'tourist' art, recognising that the former had greater artistic merit than the latter.1

The main objections to this term are based on its temporal implications. Although the concept of transition gave some recognition to the processes of cultural change, the term judged objects from other cultures by European standards, leading to criticisms that it disguised 'a form of cultural

1 It has dropped out of favour since the late 1980s. It was frequently used both in the literature and as an exhibition concept, Traditions in Transition: Culture Contact and Material Change, (Dawson Fredrickson and Graburn, Lowie Museum, 1974) and Transitional Art of Papua New Guinea, an exhibition prepared by the staff of the National Arts School for the South Pacific Festival of Arts in 1984.
imperialism' (Megaw 1985:43). Despite its popularity in the 1970s-1980s, the term ‘transitional’ art did not survive long, probably because of its negative implications. Stanton (1991) makes a case for the term ‘innovative’ art (see below and Chapter 6) to more accurately cover certain developments in Aboriginal artistic activity that Vincent Megaw and others described as ‘transitional’.

In the 1980s so-called ‘dot and circle’ acrylic paintings by Aboriginals from the central desert region of Australia came to be considered to be ‘transitional’ art (Megaw 1984a, 1986; Marrie 1985: 17-21). Discussing the emergence of this painting Terry Smith proposed that

‘(t)ransitional’ is the label that anthropologists apply to art which appears within the gaps between two cultures. This implies that the inequality of the exchange between the dominant coloniser and the subjugated colonised creates a ‘bastard’ art, subject to exploitation and necessarily short-lived (T. Smith 1991:495).

Undeniably, the incursion of European culture into the South Pacific region caused indigenous art forms to change.¹ Smith's comment is indicative of how some Western scholars (although he does not name them) have accentuated the negative rather than the positive effects of how change has affected art production. Smith (1991:495) also points out that ‘Aboriginal painting does not conform to the logic of historical development that we have been traducing in white Australian

¹ Although objects were always produced for trade or exchange in indigenous society, commercialisation in this context means producing objects for sale which were not previously produced for sale.
art', and also that the Aboriginal artists involved in major painting movements, such as that which emerged at Papunya in the 1970s, have their own valid reasons for electing to use new ways of painting their Dreaming stories. As Smith notes

(wh)en asked why he painted, Pintupi artist Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi replied: 'If I don't paint this story some whitefella might came and steal my country'. The answer combines a clear recognition of the fragility of Aboriginal culture before the rapaciousness of mining companies, and of the well-intentioned but ultimately debilitating efforts of welfare colonialism, with a quiet determination that the land will sustain the Aboriginal people if they maintain their ownership by an increasingly strong affirmation of their rootedness in it - by all possible means, including the rituals of representation (Smith 1991:495).

Morphy's research also indicates how cultural interaction, and its effect on art production, has strengthened the independence and autonomy of a community. He points to the conscious experimentation and adaptation of styles undertaken by Yirrkala (Arnhem Land) artists to meet the demands of external markets, and explains that

it is frequently through the sale of arts and crafts that indigenous peoples who survive the first phases of colonisation begin to participate in the wider socio-economic polity that has incorporated them (Morphy 1980:81).

Stanton maintains that the indigenous aesthetic traditions of Aboriginal cultures have always responded to the impact of ideas and forms from alien cultures, such as in the period of contact with Macassans for some coastal Arnhem land societies (Stanton 1986, 1991). The appropriation of new
forms or styles and their incorporation into ceremonies and exchange networks has always been a feature of what he calls the 'cultural creativity' of Aboriginal groups. What he prefers to call 'innovation', rather than 'transition' has occurred with even greater rapidity in recent times as there have been a greater number of stimuli reaching even very isolated Aboriginal groups (Stanton 1991:3).

Both Stanton and Morphy note that the changes in the types of Aboriginal art produced within a period of rapid social change may be both 'destructive' and 'inventive'; traditions and inherited structures have not always yielded or succumbed to a destiny dominated by the capitalist West; the Aboriginal people have often resisted, changed or adapted to new circumstances, and invented new ways of maintaining a distinct identity. Stanton's thesis about 'innovation' in Aboriginal art, in which he proposes an alternative way of seeing the process of change and adaptation, is discussed at length in Chapter 6.

Bernard Smith's (1988) essay is particularly concerned with the assimilationist implication of the term 'transitional' art. He decided that the temporal connotation of 'transitional' suggests that it is only a matter of time before movements in Aboriginal art, such as dot and circle acrylic paintings, would be assimilated into dominant forms of Western art. He prefers to direct discussion away from terms which reflect passivity or may seem to condone any aspect of assimilation (referring to the social damage done to Aboriginal communities by Australian government policies of assimilation from the
1930s to the 1960s). B. Smith prefers the concept of convergence to that of transition. He writes persuasively that converge . . . derives from the Latin *convergere*, meaning to meet together; whereas assimilate, *assimilat*, means to make alike and hence absorb and incorporate; on the one hand a meeting of equals, on the other an act of ethnic cannibalism . . . . The concept of *transitional* Aboriginal culture is not much better than the older concept of assimilation since it implies surely the gradual transformation of the indigenous Aboriginal culture into European modes and forms . . . the use of such a term brings with it the clear implication that the transitional process will ultimately transform traditional Aboriginal art into a kind of white art, since the latter is the dominant mode. The term convergence is better than either assimilation or transition since it grants and implies the presence of two highly durable and yet flexible traditions. That which may converge may also diverge: the act of convergence does not imply the destruction of either tradition (B. Smith 1988:13).

Vincent Megaw (1985) proposed that the term 'transitional' art was a useful 'time-lag' device, allowing the Western art world (academics, critics, curators and connoisseurs) to determine its place in their scheme of values and perceptions about art, or at least give themselves time to decide whether to take innovations in indigenous art seriously. He writes that

while the past of indigenous people in territories occupied by European settlers may have already found its place in museums, the contemporary 'transitional' arts of these people is (sic) only beginning to appear within the art galleries, which till recently denied 'fine art' status to products
such as those of the so-called 'Papunya painters' of the Western Desert (Megaw 1985:44).

In another essay (1986:32-33), Megaw commented on the collection of Aboriginal art at the Australian National Gallery at the time of its opening in 1982. He noted that, 'no example of 'transitional' or contemporary . . . Aboriginal art was on view'. The recognition that innovations in art could arise from Aboriginal culture required an intermediary step. The term 'transitional' art was useful in art world terminology to distinguish between what was perceived as 'traditional' art (for example, rock art and bark paintings) and 'transitional' art (for example, dot and circle acrylic paintings), before placing the latter in the category of 'fine' arts, which Western art theorists regard as the highest category of art.

In summary, it can be seen that the term 'transitional' art arose from a combination of Western cultural preconceptions and expediency. For a while it appeared to be a convenient term, especially for the Western artworld, to describe the phenomenon of innovative art forms arising from indigenous traditions. Primarily because of their aesthetic merit, which accorded with Western tastes at the time, (rather than the context of the art, its content, or the standards of the Aboriginal producers, as Megaw (1985: 44) notes) it was expedient, at the time, to establish a separate category from 'traditional' art and 'tourist' art.

Considering the phenomenon of rapidly emerging art forms in the context of 'innovation' (see Chapter 6), may reveal more positive aspects than the concept of 'transition' could
encompass. As Stanton perceives, innovation is a process of change, rather than a category. It is applicable to Aboriginal art, and other indigenous peoples' art, both before and after European contact, and may occur in all traditions and artforms. I agree with Stanton that ‘innovation’ or ‘innovative’ art is a useful term to acknowledge the processes of change in indigenous art. It gives recognition to the fact that the impetus to pioneer or innovate may come from within the creator group, and is not necessarily the result of their being influenced by Western culture.

**Contemporary art**

'Contemporary' art is now a widely used term to describe the outcome of innovative developments in the visual arts of indigenous cultures in the South Pacific region. As this term has emerged relatively recently there are very few references to it in earlier literature. Apart from recent exhibition catalogues there are few published accounts covering contemporary arts practice in the South Pacific region, or which claim it to be a possible discrete classification.1

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1 In their notes on the documentation of Maori art for a major exhibition of recent New Zealand art at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, *Headlands: Thinking through New Zealand Art*, the curators noted that, "there is an extensive literature on historical Maori art...(but) there is far less literature on contemporary Maori art". This catalogue listed two catalogues, *Contemporary Maori Art*, Waikato Museum 1976 and *Whatu Aaho Rua*, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui, 1989; one 'picture book' Katarina Mataira, *Maori Artists of the South Pacific*, Nga Puna Waihanga, Ralgan, 1984; and a book featuring interviews, *Seven Maori Artists*, Government Printer, Wellington, 1986, as the existing sources on contemporary Maori art. Vilsoni Tausie (1979), discussed developments in the Pacific generally. Susan Cochrane Simons and Hugh Stevenson (eds) (1990), considers the
In some instances the term ‘contemporary’ is deliberately used by practising artists as a description of themselves and their work; in this section examples will be given of Papua New Guinean artists and urban-based Aboriginal artists who call themselves contemporary artists. Contemporary South Pacific artists may be professional or amateur, in the Western sense of this distinction (Tausie 1979:52).

Marsha Berman (1990) and Hetti Perkins (1991) argue that the term ‘contemporary’ can be applied to all artistic works made by indigenous artist of the present time. Several curators of Aboriginal art (Perkins 1991, Caruana 1992, Mundine and Foley 1992, 1994) have staged major exhibitions which interpret all Aboriginal art made now as ‘contemporary’ art. This is considered an important strategy to overcome the stereotype of certain types of Aboriginal objects being regarded as too ‘ethnographic’, or too ‘traditional’ to be displayed as major works in a contemporary context (pers. comm. Caruana 1992). As a result of such exhibitions, Australian audiences for art have developed a more open mind to the diversity of Aboriginal art.

But, in general, ‘contemporary’ refers to artworks in non-traditional media. Specht describes contemporary visual artists in the South Pacific as those who

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are exploring media that do not derive from tradition. Uninhibited by
convention, they use approaches more familiar to Western artists than to
their fellow villagers . . . .

They do not use contemporary art media to restate conventional forms.
Their access to contemporary art was through urban environments, which
presented possibilities beyond those of their villages (Specht 1988:45-
48).

Specht’s concept of ‘contemporary’ envisions only new or
recent art forms which have made a break from tradition in
style, media and technique. To this I would add that
’contemporary’ art often engages with new subject matter. As
will be demonstrated in the later chapter on Papua New Guinean
contemporary art, such art forms are very distinctive and
explore new areas of creativity and personal expression.
Included in this category (although not all discussed in detail
in this thesis) are all forms of literature, theatre productions,
bond music, as well as new visual art forms - film and
photography, painting, printmaking, metal sculpture and textile
design.

Many contemporary artists in South Pacific societies are,
by choice, professional artists. For Papua New Guinean artists
this means they have made a conscious choice to earn their
living in a system which acknowledges the ‘ascendancy of
Western concepts, attitudes and values of art’ (Tausie
1979:60). Referring to creative writing, the leading example
for many South Pacific Island nations,¹ the Rotuman writer Vilsoni Tausie comments that (as a contemporary art form) creative writing may serve several purposes within the region. The first is that it acts as a unifying force. Almost everyone in the Pacific can identify with the themes and feelings expressed. . . . They can also provide valuable teaching material - students will find them much more interesting and relevant. Secondly, it reinforces our identities as Pacific people. Although the language used is English, it is only a superficial coating for a distinctly Pacific concern. The images and symbols used, the drawing from past traditions, the colonial experience, the anger, and the dilemmas that are expressed are distinctly Pacific (Tausie 1979:73).

Contemporary visual artists are now making a similar contribution. Their images are used to illustrate school texts and add impact to issues of identity, sense of place and nationhood through school curricula and by virtue of their acknowledged role in the community.²

At present a number of artists living and working in Papua New Guinea have no hesitation in calling themselves 'contemporary Papua New Guinean artists' and their artworks

¹ Creative writing courses were introduced at the establishment of universities in some Pacific Island nations (around the time of their achieving the status of Independence), but the University of the South Pacific, with its main campus in Fiji and eight subsidiary campuses, does not have an equivalent school for visual arts. The National Arts School of Papua New Guinea became the Faculty of Creative Arts only in 1991. UPNG was established in 1967, with creative writing being taught from its inception.

² For example, the present Expressive Arts curriculum for PNG high schools includes a portfolio of reproductions of 30 drawings and paintings by artist Joe Nalo which represent social and cultural concerns visually. Expressive Arts curriculum document, PNG Department of Education, 1989.
'contemporary Papua New Guinean art'. The classification 'contemporary' art distinguishes their work immediately from that of rural-based art producers working with materials from their environment in local stylistic conventions, however innovative this art may be. 'Contemporary', in Papua New Guinea society carries the connotation of individualistic, urban-based artists working in Western media, and 'Papua New Guinean' is that they have identified themselves as artists of the nation, rather than by their locality (such as the identification of 'Sepik carver'). As Narokobi (1990:17) says, 'recent developments in artistic forms of expression are not only original . . . [they] also reflect the deep socio-psychological transformation that is taking place in Papua New Guinea'.

Some urban Aboriginal artists also consider themselves to be contemporary artists. The terms 'urban' and 'Koori' have become more widespread since the mid-1980s. Within the schema of contemporary Aboriginal art, 'urban' art refers to the work of Aboriginal artists living in cities or large rural centres. Usually the descendents of tribes dispossessed at the

1 Essays by Bernard Narokobi, Susan Cochrane Simons, Hugh Stevenson and Marsha Berman investigate various aspects of the contemporary art movement in Papua New Guinea in Cochrane Simons and Stevenson 1990. Murals by Martin Morububuna adorn the walls of UPNG, Port Moresby and the facade of Gordens Marketplace, and murals by other artists, expressing ideas of contemporary PNG society play a similar role in other educational institutions and public places.

2 Koori Art '84 (Artspace 1984) and Urban Kooris (Artspace 1986) were seminal exhibitions in Sydney which established a number of urban Aboriginal artists. Since the formation of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative in 1987 these artists have had their own gallery/workspace in Sydney.
onset of European settlement, these urban artists produce individualistic work which often refers to socio/cultural and political problems of marginalised Aboriginal people like themselves. 'Koori' is the term preferred by Aboriginal people of south-eastern Australia to describe themselves. The inaccurate use of Koori to describe urban Aboriginals from anywhere in Australia is an example of how terms rapidly become misunderstood and stereotyped.¹

In the context of all Aboriginal art of the present day, 'urban', Koori, Murri, Nunga and Nyoongah, describes Aboriginal artists, living in non-traditional circumstances, whose work, nevertheless, identifies with the contemporary concerns of Aboriginal people in rural areas, towns and cities. Such artists may be professional or amateur, art-school trained or self-taught. The ideas and ideals their art express are in concert with the aspirations of the Aboriginal community and have been effective in relating these concerns to the wider Australian public. Their individualistic and penetrating imagery has also created a space for 'urban' or 'Koori' art as an accepted sub-category of contemporary Aboriginal art in the Australian consciousness (see Chapters 6 and 8).

Berman argues that the term 'contemporary' also means belonging to the same age, existing at the same time. In its wider sense of contemporaneous it must also include continuing developments in traditional art forms. In her view

¹ The correct terms are Murri for Queensland and north-west NSW, Nunga for South Australia, Nyoongah for south-west Western Australia and 'Top-end' for the Northern Territory.
'contemporary' . . . , within the framework of conventional Western art terminology, connotes avant-garde or modern. In order to avoid misunderstanding, I will introduce the term 'contemporaneous art' to denote all art forms existing together at the present time . . . Together the new artists and traditional artists constitute the body of contemporary working artists in Papua New Guinea (Berman 1990:59).

Berman's point is valid, especially in the context within which it was made. Explaining the selection rationale for an exhibition of contemporary Papua New Guinean art, she commented that, 'if the current exhibition were to be a review of contemporaneous art, it must include current developments in . . . traditional art'. But Berman (1990:53) suggests that there is a distinction between, 'contemporaneous artists who today seek and find their creative inspiration in forms of expression inherited from the past', and 'new' or 'contemporary' artists who are 'urban or urbanised in attitude or life style'. Berman's view is shared by Perkins (1991), in her introductory essay to the exhibition catalogue Aboriginal Women's Art.

Both uses are perfectly legitimate. 'Contemporary' art of the present can be contrasted with the traditional art of the present, or it can mean all art that is made now. Modern movements, for example 'urban' art, political posters, film and video are more obviously part of contemporary urban society and reflect the identity indigenous artists are making for themselves in this milieu. Unless otherwise indicated, 'contemporary' art will be used in this thesis in the narrower sense of art in introduced media, or where artists have made a
distinctive shift in style and/or subject matter from their group's artistic traditions.

This concludes the discussion of the first set of terms widely used to describe indigenous art of the period 1970s-1990s. In summary, 'traditional' art produced in this period continues to depict arcane clan stories, mythic or spiritual concepts and other subjects which represent the inherited knowledge of small-scale indigenous societies and is their exclusive right to produce. Working within traditional forms does not overly restrict the development of an individual artist's style. Tradition remains a valuable and dynamic asset to such communities and has proved useful in new circumstances.

In the 1970s, what was then termed 'transitional' art emerged, for example acrylic paintings depicting major dreaming stories by artists from Australia's central desert region. The term was short-lived and owes its demise to the recognition by some Western scholars that it was overly eurocentric. The term 'contemporary' art is now preferred to encompass such innovations. It recognises that they are part of the transformations taking place in indigenous societies in the late twentieth century and that indigenous artists wish to communicate their current realities, beliefs and aspirations to outside audiences through their art.

Discounting the now defunct term 'transitional' art, the terms 'traditional' and 'contemporary' art may be interpreted as being of greatest interest to Western cultural institutions and their frameworks for collecting art from indigenous
societies in the South Pacific region. Although they are very
genral, these terms may be interpreted as exemplifying the
cultural interests of museums and art galleries in following
and interpreting sociocultural developments occurring within
indigenous societies in the region (for further discussion, see
Chapter 10, Australian Museums and Indigenous People).

'Fine' art

The criteria for the second set of categories mentioned at the
beginning of this chapter, viz. 'fine' art and 'tourist' art, are
related to economic considerations, in particular defining the
markets for indigenous art in the Western art-culture system.

It is admitted that distinguishing certain objects as
'fine' art, from among all the art produced by a particular
group, involves the consideration of aesthetic principles, the
relative importance of the object and the reputation of the
maker. However, this section concentrates on the distinction
between 'fine' and 'tourist' art made by market analysts.

Before describing what is generally included in the
category 'fine' art, some comments on why both the categories
'fine' art and 'tourist' art are perceived useful by market
analysts of indigenous art, are necessary.

Igor Kopytoff (1986:88-89) claims that large-scale,
highly commercialised Western societies tend to emphasise the
commodity value of objects in comparison to small-scale, non-
commercialised societies which tend to value the social and
cultural values of things. He also claims that the only certain
and reliable form of valuation which exists in Western societies is by assessing their value as commodities. Kopytoff perceives Western society as representative of 'an ideal type of highly commercialised and monetized society' and claims that in such societies today, money and commodities 'tend to invade almost every aspect of existence'. Kopytoff is concerned that the concentration on commodity value of objects in the West leads to what he calls a 'flattening of values'. I understand this to mean that prioritising the economic value of art objects may lead to a number of other ways they may be valued being either disregarded or considered relatively unimportant in contrast to their monetary value.

Several government-sponsored surveys have attempted to describe and quantify the so-called 'Aboriginal arts industry' in order to develop marketing strategies for Aboriginal art. Australian analysts undertaking such surveys (Pascoe 1981, Altman et al 1989, Altman and Taylor 1990, ATSIC Draft Policy 1993, Parsons 1994) have perceived the production of Aboriginal art as the 'Aboriginal arts industry', which essentially produces two types of commodities, 'tourist' art and 'fine' art. This assists their purposes of quantifying art production, identifying the marketability or market demand for different types of art objects and who the buyers are for the range of objects produced.

Ron May surveyed existing and potential markets for indigenous arts in the South Pacific region, primarily using examples from Papua New Guinea (May 1975), and later studied the market for Aboriginal art (May 1983). In both these surveys
he defined the 'ultimate buyers' of indigenous art as two distinct groups, 'tourists' and 'collectors', and writes that they finally determine the volume of sales and the prices which are paid for different types of items. May (1983:2) emphasises 'quality' as the main determinant between the categories of 'fine' art and 'tourist' art. He allows that 'collectors' (including museums and art galleries) have provided the principal market for 'fine' art. May uses the term 'individual creative art' to describe one of the main features, or qualities, of 'fine' art.¹ In my tentative set of categories, May's term 'individual creative art', and the more widely used term 'fine' art, are replaced by the term 'original, culturally significant' art. Such works may be in either traditional or contemporary styles.

In an attempt to categorise indigenous art works of interest to collectors Jon Altman (1989) and Altman and Luke Taylor (1990), also use the term 'fine' art (which they contrasted with 'tourist' art).² Altman and Taylor found 'fine'

¹ May's distinction was appreciated by Daniel Thomas although he did not adopt May's term. In 1989, when Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA), Thomas collected Aboriginal art for AGSA and frequently wrote on the subject. He distinguished between 'high-priced, museum-worthy paintings'; 'mainstream art-market' objects; 'social-action posters' and 'tourist industry' arts. The last three categories were still collectible but, from the art galleries perspective, were considered 'marginal art production'. Thomas qualified his remarks by saying that, as art museums' interests shift from high-art media and categories, excellence is also sought in non-professional art practise (Thomas 1989:2).

² Altman and Taylor probably followed Ron May's 1983 analysis of the art and artefact market(s) in the Pacific in which he found a correlation between certain types of art objects and certain types of consumers, viz. "ultimate buyers (who) might be classified into two overlapping but fairly distinct groups: 'collectors', who are interested only in items of a certain quality but are likely to have a continuing interest, and 'tourists' or other casual buyers who are mostly interested in acquiring one or a few items, usually as souvenirs of a visit" (May 1983:2).
art a useful term to categorise original art works which art collectors find highly desirable. According to Altman and Taylor (1990:12), the market for 'fine' art requires that objects are individual creative works of singular aesthetic merit and cultural value; it recognises the individuality and renown of the artist and rewards him/her accordingly. 'Fine' art is promoted and marketed through commercial galleries, art dealers and auction houses and sold to wealthier buyers and public collections nationally and internationally.

In the latest survey of the 'Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Industry' commissioned by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and researched in 1993, Mike Parsons (1994:11-34) further delineated the market for Aboriginal art into five major sectors: the domestic residential market; the domestic tourist market; the international visitor market; the international residential market; private, corporate and institutional collectors. Parsons finds that 'fine' art is purchased by all sectors, although, sales of 'tourist' art exceed sales of 'fine' art as a percentage of all purchases in the residential and tourist sectors.

May, Altman and Parsons acknowledge that Aboriginal art producers have an imperfect knowledge of the Western art markets because most are 'distanced by language, culture and physical remoteness from the marketplace' (Parsons 1994:33). As well, the majority of retailers of Aboriginal art and craft, and the end consumers of it, are also physically and culturally distanced from where the art is produced.
In his discussion of markets for indigenous art from the South Pacific region, May points out that

(1) the market for art, clearly, is a highly imperfect market: the commodity is usually sharply differentiated (for most of the art market the commodity is in fact unique); the number of buyers and especially of sellers is typically small; 'information' is not only generally incomplete but (as 'taste') is often highly subjective (May 1983:1).¹

Altman concurs with May's claim that there are complexities in the marketing of Aboriginal art that do not occur in other sectors of the Australian art industry (1990:10). Many Aboriginal producers live in isolated communities remote from art markets (i.e. commercial city galleries, private collectors and State and National public art galleries). This means that most Aboriginal art has to be marketed via community-based, government-supported art centres which collect and distribute art production, whether 'tourist' or 'fine' art, to appropriate outlets in metropolitan centres. Only a minor portion of the output is sold directly from these art centres to tourists and collectors. The market for Aboriginal art has grown exponentially in the past twenty years since government funded arts centres were first established in the mid-1970s as part of a strategy for expanding economic opportunities for

¹ Economists distinguish between 'perfect' and 'imperfect' markets. A perfect market is characterised by a uniform commodity (so that one producer's commodity is not differentiated from another's, for example, coffee beans); by large numbers of buyers and sellers (so that no one buyer or seller can dictate the market price); by each buyer and seller acting in self-interest (so that sellers maximise profit and consumers maximise satisfaction); by complete information on the part of buyers and sellers (so that all buyers and sellers can respond to a market price), and by perfect mobility of resources (so that there are no restrictions on trading) (May 1983).
Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal art is now recognised as one way by which Aboriginal people can participate in the economy and is acknowledged as an area where they have gained esteem in Australia and internationally.

However, the factors of physical and cultural distance between Aboriginal producers and Western consumers provides a good example of what Kopytoff calls 'the flattening of values'. This is evident in the market-oriented categorisation of Aboriginal art as 'fine' art or 'tourist' art, which prioritises Western consumers interests and emphasises the commodity value of art objects. The marketing of Aboriginal art presently follows the norms and procedures developed within the Western art-culture system for dealing with art as commodities. For example, market estimations of the popularity of a particular genre of Aboriginal painting, or who may be regarded, for the time being, the most significant Aboriginal artists, will affect the fame and price of artworks.

Another way that the term 'fine' art reflects the 'flattening of values' is that it is taken from European art history, where 'fine' art specifically refers to paintings, sculpture and architecture and has elitist and patriarchal connotations. Extending the term 'fine' art to indigenous art from the South Pacific region may, however subtly, have the effect of excluding works other than paintings, sculpture and architecture from this category. The criteria for distinguishing 'fine' art objects from the totality of art produced are set by Western experts and influenced by their taste, which may vary from time to time. In Morphy's view
Aboriginal fine art consists of paintings purchased by and displayed in those museums and galleries in Australia and overseas that have a reputation for displaying fine art. More generally, it consists of paintings that are of the 'quality' to belong to that category. The paintings and sculptures that fit into the Aboriginal fine art category are defined not by the producers but by their final purchasers: by the collectors, art gallery curators, trustees, dealers, and expert consultants associated with the fine art world. In the case of Aboriginal fine art, which is an expanding category, the criteria are not fully worked out and are subject to constant change. It is a category in the process of being created, but that does not mean people are not yet investing in it. Indeed investment is part of the process of creation of Aboriginal fine art, for it is a commodity to be bought and sold, marketed and displayed, usually without any reference to the artists' original intentions (Morphy 1991:22).

The gap between what the Western art market expects of Aboriginal producers, and what Aboriginal producers wish to achieve through the sale of their art will be discussed again in the following chapter, 'Regimes of Value'.

The categories 'fine' art and 'tourist' art, as they are used in the 1990s, may be regarded as having evolved from Graburn's 1976 overall category of 'commercial' art. The lack of subcategories under either 'fine' or 'tourist' art, and the lack of a category such as Graburn's 'non-commercial' to balance them, are further evidence of a flattening of values.
‘Tourist’ art

Despite several authors’ attempts to differentiate between the types of art made for external consumption (in which ‘tourist’ or ‘airport’ arts are generally assigned to the least culturally significant category), ‘tourist’ art has become a popular term encompassing all but the most culturally significant forms of indigenous art.

Altman and Taylor’s (1990:10) market definition of ‘tourist’ art is ‘that which is represented and sold to travellers within their touristic experience’. In Altman’s (1990:2) view, ‘tourist art is by definition that which is bought by overseas visitors to Australia or Australians touring the country and is purchased for their own use and enjoyment’. He differentiates between ‘tourist’ art and ‘fine’ art markets for Aboriginal art, finding that ‘tourist’ art has little marketing potential overseas. ‘Tourist’ art is specifically designed for the ultimate consumer, the tourist on short visits to unfamiliar cultures (Altman 1990:3).

Like its corollary, ‘fine’ art, I find the term ‘tourist’ art misleading for a number of reasons:

• It presumes a limited class of end consumers for indigenous art objects.
• It does not accurately describe the diversity of products termed ‘tourist’ art, and demeans a number of significant art forms by lumping them together in a lowest-common-denominator category.
• It reveals an ethnocentric bias by emphasising the economic power and taste of non-indigenous people.
Parsons' 1994 survey of the Aboriginal 'arts and crafts industry' established that domestic and international residential market sectors (people buying for their own homes from galleries and retail outlets, not tourists buying as gifts or mementos of their travels), absorb a considerable portion of Aboriginal art in the under $200 price range (Parsons 1994:11-14). Government departments, small businesses and large corporations are also significant purchasers of replicas and commercial arts, for example limited edition prints and other items to suit the decor of hotel suites and offices.

In the post-World War II era, the expansion of tourism became possible through the increasing availability of frequent, relatively cheap, long-range travel to more and further destinations. This made visiting the South Pacific affordable to the growing middle-class of Western industrialised nations (and increasingly, the Asian middle-class). Tourists are not expected to be familiar with the landscape, people and culture of their destinations - tours are often their first-time, first-hand experience, and are conducted on an introductory level. As well, tourists are not usually discerning art buyers and have a low budget for the articles they buy. Common criteria of tourist purchases is that they are, 'crafts of non-industrial peoples . . . designed to meet the exigencies of portability, saleability and the decor of middle class homes' (Dawson, Frederikson and Graburn 1974:4).

For the majority of tourists certain Aboriginal objects, like boomerangs, didjeridus and clapsticks are believed to symbolise all Aboriginal cultures and they are not necessarily
aware of the difference between Aboriginal-made objects and 'Aboriginalia' manufactured elsewhere. As May writes at its worst . . . (tourist art) consists of stylised works whose relation to anything in the traditional culture is at best tenuous, and mass produced, often by people with little knowledge of traditional culture and perhaps not even from the society whose art they purport to portray (May 1983:1). And, in her North Queensland study Julie Finlayson found that unfortunately, the promotion of Aboriginal culture in the tourist industry reiterates the same visual and cultural symbols, thereby reinforcing the apparent universality of these objects and their validity for all Aboriginal culture. In the process the particularities of Aboriginal cultures are lost . . . . This has led, in some areas of North Queensland, to production of (tourist items not from the local culture) and deliberate neglect of the indigenous material culture (Finlayson 1990:62).

Despite the proliferation of much culturally insignificant work and, to put it simply, bad art, in areas where there is a high level of tourism, some recent studies are proving that responding to market forces generated by Western consumers does not necessarily result in the devaluation of artistic expression as a whole. This negative view has to be balanced by an appreciation of what may be valuable to a culture when conditions favour the production of various types of commercial art and people are willing to produce it. For example, a number of Aboriginal arts centres in remote areas of the Northern Territory and Western Australia are the result of adult education and training programs. Since the late 1970s, the Federal Government targeted the 'art and craft industry' as
a source of self-employment. Consequently many community groups, women in particular, received formal training in non-traditional art skills such as making batik, designing and printing textiles, limited edition prints, pottery and so on. These groups then seek funding to establish themselves as an enterprise and market their products themselves and through retail galleries.¹

Making objects for consumers who are not part of the maker's own culture most frequently results in some kind of modification to the type(s) of objects being produced. Each type of object derived from the traditional repertoire can undergo transformation in one or all of the following attributes - size, form, function, materials. Making art for sale may also affect the role of the maker or, more correctly, introduce new roles into local art production as well as (to some extent) altering art-making processes.

Harry Beran's research on the woodcarver Mutuaga (c1860-c1920), of the Suau region in the Massim district (Milne Bay Province) of south-east Papua demonstrates how this occurred (Beran, forthcoming).² Following a close formal analysis of Mutuaga's carvings and works attributed to him, Beran interpreted some of Mutuaga's pieces as 'evolved traditional' art (following Kaeppler's definition of this term), and

¹ Some examples include Utopia, famed for its batik and the several arts centres on Bathurst and Melville Islands which produce different types of commercial art.

² Manuscript provided courtesy of the author.
classified other pieces as 'tourist' art, that is he found that they were 'untraditional' in some aspects.

Beran summarises the general features of the carver's work, finding that

(Mutuaga's) artefacts, like other types of Massim carvings of the types he made, are carved from one piece of wood . . . All objects carry some type of surface engraving and most are richly engraved. The incisions are filled in with lime to highlight the designs, as is typical of Massim carvings in dark wood. The ears, neck, chest, belly and some other parts of many figures and pigs on spatulas are coloured red . . . . This red colouring seems to be much more common on Mutuaga's work than on that of other carvers (Beran forthcoming, p. 6).

Although these features are common to all of Mutuaga's works, Beran identifies some types of figures, such as human figures on stands, made for trade with Europeans or as gifts for the Abel family, as 'tourist' pieces. In his view, 'tourist pieces are artefacts of a type not made before Western contact and indeed made for sale or trade with Westerners' (p.172). One of Beran's main informants, Cecil Abel, was told by his father, Charles Abel, 'that the latter had inspired the production of these figures by Mutuaga, as an adaptation of the figures Mutuaga had already been carving on lime spatulas' (p.170).1

In his discussion and interpretation of Mutuaga's work, Beran accepts Kaeppler's distinctions between 'traditional' carvings (produced with traditional tools but unlikely in

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1 Charles Abel arrived in East New Guinea in 1891 and, with the Rev. Fred Walker, developed the London Missionary Society's mission on Kwato Island, which the latter had established there.
Mutuaga's case as he reportedly carved with metal tools), 'evolved traditional' pieces, exemplified by Mutuaga's lime spatulas, and 'tourist' pieces such as Mutuaga's independent figures.

But I find Beran's classification of 'untraditional' pieces by Mutuaga as 'tourist' art difficult to accept. Certainly, at least one type of Mutuaga's carvings was of a 'newly invented' type. But the term 'tourist' art only came into use from the 1960s onwards, and is now generally applied to mass-produced items produced for tourists. Tourism is recognised as a phenomenon of the latter part of the twentieth century - there would hardly have been any tourists to the Massim region in the period 1890-1920 when Mutuaga made these figures.

The 'newly invented' and singular objects which Mutuaga carved, and some of which Beran admits to be among his finer works, are 'untraditional'. But his description of them as 'tourist' art is, in my view, misleading. These were original works, equal to other masterpieces of Mutuaga's. The term 'tourist' art has a pejorative connotation of simplified, mass-produced pieces. Mutuaga's 'newly-invented' objects may have been an early type of art made for sale to Europeans instead of being made for local traditional use. This is an example of types of objects which escape easy categorisation. In the tentative set of categories outlined above in this chapter, Mutuaga's 'newly invented' objects could well be considered original, culturally significant, art. They were made using new materials (steel tools) to some extent, were innovative styles which incorporated local and external influences and were
designed and made for sale. Although they may have been regarded as insignificant to the local culture at the time they were made, they have since become an important example of the innovative art of a renowned master carver.

In another study researching the antecedents of 'tourist' art in the nineteenth century, Gaye Sculthorpe traces the souvenir industry developed by Pitjanjatjarra women back to the building of the trans-continental railway between Adelaide and Darwin, which took place between 1870 to 1872 (Sculthorpe forthcoming). Women exchanged utilitarian objects for food with railway workers before missionaries or traders were in the area. Sculthorpe's study reveals that Pitjanjatjarra women have perceptively responded to changing tastes in the market over time. She demonstrates that the souvenir artifacts Pitjanjatjarra women made in the past, and those they now make, are not as standardised as many would presume. As she says, 'craftspeople are more aware of the tourists as buyers than the buyers know of them or their art'. These days Pitjatjanjarra women group their artifacts into wholesale, retail or exhibition quality and are very aware of the scale of monetary values for objects of different quality.1

In central and northern Australia, producing arts and crafts has become a preferred occupation, especially since better marketing systems were introduced by the Aboriginal Arts Board in the 1970s. In Morphy's view this is because

the production of arts and crafts:

1 Report on continuing field study at Ulara given at the COMA Conference, South Australian Museum, October 1991.
capitalises on skills already present in the community
• requires virtually no capital outlay
• enables people to work at their own camp and determine their own work programs, and
• provides a degree of economic independence and autonomy absent in other occupations (Morphy 1980:86).

The extent to which the tourist is, in fact, the end consumer of many commercially-oriented products has been exaggerated. Indigenous art producers have responded to a variety of commercial opportunities and the requirements of different groups of consumers, including collectors, corporations and small business houses, local residents and tourists.

As well as being applied to all types of commercial indigenous art, the term ‘tourist’ art has become attached to the souvenir class of objects. ‘Souvenir’ is the generic term for memorabilia elsewhere in the world; for example the religious statuettes in stalls near the Vatican, or replica cuckoo clocks in a Swiss souvenir shop, are always called ‘souvenirs’ and not ‘tourist’ art. When Western tourists buy memorabilia from indigenous producers they should also be called ‘souvenirs’. As ‘souvenir’ is a well-understood term it is suggested that it replaces ‘tourist’ art for memorabilia and objects with little cultural significance.

The term ‘tourist’ art has often been misapplied to ‘newly invented’ art forms, as in the example of Mutuaga’s carvings mentioned above. Many other examples of the misapplication of the term could be given, each demonstrating how innovative art
was demeaned or negatively stereotyped by being called 'tourist' art. The effect of this on contemporary art in Papua New Guinea is discussed in Chapter 7.

It is strongly recommended that the term 'tourist' art be dropped from the Western categorisation of indigenous art from the Pacific region. I have tentatively suggested that the majority of items purchased by casual buyers (whether tourists, other visitors or local residents) are from the sub-categories 'commercial' art, 'replicas' and 'souvenirs'. Most objects in these sub-categories of 'art for sale' are designed and intended for sale to outside consumers of indigenous art.

In summary, three sets of categories devised by Western scholars to classify indigenous art from the 1970s to 1990s have been discussed, with particular reference to their appropriateness for circumstances in the South Pacific region.

The first, Graburn's (1976) 'non-commercial'/commercial' distinction provides the general framework for all other categories of art. It acknowledged the high degree of commodification which had occurred across the spectrum of art and craft production in Third and Fourth World societies by the 1970s. This development was in response to the transformations in art and society taking place in indigenous societies, as well as increasing demand from outside markets. Graburn recognised that certain classes of objects were beyond commodification and that this needed to be emphasised to Western audiences. 'Non-commercial' art was found to be a useful category to make Western audiences aware that not all art forms are marketable. Some recent examples of 'non-
commercial' art from Papua New Guinea were given to demonstrate that it is produced in contemporary South Pacific societies to maintain ideals of cultural identity, heritage, religion and social cohesion.

Graburn's term 'commercial' art was found to be inappropriate in the 1990s because of its association with the advertising industry. However, what he intended by that term is encompassed in Morphy's term 'art for sale' modified into the category 'art made for sale'. This category was accepted with the proviso that not all culturally significant artworks, or even utilitarian objects, can be evaluated in terms of their commodity nature and commercial success alone. Several subcategories were identified under the umbrella term 'art made for sale': original, culturally significant art works in traditional or introduced media made for display and sale to outside audiences; items of clothing, textiles, pottery and print media and other newly designed objects made for sale as 'commercial' art; 'replicas' and 'souvenirs'. It has also been noted that some non-commercial traditional art, designed and used for another purpose by its creators, may eventually be sold by them and enter the art market.

The second set of terms or categories comprised 'traditional', 'transitional' and 'contemporary' art. The term 'transitional' art, although popular in the late 1970s to mid 1980s, was short-lived. The terms 'traditional' and 'contemporary' persist and are probably the most widely used generic terms at present. The term 'traditional' was shown to have undergone thorough revision by a number of scholars to
expunge the negative implications of passivity and unchanging nature it had acquired in association with 'primitive' art. It is now perceived to be the sound and positive basis on which the identity and continuing development of indigenous cultures and their art continue to be formed. Evidence was given to demonstrate that the term and concepts around it are well understood by indigenous people. 'Contemporary' art covers a vast field of innovative developments in the visual arts. It is a suitable umbrella term for such categories of art made for sale as original art works in introduced media and commercial art. In Papua New Guinea at least, it is deliberately used by a number of artists to describe their art. Although these are universal terms, 'traditional' and 'contemporary' are found to be viable to describe indigenous art at present.

The third set, 'fine' art and 'tourist' art have become entrenched since the mid-1980s, at least in Australia. One of the reasons is that they have been adopted by market analysts to describe and quantify the Aboriginal 'arts and crafts industry' in a number of influential Government-sponsored reports. My analysis of these terms finds that they both misconstrue the intent and nature of indigenous art because the end-consumer is prioritised over the art producer. These terms are found to be inappropriate sub-categories within the 'non-commercial'/'art made for sale' framework and alternative ways should be found to describe indigenous art to the domestic and international art market(s). Tourists and other casual buyers may become more discerning in their purchases if they were informed that the item they wished to purchase
was, for example, a good replica instead of a mass-produced souvenir.

A number of other categories have been rejected in this survey. These include Graburn's 'ethnic' and Kaeppler's 'folk' art. In the multicultural societies of Australia and New Zealand, both of these terms are widely used to refer to the art forms of immigrant sectors of these composite societies. Terms which contained a eurocentric bias, like Graburn's 'assimilated fine art' and the more widely used 'transitional' art, proved unviable because of their negative implications for indigenous art producers.

In the 1990s categories used to describe indigenous art should not only be suitable for the needs of art theorists and connoisseurs but also recognise indigenous values and opinions and the dynamics of contemporary indigenous societies.

The following categories have been accepted as appropriate for the present. The basic framework 'non-commercial'/ 'art made for sale' indicates that not all indigenous art is made for sale to Western consumers, but also recognises the degree of commodification of indigenous art that has taken place in the past few decades. Objects with secret-sacred properties, ephemeral objects made for ceremonies and rituals and symbols of cultural identity were among the 'non-commercial' types of art discussed. 'Art made for sale' included original culturally significant art works, in both 'traditional' and 'contemporary' styles, commercial art, replicas and souvenirs. The set of sub categories 'traditional' art and 'contemporary' art are based, to some degree, on local
use versus Western influence on the nature of the art produced and may take into account socio-cultural factors affecting art production. Some evidence was given that indigenous communities understood the terms ‘traditional’ art and ‘contemporary’ art and concepts embedded in them, and either used these terms or employed other terms with similar meaning. These categories and sub-categories are not intended to be exhaustive. New developments in art production and contributions to art theory, including the issue of categorising indigenous art within the Western art-culture system may require their revision.

BARK PAINTINGS: A TEST OF CATEGORIES

I have accepted Graburn's 'non-commercial'/'commercial' framework and have tentatively developed a set of sub-categories which differ somewhat from his. This section will test how appropriate they are to describe a particular art form, viz. bark paintings from Arnhem Land, Northern Australia.

Stanton criticises Graburn's attempt to devise a number of categories for indigenous art (Graburn 1976:10-21) on the grounds that it has little utility if the same art forms can be assigned to several categories (Stanton 1986:22-23). He demonstrates that the pattern of usage, or different socio-cultural contexts (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), within which the same type of object appears, effectively blurs distinctions such as those in Graburn's categories and sub-categories. The example of bark paintings is also used to test
Stanton’s claim that ambiguities exist in the Western system of categorisation of indigenous art.

I have accepted Graburn’s framework distinction ‘non-commercial’/‘commercial’ art, but modified his ‘commercial’ art to ‘art made for sale’. I have also rejected some of his sub-categories, including ‘commercial fine art’ and ‘assimilated fine art’ which have been replaced by ‘original, culturally significant art’; ‘tourist’ art has been replaced by ‘replicas’, ‘souvenirs’ and ‘commercial’ art. Another set of categories, viz. ‘traditional’ art and ‘contemporary’ art was also discussed. In this section it will be demonstrated that certain types of bark paintings may be assigned to each of the accepted categories, viz. ‘non-commercial’, various sub-categories of ‘art made for sale’, ‘traditional’ art and ‘contemporary’ art. Each of these categories may be useful to the Western conceptualisation of bark paintings and to establish into which type of exhibition or niche of the art market a particular bark painting may fit.

However, it found that Stanton’s claim is also supportable; in some instances bark paintings escape easy categorisation. and there are different socio-cultural contexts for Aboriginal art (these are explored more fully in Chapter 4)¹ As well, this section includes evidence that Yolngu people (Aboriginal people of north-eastern Arnhem Land, who are among the most prolific bark painters) have their own methods of categorising bark paintings. It is shown that Aboriginal categories (in this case, ¹ Not all the circumstances related to bark paintings would be true of other indigenous art forms from the Pacific region, but a similar exercise could be undertaken with others.
only for bark paintings) differ in a number of aspects from Western categories. The discussion of various categories follows a brief outline of Western records of Aboriginal bark paintings.

It has been established that several kinds of bark paintings were in existence at the time of European contact. A shore party on the voyage led by the French navigator, Nicholas Baudin, in 1802 saw and recorded paintings on bark slabs on Maria Island, Tasmania (Ruhe:1990) and travellers in Tasmania report seeing them fifty years later (Bunce 1857). There is evidence of decorated slabs of bark being used in corroborees in NSW (Matthews 1896) and as late as 1943 G.K. Dunbar reported Aborigines of the Ngemba tribe painting designs on tree trunks adjacent to initiation grounds in Western New South Wales. Designs on wet weather shelters and on bark huts were common throughout Victoria (Bough Smyth 1878, Massola 1958). Matthew Flinders reported painted slabs of bark forming shelters in Arnhem Land in 1803 and Major Campbell reported them on Melville Island in 1834. Illustrations of bark paintings from Port Essington appeared in an article by Cox (1878), and they were reported by Captain Carrington at a deserted camp near the East Alligator River in 1887 (Mountford 1957). These accounts provide evidence that bark paintings were used in Aboriginal cultures prior to European contact.

1 These and other early records of bark painting and the history of collecting bark paintings are outlined in Sutton (1988, 33-58).

2 Other early reports of bark paintings include those of French explorers Captains Baudin, Peron and de Freycinet (Rhue 1990); Major Campbell, Port Essington, 1834; D. Bunce, 1897; J. Matthews, NSW, 1896; Baldwin Spencer, Oenpelli, 1914.
Philip Jones (1988a:147) records that, ‘It was not until the 1870s that bark paintings were identified as a characteristic form of Aboriginal art, and another forty years passed before Sir Baldwin Spencer made a substantial collection of them’. Spencer collected fifty bark paintings at Oenpelli, Western Arnhem Land on two expeditions in 1914 and 1928 and exhibited them at the National Museum of Victoria in 1929 as ‘primitive’ art (Spencer 1914, 1929). Other major collections of bark paintings from Arnhem Land were assembled from the 1920s to the 1930s, representing this genre in Western major collections and forming the basis for Western scholars’ interpretations of them.

Apart from the types of bark paintings recorded by Europeans since the time of contact, there may have been many other forms of bark art made over the centuries by Aboriginal societies of which nothing is now known. For many Aboriginal societies the encroachment of Europeans across the continent made it impossible to sustain their traditions and life styles. By the time bark paintings from Port Essington were exhibited in the Ethnological Court of the Garden Palace Exhibition in Sydney in 1879 to 1880, the use of bark paintings in southeastern Australia had disappeared (Jones 1988a:155). But bark

1 Norman Tindale, Groote Eylandt 1921 to 1922; Gray and Rose, Groote Eylandt 1938 to 1945; Rev. L. Dyer, Groote Eylandt and Oenpelli 1920 to 1930; Dr. W. Warner, Millingimbi 1926 to 1929; Frobenius expedition 1938; Miss Matthews, Goulburn Island, 1939; Rev. Chaseling collected at Yirrkala and Caledon Bay from 1936; the Berdts collected 400 bark paintings from Arnhem Land 1946 to 1947; Charles P. Mountford commissioned and collected throughout the American-Australian expedition to Arnhem Land 1948; Scougall and Tuckson commissioned major paintings at Yirrkala 1958.
painting continues to be an important form of cultural expression in Arnhem Land where Aboriginal communities have substantially maintained their traditional life style. European records of bark painting in Arnhem Land provides evidence that they have been continually produced since the time of European contact.

The practice of painting with ochres on various surfaces is ubiquitous in Aboriginal cultures and is known to have considerable antiquity. With regard to tools and materials, bark paintings have always been produced with locally available, or regionally traded, traditional materials; the only contributions of Western technology are a steel axe to make the initial incision to remove the bark of a selected stringybark tree, and, recently, commercial adhesive as fixatives for earth pigments. Knowledge of how to collect and manipulate the materials, and the use of clan designs, are skills the artist develops under the instruction of elders.

Acrylic paints are more frequently used on barks of the ‘souvenir’ variety, particularly by painters in Darwin, Katherine or other urban centres where ochres are not readily available and undiscerning buyers are probably not aware of the

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1 Paintings in rock shelters have been dated back 10,000 years and the skeleton of a woman at Lake Mungo, estimated to be 40,000 years old, was smeared with red ochre.

2 Wood glue, particularly Aquadhere glue is now preferred as a fixative for ochres instead of orchid juice and manufactured paint brushes and sandpaper are sometimes used. At Bulabula Arts, Ramingining, Central Arnhem Land, where I worked as Arts Adviser in 1993 to 1994, axes, sandpaper, glue and brushes were regularly requested by bark painters.
difference between ochres and acrylic paint. The images on 'souvenir' barks are not important.

There is considerable stylistic variation in the clan designs used in bark painting across Arnhem Land. Sutton identifies the regional styles as (from west to east) the Kimberley, Port Keats, Mellville and Bathurst Islands, Western, Central and North-East Arnhem Land, Groote Eyelandt and Mornington Island. But he cautions that 'a precise study of these regional styles and how they relate to each other has yet to appear' (Sutton 1988:58). However, descriptions of particular regional styles have been undertaken, such as Leonhard Adam's study of Groote Eyelandt and Morphy's study of Yolngu art of north-east Arnhem Land. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to enter into an analysis of the regional styles of bark painting, and this is not central to its objective. But the fact that scholars have been able to identify regional styles which have persisted over several generations, is also evidence of bark painting traditions being maintained.

Paintings which represent mythical events or moral fables may be used by elders to instruct youths in clan knowledge. In the first of series of films, Narritjin, directed by Ian Dunlop, the reknowned Yolngu painter Narritjin Maymurrung is shown demonstrating bark painting techniques to his sons and using them to relate ancestral stories and creation myths. Narritjin sold his paintings to art collectors and museums, and came to know at least some of the outside audience for his art. The third film in the series, Narritjin in Canberra, shows him with other members of his family preparing for a major exhibition.
He intended the paintings to educate the Canberra audience about Yolgnu (Arnhem Land) life, and to finance his family's return to their homeland at Jarrakpi. Therefore, although Narritjin's paintings were eventually sold, they served his initial intent of passing on traditional skills and knowledge to his sons. They were also used to explain some aspects of Yolngu culture to an external audience. As well, the intent of Narritjin selling his paintings was to reinforce his culture by enabling the family to move back to clan lands.¹

In 1961 each of the senior custodians of the clans resident at Yirrkala presented a large board with a painting depicting their clan to the newly built Methodist church at Yirrkala (Wells 1971). Morphy comments that

(t)he motives of the participants were surely complex and diverse, but placing the paintings beside the altar was done partly to demonstrate the compatibility of Yolngu religious beliefs with Christianity and to assert Yolngu identity in an introduced context. That the paintings were thought to be spiritually powerful is evidenced by their subsequent expulsion from the church a decade or so later at the hands of a more fundamentalist and less syncretically oriented minister (Morphy 1991:20).

In 1988 the Yirrkala church paintings were placed in the community museum attached to the Buku Larrnggay Arts Centre at Yirrkala. On this Morphy comments that

(i)n the church the paintings were an active symbol of the relationship between Yolngu religion and Christianity and were part of the process of change within the community. Their position in the museum suggests that

¹ Ian Dunlop (dir.) Narritjin, series of four films, Film Australia, 1976.
today that role is over and the discourse has changed (Morphy 1991:20 footnote 6)

The above examples clearly demonstrate that there are 'non-commercial' contexts for bark paintings. The case of Narritjin's paintings reveals that ambiguities can arise in attempts to define particular objects as 'non-commercial' or 'art for sale'. Graburn (1979:356) admits this, citing Williams (1976) example of bark paintings from Yirrkala. He acknowledges that 'there is one exceptional category in which items are made for both functional and commercial purposes ab initio', and using William's example of Yirrkala bark paintings comments that

they (bark paintings) constitute a contemporary art that fulfils a traditional function, and in providing a cash income they serve a contemporary function as well. The media - the barks, the pigments - and the techniques of artistic expression are traditional. (Bark paintings are also) used in the instruction of young men in important aspects of aboriginal culture (Graburn 1979:356).

Since the exhibition of bark paintings organised by Baldwin Spencer at the National Museum of Victoria in 1929, bark paintings have been exhibited and described in scholarly and popular literature as traditional Aboriginal art from Arnhem Land. They have had special exhibitions and separate gallery space devoted to them, indicating they had a different context to European art. It is only very recently that bark paintings have been exhibited with other media as a form of
contemporary Aboriginal art, in the sense of being art of this time.\(^1\)

Arnhem Land artists have been willing to work with anthropologists and other serious collectors who had an express intention to learn about Aboriginal culture through artistic expression. Artists from the Western Arnhem Land, including Yirawala, Midjaw Midjaw and Paddy Compass Namatbara had made paintings for the Berndts and Mountford in the 1940s, and were working as a group of painters on Minjilang (Croker Island) when Karel Kupka collected there in 1963 (Taylor 1989:26). More recently Jack Wununun painted the major religious story, *Banumbirr, the Morning Star* (1987) for the Australian National Gallery and David Malangi completed a series of works centred on his homelands (Glyde River) for the Art Gallery of New South Wales. In 1993 to 1994 the custodians and senior artists of the Yirrkala clans completed twenty five major paintings, each representing a major clan story, commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria. Major works commissioned for important collections are difficult to categorise as 'art for sale'. One reason is that, although artists receive renumeration, commissioned works effectively bypass the market and enter the non-commoditised museum context (see Chapter 4, Aoriki case study). The paintings reflect the importance of the artists within their own culture and their

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exhaustive knowledge of ceremony and the spiritual and physical world.

But the majority of bark paintings produced in Arnhem Land are not of the high calibre just mentioned. In terms of the overall quantity of bark paintings produced, exceptional works are rare, as with every other genre of art. The majority of paintings are of less serious intent, and are made for the mainstream art market, generally entering circulation from local Aboriginal arts centres through exhibitions at metropolitan commercial art galleries and less exclusive retail outlets. The less discerning casual buyer is not so interested in the cultural content of bark paintings. Many bark painters do most of their work specifically for the consumer market, but the works, although they may be proficient, are usually of unimportant images, such as animals and bush tucker; some of these paintings may be categorised as replicas and others as souvenirs. The way bark painters have responded to different levels in the outside market for their work is demonstrated by developments in bark painting at Yirrkala.

Producing bark paintings for the museum market and mission outlets was initiated by the Rev Chaseling at Yirrkala in 1936, and similarly for Milingimbi in Central Arnhem Land by Rev. T.T. Webb at the same time (Morphy 1991:14). Williams wrote that, 'Bark painting in its present form apparently originated (at Yirrkala) in the second half of the 1930s. This date was consistently indicated by Aborigines, as well as by whites who were resident in, or visitors to, the Yirrkala area in the 1930s' (Williams 1976:272). The level of activity
expanded in the mid-1950s, by which time 'the mission had assumed the function of art-dealer as a means of improving the economic base of the Aboriginal community, and the sale of arts had come to be viewed as a major source of cash income to Aborigines' (Williams 1976:275).

In Williams' account, which covered events between the mid-1930s to the early 1970s, innovations in bark painting at Yirrkala included the expansion of subject matter, diversification in the sizes and methods of presentation of bark paintings in response to different markets, and the emergence of women as bark painters. By the 1960s she describes a number of categories of bark paintings being produced: 'important stories' of mythological sagas where production was restricted; 'hunting scenes' where there is no restriction on subject matter, and small decorative 'souvenir' barks (Williams 1976:278). This diversification satisfied different levels in the market, and maximised the number of producers who could earn an income from painting. This range of bark paintings is still being produced at Yirrkala in the 1990s. There are many which fit into the overall category of 'art for sale', but paintings range from 'original' art to 'replicas' and 'souvenirs'. On the other hand, a number of the major commissioned works and the church panels are 'non-commercial' art.

The term 'contemporary' art can also be applied to bark paintings. On some occasions innovations by one or more artists are criticised as inappropriate by others. Milpurrurruru commented 'Some people have painted things like MAF
[Missionary Aviation Fellowship] planes and balandas with VJY radios [radio-telephones]. They paint these things on bark; that's a different way of thinking. For my part, I couldn't paint things in that way because they're not my Dreaming' (Milpurrurru 1989:19). Wandjuk Marika relates how his father, Mawalan, critised his use of green pigment, 'Where did I get the green? I mix the black and yellow! My father was very cross at me. And then he said 'Where did you get this mulmu colour? (green grass colour). I said 'From my own mind,' and he said 'Forget it' (Marika 1986:8).

Contemporary bark painters do not feel constrained by the limitations of subjects or materials, but continually devise variations in their own style and in the presentation of the subject which keeps their art inspiring. Some artists, like Brian Nyniwanga, who painted the MAF planes and VJY radios referred to by Milpurrurru above, are inclined to paint subjects which reflect the everyday realities of their world.¹ Idiosyncratic paintings are acquired by Western collectors as examples of contemporary expressions of an art form: Marika was amused to see his mulmu paintings at the AGNSW twenty years later (Marika 1986:8). Although, up to the 1970s, bark painters were advised not to deviate from traditional techniques and media (Williams 1976: 278-9) because they

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¹ Two of Nyniwanga's bark paintings, Visions of the City and Cattle Country were purchased by the Northern Territory Department of Labour and Industry as they depicted experiences of city life and industry by a non-urbanised Aboriginal artist. One of Nyniwanga's first works on canvas, Kava Story, shows the debilitating effects of kava abuse.
would be unacceptable to white art buyers, bark painters have continued to innovate.

So far it has been demonstrated that it is indeed difficult to categorise bark paintings in one discrete category of the Western system of categorising indigenous art. While bark paintings are undoubtedly a traditional form of Aboriginal art, in accordance with all the criteria discussed in this chapter, there is also evidence to show that some bark painters have diversified into producing contemporary bark paintings (i.e. non-traditional subjects) and 'souvenir' barks.

Aboriginal categories of bark paintings

The section below gives an example of how the Yolngu clans of Central to Eastern Arnhem Land categorise paintings. The system of classification was initially recorded by Donald Thompson in the 1930s and confirmed by Morphy (1977, 1991). In this system, certain types of paintings, those related to the clan's wangarr (creative spirits) and rangga (sacred objects) are in the restricted categories ngarrapuy and likanbuy (restricted to fully initiated men, painted on mens' ground). There are also intermediate and open categories of paintings which are not connected with the clan's sacred subjects and objects.

Painting is an important activity for Yolngu people, and the medium of bark is only one surface upon which paintings occur. For example, a clan design in the likanbuy (restricted) category may be executed on different surfaces (bark slab,
initiate’s body, hollow log coffin), on different occasions. A number of restrictions on who may see paintings and by whom they may be executed have changed since the time of Donald Thompson’s initial contact in the 1930s.

Thompson recorded Yolngu categories of art as they existed in the 1930s (Morphy 1991:183). Morphy uses this material as the basis for comparing the immediate post-contact situation with that existing during the time he was conducting research for his PhD in the mid-1970s (Morphy 1977). The table immediately below was devised by Morphy from Thompson’s records of the Yolngu categories of paintings.

AFTER MORPHY 1991 (HIS TABLE 9.2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship to Wangarr (Spirit) Beings</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonancestral</td>
<td>Wakinngu</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not connected with the clan’s rangga</td>
<td>Garma</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected with the clan’s rangga and associated wangarr</td>
<td>Bulgu</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngarrapuy</td>
<td>Restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likanbuy</td>
<td>Restricted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Morphy notes that, ‘Thompson’s categories of Yolngu paintings were derived basically from informant’s subdivisions of the Gupapuyngu clan paintings Thompson collected. He generalised these distinctions to apply to all Yolngu speaking clans . . . . They applied to paintings in all media’ (Morphy 1991:183).
At the time Thompson collected Yolngu art in the 1930s he was the first to do so (as Williams 1976 concurrs). There was no outside market at that time, so all the paintings collected by Thompson were made within what Morphy calls the ‘Yolngu frame’. In the intervening period between Thompson's and Morphy's fieldwork, missions had been established at Yirrkala, Milingimbi and Elcho Island. From 1936 missionaries had undertaken selling arts and crafts, partly to educate city congregations about the Aborigines of Arnhem Land, and as a means of providing Aborigines with a source of income, or supplies, particularly tobacco (Morphy 1991:14). Between the 1930s to the 1970s, many of the earlier restrictions, such as women viewing certain categories of painting, became discontinued and the contexts for art opened up (for example, panels painted for the Yirrkala mission church, described above). Thus, a 'European frame' for Yolngu art developed. Yet, for Yolngu people 'in spite of these changes, the artistic system still operates to structure knowledge and control access to it, and the distinct properties of the representational system are still exploited to this end' (Morphy 1991:182-3, see also Tables 9.3 and 9.4). Morphy's Table 9.3 shows that the restricted categories of painting noted by Thompson (ngarrapuy and likanbuy) remained restricted. Commercial art comes from paintings in open categories including paintings presenting 'public' stories and myths; hunting paintings; innovated paintings with no mythological reference; but he also includes modified likanbuy-type paintings (Morphy 1991:202-3). He notes that
(i)n reference to these categories (in Table 9.4) . . . bear in mind that a clan's paintings are controlled not by individuals but by owning clans and managers. Decisions about which paintings to produce for commercial sale are made largely at this level . . . . The categories of commercial art must be understood to operate in the context of clan-based decision making (Morphy 1991:202-3).

It becomes apparent from Thompson's and Morphy's compilations of Yolngu categories for painting that the overriding principle of classification is restricted or unrestricted. That this principle is still important to Yolngu is borne out in the statement made by the reknowned bark painter George Milpurrurruru. He makes a distinction between paintings and other objects restricted to clan use and those made for sale, 'Today we paint for ceremony and we paint bark paintings to sell', and, 'I paint hollow-log coffins for sale too, and I might paint some of these differently to the ones we use in ceremony' (Milpurrurruru 1989:18-19). One of the reasons he gives for selling paintings is that 'Yolngu painters want to tell balanda (white) people about ourselves, our lives, our Dreamings, through our paintings' (Milpurrurruru 1989:20).

The Yolngu people of central and north-east Arnhem Land are divided into two moieties, Yirritja and Dhuwa. Each Dhuwa and Yirritja clan owns specific mythic stories and totems relating to specific tracts of land. These are expressed in ceremonies in songs, dances and the designs painted on people's bodies and objects. George Milpurrurruru said in explanation of the different styles from Central Arnhem Land:
We Yolngu belong to different barpurru (clan groups) and each barpurru paints things differently; it depends if you come from the gulunbuy (mangroves), or diltjipuy (forests) or rangipuy (beach). It's important to know the difference . . . . I teach young people by painting a picture so they learn to see the difference (Milpurruru 1989:18).

For the exhibition Objects and Representations from Ramingining: A Selection of Recent Art from Arnhem Land (Power Gallery, 1984) the (Aboriginal) curator, Djon Mundine, commissioned bark paintings and other objects from artists in the Ramingining area which illustrated Yolngu concepts of the two moieties, Dhuwa and Yirritja, and the totem animals, plants and physical features which were associated with different moieties and their clan homelands. In the exhibition catalogue Mundine wrote that the paintings and objects revealed an 'Aboriginal system of classification which is in part comparable, in part contrasting, with the Linnean system of natural science classification' (Mundine 1984:2). The idea behind using this system of classification of the natural world as principle of display was to demonstrate how each moiety and clan 'has responsibility for specific species of animal, plant or fish that are related to . . . specific tracts of land' (Mundine 1984:4). The second principle of Yolngu classification becomes apparent here, that is that Yolngu people classify paintings by moiety, Dhuwa or Yirritja, and the clan stories and physical landscapes appropriate for each to paint.

On any trading day at Bulabula Arts, Ramingining, during my term as Arts Adviser there in 1993 to 1994, a stock of between eighty to one hundred bark paintings was on display
and in store. Among them always were a few major artworks depicting clan stories, for example Jimmy Wululu’s *Niwuda Yirritja Honey Story* and his three dupun (hollow log coffins) painted with the *Manbirri* (catfish) design, commissioned by the Linden Museum, Stuttgart, Germany; Ray Munyal’s *Dhuwa Sugarbag Story* (purchased National Gallery of Australia), and Philip Gudthaykudthay’s *Mirramina Story* (purchased National Gallery of Victoria). All of these major paintings contained restricted elements - only the ‘outside’ story was told to the arts adviser for documenting the painting, the artist retained restricted clan knowledge by not revealing the full meaning of the elements of the painting.

The gallery display at Bulabula arts was often organised by placing paintings depicting different Dhuwa and Yirritja clan stories together. The groups of paintings varied in size and complexity and were executed by both men and women artists. A few small barks of the ‘souvenir’ class were clustered near the door. These were generally done for ‘tucker money’ and were popular with the rare casual visitors like contractors or family members visiting balanda residents. A number of artists, like Brian Nyniwanga, liked to experiment, ensuring that some ‘contemporary’ bark paintings were usually available.¹

¹ A number of Ramingining artists, including George Milpurrurru and Jimmy Wululu, had strong reservations about painting subjects ‘outside’ their extensive clan repertoire. Others, including David Malangi, Micky Dorrng, Dorothy Djukulul and Clara Wugukwuguk experimented with new media like large acrylic paintings and works on paper, but still only made paintings of clan subjects. A few, notably Brian Nyniwanga, Charlie Djurritjini and Namiyal Bopirri, introduced new subjects across all media.
The artist members of the cooperative preferred paintings to be arranged by 'stories', and instructed the non-Aboriginal staff about which were Dhuwa and which Yirritja, who the paintings 'belonged' to, which were real 'culture' paintings and which, although they may look particularly pleasing to balanda (outsiders), were insignificant to Yolngu culture.¹

This extremely brief outline of some of the ways Yolngu people classify their art reveals that paintings are either in restricted or open categories; the restricted categories are connected to the clans' ancestral spirits and sacred objects and are used in mens' ceremonies by initiated men. Secondly, paintings belong either to Dhuwa or Yirritja clans, and Dhuwa and Yirritja subjects are restricted to those within the correct relationship to them. When Yolngu artists paint their clan subjects for sale, they still observe these restraints. There are no restraints on artists wishing to paint what Morphy refers to as 'innovated' paintings such as hunting scenes, representations of camp life or other subjects which have no ancestral connections.

Comments on the test of categorising bark paintings

The test of categorising bark paintings has revealed the following:

- That there are certain instances where bark paintings are non-commercial. Three instances have been outlined here: (i)

¹ Detailed documentation was kept of all paintings purchased by the arts centre, including artist's biographies and the clan stories they painted.
Yolngu people have categories of restricted paintings (*likanbuy* and *ngarrapuy*) which are only used on mens' grounds during ceremonies; (ii) the 'story' barks painted for the Yirrkala church which were subsequently placed in the community museum; (iii) the Yirrkala bark petition to Parliament.

- That many types of bark paintings have been consistently for sale since the establishment of missions in Arnhem Land in the 1930s. Prior to that bark paintings may have been sold, or more likely traded for *balanda* goods, such as the collection assembled by Spencer at Oenpelli. Makers of bark paintings have developed a range of unrestricted subjects when making art for sale; also, paintings range from souvenir barks and replicas to original, culturally significant paintings.

- That bark paintings were traditionally used in pre-contact Aboriginal societies. Evidence from a number of sources reported bark paintings in use at the time of first contact. Very little is known about the traditional uses of bark paintings and very few pieces were collected during the early contact period, but the evidence presented indicated that bark painting was more widespread across Australia then than it is now. Painting is an important form of Aboriginal cultural expression; Yolngu people paint their clan designs on a number of surfaces including bark slabs. Bark paintings made for community use such as ceremonies and for didactic purposes are traditional art. And if senior Yolngu artists who are custodians of ritual knowledge make important bark paintings for museum commissions, or in order to explain their culture to outsiders, such paintings are also traditional art.
Some curators of Aboriginal art (Perkins 1991, Caruana 1991) express the view that all art produced now is contemporary art. If this wide use of the term contemporary art is used, then significant bark paintings produced now are contemporary Aboriginal art. Several examples have been given where bark painters have introduced non-traditional subjects or have made other innovations in their paintings which mean that such paintings may be categorised as contemporary art when this term is used in the narrower sense of 'new' art.

The aim of this exercise has been to demonstrate how careful one must be when assigning objects to cross-cultural categories. The non-specialised Western audience is inclined to categorise all bark paintings as 'traditional' Aboriginal art, but this exercise has shown that some bark painters paint contemporary subjects, and others paint insignificant small barks for the souvenir market. Most of the subject matter of bark paintings is 'traditional', that is, inherited clan stories which may only be painted by an artist who is their proper custodian.

Stanton (1986:22) criticises Graburn's (1976) system of categorisation, finding that Graburn's attempts to assign indigenous art to a fixed set of categories is, 'of limited value in the Australian context, since it fails to accommodate the multiplicity of purposes for which Aboriginal art is being manufactured'. Stanton's main criticism of Graburn's categories is that his scheme is based on terms which reflect culture contact from a European perspective. But Graburn never suggested that he was setting out with any other purpose. His
scheme was intended to devise more suitable categories for the Western appreciation of indigenous art than 'primitive' art. If it appears (in retrospect) that Graburn's scheme used terms which suggested Western cultural domination, this must be viewed as a phenomenon of the times in which he was writing. In the mid-1970s his views (and those of the other authors included in the 1976 volume) represented a considerable departure from the previous paradigm of 'primitive' art. Although some of his terms and concepts are dated, I find the structure of Graburn's scheme of categorisation sound as a basis from which to discuss changes in the conceptualisation of indigenous art in Western society since the mid-1970s.\(^1\)

First, Graburn's 'non-commercial/commercial' distinction assists Western scholars and the interested public to comprehend that there are many functions and purposes of art other than that of satisfying Western demand for it. This distinction held up in the test of Western categories suitable for describing bark paintings, as bark paintings were identified in non-commercial contexts (such as Yirrkala church), and because many types of bark paintings have been made for sale since the mid-1930s.

It was also found that the subject matter of many bark paintings was 'traditional', and in fact that this aspect transcended whether they were made for internal purposes (such as Narritjin teaching his sons clan stories), or eventually

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\(^1\) Stanton presents an interesting challenge to the conventional form of categorising, and there is considerable validity in his recognition that much of the impetus to create comes from within indigenous communities (see discussion of Stanton's theses regarding 'innovation' in Chapter 6).
offered for sale (Narritjin sold the same paintings in Canberra). Since Yolngu people started to regularly sell their art, first through missions, then local arts centres, some artists have elected to paint non-traditional subjects. These may still be significant paintings in the category of ‘contemporary’ art. Paintings of less significant subjects, such as hunting scenes or bush tucker are usually directed at the lower end of the market, providing ‘souvenirs’ for visitors. It has been demonstrated, therefore, that although the presently-used Western categories for indigenous art have some utility, none can adequately describe the entire production of bark paintings.

Stanton (1986:22-23) claimed that the different socio-cultural contexts (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), within which the same type of object appears, effectively blurs distinctions such as those in Graburn’s scheme of categorisation. This claim is plausible in the case of bark paintings which have a multiplicity of purposes (such as the example of Narritjin’s paintings). Graburn (1979:356) accepted that this was possible in the case of bark paintings of ‘important stories’ from Yirrkala.

Although this discussion has only marginally suggested explicit purposes for which Aboriginal people make bark paintings for their own use, some evidence has been presented that they indeed do so (Morphy 1977, 1991). Within their own society, Yolngu people have no use of, or need for, Western categories of their art. For their own reasons, however, Yolngu people have been willing to introduce their art into new contexts (church, local museum, petition to Parliament,
commissions for major collections and for sale through arts centres). They have also restructured their own restricted categories, and commenced painting new subjects.

It is also apparent that Western scholars have not taken into account Aboriginal methods of categorising paintings and the principles behind such classifications. 'Restricted', 'intermediate' and 'open' categories may also suit art from other Aboriginal cultures, for example paintings by artists from Central Australian communities.

Morphy establishes that there are two 'frames' for Yolngu art: the Yolngu 'frame' and the European 'frame'. As he notes, 'All Yolngu artists are increasingly operating in both the European and the Aboriginal frame, and in doing so are actors in the transformation of their society'. (Morphy 1991:26). He also points out that

(t)he same painting becomes a different kind of object as it moves from the indigenous cultural frame to a European fine art frame . . . . New frames are continually being created as old ones pass into history . . . . Aboriginal paintings have only recently entered the art galleries, been considered as objects of aesthetic contemplation, become the subject of art historical research, and been produced by creative arts fellows at universities and art colleges. Before that the works were primarily classed as ethnography (or very occasionally 'primitive' art), exhibited in natural history museums, and written about as anthropological data (Morphy 1991:28).

In the words of Yolngu leader Galarrwuy Yunupingu:

The importance of painting to Aboriginal people has not diminished over the years since 1788 . . . .
(Paintings) are about Aboriginal law, Aboriginal life. They are also about our resistance over the last 200 years, and our refusal to forget the land of our ancestors. They are about cultural, social and political survival (Yunupingu 1989:13).

DISCUSSION

Categorisation is important in the disciplines of art history and anthropology and suits their empirical methodology. Material culture specialists find categorisation a useful tool to make distinctions among specific types of objects, for example, types of pottery vessels. These may be classified by a variety of organising principles, whether the date of production, geographical distribution, physical form, decorative motifs or glazes used. A limited type of objects, such as the traditional pottery of Fiji, may readily be encompassed within what Beran describes as 'a system of classification based on a declared and illuminating principle. The principle should produce mutually exclusive categories' (pers. comm 1994). The most difficult form of categorisation is that which attempts to develop generic terms to encompass the nature of all the art forms of a culture.

There is a need for the Western categorisation of indigenous art from the South Pacific region to be frequently reassessed. Many of the terms or categories used in the Western art-culture system to describe indigenous art - 'traditional', 'transitional', 'contemporary', 'fine' and 'tourist' art - are interpretations of the art production of other cultures
in terms of the ways this art is interpreted and circulates in Western culture. Evidence that indigenous people shared the view of Western researchers, or accepted a category as an adequate description of their art, was only found for two categories, 'traditional' and 'contemporary' art. In the section on bark painting, evidence was presented to demonstrate that Yolngu people have their own systems of classification.¹

Characterising objects with accurate descriptors such as place of origin, the local name for the object and/or media, is another way of overcoming stereotypes and making the terms used to describe indigenous art more accurate and informative.² The use of generic terms like 'traditional' and 'contemporary' is probably unavoidable, but it is important to be clear about the meaning of these terms when they are used, as this chapter has demonstrated.

What should be apparent from the evidence presented in this chapter (and the previous one), is that terms and categories are a metaphorical way of describing the relationships between cultures. As the balance of the relationship changes, so does the terminology used to describe the physical manifestations of culture, such as art. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, in the period of European

¹ This example is only representative of indigenous societies having systems of classification. Another example is the distinction Massim people make between canoe prows carved by master carvers and those made by carvers without magic (see Chapter 5).

² Community arts centres in the Northern Territory of Australia now attach labels of authenticity identifying the maker, the local name of the object and its traditional use where applicable, or a brief mention of the community's print workshop, pottery or other venture into commercial art production.
domination of the first half of the twentieth century, an extreme polarity between 'primitive' and 'civilized' was envisaged. 'Primitive' societies with static, uninventive 'traditions', were contrasted to the dynamic, inventive, modern European culture. 'Primitive' people did not vote and had very little, if any, control over their country's affairs. 'Primitive' art was amassed by European colonisers and was interpreted and displayed in accordance with their current beliefs. The use of the term 'primitive' distanced indigenous societies' intellectual and cultural achievements from (the supposed superior achievements of) Western culture.

From the 1960s to early 1980s, as some South Pacific people gained their Independence, and minorities struggled for greater autonomy, the predominant Western view was that indigenous societies were in a 'transitional' phase. It was considered that they would assimilate more and more Western cultural forms as they moved away from their own. Similarly, Western scholars regarded innovations in indigenous art as 'transitional', moving towards Western forms. Since the 1980s, this has been disproved and it has been realised that diversity and inventiveness has blossomed from cross-cultural borrowings. Indigenous peoples' traditions are now recognised as a positive, dynamic force structuring and informing present-day societies. Changes should not necessarily be considered 'untraditional', i.e. implying cultural loss, but evaluated within the context of the contemporary realities of the producers. Acceptance has come that indigenous contemporary art reflects the contemporary realities of indigenous people.
Considerable political and social change has occurred in the South Pacific region over the period under review. Since Graburn wrote on the 'arts of the Third and Fourth Worlds', many Pacific nations have achieved their Independence, and minority indigenous populations have gained greater autonomy. In this complex period of decolonisation, the political, cultural and economic patterns of dominance established in the colonial era have diminished and the balance on which relationships were established has changed. As Clifford noted, this has meant the 'end of certain orders of diversity and the creation or translation of others' (Clifford 1988:16).

In an essay on the history of the Museum fur Volkerkunde of Basel, Switzerland, Christian Kaufmann (1979) outlined the development of museum ethnography within that institution and how its role has expanded in recent decades. Following an evaluation of the ethnographic 'thought systems' which have prevailed from time to time, and in terms of which Basel's collections were formed and understood, Kaufmann suggests that anthropology now tries not just to approach non-Western cultures with Western concepts, but to understand them in terms of their own categories of thought, emotion and knowledge. This requires an approach in which indigenous informants and their cultures are recognised as being different from, but having equivalent value, to that of the researcher (Kaufmann 1979:4). This regard for indigenous people as 'our contemporaries' predicates a more equitable basis for the sharing of knowledge and appreciation of art and culture.
Morphy, Stanton and Specht have countered the negative concepts that were attached to 'traditional' art (unchanging, stereotyped), with proof that the continuation of traditional art forms show cultural creativity. Every negative concept, for example that a work is 'untraditional', can be met with a positive response, for example it may also be seen as 'inventive' or 'innovative'. In producing art for external audiences and markets, indigenous people have capitalised on skills and knowledge which are uniquely theirs and which assert their cultural identity to an outside world.

This chapter has investigated a number of widely used terms, and rejected some. It has discussed nuances in the meanings of terms and ambiguities in their applications. It acknowledges that categorisation and the use of generic terms is unavoidable, both for scholarly research and explanations of art for the general public. But it also envisages that more appropriate terms will arise for the description of indigenous art in the late twentieth century from greater engagement with indigenous artists, scholars and spokespersons and that, in the future, such terms will not assume Western cultural superiority.